

Khalid Samad: PAS chief need not be an ulama

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INTERVIEW The PAS Ulama Council is not the legislative body of the party. It is the Central Council. And the oath of obedience of PAS members is only to God and his Prophet Muhammad, party leader Khalid Samad says.

Khalid, a PAS Central Committee (CC) member, was explaining how PAS works as a party, said the Ulama Council has been labelled as not being obedient to the party.

PAS president Abdul Hadi Awang (right) has been facing opposition from within his party when he first voiced support for estranged Selangor Menteri Besar Abdul Khalid Ibrahim, and again when he later refused to support PKR president Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail as the next menteri besar.

Khalid, in an exclusive interview with Malaysiakini, said there is a group of young ulama that wants to play the ulama card for personal gains and insists on bringing in "the regimental and obeying culture".

He also said that due to the nature of the party, where the powers of the executive and legislative bodies are quite blurred, some have yet to understand that the president need not necessarily be an ulama.

"I think the confusion has now set in, with the influx of younger ustaz. If you see the original working paper, with respect to the ulama leadership, it quite clearly specifies that the PAS CC is the executive, not the Ulama Council.

Muktamar decides, CC implements

Khalid, a member of the CC, said: "The muktamar makes the decisions, the PAS CC implements and the Ulama Council is the overall guardian to ensure that things which are contrary to the syariah are not done.

"The Ulama Council is not the legislative body. The one that decides the legislation and policies of PAS is the muktamar. That is why the decisions, such as whether to be with Pakatan Rakyat and the practice of political consensus, are made by the muktamar."

Khalid insisted that his obedience is only to God and the prophet and to the party leaders as long as they do things in line with Islam.

"The bai'ah (oath of obedience) is to give obedience to Allah and his prophet - not to individual leaders and give unconditional support to leaders.

"This, they (the regimented young ulama) do not understand. As long as the president is seen to be in line with Islam, it is okay. It does not mean you have to listen and obey all his decisions. Even the prophet had to change his decisions (when his followers did not support him).

"They (the group of young ulama) come from the culture such as in Egypt where (Islamist political party) Islamic Brotherhood is underground and secretive. Some want to use the ulama card for their personal gains.

"Party members will know those who work hard for the party. There should not be fear that the party will regress when people are willing to speak out and curb these negative tendencies. PAS has never been a party that just hears and obeys," Khalid said.

He also said that his support for Abdul Khalid Ibrahim to be replaced as menteri besar was not because he blindly supports PKR de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim.

He said that he retracted his support for Abdul Khalid as menteri besar in Abdul Khalid's fourth year as head of the Selangor government, when he realised how autocratic Abdul Khalid was, and not willing to listen to anyone.

'Wan Azizah will not be remote-controlled'

"PKR never supported Abdul Khalid for the menteri besar post but when Abdul Khalid reneged on his promises to me, I too felt he was not suitable for the post. The situation became further enhanced when he could not explain to me about his Bank Islam's debts.

"Even though he asked his two lawyers to see me, they still could not answer my queries. Coupled with the fact his own economic finance officers gave explanations that his lawyers said were false. He was just creating stories of how he made RM70 million disappear," Khalid said.

"Everytime we call him for meeting, he is always too busy. At that time, I told the PAS CC that we don't want to change him Abdul Khalid as MB) but we want him to change. And he knew that there was no one to replace him then. That put him in a place where he could do as he wanted, as long as he kept his relationship with PAS."

He also said he does not believe Wan Azizah will be a remote-controlled menteri besar, or an incapable one.

"In the absence of Anwar in the past, she has performed as a leader (of the opposition) and we have to acknowledge that she has been the president since inception of PKR and the party has achieved a lot despite being new. Anwar was in prison at that time and she did not have to go see him in jail to decide on matters (of the party)."

"The performance of the menteri besar is not solely on one shoulders," said Khalid referring to the whole state government that will support the menteri besar.

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