

**Apology not enough, Vatican envoy should leave, say Perkasa and Jati
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by Hasbullah Awang Chik**

Despite the Vatican envoy's apology to Wisma Putra over his comments on the Allah issue, several non-governmental organisations saw fit to march to the Apostolic Nunciature here to send in a protest note.

They are still adamant that the apostolic nuncio Archbishop Joseph Marino leave the country, with Perkasa wanting the envoy to be changed and Jati taking it a step further, asking for the end of any diplomatic relations with the Vatican.

They are also demanding that the Vatican envoy apologise for offending Muslims in Malaysia.

Aside from Jati and Perkasa, the NGOs present were Armada Melayu, Gabungan Bela Hak Insan Pulau Pinang and Perembam, an Indian NGO.

"We came here to meet the Vatican envoy but he is not here," said Jati president Datuk Hasan Ali.

No one came out from the Apostolic Nunciature to meet the group, forcing the protesters to hand over a copy of the note to the policemen outside the premises. A copy of the note was also posted on the guardhouse.

"Marino had said that they had strong arguments on why Christians could use the word Allah, while to our understanding, the word cannot be used by non-Muslims", Hasan said.

He also called for the nunciature to be closed, adding that they would advise the government that there was no need for a Vatican embassy here.

Perkasa president Datuk Ibrahim Ali said Archbishop Marino's meeting with Foreign Affairs minister Datuk Seri Anifah Aman did not bring closure to the issue as it was a meeting to explain and to convey his apology to the minister.

"We wish to state that Marino is persona-non-grata in Malaysia and he has to leave.

"By stating his support for the use of the term Allah, it can be construed as the archbishop was supporting the opposition, which has always been wanting to play up this issue," said Ibrahim.

Ibrahim and Hasan were clearly not on the same page as the former also told reporters: "We want a new envoy. We are not anti-Christian or anti any other religion. But if Marino can make fun of our religion, we cannot remain silent."

In his first interview with the Malaysian media, Archbishop Marino had expressed his support for the Christian Federation Malaysia's arguments in support on the use of the word Allah by the Christian community here.

It was also reported that during the interview, the archbishop had qualified that the court case pending on the Allah issue was an internal matter for the country.

Perkasa and Jati demanded that the Vatican envoy withdraw his support for the local church's campaign to use the word Allah and wanted him to apologise within seven days.

The Council of Churches Malaysia urge the government to take action against Perkasa and Jati for trying to disrupt diplomatic ties between Malaysia and the Vatican.

The Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism (MCCBCHST) had also come out in support of Archbishop Marino saying he had no reason to retract his statement as he was speaking the truth.

Catholic Bishop Paul Tan said that he was shocked at the reaction of the two Malay rights NGOs, noting that the Vatican envoy's remarks "should not be seen as an interference in Malaysia's internal affairs any more than the demand at some embassies in Kuala Lumpur recently that our government reject the goings-on in Egypt and Syria constitutes interference in those nations' affairs".

The head of the Catholic Church in the Malacca-Johor diocese described Perkasa and Jati's demands as "gimmicky sabre-rattling".

Archbishop Marino was then summoned to Anifah's office, where he asked the foreign minister to convey his apologies if his comments on the Allah issue have caused any misunderstanding and inconvenience with the envoy stressing he never intended to interfere in the internal affairs of Malaysia. - July 19, 2013.

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