

Anwar: Nik Aziz merely gave 'polite' advice
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By Shazwan Mustafa Kamal

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 16 — Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said today Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat was only offering "polite" and friendly advice when he suggested the PKR de facto leader retract his controversial remarks on Israel.

"Nik Aziz gave me polite, soft advice. He suggested that if I had said it, retract; if not, sue," Anwar was quoted by Sinar Harian as saying.

The opposition leader was referring to the PAS spiritual leader's demand that he disavow a reported statement supporting "all efforts to protect the security of the state of Israel."

The PAS Ulama Council decided earlier this week that Anwar needs to retract his remarks made during an interview with the Wall Street Journal, if indeed they were his own.

According to Nik Aziz, the council decided the opposition leader must withdraw his statement unless the newspaper had misreported his statement.

"If the Wall Street Journal was inaccurate in reporting what he said, then we hope he will sue the newspaper," Nik Aziz had said.

In response, Anwar today blamed Umno for smearing him and omitting his remarks in the same report that were in support of Palestinians.

"Umno has slandered me and erased my statement on the rights of the Palestinians," said Anwar.

He also confirmed The Malaysian Insider's earlier report that he would be meeting Nik Aziz soon to explain his remarks, and said further details will be provided later.

It is now understood that Anwar will be meeting Nik Aziz next Monday, and that the matter was decided during PKR's political bureau meeting last night.

Last month, The Wall Street Journal had quoted Anwar as saying in an interview that he supported "all efforts to protect the security of the state of Israel."

But the newspaper said Anwar stopped short of saying he would open diplomatic ties with the Jewish state, a step the former deputy prime minister said remains contingent on Israel respecting the aspirations of Palestinians.

Nik Aziz said PAS was not in favour of the two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian dispute, which Anwar subscribes to.

The Kelantan menteri besar said he had sent a letter expressing the council's view to the Permatang Pauh MP.

Anwar came under heavy fire from Umno and its media after his statement was published by the Wall Street Journal in January.

He was forced to defend himself by stressing that his remarks in the newspaper meant that he supported a two-state solution, which he said was also mentioned by Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Anifah Aman when the latter addressed the United Nations General Assembly in September last year.

Following the report, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad labelled his former deputy a Jewish sympathiser and a leader who disregarded the plight of the Palestinians.

Malaysia is a staunch supporter of Palestine and has no diplomatic ties with Israel.

Muslim politicians have long vied for support from Malays by denouncing what they say are inhumane acts of aggression by Israel towards its neighbour.

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