

Abu Sayyaf imposed extra conditions that authorities couldn't comply with
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Home Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Zahid Hamidi says the Abu Sayyaf group added further conditions that could not be agreed with and as a result, the terrorists broke their promise to return kidnapped Sarawakian Bernard Then Ted Fen. — TRP file pic

KUALA LUMPUR, Extra conditions imposed by the Abu Sayyaf terror group for the release of Sarawakian Bernard Then Ted Fen made it difficult for Malaysian authorities to comply with their demands.

According to Home Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, both the terror group and negotiators appointed by Malaysian authorities had reached a consensus which initially, saw the group agreeing to release Then.

At the last minute however, the Abu Sayyaf group added further conditions that could not be agreed upon and as a result, the terrorists broke their promise to return the 39-year-old electrical engineer.

“The federal and state governments had done all we could to secure his (Then) release. We are really saddened by what had happened.

“They had agreed to release both of them but unfortunately, they imposed several further demands that were not welcomed by the negotiators.

“Of course we had hoped that in this matter, they would respect the victims’ human rights,” said Ahmad Zahid in reference to Then and another Malaysian hostage, restaurant manager Thien Nyuk Fun, 50.

He reiterated that although according to reports by international media, the severed head found in a sack labelled “Bernard Then Ted Fen” was confirmed to be Then’s, Philippines authorities had yet to do so.

“We will continue to work with them and the negotiation team for information which are being channelled directly to Malaysian police.

“We leave it to the Philippines authorities to carry the DNA test needed to identify the head.

“We have contacted Then’s family through the police and we are working towards having the remains sent to his family, if it (the head) is indeed proven to be his.”

Ahmad Zahid, who is also the nation’s Deputy Prime Minister, was speaking to reporters in a press conference after a signing ceremony for a crime prevention agreement between Malaysia and the United States here today.

Then was reported to have been beheaded by Abu Sayyaf gunmen who abducted him and Thien from the Ocean King Seafood Restaurant in Sandakan in May.

Thien was released earlier this month after successful negotiation between the authorities and the militants.

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