



雪兰莪暨吉隆坡福建会馆 (Reg.No.295)

SELANGOR AND KUALA LUMPUR HOKKIEN ASSOCIATION

41-C Jalan Hang Lekiu, 50100 Kuala Lumpur

TEL: 603-2078 3530/3531 FAX: 603-2070 4612

Website: www.fujian-ren.com Email: secretariat@fujian-ren.com

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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

The Selangor and Kuala Lumpur Hokkien Association released a press statement today expressing their full support of the 25 prominent Malays personalities who were criticized and ridiculed by the former Information Minister, Tan Sri Zainuddin Maidin, PERKASA and other extremist groups for advancing moderate policies and criticizing extremist organisations.

Since the 13th General Elections last year with Barisan National continue to government the federal government, our country has degenerated into an atmosphere of racial mistrust, religious supremacy, messy confrontation between various political parties, lethargic economic environment; all these have made the public anxious and worried about the future of this nation. Extremist groups have made the groundless proposition that there is a religious crisis, and propagated the baseless notion that the Malays' position in the country is being threatened, in the process created misunderstanding among the various ethnic communities, and hurting racial harmony and the healthy development of democracy in our country.

Datuk Noor Farida Ariffin, a former ambassador to the Netherlands, in her interview with the mass media said that she did not want to see *"what happened in Pakistan and Afghanistan happen to us, where professionals and talented people are so scared of their own future and their families' future because extremist religion is on the rise and they leave the country taking their money and skills with them"*. This has led her to seek fellow like-minded Malays to sign an open letter asking for a rational dialogue on the position of Islam in the country.

The Selangor and Kuala Lumpur Hokkien Association agree with the position stipulated in the open letter by the 25 prominent Malay personalities:

1. A plural legal system that has led to many areas of conflict and overlap between civil and shariah laws; they reckon that there is a need to review the Shariah Criminal Offences (SCO) laws of Malaysia.
2. The lack of public awareness, even among top political leaders, on the legal jurisdiction and substantive limits of the powers of the religious authorities and administration of Islamic laws; they pointed that the Federal Constitution

is the supreme law of the land and any law enacted cannot violate the Constitution.

3. The need to ensure the right of citizens to debate the ways Islam is used as a source of public law and policy in this country.
4. The need to promote awareness of the rich diversity of interpretive texts and juristic opinions in the Islamic tradition.
5. The need for the prime minister to assert his personal leadership as well as appoint key leaders who will, in all fairness, champion open and coherent debate and discourse on the administration of Islamic laws in this country to ensure that justice is done.

The extreme right wing organizations ISMA and PERKASA often accuse others of being anti-Islam, anti-monarchy, and anti-Malay, with the resulting effect of stifling rational discussion and expanding unnecessary conflicts. On top of this, the existing Sedition Act prevents certain forms of rational and open discussion. All these have made our struggle for the implementation of democratic principles and rule of law ever more difficult, and at the same time deepen racial prejudice. The rise of moderate and liberal Malay compatriots would act to contain the forces of extremism.

The Selangor and Kuala Lumpur Hokkien Association believe that moderate and liberal Muslims are in the majority; we call on all those who cherish peace, irrespective of their ethnicity, to come forward to support the 25 moderate and liberal Malay compatriots.