

Adam Adli: UPSI should have just expelled me
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Student activist Adam Adli Abdul Halim courted controversy for defying the norm in challenging his peers to stand up for their voices to be heard.

And for that he was booted out of his university for three whole semesters - 18 months in all.

NONEThe 22-year-old who is in his third-year at Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI), was, when suspended on Jan 9, accused of damaging the good name of the institution and disrupting public order.

However, Adam is adamant about returning to continue what he started, for he strongly believes that UPSI would have axed him for good if they did not want him back.

"I have been wondering why they didn't expel me... it is because they know I'll be back and do the same thing all over again?

"This is another problem, it is not like I'm lazy to learn, but at least if I'm expelled, I can find another place to study.

"But it's okay, for it looks like they still want me... I'm still someone," quipped Adam.

At the time of the, he had received 36,169 likes on his Facebook fan page 'We Are All Adam Adli'.

we are all adam adli facebook fanpageHowever, Adam - who is pursuing Bachelor's in Education in Teaching English as a Second Language - said he has yet to figure out what will come next.

He has activities planned for the next "two to three months" - for roadshows, talks and dialogues on promoting academic freedom and autonomy.

"I will go back to UPSI but when that time comes, I will no longer see my friends there... they will all be gone by that time. I must think then what will happen," said Adam.

He said he may opt to do a short-term course over the next 18 months.

No stranger to activism, Adam and a few of his friends mooted Legasi Mahasiswa Progresif in 2009 to revive the student activism movement for which UPSI was once known.

Over the years UPSI has "lost its verve", he said, mainly because of the stifling effect of the Universities and University Colleges Act.

NONEAdam became an instant hit when he "instinctively" lowered a flag featuring Umno president and Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak outside the Umno headquarters at the Putra World Trade Centre in Kuala Lumpur during a rally.

He replaced it with a banner calling for academic freedom. Less than five minutes later, Najib's flag was replaced by the building security people on duty.

The incident drew criticism as well as commendation. Adam said the gesture had delivered the impact intended.

"You see, it's very significant (because) we went there to insist that 'we want academic freedom', so (we thought) let's raise the flag... and there was the flag, in my hands.

NONE "So eventually Najib's flag or banner had to be brought down for us to raise our own flag. So that's what happened. But for something that happened in five minutes... people start to speculate everything.

"I have to be honest - when people ask me why did you bring down the flag, why did you do that? Actually I have no answer, it was very spontaneous.

"Actually people with enough courage will do the same thing. You have a flag in your hand, and then there's a flagpole.... do it, for it's your only chance. That is all, just to make a statement."

What followed came as a shock. Not only was he suspended, Adam was allegedly harassed by police, while his personal safety was threatened.

When everything went wrong

In support of Adam, his peers attempted to mount a 16-hour protest at the UPSI entrance on the night of Dec 31, only to be allegedly beaten up by the police in the early hours of the New Year, forcing the hundreds gathered to disperse.

"It was good... and so, finally, the people are listening to the students.

"But on that day, we just wanted to celebrate the New Year in UPSI, so we brought candles and posters and planned to sit around and read poetry, have discussions and dialogues... instead of having fun in KLCC or Dataran Merdeka, we thought we would do something different.

adam adli suspended by upsi 090112 addressing supporter "We wanted to show the people that we are serious about our struggle. So on New Year's Eve, we went to our university, to assemble in front of the gate... we never intended to go in.

"I had to sneak into Tanjung Malim through the jungle, river and bushes that night just to get to the gate.

"We wanted to show solidarity, but now everything we do is considered a demonstration.

"Even when I went back to the university for my disciplinary hearing... the police and the riot squad (were there)... I mean, come on, people, what is happening in our country? Wouldn't two or three policemen be enough?"

Recounting the moment of panic that enveloped him when his friend Muhammad Safwan Anang collapsed and fell unconscious, Adam, sounding glum, said, "that's when everything went wrong".

NONE "We took him to the clinic, but the people there closed the doors... we panicked and had to force the clinic door open and then everybody panicked - the nurses, doctor too... and we had to break the windows.

"But we are not that kind of people... we are not rioters. We have kept silent all this while, but we cannot be silent any longer."

He reminded students that they have to share responsibility with the public at large to ensure that their voices are no longer stifled.

"People say that we are a minority... I don't understand how people measure majorities and minorities.

"It's okay to be the loud minority rather than the silent majority because when people are silent, those with power, and even if in minority, can do anything."

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