

**Return ransom money to hostages' kin, Zahid told
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Home Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi has no right to give away the RM12 million that was raised to free the Sarawakian hostages, and should return the cash to their families and the public, an activist has said.

The Consumers' Association of Subang and Shah Alam (Cassa) president Jacob George pointed out that the money belonged to the kin as well as members of the public, who had responded to their cry for help.

"It is not government money, so who is he to decide to give it to an Islamic agency? It is the height of irresponsibility and is totally unacceptable.

"It is also embarrassing to Islam and all Islamic agencies," Jacob told *Malaysiakini* when contacted.

He was commenting on Zahid's statement that the money the family raised to pay for the four's ransom had instead been [given](#) to an Islamic body in the Philippines.

Zahid also confirmed that the money raised was from public donation and the family's sale of assets.

"The government decided not to pay ransom, and police adhered to this order," Zahid was quoted saying in *Berita Harian* yesterday.

But Jacob said the government's decision to channel the money would just spur more kidnappings in Sabah's waters.

He added that the public would no longer believe the Home Ministry after its latest "stunt".

"How do you expect us to trust these people with the security of the country after what they did?

"Zahid must apologise to the Malaysian public and come clean on what really happened, and who decided the money should be given to the agencies. We want accountability."

He also urged leaders to stop issuing statements until they had obtained all their facts straight, so as to prevent confusion.

The hostages' families had previously said they passed RM12 million to Special Branch officers to pay the ransom, after those who contributed demanded to know what happened to the cash.

This was because the police said the four were released without any ransom paid.

But Bukit Aman's Special Branch director Mohamad Fuzi Harun had refused to comment on the matter, while deputy inspector-general of police Noor Rashid Ibrahim said any questions about the money should be directed to the family.

The four Sarawakian sailors were abducted by Philippine-based militant group Abu Sayyaf on April 1, from a tugboat off the coast of Pulau Ligitan, Sabah.

The four were Wong Teck Kang, Wong Teck Chii, Johnny Lau, and Wong Hung Sing.

The Abu Sayyaf group had reportedly demanded a ransom of RM18 million, and their families turned to the public for help.