

Malaysian Airlines MH17: Quest for Justice Continues

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This Saturday, a conference will convene in remembrance of the 298 passengers and crew on board the Malaysia Airlines flight MH17, which was shot out of the sky over a war zone in Ukraine.

Organised jointly by the International Movement for a JUST World, the Perdana Global Peace Foundation and the Canadian-based Centre for Research on Globalisation, the conference will be held in the main auditorium of the International Islamic University Malaysia in Gombak.

The proceedings will run from 8am-6 pm, and will open with the screening of the latest documentary on the MH17 tragedy directed by the Russian freelance director, Yana Yerlashova, who will be taking questions from the floor afterwards.

Needless to say that in less than half an hour the film cannot cover everything of pertinence that has transpired since July 17, 2014, the day MH17 was downed when flying at 30,000ft, following the instructions of Kiev's flight control tower. That the airspace above East Ukraine was not closed to civilian aircraft is in itself a demonstration of callous disregard on the part of the Ukrainian authorities.

Questions have been raised about this. A family of one of the victims has proceeded to sue the Ukraine government for negligence but presumably Kiev did not view the airspace as dangerous enough to warrant closure. Does Kiev have a point? After all, other airlines were still overflying the war zone. How much does this matter when trying to place blame?

Larger questions will be posed by experts who have been following the unfolding developments, the latest being the Joint Investigation Team (JIT) Report. They include prominent economist and head of Global Research, **Prof Michel Chossudovsky**, the German pilot **Peter Haisenko**, a man very familiar with wide-bodied jets and **Dr Kees van der Pilj** who will examine evidence put forward by JIT. **John Philpot** and **Gurdial Singh Nijar** are the legal beagles.

Malaysians will, too, discover that the tragedy produced some unsung heroes from our midst. Speaking will be the head of the Malaysian military team, **Colonel Haji Mohd Sakri Hussain**, who went with his men into the scene of the tragedy, a war zone, to retrieve the airplane's black boxes even while the wreckage was still smoldering. The then Malaysian ambassador to the Netherlands, **Dr Fauziah Taib**, will recount her first-hand experience, handling families and other official arrangements including the return of the remains of the victims. Remember, more than 40 Malaysian lives were lost including, of course, the crew.

For the first time in Malaysia, at least, the tragedy will be thoroughly unpacked and closely examined. The timeline of events will be laid out and the evidence set forth. The testimonies of eyewitnesses and more presented, and the geopolitical context established.

While some might conclude that a few men may rightfully be accused for the mayhem from mere soundbites, a forensic sound expert will demonstrate that it is a ludicrous basis for laying blame on individuals when there are signs of tampering. Remember, too, the downing of the Boeing 777, whether intentional or otherwise, is impossible without the firepower bespeaking of major military capabilities.

There are also irregularities that cannot be denied, like the often asked question why Malaysia, the operator of the flight, was initially not included in the JIT when Ukraine, the country most likely to be implicated was. Is it not the international norm for the operator country to undertake the investigation, as asserted by **Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad**.

Are the organisers poking their noses where they do not belong? What gives individuals and groups the locus standi to examine the case? Surely when the grounds for doubt abound, others with the wherewithal must act so justice is served for those whose voices were robbed from them for no rhyme or reason.

Even if it were mere coincidence — MH17 was at the wrong place at the wrong time — the family must be told this truth. Nobody in good conscience can demand for what is not theirs to have.

And, if ever it is proven beyond doubt that a tragic accident took place that day more than five years ago, our prayers go out to them who paid with their lives for some terrible human error. But more than prayers are needed to prevent a repeat of similar accidents.

The outcome of the conference is an action plan intended to minimise, if not eliminate, these man-made errors.

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