

Fatal Somali mission not a publicity stunt, say Umno MPs
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By Boo Su-Lyn

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 3 — Umno lawmakers have denied accusations that the party's Putera 1 Malaysia Club's humanitarian mission to Somalia that led to a local cameraman's death last night was a publicity stunt.

Bernama TV cameraman Noramfaizul Mohd Nor was killed in the Somali capital of Mogadishu when African Union peacekeepers allegedly shot at a truck in which six mission members, including the 39-year-old, were travelling.

A picture released by Bernama to Reuters on September 3, 2011 shows Noramfaizul taken by fellow journalist and blogger Bani Amin Ahmad Zabidi a few hours before he was shot dead in Mogadishu on September 2, 2011. — Reuters pic
"These missions are risky," Umno Youth chief Khairy Jamaluddin told The Malaysian Insider today in a text message.

"Don't blame Azeez now that something has gone wrong. There are always risks attached and I'm sure he took precautions for everyone involved," said the Rembau MP, referring to Putera 1 Malaysia Club chief Datuk Abdul Azeez Rahim, who is also an Umno supreme council member.

While parties from both the ruling coalition and opposition expressed their condolences, PKR central leadership council member Latheefa Koya called Umno "hypocrites" for purportedly failing to help refugees here while "acting all humanitarian" in the war-torn country.

"Putting poor journos and reporters at grave risk to cover their propaganda trip!! Sad state of affairs!" said Latheefa on micro-blogging site Twitter today.

"What has Umno done for the poor asylum seekers here — even Palestinians & Afghans end up in detention centres here! Hypocrites!" the lawyer added.

The Malaysian Bar questioned yesterday if the government had violated international law by deporting 11 Chinese nationals of Uighur ethnicity back to China on August 18.

US diplomatic cables have also revealed that as many as 1,000 unregistered Myanmar Chin refugees lived in fear of police harassment in primitive jungle camps within 8km of the Prime Minister's Office in Putrajaya.

Khairy called Noramfaizul's death a "sad time for all Malaysians", saying: "We should support the family of Noramfaizul in this tough time. Not point fingers."

Umno's Pulai MP Datuk Nur Jazlan Mohamed echoed Khairy's remarks, saying: "I wouldn't say it's a stunt. It's a good thing."

He pointed out, however, that the humanitarian mission revealed "ill-prepared" efforts that endangered the lives of the entourage, like the Malaysian Medical Relief Society's (Mercy

Malaysia) 2003 mission in Iraq.

"They went in, not as part of the official mission, and caused somebody to be hurt, or in this case die. So I think the government should not allow these things to happen," Nur Jazlan told The Malaysian Insider.

Mercy Malaysia then-president Tan Sri Dr Jemilah Mahmood and volunteer Dr Baba Deani were injured after they were shot by gunmen in an ambush outside the Iraqi capital of Baghdad.

"In a way, we're ignorant of international implications... You don't just go and land there. They should be more responsible. In this case, it has tragic consequences," said Nur Jazlan.

The Royal Malaysian Air Force is bringing back the cameraman's body while the remaining 54 members of the mission are due to return home tomorrow.

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