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Newspaper	The Star
Date	6/3/2013

10 NATION The Star, WEDNESDAY 6 MARCH 2013

Suluks: Malaysia is our motherland

The Star - 6/3/2013

We want no part in intruders' demands, say groups

KOTA KINABALU: The Suluks stand united in accepting Malaysia as their motherland and support any move by the national security forces to evict the armed intruders from Sabah soil.

Suluk groups here and in the peninsula said that although they and the intruders were clansmen, their loyalty and support was for Malaysia.

"We fully denounce what the intruders have done and had brought to Sabah," said Sabah Sukuk Ethnic Clan Association secretary Mohd Zaki Harry Susanto.

"They have invaded our homeland and had been cruel and acted like uncivilised people.

"Their actions do not reflect what true Suluks are like," he said, adding that none of the over 300,000 Suluks in Sabah would follow the gunmen's lead.

Mohd Zaki, together with Tawau Suluk Bajau Cultural Association

vice-president Abdul Ali Eritis and Kota Kinabalu Handicraft Traders Association chairman Ruhil Sailajan, paid a courtesy call on Chief Minister Datuk Musa Aman to convey their allegiance to the nation.

They agreed on the Government's action to forcibly end the nearly three-week standoff between the gunmen of the so-called Royal Sulu Sultanate Army and Malaysian forces in Lahad Datu and Semporna.

The Suluks are known as Tausug in the Philippines, where they are part of the wider Muslim community of Sulu, Mindanao and Palawan, known as the Moro ethnic group.

Abdul Ali assured the Government and all Sabahans that the local Suluks were not linked to the intruders although there were such claims.

"We will not help or support them



in any way at all. This is our country and we want to maintain the peace and sovereignty here," he said.

Ruhil said Malaysian Suluks had drawn the line and did not want to be associated with the intruders.

"We want to see everything return to normal as businesses had also been affected," he said.

Musa said Sabah backed the Government fully to evict the intruders from Lahad Datu and elsewhere in the state.

"Ample time had been given for

them to leave to avoid bloodshed but they insisted on staying," he said.

"We will do all we can to ensure the safety of our armed forces and the people."

In **JOHOR BARU**, Suluks based in the peninsula said they, too, were fully behind the Federal Government in its use of force to end the intrusion.

Persatuan Suluk Bersatu Sabah (PSBS) president Faizal Sisar said the so-called Sulu Sultan Jamalul Kiram III had no right to claim the state as Sabahans had unanimously and democratically voted to be part of Malaysia on Sept 16, 1963.

Faizal said the Suluks of Malaysia preferred to see themselves as descendents of Datu Muhammad Salleh, a Suluk warrior who fought for Sabahans against

British colonisation.

"In fact, the lineage of Jamalul Kiram II is questionable as Sultan Mohd Mahakuttah A. Kiram, who passed away in 1986, had no son," he told *The Star* yesterday.

Faizal said when the intruders first landed on Feb 12, many Suluks in the peninsula were worried about the safety of their loved ones in Lahad Datu.

"When news broke out that several police officers were killed by these gunmen, we were shocked and shared the sadness and grief of all Malaysians as these officers had given their lives to protect Sabah and Malaysia's sovereignty," he said.

Faizal said his association would hold *tahlil* prayers next week in honour of the sacrifices made by the fallen heroes.

He said there were about 20,000 Suluk people in the Pasir Gudang area, working in shipyards and as policemen, soldiers and lawyers.