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PAS-Double Talk (News Analysis)

MUSTAFA AT ODDS WITH HADI OVER ISLAMIC STATE

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 30 (Bernama) -- Parti Islam Semalaysia (PAS) has expressed conflicting views on its position vis-a-vis Islam and an Islamic state.

In an interview with the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) programme Hardtalk, PAS vice-president Datuk Mustafa Ali told the world-wide audience that an Islamic state was not an objective in the party's constitution.

Instead, he said the media had used the term "Islamic state" to "frighten the non-Muslims".

But while Mustafa was expounding his views to Hardtalk's Tim Sebastian in an interview conducted by the award-winning presenter in Kuala Lumpur earlier this month, his president, Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang was on the same day expressing completely divergent views.

Hadi, who has previously repeatedly said that PAS would continue with its struggle to set up an Islamic state and implement hudud laws (Islamic penal code) in states under its rule, announced the same day as the interview was aired that Terengganu, of which he is Menteri Besar, would gazette the Syariah Criminal Enactment (Hudud and Qisas) before end-October and enforce the laws immediately.

Mustafa told Sebastian: "The term Islamic state is not there in our party's constitution. We never mention about Islamic state in our constitution. We mention that society should abide by the good values of what Islam stands for.

"It's only the media that carries the term Islamic state to frighten the non-Muslims, also the Barisan Nasional government leaders harping on this issue to frighten the non-Muslims as a way for them to gain power continuously."

Government leaders, including Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his deputy, Datuk Seri Abdullah Badawi, have in the past criticised PAS leaders for "double-talk", saying their differing comments to different audiences, reflected PAS' insincerity.

"PAS will say one thing to the non-Malays and another to the Malays," Umno vice president and Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said recently.

Sebastian, who is known for his hard-hitting and relentless style of questioning, also caught Mustafa off-guard and uncertain when he asked about PAS' views on suicide bombings and the party's relations with Hamas, the Palestinian militant group which takes responsibility for suicide bombings, and the Hizbullah, the Lebanese militant organisation.

Mustafa said these organisations were freedom fighters but when Sebastian said PAS' relations with these groups was inconsistent with its proclamation of being a moderate Islamic party, Mustafa, tried to distance the party, saying that it was a "long time ago" that PAS played host to the Hamas and Hizbullah leaders.

Sebastian then referred to his notes and reminded Mustafa that the last time was "was only in May last year."

Mustafa, apparently caught off-guard, said: "Yes, (but) it does not mean when we support freedom fighters, we agree to every act by them".

Mustafa then re-phrased himself and said PAS "did not support" Hamas if its members blew themselves up to kill innocent civilians and it was justified for them to do so against the Israeli military which had

committed all kinds of atrocities against the Palestinians.

This again conflicted with Hadi's views at the party general assembly two weeks ago where he described Hamas suicide bombers as "martyrs".

To another question, Mustafa agreed with Sebastian that if the party came to power, it would adopt the "one country, two systems" type of government.

Sebastian: " You will also have the death sentence for those who want to renounce Islam?".

Mustafa: " No, no. no. There is no compulsion for people to embrace Islam. If they embrace Islam and quietly without anybody's knowledge left Islam, they can get (away) scot-free..if they announce to the world that they are leaving Islam, it's tantamount to declaring war on Islam, that Islam is bad..."

Here, Mustafa was again caught off-guard when Sebastian said this meant that PAS rejected the Universal Declaration on Human Rights under which everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, including the freedom to change his religion or belief either alone or in community with others in public or in private.

Mustafa: If you want to leave Islam quietly, it's up to him, if you renounce openly then he must be up to something...

Sebastian: But the Universal Declaration on Human Rights allows him to do it openly...

Mustafa: We have to discuss on this.

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