

GABUNGAN Bertindak Malaysia (GBM) views the escalating tension vis-a-vis the Kalimah Allah issue with great concern.

We regard Jabatan Agama Islam Selangor's (JAIS) seizure of Bibles as well as the planned protests against Catholic Churches by various conservative Muslim organizations as retrogressive and against the goal of establishing a truly peaceful Malaysia.

JAIS had clearly acted beyond its jurisdiction, as it is mandated only to manage Islamic related affairs. By forcing its way into the Bible Society of Malaysia's premises it had acted in aggression and disrespect towards an established Christian organization. Much worse, it had done so with neither a warrant nor any evidence that the Bibles were being used to proselytize Muslims.

On this issue, GBM would like to highlight the freedom of religion that is guaranteed in the Federal Constitution to every Malaysian. In this regard, each and every non-Muslim is promised the the right and freedom to practise their religion as long as it does not infringe on the status of Islam as the official religion.

We would also like to affirm our support for Putrajaya's Ten Point Agreement between the Federal Government and the Christian community in 2011, which recognizes the right of Christians to the use of the word Allah. We expect this agreement to be upheld by Putrajaya.

Viewing the deteriorating situation with utmost concern and in our shared quest for justice and peaceful co-existence, GBM strongly urge:

1) JAIS to return the seized Bibles as soon as possible with a formal apology recognizing they had acted beyond their powers.

2) The newly established National Unity Consultative Council to issue an immediate statement against rising politicisation of religion as a hindrance towards a more inclusive and just Malaysia.

3) The Prime Minister, Najib Razak to censure the extremist elements within his party which are clearly linked to the groups that are stoking religious hostilities.

Gabungan Bertindak Malaysia, as a multicultural coalition of civil society organizations, seeks to establish a harmonious Malaysia where various cultures can flourish together as one. We believe the multiculturalism and diversity which Malaysia enjoys is at once both a blessing as well as a challenge.

Malaysia's rich diversity is a celebration of racial, religious and cultural backgrounds and presents an opportunity for us to expand our horizons and together work towards a nation that provides and promotes religious discourse and scholarship with love, compassion and mutual respect. On the other hand, it also poses a fragile challenge to our multi-cultural community because it is readily abused by individuals and groups for ulterior political gains.

Strong, effective and principle centric leadership is required to ensure that Malaysia continues to enjoy our blessed diversity and challenges posed by ethno-religious bigots are immediately identified and eliminated in order for us to live harmoniously and peacefully in mutual respect. We believe it is our joint aspiration and hope to see this happen as soon as possible before the situation further worsens.

Issued by the Executive Council of Gabungan Bertindak Malaysia

Note: GBM comprises of the following 25 civil society organisation members:

1) Kuala Lumpur & Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall (KLSCAH)

2) Aliran

3) Tamil Foundation

4) Pertubuhan IKRAM Malaysia (IKRAM)

5) Majlis Perundingan Malaysia Agama Buddha, Krisitian, Hindu, Sikh dan Tao (MPMA-BKHST)

6) Negeri Sembilan Chinese Assembly Hall (NSCAH)

7) Penang Chinese Town Hall (PGCTH)

8) The Federation of Chinese Associations Johore State (FCAJ)

9) Lim Lian Geok Cultural Development Centre (LLG)

10) United Chinese School Alumni Association of Malaysia (UCSAAM)

11) Muslim Professionals Forum (MPF)

12) Suara Rakyat Malaysia (SUARAM)

13) Pusat Komunikasi Masyarakat (KOMAS)

14) Saya Anak Bangsa Malaysia (SABM)

15) Persatuan Masyarakat Selangor dan Wilayah Persekutuan (Permas)

16) National Indian Rights Action Team (NIAT)

17) People's Green Coalition (PGC)

18) Anak Muda Sarawak (AMS)

19) All Women's Action Society (AWAM)

20) Partners in Community Organising (Pacos Trust)

21) Persatuan Bekas Siswazah Universiti dan Kolej di China, Malaysia (Liu-Hua)

22) Nanyang University Alumni Malaya (Nanda)

23) Japan Graduates Association, Malaysia (JAGAM)

24) Gabungan Persatuan Alumni Universiti Taiwan Malaysia (GPAUTM)

25) Islamic Renaissance Front (IRF)