

Umno MP says only asked if could hang Ambiga
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By Clara Chooi

KUALA LUMPUR, June 28 — Umno lawmaker Datuk Mohamad Aziz today denied demanding for Datuk Ambiga Sreenevasan to be hanged for treason, saying he had merely asked if she could be punished in such a manner for threatening national security.

The Sri Gading MP refused to apologise for his remarks, uttered in the Dewan Rakyat on Tuesday night, insisting that he had meant harm to anyone in the incident.

"I am not sorry because I am not in the wrong. I did not call for her to be hanged, I did not utter anything racial.

"It was merely a question so I will not apologise because I did not commit any wrong to anyone," Mohamad (picture, right) said.

According to Hansard, the Umno leader had said: "Apakah Ambiga tidak boleh kita anggap penderhaka kepada Duli Yang Maha Mulia Yang di-Pertuan Agong dan hukum gantung pada dia?" (Translation: Can we not consider Ambiga a traitor to the Yang di-Pertuan Agong and sentence her to hang?)

According to Hansard, the Umno leader had said: "Kita masih ingat apabila al-Maunnah menderhaka kepada Yand di-Pertuan Agong, kita hukum gantung dia. Ingat cerita itu beberapa tahun yang lalu?"

"Apakah Ambiga tidak boleh kita anggap penderhaka kepada Duli Yang Maha Mulia Yang di-Pertuan Agong dan hukum gantung pada dia?"

(Translation: We still remember when al-Ma'unah committed treason against the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, we hanged them. Remember that incident several years ago?

Can we not consider Ambiga a traitor to the Yang di-Pertuan Agong and sentence her to hang?)

At the time, Mohamad was speaking in reference to the April 28 rally for free and fair elections organised by Bersih 2.0, the coalition of non-governmental organisations that Ambiga co-chairs with Malay literary icon Datuk A. Samad Said.

The Al-Ma'unah group had stolen weapons from an army camp in July 2000 in their attempt to overthrow the government before finally being cornered and forced to surrender in Sauk, Perak.

Mohamed Amin Mohamed Razali, who led the band of 29 men, was eventually hanged six years later, followed by three other leaders of the terrorist group. They were the first to be convicted for "waging war against the King".

Mohamad's words had upset many across the political divide and even drew flak from MIC president Datuk G. Palanivel who yesterday urged intervention from Barisan Nasional (BN) leaders and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak.

In condemning Mohamad yesterday DAP secretary-general Lim Guan Eng said the remarks were racist and extremist, accusing the former of targeting Ambiga as she is a woman, Hindu and Indian.

But Mohamad retorted today that it was Lim and his party DAP that are racists, pointing out that at no point in his statement had he mentioned race or gender.

"I was talking in the context of the nation's safety, not race, religion or gender - my speech was in the context of the nation's security... that those the rallied on April 28, that can be considered treason towards the Yang di-Pertuan Agong," he said.

"It is clear I have no bad intention. Many of my friends are Hindus and I respect them."

But Mohamad maintained that Ambiga was an "agent" of foreign powers, alleging that the presence of diplomats and foreign parliamentarians during the Bersih rally was proof of this.

"I was speaking in the context of national security," he repeated.

Mohamad accused the DAP of trying to become heroes of the Indian community by using his remarks as fodder for their "narrow politics".

"DAP lives on racial issues. DAP will be buried if Malaysians reject this narrow and dirty political culture," he said.

The April 28 rally that saw tens of thousands gather at six different locations before heading to Dataran Merdeka was peaceful until about 2.30pm when Ambiga asked the crowd to disperse.

But her announcement was not heard by most of the crowd who persisted to linger around the historic square which the court had already barred to the public over the weekend.

Just before 3pm, some protestors breached the barricade surrounding the landmark, leading police to disperse the crowd with tear gas and water cannons.

Police then continued to pursue rally-goers down several streets amid chaotic scenes which saw violence from both sides over the next four hours.

Several dozen demonstrators have claimed that they were assaulted by groups of over 10 policemen at a time and visual evidence appears to back their claim but police also point to violence from rally-goers who attacked a police car.

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