

IGP's brother: I was there to keep peace

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By Zulaikha Zulkifli

Abdullah Abu Bakar has clarified that the protest demanding the removal of a cross from a church building has nothing to do with him being the brother of Inspector-General of Police Khalid Abu Bakar.

Abdullah told reporters at the Petaling Jaya City Council building that his brother telephoned him this morning to inquire about the incident.

The Umno branch leader said he explained to Khalid that he was only present at yesterday's protest in Taman Medan, Petaling Jaya, to mediate between the residents and church officials.

"IGP called me and I explained to him. This is between the residents and church. The church authorities have agreed to remove the cross. So there is no issue.

"Khalid (right) was just asking. He calls me 'Lang'. He asked, 'Lang, apa cerita? (what is the story)' and I explained.

"After listening to the explanation, he (Khalid) replied 'okay'," he said.

Responding to a question, Abdullah said he has no qualms with the police recording his statement if he was asked to do so.

"I have no problem with that. I had no bad intention. I was there to calm the situation and I was the middleman," he added.

Fear of proselytisation

Abdullah explained that he had to intervene because young locals were worried that the church would indulge in proselytisation of Muslims.

"They were demanding that the church cease operations completely, but we managed to convince them to be satisfied with the church taking down the cross symbol.

"You must understand, this church has only been operating for a week. And people are starting to panic because they hear stories that Christians would attempt proselytising their faith to others.

"They came to us and as the elders in the community, we told them we would help resolve the issue as we don't want matters to get out of hand," said Abdullah, who is also the Kampung Lindungan Umno branch head.

However, he denied suggestions that the protest was political in nature, despite the fact that several local Umno leaders were spotted at the scene.

"The people want the issue solved and now it is under control. No issues.

"This is our expertise, to avoid it from blowing out of proportions and resolving it, since no one else wants to listen to them.

"Now don't put the blame on us, but take the initiative to resolve the issue," he said.

Another community representative, Harun Ismail, 58, said the residents are mostly worried that youth will be exposed to potential proselytisation by the church.

"This issue of the cross is different. There are two or three (non-Muslim) places of worship in Taman Medan.

"In fact, there is a temple built next to a surau and this is not a problem for us.

"But the belief among the locals is that Christians will try to reach out to the youths. This is what scares and worries them," Harun said.

Some of the younger demonstrators yesterday yelled that they want the cross removed or they will remove it themselves.

Another said: "We don't want to fight, we just want that thing (the cross) taken down."

'Church understood us'

It was reported earlier that Abdullah was leading the protest after introducing himself as the village head.

Abdullah claimed the protesters met with one church representative by the name of Madam Victoria, who was "very understanding" of their demands.

"We asked her to remove the cross and she agreed. She said it would be done (today). But it was removed two hours after the protest.

"We had a good discussion with them. I thank Madam Victoria for acting swiftly. It was good that they understood us," he said.

The duo spoke to reporters after a meeting with Petaling Jaya mayor Mohd Azizi Mohd Zain.

"The mayor told us the matter will be raised to the state government level so we can only wait," Abdullah said.

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