

Nik Aziz: Fatwa council looking through one eye
MalaysiaKini.com
May 07, 2012

PAS spiritual leader and Kelantan Menteri Besar Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat today lambasted the fatwa of the National Fatwa Council for equating the pro-electoral reform rally Bersih 3.0 with an unruly and riotous gathering.

“I believe the council's statement was issued while only seeing with one eye.

"An eye with hazy vision, wearing a broken pair of eyeglasses," Nik Aziz says in a posting on his official *Facebook* page.

He asked if the council had realised that Bersih 3.0 was not intended to cause chaos, being a gathering to press for electoral reforms, and therefore a far cry from any attempt to topple the government.

Nik Aziz also pointed out that there is nothing more civilised and peaceful than a sit-down protest.

The PAS ulama leader said the council should instead look through and understand the core issues behind Bersih's demands, such as phantom voters and electoral fraud.

This was because, he said, he was sure that the council's decision was made based on pro-government media reports, without consulting with Bersih organisers in its deliberation.

“So, can it be called a fatwa if it was made without prior explanations from both sides, and was made into an edict just like that?”

'Peaceful gatherings turn chaotic if unduly suppressed'

Any peaceful gathering, Nik Aziz argued, would turn chaotic if it was unduly suppressed.

Even the recent gathering in Gua Musang and the Rural Transformation Centre crowd in Kota Baru hosting Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak would have turned violent if they were sprayed with chemically-laced water.

He also pointed out that both gatherings clearly sought for change, if not to topple the PAS-led government of Kelantan

However, the PAS leader agreed that any gathering meant to cause chaos and destruction of public property is proscribed in Islam.

He added that while he held the highest regard for the council, in this instance he disagreed with its assessment of the situation of the April 28 rally in Kuala Lumpur.

He advised the council not to walk with only one leg as it might find it difficult to take its steps.

Meanwhile PKR information chief Muhammad Nur Manuty compared the view put out by the National Fatwa Council with that of World Ulama Association president Shaikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi.

“Shaikh Yusuf is of the view that demonstrations are permissible as a means to free the rakyat from the grip of an unfair totalitarian regime that denies freedom of expression and prevents people from peacefully expressing dissent,” Muhammad said in a statement.

He also questioned the council’s credibility for its failure to consider both sides of the case.

The PKR leader asked the council to instead look at cases of slander and bringing shame to fellow Muslims, such as the sex videos being circulated these days, as well as claims of police violence.

He reminded the fatwa council that it was supposed to ensure that all fatwa issued are based on facts and based on the Holy Quran and that the examples set by the Prophet are not ones borne of “cheap politicking”.

Both Nik Aziz and Muhammad were commenting on the National Fatwa Council decision yesterday that it is "haram" (not permissible) for Muslims to participate in any gathering or demonstration that is unproductive, against the law or causes disturbance in the country.

However, while expression of dissent is allowed in Islam, it must be done through civilised and peaceful means, the committee said.

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