

# Malaysia: anti semitism is the Malay nationalism of idiots

Some of my best friends are Muslims....

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***“Anti-Semitism is mainstream in Malay politics. Anything wrong with the Muslim world is blamed on the Jews. We have hosted despotic theocratic regimes. We have welcomed religious tyrants. We have courted religious fanatics. We have embraced religious extremists who mock the religions of the non-Muslims in this country.” - Feb 16, 2018***

COMMENT | Whenever Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad becomes verbally incontinent when Jews are [mentioned](#), there is this rush by people to point out that there is a difference between “a Jew and a Zionist.” Honestly, this is a rather dumb distinction to make. It is dumb because for bigots and racists and let us face facts, the mainstream Muslim political elite in this country, this distinction is meaningless. Furthermore, “Zionism” is a complex ideology which should not be shorthand for “a bad Jew” which is how some liberals use it - intentionally or unintentionally - when it comes to the discourse about anti-Semitism.

Muslims in this country are taught to hate the “Jews”. The anti-Semitic narratives of our prime minister, political operatives like Abdul Hadi Awang and religious charlatans like Zakir Naik always resort to anti-Semitism to define the discourse when it comes to Muslim grievances.

In 2003, when the US-based Simon Wiesenthal Centre called for a boycott of investments and tourism in Malaysia for Mahathir’s serial anti-Semitism, Mahathir beseeched Malaysians not to be blackmailed by the Jews. The MCA under Ong Ka Ting claimed the same thing Mahathir says now, that this was just his personal opinion and added, “They must be rational. Malaysia will stand firm on what we view is true and needs to be said.” Really? Nothing Mahathir has said about the Jewish people has been true and needed to be said. And don’t refer me to his defence of the Palestinian cause.

Meanwhile, the DAP under Lim Kit Siang stated, “Malaysians, regardless of race, religion or political affiliation, should unite to deplore the intolerable boycott call by the group, to send out a clear message to the world that the 23 million Malaysians are united as one in the defence of national interests” which I thought was pretty good, because it did not endorse Mahathir’s words but instead reinforced that “national interests” came first even though it was jeopardised by the words of a bigot.

Now, of course, it is different. I have not heard a peep from the non-Muslim components of Pakatan Harapan. We have the prime minister of Malaysia - who is not only representing the Harapan government but also the people of Malaysia - making anti-Semitic remarks in a world-renowned education establishment and he receives no blowback whatsoever from the people who claim that he can save Malaysia.

Non-Muslim leaders have to kowtow to the bigotry and racism of the *ketuanan* ideology because to

do otherwise would mean to lose political power. Non- Muslims become complicit in the anti-Semitism of Mahathir because to stand up and say the prime minister is bigot would mean we have to question why is it only someone like him can save this country or why did we endorse him.

All of this, of course, is part of the power-sharing formula that the MCA and MIC were mocked for participating in before the historic May 9 victory. Now, of course, the non-Malay components are terrified that they will lose power to the far right. The probability of Malay power structures coalescing once and for all to form an all Malay/Muslim power block - at least in the Peninsula - is becoming more plausible with each Harapan misstep; so do not fret too much.

But here's the thing. I hope people realise that whenever Mahathir speaks about the "Jews" and retreats to such defences of "personal opinion" or that "people do generalise", what he is really doing is continuing Malay supremacist attitudes that define mainstream Malay politics.

Mahathir has used generalisations like "inclined towards money" for instance, against specific communities. Indeed the prime minister has always attributed the economic success of the Chinese community as something detrimental to the Malay community. At various times he has lectured the Malay community on the "contributions" of the Chinese community but always with the sub-narrative that "Chinese" economic success comes at a price which is the subjugation of Malay political power.

We put up with a lot in this country. To take down Najib Abdul Razak - who for the record was less of an anti-Semite than Mahathir - we had to swallow a lot of manure for the belief that incremental changes would mean something in the long run. Nobody seems overly concerned when this sort of racism and bigotry rears its ugly head - which is a mistake.

In fact, non-Muslim political operatives always attempt to rationalise Mahathir's anti-Semitism conflating it with the "Zionist" imperatives of the state of Israel. This is done in much the same way they attempt to differentiate the racial and religious imperatives of Bersatu with the far right. Ultimately, the only thing this achieves is to bring a sense of normalcy to racism and bigotry.

Think about it this way. When young Muslims who are already indoctrinated by their religious teachers to demonise the Jews learn how easy it is to hate an entire community, it will become easier for them to transfer that hate to other communities whom they are taught they are in economic, social and religious warfare with.

This is the real danger of Mahathir's anti-Semitism. This is the real danger of non-Muslim political operatives not giving any blowback to the prime minister's hate speech.

Now one could argue that there are more important issues to attend to but this is exactly what the far right and the Islamic deep state want you to believe.

In case you are wondering, some of my best friends are Muslims.

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