

A SHEER HUMILIATION TO THE ACADEMICS

Higher learning institutions have long regarded as the brains producers in any society. There, cream of the crops being moulded to be the trustees of the intellectual tradition. Degrees obtained by those who succeeded their litmus test in bearing the responsibility as learned person is but recognition of their achievement and capability. This tradition was not a mere post-Enlightenment Western product, but had long practiced by the Muslims throughout the centuries. The recognition of one to be a scholar is heavily based on their achievement in their performance in the campus years.

However, this consensus agreed convention was denied in Malaysia through the pseudo-detention of the former mufti of Perlis, Dr Mohd. Asri Zainul Abidin by the religious authority in Selangor (JAIS). Nobody really knows the motive of the lynch-mob style detention at one of the bungalows in Taman Ukay. Not only the detention were committed without any permit, even the JAIS personnel keep changing their words in justifying it. Thank God, a press statement made by JAIS chairman, Datuk Mohammed Khusrin Munawi, eventually solved the enigma. It's all about 'preaching Islam without 'Tauliah' (ratification or should I coin a 'license') from JAIS. So it's all about showing to the people, who are the boss!

I wouldn't argue about the legal provision in the '*Tauliah*' matter. The curbing of any teaching of the cults and heretics will be a nice justification for such. The problem remains in the former mufti case is about what else do they want from a former mufti and a PhD holder in Islamic studies? If the detention happened to Ayah Pin, or Haji Kahar the Malay Prophet, public will never find any objection towards it. But when it happens to a former mufti, the highest level of a religious authority in any Malaysian state after the Sultan and Agong, something is definitely not right. In the same vein, how does JAIS evaluate his scholarship? Doesn't the PhD in Islamic Studies he obtained from International Islamic University Malaysia after his long journey in knowledge seeking brings any weight before the authority's eyes?

Personally, as an academic, and a lecturer in the institute where Dr Mohd Asri obtained his doctorate from, I felt humiliated by the detention and the argument given to support the detention. If the doctorate holder produced from the academia world of my working place has no value in compared to the *tauliah*, what else should we expect from us the academics? So what about the JKKK and YBs that normally doing their *ceramah* occasionally at the mosques and *suraus*? And what about the *Tabligh jamaat* that moving from one mosque to another preaching people about religion?, and what about those good hearted mosque goers that reciting *hadith* and Quranic verses after some prayers at the mosques?

To the religious authorities, I suggest a modification on their prerequisites in allowing people to preach Islam within their jurisdiction. To be more accepted by the public and for the largest interest of Islam and the *ummah*, their current attitude towards the scholars and academics with Islamic studies background must be altered and renovated. Or else, the aforementioned policy will continue to be a sheer humiliation towards the academics and scholars of Islamic studies. I am wondering how Islam had and continuing flourished and spread all around the globe especially in the Europe by the scholars, preachers and academics despite of their non-‘*tauliah*’ status by the authorities.

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