

## The Allah Issue: The difference in Malaysia and Indonesia

Written by Super Admin

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The Malaysian Government is totally right, of course, in its explanation that Malays in Malaysia are different from Muslims in other countries such as Indonesia. Its insistence that this difference is justification why the word Allah cannot be used by those of other religions as in Indonesia and in Arab nations are, however, spurious.

Marina Mahathir has written in her blog about how Arab nations make no fuss about Christians using the word Allah. **Unspun** has little knowledge about the Middle East but having grown up in Malaysia and spent 14 years in Indonesia feels somewhat qualified to examine the government's claim that Malays in Malaysia are different from those in Indonesia. Let me count just three ways ( **Unspun** is aware that the three points are generalizations and contain their quota of untruths but generalizations sometimes capture some truth too that may spur informed conversations, hopefully, and it is in this spirit that this post is written):

### **1. Malaysian Malays get all confused between race, ethnicity and religion, Indonesians don't**

In Malaysia Malays are all Muslims. If they are not Muslims then the Malaysian Constitution itself rules them out of being a Malay. They also think that Malay is a race and the more idiotic fringes think of it as a super race. Hence the term Ketuanan Melayu.

In Indonesia, everyone has no difficulty identifying themselves as Indonesians in terms of nationality but are clear about their ethnic origins. Malay is considered an ethnic group in Indonesia confined mainly to Riau and parts of Kalimantan. Others are Bataks, Sudanese, Javanese, Bugis etc, who may belong to one religion or another.

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