

Dr Asri: Restriction of Islam could provoke apostasy
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KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 7 — Influential Muslim scholar Dr Mohd Asri Zainul Abidin today accused religious authorities of using a colonial system to restrict Islam, saying this could further provoke apostasy.

The former Perlis Mufti was responding to the Selangor Islamic Religious Department's (Jais) decision to charge PAS MP Khalid Samad over delivering an unauthorised sermon and for revoking Selangor PAS chief Dr Rani Osman's religious credentials.

The outspoken leader came to the defence of the duo in a strongly-worded statement on his Facebook profile page this morning.

"... sympathies when there are MPs punished by Jais for giving sermons ... although there was no proof of errors in the sermon ... so hard to preach ... colonial system used to restrict own religion ... do not be surprised if more leave the faith," he said.

He added that religious authorities were using their power over Islam to hamper the development of the religion itself.

"The ones unqualified to propagate religion are given the immunity that was not even accorded to the al-Khulafa al-Rasyidin at all," he said.

According to Harakahdaily, Khalid was summoned to Jais yesterday where he was notified of a charge in relation to a sermon he had given in Klang during the recent fasting month.

The PAS party organ also said that Dr Rani, whose credentials expired during Ramadan, had his renewal application rejected.

"I received the credentials last year and applied to extend them but I received a letter from Jais informing me that my application has been rejected and my credentials revoked," the Meru assemblyman said of the license which allows a Muslim scholar to give sermons without prior permission.

Khalid was charge under Section 119 of the Selangor Islamic Religious Administration Enactment for giving a sermon in a surau at Taman Seri Sementa, Kapar in Klang on August 16 without prior permission.

The Shah Alam MP will face trial on November 24 in the Klang Syariah court.

He told Harakahdaily that the sermon had touched on the role of Muslims in the religious affairs of the state.

"I gave a sermon saying Islamic justice is not just for Muslims but also for Jews or even those at odds with Islam itself. I was relating it to how we should hear both sides in the case of Jais's investigations into the church," he said, referring to the religious authorities probe into alleged proselytisation last month.

Jais had showed up at a dinner event at the Damansara Utama Methodist Church (DUMC) in Petaling Jaya on August 3, claiming that it was acting on a complaint that Muslims were being converted by Christians at the time.

The church had denied the allegations and insisted that the 12 Muslims present that night were attending a thanksgiving dinner by a local NGO.

The contentious raid has escalated religious conflict between Muslims and Christians in the country, with Malay newspapers highlighting allegations of Christians trying to convert Muslims through welfare work.

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