

**Don't let Jakim speak for you on 'Allah', gov't told
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On the eve of the hearing of the government's appeal against the use of 'Allah' by Christians, the Christian Federation of Malaysia has urged the government not to let the Islamic Development Department (Jakim) be its voice on the matter.

NONEReferring to a Jakim-issued sermon, CFM chairperson Rev Eu Hong Seng (right) said the urging for a "holy struggle" against the use of the word by non-Muslims could be deemed as "incendiary".

"The CFM vigorously urges the government, which represents all Malaysians, to ensure, uphold and protect freedom of religion ...," he said in a statement.

"Let not Jakim be the only voice purporting to speak on behalf of the government ... that has said it represents Malaysians of different faiths and ethnicities."

The Jakim-issued sermon, uploaded onto its website on Sept 6, had urged Muslims to protect the use of the word 'Allah'.

"The struggle to defend the word 'Allah', the religion, as well as the exclusive rights of Muslims is a holy struggle, and Allah will help in this struggle," reads the text.

Eu noted that such "urgings to action" are also "alarming to ordinary Muslims".

Coupled with "unsubstantiated" accusations that Christians use the word 'Allah' to convert Muslims, he said, the act amounts to "blatant scare-mongering and provoking of religious tensions".

"The issue, then, is whether such calls would become the catalyst and the incitement of reactions which may result in public disorder ...," he said.

"Worst of all, there appears to be no action or statement whatsoever from any governmental authority in our nation, calling for calm or even ordering a stop to such stoking of anger and heightening of feelings."

azlanCFM also reiterated its urging for calm and its position that the word 'Allah' is used to refer to God by 60 percent of Christians in Malaysia, most of whom reside in Sabah and Sarawak and who worship in Bahasa Malaysia.

"The CFM invites our Muslim sisters and brothers in Malaysia to reflect, understand and appreciate the context of how, when and why Christians use the word 'Allah'," he added.

On Aug 22, Catholic Archbishop Murphy Pakiam had failed to strike out the appeal by the Home Ministry against a 2009 Kuala Lumpur High Court ruling that Christians have the constitutional right to use 'Allah'.

The ruling prompted acts of arson and attacks on places of worship, including churches and a Sikh gurdwara.

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