

Anwar will not choose exile, despite jail prospect

MalaysiaKini.com

Oct 18, 2014

Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim, who is in the United Kingdom now, dismissed any prospect of going into exile, insisting that he will return to Malaysia to face the sodomy charge despite the possibility of being jailed.

"Most Muslim scholars urge me to remain behind (in UK), as they cannot just fathom how difficult it would be to see me in prison.

"I said 'no', it's a matter of conviction. I know exactly the difficulties and tribulations one has to endure in fighting a corrupt, opaque system," he is quoted as saying in an interview with the UK's Telegraph.

Anwar is currently in the UK for a task force meeting on higher education reform in the Muslim world.

On March 7, he was found guilty of Sodomy II and sentenced to five years in prison but obtained a stay of execution of sentence pending his appeal to the Federal Court.

The appeal at the apex court on Oct 28 will be the last.

In 1999 he was convicted for abuse of power. He was acquitted by the Federal Court of Sodomy I in 2004.

Anwar, 67, is accused of sodomising his former aide, 30-year-old Saiful Bukhari Azlan (right in photo), at a condominium in Damansara in 2008, a charge the opposition leader denied and said was politically motivated.

Decide on facts

In his interview with the Telegraph, Anwar said his case is difficult for his family but he is not giving up.

"It is difficult for me, my family, and my friends. But I still have that glimmer of hope that sanity will prevail, that the Federal Court will decide based on facts and law and not work under the thumb of the executive.

"Therefore, I have decided to return to my village, to fight and continue the struggle, from Malaysia, the country I love," he said.

Anwar added that regardless of whether he goes to prison or not, he is confident the agenda for reform and democracy will continue.

"Dictators, authoritarian leaders, they don't survive forever.

"I believe in the wisdom of the masses. We have seen under semi-authoritarian rule, where the electoral process is fraudulent, we have majority of Malaysians, opting to support the opposition, and for change," he said.

Anwar also dismissed the Malaysian government's charge that the opposition was over-politicising issues in the country, pointing out that the opposition had given credit where it was due in Putrajaya's handling of the Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17 tragedy.

However, in the case of the Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370 disaster, the opposition had been critical only because of the government's lack of transparency.

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