

**Azmin insists he never aired Apco letter**  
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Suspended parliamentarian Azmin Ali today defended himself against his six months ban, saying that he had never mentioned the contents of the letter from public relations firm Apco Worldwide as claimed in the motion suspending him.

He quoted part of his letter to the House speaker, dated Dec 6, under Standing Order 18(1) in which he wanted the "Dewan Rakyat to debate the proceedings of the Rights and Privileges Committee on Friday, Dec 3, which had made the decision to deny the rights of the Permatang Pauh representative ... to defend himself in the investigations".

As such, Azmin said in a statement, the reason given by de facto Law Minister Mohd Nazri Abdul Aziz for his suspension did not hold water as he had never revealed the contents of the Apco letter to anyone, nor had he raised it during parliamentary debates.

pkcr national congress 301108 azmin ali In the suspension motion read out by Nazri, Azmin (right) was accused of publishing the contents of the letter that was presented in the Rights and Privileges Committee in his letter to the speaker on Dec 6.

The Apco letter, in which the company denied involvement in the drafting of 1Malaysia and One Israel, was the only evidence accepted by the committee in deciding to suspend Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim on the issue.

This led committee members Karpal Singh and R Sivarasa to boycott the proceedings, leading to their suspension yesterday.

Anwar was suspended for misleading the Parliament by linking 1Malaysia with One Israel.

According to Azmin, the fact that he had been suspended over what he claimed was a false accusation showed that the Dewan Rakyat was politically motivated.

"My colleagues in PKR and Pakatan Rakyat therefore believe that the suspensions were mainly to reduce Pakatan Rakyat's say in the Dewan," he said.

Let them defend themselves

Meanwhile, human rights NGO Suaram has spoken out against the suspension of the MPs, calling the move a mockery of democracy.

In a press statement today, Suaram coordinator Hasbeemasputra Abu Bakar said that Suaram was particularly concerned over how the suspensions were passed without the MPs being given the opportunity to defend themselves.

"Anwar was never allowed to make his defence before the Rights and Privileges Committee... and the suspensions of the other three persons never went through any investigation process (and were) debated and passed without the presence of any Opposition MP," he said.

"The decision by the Speaker to call for a vote without any Opposition lawmaker present calls into question his neutrality, and as he was also the chairperson of the committee that recommended Anwar's suspension, it clearly show a bias against Opposition parliamentarians," he said.

Suaram also frowned on the "overly long and harsh punishment for what is clearly not an issue of urgency".

As such, the NGO called for the reinstatement of all the four MPs and for Parliament to review the minority report made by Karpal and Sivarasa.

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