

After Anwar, woman at centre of forced eviction to speak in UM
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A 73-year-old woman who is putting up a fight after her house was demolished last week will speak in Universiti Malaya this Wednesday, a week after the fracas on October 27 which saw students storming the varsity gates to allow access to opposition leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

Wahida Mat Salleh, 73, or fondly known as Opah Wahida, will be the main speaker at a programme organised by students group Pro-Mahasiswa, to explain her side of the story, including the "unjust acts" committed against her family.

The event will be held at the food court of the 7th Residential College from 9pm on November 5.

Opah Wahida's home of 40 years in Kampung Chubadak Tambahan in Sentul was bulldozed by the developer on October 28 to make way for a commercial development.

She now stays in a makeshift tent near the site.

UM Students Council president Fahmi Zainol, who is in support of the programme, said that similar to the event where he had invited Anwar, Pro-Mahasiswa's plan to bring Opah Wahida into the campus has also been described as an act of defiance by the university's administration.

"This is just an event to allow the villagers, as well as Opah Wahida, to speak about the predicament they are in and their fight against injustice and oppression," he said.

"Before this, they (the university) say we brought Anwar for a political reason when our aim was to let him speak at his alma mater.

"At that time, the students' intention is to highlight the university not only as a centre of tertiary education but also a venue to nurture their minds to be proactive thinkers," said Fahmi.

Fahmi said such programmes are part of learning for the students.

"We talk about compassion, now let's show some compassion.

"We talked about being fair, so let's start practising it. UM is a divine place. We should

celebrate the campus as an venue to encourage critical thinking that allows for academic freedom.

"The classrooms, the lectures, are only theories. This is how we take and practise what we learn into the next level of learning," he said.

Fahmi added that instead of dismissing it, the university should be proud and support such activities.

"If they can put a red carpet and give a proper welcome to the leaders of the country who visit the university, someone like Opah Wahida as well as Anwar should also be treated fairly and allowed into the university."

No stranger to controversy, Fahmi and seven other students currently face disciplinary action for holding the "40 years: From UM to Prison" programme on October 27.

On charges against them, the final year student of Administration and Social Justice said all of them had appealed to the university to postpone the proceeding scheduled this Friday, to allow them ample time to prepare for their defence.

"We did not receive any show cause or warning letters. The charge sheet arrived at our doors not even a week after the event.

"We feel that we should be allowed some time to study the charges and to prepare for our defence," said Fahmi (pic, left).

He said he was surprised that the UM had asked him to attend the disciplinary hearing as he thought he was going to be expelled.

"Whatever it is, I am prepared. Organising the event for Datuk Seri Anwar was a calculated risk. I know the kind of risk I am facing," he said.

As for his family, Fahmi said his parents were initially upset that the university was planning to take action against him but had calmed down once they saw the letter.

"They even said the charges were illogical. They have been following my activity and they know what I do," he said.

As for Wednesday's event, he said the students did not expect a large turnout but welcome everyone to take part.

Fahmi said the students will also be collecting some funds to help the effected villagers.

"Students need to keep themselves abreast not only with political issues but also community issues affecting the people around us.

"There is more to learning than just being in the classroom." he said. – November 3, 2014.

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