



PERTUBUHAN BIBLE MALAYSIA (3618/84)
THE BIBLE SOCIETY OF MALAYSIA

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HOLY SCRIPTURE DESECRATED YET AGAIN

The Bible Society of Malaysia is appalled and deeply saddened to discover that the 321 Bibles and 30 copies of the Gospel according to St. Luke that were seized from our premises in Petaling Jaya, Selangor on 2 January 2014 were stamped and desecrated by the Selangor state religious authorities prior to their delivery to the Association of Churches Sarawak. In so doing, the Selangor state religious authorities have seriously undermined and undone the efforts of HRH the Sultan of Selangor in bringing this particular instance of Bible seizure to a resolution.

An earlier incident of Bibles being stamped and desecrated by the Publication and Quranic Texts Control Division of the Ministry of Home Affairs occurred in 2011, and the Federal Government then gave a solemn assurance that such an incident would not recur. The incident has now recurred, this time perpetrated by the Selangor state religious officials. On both occasions, the Christian community has suffered the indignity of having its religious texts sullied and defiled. It does not matter to us which level of government is responsible for this heinous and despicable action. The fact remains that Bibles have been desecrated and the Christian minority in this country has been made to suffer at the hands of religious zealots and extremists working within government. We demand an apology from the Selangor state religious authorities for desecrating our Holy Scriptures, let alone the raid of our premises early this year.

The fact of the matter is that for as long as there remain within government those who arrogantly believe that it is their right and responsibility as self-appointed guardians of the majority religion to carry out such activities, there can be no religious moderation in this country. For as long as the right of religious minorities to worship God using whatever name they choose, to publish and distribute religious texts in whatever language they desire, and to share their faith and religious expressions to whomever wants to listen, is controlled and curtailed, there cannot be true religious freedom for all adherents of any religion. Officers of the religious authorities may invoke the law, whose scope and ambit is in any event strenuously disputed and refuted and denied, but at the end of the day they lack the moral authority.

We reiterate that in order to work together to respect and celebrate the rich diversity of Malaysians in being able to live harmoniously in a mature and multi-religious society, there shall be no repeat of this or similar situation, where Bibles or other materials are seized and/or desecrated. The stamped and desecrated Bibles will now not be distributed nor used, as they are as only good as museum pieces.

We seek an acceptable and sustainable solution to this seemingly never-ending provocation on the part of the religious authorities. However we proffer the view that there can be no genuine harmony and long-lasting resolution until and unless there is sincere appreciation and acceptance of religious freedom. Governments can legislate the letter of the law, but can never suppress the spirit of the soul.

Bishop Datuk Ng Moon Hing
President

6 August 2014