

**PH to appeal to Agong amid outrage over top judges' extensions**  
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**Opposition leader Wan Azizah Wan Ismail accuses the prime minister of destroying the independence of the judiciary.**

PETALING JAYA: Pakatan Harapan (PH) is seeking to appeal to the Agong to “take a firm position” following protests from former judges and senior lawyers over Putrajaya’s move to extend the tenures of Chief Justice Raus Sharif and Court of Appeal president Zulkefli Ahmad Makinudin.

“I will also be moving a motion in the forthcoming sitting of Parliament calling for the extensions of service to be nullified,” said opposition leader Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail in a statement.

She said Prime Minister Najib Razak must be stopped “from continuing to destroy” the independence of the judiciary, adding that the decision would lead to judges making decisions “to please the executive in order that they would be rewarded”.

Najib’s office last night confirmed that Raus has been extended for another three years for the post of chief justice, and Zulkefli as Court of Appeal president for another two years.

It said the decision was based on Article 122B(1) of the Federal Constitution, and was on the advice of former chief justice Arifin Zakaria before his retirement last March, to the Agong.

Raus was scheduled to retire on Aug 3 and Zulkefli on Sept 27, after reaching the age of 66 years and six months.

The move was slammed by the Bar Council as “blatantly unconstitutional”, with plans for an extraordinary general meeting (EGM) next month.

Wan Azizah today questioned whether the Rulers had indeed agreed to the move.

“It is unclear at this point whether the Rulers have indeed agreed with this very controversial move.”

The Bar Council has described the appointments as “blatantly unconstitutional”, and said it was preparing to serve notice to members to convene an EGM on Aug 3.

Former attorney-general Abu Talib Othman told FMT that any challenge to the government's decision might be futile, but acknowledged that the decision could give the impression that no other judges were qualified to replace Raus and Zulkefli.

Two senior judges had previously criticised any attempts to extend the duo's tenure.

Former chief justice Abdul Hamid Mohamad said any move by Raus to remain in office after retirement would compromise the independence of the judiciary, while former Federal Court judge Gopal Sri Ram said there were capable judges to take over the position of Raus as top judicial officer.

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