

SIB: Putrajaya emboldens Muslim extremists

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Sabah's main Christian organisation has warned that Putrajaya's defence of religious extremists is putting non-Muslims at risk of more incendiary actions.

Sabah Sidang Injil Borneo (SIB) president Jerry Dusing said this in reference to de facto Law Minister Nancy Shukri and attorney-general Abdul Gani Patail's refusal to act against a Muslim right-wing threat to burn the Bible.

"The failure of the attorney-general and the law minister to act against religious bigotry and extremism can only serve to embolden such extremists to become more incendiary in their posture against non-Muslims," he said in a statement.

Dusing (left) appealed on behalf of the Christian community in Sabah for Putrajaya to "stop defending religious extremists".

Nancy in a parliamentary written reply early last month said no action would be taken against Perkasa president Ibrahim Ali for the threat as he was "defending the sanctity of Islam".

This was later echoed by the Attorney-General's Chambers which said Ibrahim's statement was not seditious as the context was specific reference to copies of the Bible which were openly distributed, including to Muslims, in Jelutong, Penang.

Ibrahim in January last year had urged Muslims to seize copies of the Bible which use the word 'Allah' to refer to God and burn them, claiming that Muslims may be confused by it.

Dusing said the stance was "obnoxious" and "unacceptable", adding that Malaysia was formed on the understanding that it would be multi-cultural and multi-religious.

"There are limits to what one can say against another religion. Asking for the Holy Scriptures of another religion to be burned violates the most basic of human decency," he said.

Christians under constant threat of aggression

Meanwhile, the Catholic Lawyers' Society (CLS) said it was "deeply disappointed" by the inaction particularly as the Christian community has lived "under the threat of constant aggression by some who are bent on creating religious intolerance".

CLS president Viola Decruz Silva said there has yet to be any action on at least two other similar threats in Butterworth this year.

He added nor was there any action against two journalists who in 2009 entered a Catholic Church, consumed, removed and photographed the Holy Communion deemed sacred to Christians and published the episode in the Al-Islam magazine.

He said this is on top of at least seven government-sponsored actions against Christians since 2008 including raids and confiscation of Christian material, banning Christians from using the Arabic word 'Allah' to refer to God and delivering an anti-Christian seminar.

In the latest incident, Decruz Silva said the attorney-general's use of context to justify its inaction "dangerously suggest" that there could be situations where threats to burn a holy book will be permissible.

"Surely such an opinion emanating from none other than the chief prosecutor of the nation bodes ill for a multi-religious country such as Malaysia," he added.

Decruz Silva urged the attorney-general to reconsider the decision not to act, reminding him that it was his public duty to ensure all citizens, including minorities, are protected under the law.