

**Himpun says numbers don't matter**  
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**By Yow Hong Chieh**

SHAH ALAM, Oct 22 — Himpunan Sejuta Umat has said it is not concerned with the poor turnout at today's rally, arguing that the spirit of the 5,000-strong crowd was more important.

"We are not concerned about the real numbers if you want to count everyone," Himpun chairman Mohd Azmi Abdul Hamid told reporters after the rally.

"They can be a small number but the spirit is the same, whether one million come or one hundred thousand or one thousand."

Azmi also said he considered the rally a great success as it proved that Muslims could come together to talk calmly about the issues affecting Islam, whatever their background or political affiliation.

"This rally is a symbol of Muslim unity, of Muslim determination to keep the country free from religious tension," he said.

He said non-Muslims should not fear the movement or its goals as the rally had been conducted with "no feelings of animosity" towards them.

But Azmi added that non-Muslims must respect the decision of Malaysia's founding fathers to prohibit attempts to proselytise Muslims and to understand the current grouses of the community.

He stressed that it was the right of Muslims to stand up against what they saw as encroachment on Islam, which was accorded a special position in the Constitution.

"This is the right of the Muslims. We are not intruding, we are not transgressing, we are not violating the rights of the non-Muslims," he said.

Himpunan Sejuta Umat was organised by various right-wing religious groups calling for Muslims to rise up and fight the "challenge of Christianisation".

The mass rally was mooted following the controversial August 3 raid by Selangor Islamic authorities on Damansara Utama Methodist Church (DUMC), where it was alleged that Christians were converting Muslims.

It is illegal to proselytise Muslims in Malaysia.

With racial tension stoked in recent years by church firebombings and the cow head protest, today's rally could resurrect fears of growing Islamisation among non-Muslims and more liberal Malays.

Christian leaders have denied claims that Christians were attempting to convert Muslims and have called Himpun's fight "irrelevant".

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