

Silent majority' of Muslims supports Himpun, says Ibrahim Ali
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KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 29 — Datuk Ibrahim Ali today played down Himpunan Sejuta Umat's (Himpun) low turnout for its rally in Penang today, saying that a lack of numbers does not mean support for the "Islamic cause" has faded.

The Perkasa president charged there are many Muslims who support Himpun's "noble" aims in combating apostasy but that they just did not turn up for the anti-apostasy rally.

Ibrahim said today, "Don't look at the numbers alone ... support is not determined by turnout." — file pic

"The silent majority of Muslims supports Himpun. Just because there are not a lot people at every gathering does not mean there is a lack of support," he told reporters here.

Himpun's rally in Kepala Batas saw a turnout that did not even meet 10 per cent of its 20,000 target.

"Don't look at the numbers alone ... support is not determined by turnout," added Ibrahim.

The coalition of Muslim NGOs, also known as Himpun, first held a gathering in Shah Alam in October in response to the "challenge of Christianisation" but revised its target to hundreds of thousands of attendees instead of the stated million in the lead up to the event.

However, despite an attendance of fewer than 10,000 Muslims concentrated in one corner of the 100,000-capacity Shah Alam Stadium on October 22, Himpun announced it would bring its fight to other states with about 3,000 reported to have attended December's rally in Perak.

The Penang state government distanced itself from today's three-hour event, saying it would not endorse or participate in it.

Himpun was mooted following the controversial August 3 raid by the Selangor Islamic Religious Department (JAIS) on the Damansara Utama Methodist Church (DUMC) in Petaling Jaya, where it was alleged that Christians were attempting to convert Muslims.

It is illegal to proselytise Muslims in Malaysia.

Christian leaders have denied the claims and have called Himpun's fight "irrelevant".

Several Muslim figures, including Datuk Hasan Ali, the former Selangor Islamic affairs executive councillor who was recently sacked from PAS, addressed the crowd at today's rally.

Hasan had backed JAIS over the DUMC raid and continues to allege that Christians are

actively converting Muslims.

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