

## Retract 'repulsive' reminder, staff union tells UM

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The University of Malaya Academic Staff Union (PKAUM) today called for the university to immediately retract its "reminder" forbidding its students from making any public statements.

In a statement, PKAUM president Azmi Sharom said the "repulsive and obtuse" reminder shows that the university's management does not understand that one of the purposes of academia is to view critically, the society, as well as the government and their own universities.

"If academics and students were to comply with this 'reminder', we will not be able to carry out and disseminate any sort of research which involves the government. The social sciences, economics, business, law, public health, engineering, to name but a few departments, are involved with work that by its very nature involves the critical study of government policies and decisions.

"The wording of the reminder (*photo*) expressly forbids us from speaking to the general public. Yet we have a responsibility to disseminate our findings, thoughts and ideas to the world at large, lest we are detached from the society we live in. If this was the case then we will truly be living in ivory towers providing no value whatsoever to the community," he said.

Azmi also pointed out that the wording in the reminder was also vague enough, that it may also include academic publications and presentations, as well as ordinary university lectures.

"This 'reminder' by the integrity unit is an affront to academic freedom; it prevents us from doing our jobs; it is a breach of our freedom of expression (guaranteed by the Federal Constitution) and it will go a long way in ensuring that our university is not worthy to be described by that name," he added.

Azmi then urged the office of UM vice-chancellor, retract the reminder immediately, and thoroughly review the use of the University and University Colleges Act as well as the Statutory Bodies Discipline and Surcharge Act, "which oppresses both students and academic staff".

"The general public knows that dissenting views are not harmful, but instead it is a healthy democratic initiative. It is time, the executives and the senior administrators realise that too."

Earlier today, it was reported that the **gag order** had forbidden all its staff and students from making any public statements perceived to potentially have a “negative implication” on the institution and the government.

They are forbidden from issuing any such public statements, which includes comments to the media, ordinary public or during lectures, broadcasts, publications (and) social media.

According to the circular, all students and staff are forbidden from issuing any such public statements whether verbally or in writing.

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