

## **Students protest PAS silence on Kuin 5**

**MalaysiaKini.com**

**January 18, 2012**

**Nigel Aw**

Some 20 students protested outside the PAS headquarters today against the party's silence on the suspension of five students of Kolej Universiti Insaniah (Kuin) in Kedah.

NONEKedah Menteri Besar Azizan Abdul Razak is the chairperson of the Kuin board of directors, which comes under the PAS-led state government.

The five students were suspended after demonstrating against the take-over of their hostel by college authorities, building a school in its place.

"Until today, there has not been an official response from PAS nor Pakatan Rakyat. We demand that they intervene in this matter," noted Gerakan Menuntut Kebebasan Akademik (Bebas) president Mohd Safwan Anang.

"Previously, we marched to the Umno headquarters. Today we are demonstrating at the PAS headquarters to express our stance against the Universities and University Colleges Act (UUCA)."

NONEThey also condemned Act 555 and Act 174, which are laws similar to the UUCA, and which govern private universities.

Echoing this, Mohd Aiman Abd Razab (left) - one the five students suspended last June - said this was a matter of principle.

"We will continue to fight for our principles (on academic freedom). It is not about party or skin colour, we do not practice double standards. It is odd. Where can our voices be heard if even under Pakatan we are silenced?" he said.

A dozen police officers were stationed across the street but allowed the protest to proceed without incident.

'Students sacked as representatives'

The students strung up an effigy outside the PAS headquarters with a banner reading 'Students oppose UUCA' attached to it.

NONEThey also unfurled a banner reading 'Free the students' which they subsequent left hanging at the party's headquarters.

In a hearing on May 25 last year, the five were suspended for participating in a demonstration, giving a public speech and issuing public statements to the media.

Aside from Mohd Aiman, the other four are Mohd Faiz Mohd Arshad, Zukhilatif Marzukhi, Mohd Azlan Mat Zain and Ahmad Remi Md Arof.

Mohd Faiz, who was suspended for two semesters, is still unable to return to his studies, but four other's have finished serving their single-semester suspension.

Aiman said the suspension caused four of the five undergraduates who were part of Kuin's student representative council to be sacked.

'Kuin taken to court'

As a result of PAS' silence and refusal to intervene, Aiman said they are now challenging Kuin's suspension at the Kuala Lumpur High Court.

NONE "It is not like we cheated in exams, action was taken against us for voicing out. Pakatan should make Kuin as an example of an open institution," he said.

Kuin students had in May last year conducted a similar protest outside the PAS headquarters but the party has not responded their demands for intervention.

However, the case which is supposed to begin today has been postponed to an unstated date as the judge is on leave.

Meanwhile, Solidariti Mahasiswa Malaysia (SMM) president Ahmad Syukri Ab Razak said the student coalition is now conducting nationwide roadshows and are planning for a major protest on March 8.

"We want the government to respect academic freedom," he said.

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