

Sodomy II prosecutor now in Anwar's legal team for illegal assembly charge
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Anwar arriving at the courthouse in Kuala Lumpur on May 22, 2012 where he was charged under the Peaceful Assembly Act with taking part in the April 28 Bersih 3.0 rally. — Picture by Choo Choy May

KUALA LUMPUR, May 22 — Former Solicitor-General II Datuk Yusof Zainal Abiden has joined Datuk Anwar Ibrahim's legal team as the opposition leader is charged with taking part in an illegal street demonstration today.

It was a startling turn of events as Yusof had led the Sodomy II prosecution against Anwar, which saw the latter being acquitted earlier this year.

He has since retired from the Attorney-General's Chambers.

"Anwar called me last night and I had no hesitation," Yusof told reporters when approached in court today.

"He has the right to a counsel of his choice," he said.

Yusof stressed that he had no political affiliation and was a "working professional" who was "willing and able" to help Anwar when asked to "come on board".

"I am a free agent," he said.

He also said he would "not say anything against the government" and there was no conflict of interest involved.

Yusof was the Solicitor-General II in the Attorney-General's Chambers.

"I am not joining a political party. I am just a counsel," he said.

The Malaysian Insider understands that Yusof's ties with Attorney-General Tan Sri Abdul Ghani Patail have been cool for some time and he had disagreed with the way some high-profile cases had been handled.

Asked about his ties with Abdul Ghani now, Yusof merely said "no comment".

He was earlier spotted mingling with Anwar's other defence lawyers.

PKR leader and lawyer Sivarasa Rasiah confirmed with *The Malaysian Insider* in a text message when asked if the former government lawyer was on the PKR de facto head's legal team.

Sivarasa said Yusof was assisting Anwar's lead counsel Karpal Singh. The other lawyers on Team Anwar are Karpal's son Ram Karpal Singh Deo and Sankara Nair.

Anwar, PKR deputy president Azmin Ali and Rembau PKR chief Badrul Hisham Shaharin were today charged with taking part in the April 28 Bersih 3.0 under section 4(2)(c) of the

Peaceful Assembly Act, less than a month after the new law aimed at allowing public gatherings "in accordance with international norms" was enforced.

The offence under the Peaceful Assembly Act carries a maximum fine of RM10,000.

All three claimed trial.

Sessions Court judge Mahmud Abdullah set July 2 as the next mention date for the trial.

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