

Many questions remain on Altantuya murder
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COMMENT The Federal Court has ruled that Chief Inspector Azilah Hadri and Corporal Sirul Azhar Umar are guilty of murdering Mongolian translator Altantuya Shaariibuu.

Sentencing them to the gallows offers some measure of justice to Altantuya and her family, but despite this ruling of the highest court in the nation, the wound that this case has afflicted on this country's soul has not been healed.

People are still demanding answers to many unanswered questions. There can be no closure to this gruesome and senseless murder until they know why she was killed in the first place.

Ordinary men and women want to know if Altantuya was killed by Azilah and Sirul (right) under the instruction of somebody else. They want to know if the offer of RM100,000 to Sirul (going by Sirul's own admission) is true, and who made the offer.

They also want to know what was the instruction given to the two commandos; the exact words used to "assist Razak", as the judge put it. They want to know why there were changes to the prosecutors and the High Court judge hearing the case.

Malaysians also want to know if their Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak knew Altantuya despite his much publicised declaration in the mosque that he did not. They want to know why private investigator P Balasubramaniam (or PI Bala) and his family were asked to leave the country.

Questionable decision of Federal Court judge

Federal Court judge Suryadi Halim Omar reportedly said Prime Minister Najib's former aide-de-camp DSP Musa Safri never instructed Azilah on how to assist Razak Baginda, that Azilah was merely told to meet with Razak.

How does the judge know this for sure? Azilah could have said this but Musa was never called as a witness. Did the judge have access to Musa's police statement, or to some other reliable piece of evidence adduced at the High Court?

It seems to me the court accepted that Musa was the one who gave instructions to Azilah, but it somehow came to the conclusion that the instruction was of a friendly and innocuous nature; something like, "Do what you can to assist Razak".

That bothers me. Altantuya was here to ask for money from Razak (left), which she claimed was due to her. She was not waging a war against the country. She did not bring along commandos from Mongolia to kill someone if her demands were not met.

Razak and/or Musa Safri could easily have asked a friend to mediate and see Altantuya on their behalf. Even if they had wanted a man in uniform, someone from the Cheras police station - helped perhaps by an immigration officer - would have sufficed.

All they needed to do, if Altantuya's claim was frivolous, would be to persuade her leave the country peacefully. I am anxious to know what was on Musa's mind when he decided to introduce Razak to Azila and Sirul.

So, what were DSP Musa's instructions?

When you ask people whose job is to eliminate and destroy to "assist" you, and they have access to C4 explosives, you cannot expect them to engage in peaceful and polite negotiations. You expect them to do exactly what they were trained to do: take orders, ask no questions and kill if necessary.

Many people want to know what Musa's exact instructions were. Did Musa (left), for example, give any kind of caveat to say no harm should come to Altantuya?

Some are happy with the explanation of the attorney-general (AG) on why he chose not to call Musa to testify during the trial - and obviously the judges are within their rights to convict a murderer without any known motive.

But, in the real world, nothing like that ever happens. In the real world, a prosecutor would want to present the full story, for only a madman kills for no reason. Everyone else has a motive for doing something.

That's why there has to be closure for this case. Our country will forever be seen as callous with human lives, with no regard for the truth, until the mystery surrounding Altantuya's murder is solved.

I believe there are things we don't know about the murder, and the conduct of the police and the AG regarding the matter have hardly been beyond reproach.

Justice is about more than compliance with the letter of the law. It's more than just a court decision, for the court can only do so much based on the materials the AG and the police put forward.

Justice, in this case, requires the country to have an independent inquiry to ascertain why the case unfolded as it did and to determine if the roles played by the police and the AG were aboveboard.

Although we cannot depend too much on a royal commission of inquiry to determine the truth these days, we might be able to get some justice if we can get enough men of courage and integrity to conduct the inquiry. So far we have found two men guilty. There could be more if the truth is allowed to finally surface.

I may be a lone voice in seeking to know more about the murder of Altantuya, but for our system of government to operate well, we need to have enough conviction to raise questions and get answers when we are in doubt.

We need to defend what is just and right. I hope the parliamentary opposition leader (who has been unusually silent on this matter) will be willing to support my proposal for a full inquiry.

We need to make sure that we have not left important clues behind, and remove all doubt that the stakeholders in our justice system may have been less than honest in dealing with the Altantuja murder.

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