

## **Violence, dirty tactics making PAS as bad as MIC in its heyday**

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**By Zulkifli Sulong, Features and Analysis Editor**

This morning's assault on PAS central committee member Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad has only strengthened claims that the situation in the Islamist party was worse than in 1982 when its former president Tan Sri Asri Muda was kicked out, said party leaders.

Observers said today's incident puts PAS on the same level, or worse than what used to happen in MIC or Umno, where violence was reported on several occasions over the years.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, scuffles and chair-throwing at MIC grassroots meetings became synonymous with the Barisan Nasional component party.

Even today, the party, which has split into two factions, is accusing each other of using gangsters to subdue members and control the party.

Umno, too, has seen its share of shouting matches and violence at division meetings with the last one in 2008 where two Umno delegates, including a woman, were injured after they were hit by chairs flung during a scuffle which broke out at the Seremban Umno divisional meeting at the Tuanku Ja'afar Golf Club.

Analysts, observers and PAS activists said this morning's incident was a manifestation of a culture that should not be associated with an Islamist party with followers taking pride in the way its leadership had settled party matters.

PAS practises the concept of leadership by ulama (clerics) but that is now marred by recent events involving violent behaviour like assaults and torching the property of party leaders, and members hurling foul language at each other.

Dzulkefly had previously told The Malaysian Insider that all this while, PAS leaders had attacked Umno by accusing them of not being united.

He said former PAS president Datuk Fadzil Mohd Noor had always read a Quranic verse from surah Al-Hashr which means: "They look united but in their hearts, they are divided".

"The verse was used by Fadzil against Umno because of the divisions in the party, but now it has fallen back on PAS," he added.

Dzulkefly was assaulted by unknown assailants armed with sticks at the porch of his house in Shah Alam early this morning after returning home from morning prayers.

The PAS research director's lips were split and he suffered a swollen head. Dzulkefly lodged a police report in Shah Alam after receiving treatment at a clinic.

In a WhatsApp message following the incident, Dzulkefly warned all his friends to be careful over what had happened. "Be careful, my friends," he had said.

Former PAS secretary-general Datuk Kamarudin Jaffar in an immediate reaction following the assault on Dzulkefly said: "Just as I had said, PAS is now worse than Asri's time".

Kamaruddin, who is Tumpat MP, said that the incident was disheartening and expressed his sympathy with what had befallen his PAS colleague.

"First, Dr Hatta's (Ramli) car was torched, and now it is Dr Dzul's assault. Like I said, this is worse than Dr Asri's time," Kamarudin told The Malaysian Insider.

He also said factions were prone to criticise each other using coarse language.

He said the ulama wing, which had adopted a position that it was above criticism, was not averse to criticising others, using terms like "pig" and "devil" against its critics.

Similar ugly scenes played out in 1982, which led to Asri's resignation.

Asri had resigned during the 1982 PAS muktamar after his policy speech was rejected by delegates. He was also mocked by a faction in the party. Prior to that, the PAS Youth muktamar was held elsewhere, and it approved a motion for PAS to accept the concept of "ulama leadership".

With Asri's resignation in 1982, PAS began its ulama leadership. The PAS leadership was taken over by Yusof Rawa and the Ulama Council was formed as the highest authority in the Islamist party.

Kamarudin was a political analyst then as he was a political science lecturer with Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM).

Since Yusof Rawa's time, the position of the PAS president has never been contested as those chosen had won by default.

But now, the leadership of Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang and the concept of ulama leadership in the party are being challenged.

In the last muktamar held in Batu Pahat last year, youth representatives who were in support of Hadi's leadership left the hall when PAS deputy president Mohamad Sabu began giving his speech.

During a debate, those who were not aligned with the conservatives were booed while another ulama leader had recited a prayer, cursing other PAS leaders in his speech.

In his closing speech, Hadi had hit out at certain PAS leaders, calling them "barua" and asked those who were not in agreement with his leadership to "find new land, build new mosques and become their own imams", which was seen as an attempt to

ask his critics to leave the party.

PAS central committee member Datuk Dr Mujahid Yusof Rawa in a book titled "Menuju PAS Baru", said PAS needed a new theme after using the ulama leadership concept for more than 30 years.

He said PAS had to find a new approach as ulama leadership, which started with his father Yusof Rawa, had reached a plateau and was bound to go down.

Meanwhile, PAS Youth chief Suhaizan Kaiat, in responding to Dzulkefly's assault, said he did not believe PAS members were responsible for the attack, suggesting instead that the attack was by those who wanted to take advantage of the situation in the Islamist party.

"I do not discount the possibility that there are certain parties who want to take advantage to provoke PAS leaders," he said in a Facebook post.

"Their aim is to break PAS up. May Allah punish their evil doings." – March 5, 2015.

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