

Malaysia: “No more racism! Freedom of religion to all!”

PSM condemns attacks on churches! Najib and Hishamuddin should take full responsibility!

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Statement by Socialist Party of Malaysia central committee.

January 8, 2010 — The Parti Socialist Malaysia (PSM) is shocked to learn that three churches have been attacked in the last 12 hours in the Klang Valley – the Assumption Church in Jalan Templer, Petaling Jaya, the Life Chapel in Section 17, Petaling Jaya, and the Metro Tabernacle Church in Desa Melawati, Kuala Lumpur. The three-storey Metro Tabernacle church in Desa Melawati, part of the Assemblies of God movement, was set ablaze in the attack which took place around midnight.

We cannot deny the fact that the attacks are somehow related to the High Court ruling last week which ruled in favour of allowing the *Catholic Weekly Herald* newspaper, which used the word “Allah” as a translation for “God” in its Malay-language section. The ruling however was suspended on January 6 pending an appeal by the government.

[Islamists called for demonstrations at Friday’s prayers against the use of the word “Allah” by “non-Muslims”. Opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim advised Pakatan Rakyat (People’s Alliance, PR) supporters against joining demonstrations. However, the government gave back-handed approval. About 10 per cent of Malaysians are Christians, including some 850,000 Catholics. Anwar said the PR’s stand was that it is acceptable for Christians to call God “Allah”: “Islamic tenets do not forbid the use of the name ‘Allah’ by adherents of other religions.”]

The PSM believes that the irresponsible acts were caused by the indirect blessing given by Malaysia’s Prime Minister Prime Minister Najib Razak and the home affairs minister Hishammuddin Hussein to protests against the ruling. The Hishammuddin was reported as saying that the government would not stop anyone from protesting against the “Allah” ruling, however he later attempted to deny it. It is difficult to accept his denial since he has been consistent in “welcoming” any protest that stirs up racial hatred among the rakyat [people]. This has been proven when he welcomed the “cow-head” protesters at his office last year on the Section 19 Shah Alam temple issue.

Race and religion cards

The government is again playing the race and religion cards in times of crisis. It plans to divert the rakyat from many critical issues, such as rising prices of goods, the goods and services tax, corruption, missing jet engines and the list goes on. It is also to create a climate of fear and a perceived threat to national security so as to pressure the courts in reversing its decision during the appeal.

More than half of Malaysia's Catholics are from Indigenous groups, most of whom live in Sabah and Sarawak and who mainly speak Bahasa Malaysia. All this while churches have used the word "Allah" in their sermons and teaching in Malaysia. The Sikhs too have voiced concern, because in the Sikh religious text the word "Allah" is also used. In the Holy Scripture of the Sikhs, the Sri Guru Granth Sahib, the word "Allah" appears in the original text numerous times.

For years the Barisan Nasional (National Front, dominated by the United Malays National Organisation, UMNO) government has been responsible in ensuring Malaysians are divided.

The issue has been deliberately built up on unsubstantiated fears that Muslims will be confused and probably be converted to Christianity!

Thus the PSM immediately calls on the government to:

1. Ensure the freedom of religion to all groups. Religion must be treated as a private and personal affair of individuals and should remain so.
2. When there are religious disputes, it is important that discussions and dialogue among the concerned people be held. It is again proves why we need an inter-faith commission to resolve such sensitive issues amicably and harmoniously.
3. All political parties must stop playing the race and religion cards [to advance] their political agendas. All parties must immediately refrain from further violence.
4. There are enough laws to punish those who create such violence and we will not in anyway support the use of the Internal Security Act (ISA).

In wake of this, we call upon all peace-loving Malaysians to form multiracial peace brigades in their respective towns and kampongs to protect all lives and give a strong message to those who use religion and race to propagate violence.

NO MORE RACISM ! FREEDOM OF RELIGION TO ALL!

On behalf of the PSM Central Committee,

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P.S.

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