

Academics should have challenged Gilley's stance at UM talk, says NGO

By [Adib Povera](#) - April 30, 2024 @ 1:16pm



The non-governmental organisation, Pergerakan Tenaga Akademik Malaysia (Gerak), said that academics should have confronted and challenged the views presented by American professor Bruce Gilley when he delivered his talk at Universiti Malaya recently.

KUALA LUMPUR: Academics should have confronted and challenged the views presented by American professor Bruce Gilley when he delivered his talk at Universiti Malaya recently.

The non-governmental organisation, Pergerakan Tenaga Akademik Malaysia (Gerak), said this would be in keeping with the spirit of creating a purposeful dialogue.

Gerak, however, was appalled that there was silence on the floor when Gilley accused Malaysia of pushing for a "second Holocaust against the Jewish people" during the event.

"Such an incident, according to Gerak, highlights the intellectual passivity among academicians at universities in the country.

"They were unable to put him in his place, which is the lesson he deserved.

"Gerak believes that this was a good opportunity for our scholars and students to share their ideas and interpretations, and to 'educate' foreigners like Gilley about ethics, and to be mindful of their slipshod, biased, and divisive scholarship," the NGO said in a statement today (April 30).

Gerak added that the incident could have been a "value-added" episode had Malaysian professors and students who attended the talk countered Giley's erroneous and offending remarks.

"The invitation by UM academics and administrators (to Gilley) exposes a combination of their carelessness, their intellectual cluelessness, and possible Zionist sympathisers among them.

"Alternatively, they may be simply wide-eyed and enamoured by a Western scholar who they thought had something profound to teach post-colonial Malaysians," the statement said.

Gerak also did not agree with the instructions for the university to "de-platform" controversial scholars and punish universities for the incident.

"Gerak has consistently advocated for open discourse in our universities, no matter how controversial the subject matter may be.

"Gerak's position is that this is not right. It reinforces political interference in higher education, perpetuates mediocrity within the academy, and encourages the 'professor kangkung' syndrome in universities.

"This incident has showcased our culture of 'intellectual laziness', a lack of confidence among our academics, and widespread apathy in our universities. This must stop."

Last week, UM issued an apology over the controversy. The university expressed regret over the incident and [announced](#) immediate measures to address the situation.

Higher Education Minister Datuk Seri Dr Zambry Abdul Kadir recently said that he had [directed](#) that any programmes and activities scheduled to be attended by the foreign speaker be cancelled immediately.