

A US-based Islamic scholar said today there is no basis to say it is sinful to reject the hudud. Emory University religion and law professor Professor Abdullahi A An Na'im said there are no hudud provisions in the Quran. Instead, Abdullahi said, hudud has been politicised by vested interests.

"Who says rejecting hudud is a sin? When someone says something like that, ask them to give you the source of that claim. "You'll find that it is personal speculation. If hudud is a creation of Quranic text, give me this text," Abdullahi said in an interview with Malaysian media at Concorde Hotel in Kuala Lumpur.

The interview was organised by G25, the group of prominent Malay individuals who advocate for, among others, the fair implementation of syariah law.

Last week, PAS president Abdul Hadi Awang submitted a Private Member's Bill to the Dewan Rakyat to amend Act 355 to expand the jurisdiction of the syariah court, paving the way for hudud, the Islamic penal system, to be implemented in Kelantan. Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Azalina Othman Said tabled a motion to prioritise the Private Member's Bill ahead of the government's business last Thursday, the last day of the second Dewan Rakyat session for 2016.

Move caused shockwaves in BN

However, Hadi asked for his bill be tabled in the next session, in October, in the interest of time. Last Thursday's move in Parliament caused shockwaves in BN, with cabinet ministers from MCA, MIC and Gerakan threatening to quit cabinet if Hadi's bill is passed by Parliament.

The bill seeks to raise the threshold of penalties that can be meted out by the syariah court, thus allowing hudud penalties as per the Kelantan syariah enactment. However, BN chairperson and Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak has denied that the bill has anything to do with hudud.

Abdullahi said the Malaysian government should maintain secular laws that treat all citizens equally. "The nature of the state that we live in today is a nation state, in which all citizens are equal. The state should enforce a single law upon all citizens equally. "That law should be produced by Parliament, through a democratic process, in a secular state. When you have it like that, you can change if it doesn't work. "A crime is different

from a sin. A crime should not be made a crime because it's a sin according to the beliefs of some people," he said.

The Malaysian government, Abdullahi added, must tread carefully as other states may follow suit if Kelantan is able to implement hudud.