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We fail both God and man when we deny justice

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Anushka Anastasia Solomon, Denver
Jun 5, 07 3:50pmAdjust font size:

I refer to the malaysiakini report [Nik Aziz: Apostasy akin to army deserters](#). The words uttered by Nik Aziz Nik Mat, the spiritual advisor of PAS and Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's silence regarding the Lina Joy case, condemn rather than vindicate Islam.

The Islam held up by both men, indicate submission not to a Higher Power but to power. Both men are poor leaders, using their political power to intimidate, threaten and forcefully obtain the submission of a Malaysian woman who has voluntarily left a religion that no longer nourishes her soul. In the absence of just international intervention, Lina Joy, becomes a pawn, a tool much like the Muslim woman [Mukthar Mai](#), was in the hands of the Islamic tribal court.

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Of particular concern is the threat contained in the words of Nik Aziz Nik Mat when he says of apostasy and Islam: 'It's like joining the army. You can choose to join. But if you wear a uniform, start training only to desert later, you'll be caught by the military police'. The PAS spiritual advisor needs to be held accountable for his words as by uttering it from his high office, he is basically giving consent to irresponsible, ungodly men to threaten and intimidate a woman seeking to follow her religious conscience and attain through political process the right to do so.

With respect to the prevailing laws of Islamic Malaysia, Joy has appealed for the right to follow God and her religious conscience. The Malaysian courts and two Muslim judges have denied Joy the right to follow her religious conscience.

This is no longer a matter that pertains to Malaysia alone, but a concern of the United Nations and all men and women of God from all different faiths. I urge women in Islam to take a stand on this issue. It is time to rise up and reexamine the theology and the imaging of a God of compulsion. Moderate Muslims in Malaysia and all over the world must begin to hold their clerics and leaders to a higher standard. The question moderate Muslims need to answer is whether or not the God they worship embodies liberty, justice and truth. Is Islam a religion of peace or compulsion?

Unlike President George Bush and President Abraham Lincoln, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi is unable to confront his conscience regarding his faith. By his silence on the matter of Lina Joy's right to convert out of the faith she was born into, Abdullah is skirting the challenge that God has placed before him. As harsh as the indictment may sound, we fail both God and man when we fail to uphold justice and truth when it is within the power of our hands to do so.

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Abdullah says that he cannot influence the Malaysian court but no one has forbidden him to opine on Lina Joy's right to petition out of a faith she no longer believes in. If Abdullah were to pace the floor and seek God's face, first, I am sure that God would say to him that He is not a god of compulsion but of liberty and love.

There are many questions that knock on the doors of Malaysia's predominantly Muslim leadership. A degree in theology is useless if it cannot attain liberty, dignity and protection for men, women, children and minorities. It is my sincere hope and prayer that Abdullah will step up to the challenge.



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