

Kajang church denies supporting Anwar
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The Holy Family Church in Kajang today denied that they invited Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim last Sunday as a show of support for him in the Kajang by-election.

"It was not to help Anwar to canvass for votes. He was invited to deliver an inter-faith speech," said parish priest Reverend Father George Harrison.

Speaking to news portal Malaysiakini, Harrison said the function was in tandem with the church's objective to improve relations between religions in Malaysia, and that the talk was organised by a church member who is also from the Centre for Reform, Democracy and Social Initiatives.

"I have been talking to people about building bridges with our Muslim brothers and sisters and so the event was allowed because a parishioner proposed it," the parish priest said.

"This is my message all along - I have said nothing to side anybody and to Anwar, I have only said: 'This is my brother, welcome,'" said Harrison.

Anwar had delivered a speech at a multi-purpose hall after mass on Sunday and spoke on brotherhood between races and religion by quoting verses from the Quran and the Bible.

The priest said that his stand has always been to listen to all sides and make his own judgement.

"I have told my people that we must listen well to all and then make our own discernment and decision (on the by-election) - even Barisan Nasional's view and all," he said.

The 40-year-old priest said that as a citizen, he too had a right to host a famous personality, and noted that it was the first time he and Anwar had met.

However, the priest stopped short of agreeing to extending invitations to Umno or Malay right-wing groups such as Perkasa or Isma to speak in the church.

"If this happens now, it will be very political," he told Malaysiakini.

The church came under attack from various quarters for allowing its premises to be used by the opposition leader.

In his latest blog posting, former Perkasa deputy president Zulkifli Noordin lambasted the church for allowing Anwar to address its congregation, questioning why was the church getting involved in politics.

Zulkifli had posted that it was also rude of Anwar to raise the "Allah" issue in the church.

He said it would be a good idea for Umno to ask the church administration for an opportunity to address their congregation.

"Then we will see whether they are political hypocrites or are truly in support of democracy and freedom of speech," Zulkifli added. – February 21, 2014.

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