

I never admitted to killing her, says Sirul
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EXCLUSIVE The Federal Court has sentenced him to death, but former police commando Sirul Azhar Umar said that he never admitted to murdering Altantuya Shaariibuu.

In a telephone conversation with Malaysiakini, he maintained that he had acted under orders and was being made a scapegoat.

"There are no witnesses to the murder until today. All this is based on circumstantial evidence linking me (to the murder).

"I understand that circumstantial evidence is not strong as direct evidence," said the 43-year-old father of two.

Last month, the apex court convicted Sirul and another former police commando Azilah Hadri in relation to the 2006 murder.

The pair was said to have shot dead the Mongolian national and blew up her remains with military-grade explosives in a jungle.

However, the prosecution and court did not establish a motive and this fueled speculation, especially since one of Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's close associate, political analyst Razak Baginda was also implicated.

Razak Baginda was charged with abetting the murder but was freed without his defence being called.

Najib, who was then deputy prime minister, also denied any links with the matter and swore in the name of God as well. The police also cleared him of any wrongdoing.

This morning, the prime minister dismissed Sirul's claim of having acted under orders and that those who had a motive to kill her are still free as "utter rubbish".

Yesterday, Malaysiakini reported Sirul's dissatisfaction with the legal proceedings, among others, his former superior DSP Musa Safri (left), who was then Najib's aide de camp.

Meanwhile, the former police commando is also upset with Inspector-General of Police Khalid Abu Bakar for releasing his photograph.

"Why reveal the photo without my consent? Since the start of the hearing and up to the appeal at the Federal Court, I managed to hide my face.

"What is the purpose (of releasing my photo)?" he asked.

Sirul, who did not turn up at court when the verdict was announced, was later arrested in Brisbane, Australia, on Jan 21 after an Interpol red notice was issued.

He is currently being held at the Villawood immigration detention centre in Sydney, where he has been given access to a mobile phone and internet.

Malaysia aims to file for his extradition but Australian law forbids sending back those who face capital punishment in their home countries.

Sirul had also told *Malaysiakini* that he is planning to reveal all on the case after being approached by several Australian media organisations.

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