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Misuari-Wife

MISUARI'S WIFE FEARS FOR HIS SAFETY

By: Mohd Haikal Isa

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 26 (Bernama) -- The wife of Nur Misuari, the former governor of the Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), said she fears for his safety because no one has been able to see him since he was arrested by the Malaysian authorities on Nov 24.

Siti Tarhata Ibrahim said she was worried as even Misuari's lawyers could not visit the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) leader in detention.

"Nobody is allowed to see Misuari," she told Bernama at a local hotel here today. She was accompanied by Misuari's lawyer Elly Pamatong.

Siti Tarhata arrived here with her three children from the Philippines yesterday via Singapore with the sole purpose of trying to meet her husband.

She will remain in Kuala Lumpur until she gets the greenlight from the Malaysian government to meet Misuari.

"I came here together with my children so that I could see my husband," said the 27-year-old Siti Tarhata. Her children -- Nur Redha, 7, Khalid, 4, and nine-month-old Nur Hata -- were with her during the interview.

She said she would consider residing in the United States as advised by her husband's lawyer.

The renegade former governor was arrested on Nov 24 on Jampiras Island near Sandakan along with six supporters for illegally entering Malaysia. They had fled there after launching a rebellion against the government in Southern Philippines.

Malaysia has said it is ready to deport Misuari, while the Philippine government has stated that Misuari would face rebellion charges, which bring 20 years' jail on conviction.

Pamatong claimed that Misuari would not get a fair trial if he was deported to the Philippines, and he appealed to Muslim nations to intervene.

"I appeal to the Islamic world to come to the rescue of a brother Muslim," he said.

He said Misuari, who has been recognised internationally as a peacemaker in Mindanao, is not a terrorist as claimed by the Philippine government.

"There must be a clear distinction between a terrorist and freedom fighter," he said, adding that a terrorist could not have attained permanent observer status in an international body like the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC).

Pamatong also said he had not received any formal clearance or invitation from the Malaysian government to meet Misuari.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has said the government would consider allowing Misuari's family to visit him in detention.

-- BERNAMA

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