

In Manila, religious protests helped fan hype for Lady Gaga

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(ENInews)--Religious protests in the Philippines apparently helped American pop star Lady Gaga move tickets, as her two recent concerts in Manila were sell-outs.

"Sold out night 2 in the Philippines. I love it here," Gaga (whose real name is Stefani Germanotta) reportedly tweeted after her concert on May 22 was packed with 20,000 fans, the same number who attended the previous evening.

Concert organizers have yet to decide whether or not to push through with a scheduled June 3 concert in Jakarta, Indonesia amidst threats from Muslim groups.

Before Gaga arrived in Manila, some Christian youths had been holding vigils and calling for the concert to be banned. Catholic Archbishop Ramon Arguelles also had told reporters that her fans were in danger of "falling into the clutches of Satan."

To prevent the spread of hate against Gaga and her avid fans, another pastor said that Jesus's gospel of love must prevail. "I've advised parishioners that we must love the person (Gaga) although we may not approve of her songs, lewd dances, skimpy attire and occult-oriented pronouncements," the Rev. Wilfredo Basilio of the Marikina Christian Fellowship said in a text message to ENInews.

A church leader and some entertainment critics believe that the religious protests helped fan hype over Gaga's show.

"For some reason people get excited when it comes to showbiz and the controversies ironically generate more interest," noted National Council of Churches in the Philippines general secretary Rev. Rex Reyes in a May 23 text message to ENInews.

Lea Salonga, a Filipino Broadway singer and art critic, was also quoted in the Manila press as having tweeted that the protest was "much ado about nothing" after she

read the lyrics of the controversial song "Judas."

Protesters had threatened to sue Gaga if she sang "Judas" as it supposedly mocks Jesus Christ. But Gaga defied her critics and during her two shows belted out "Judas" and the equally strong "Born This Way," an anthem seen as calling for recognition of gay identity.

"The song ["Judas"] is actually about admitting one's sinfulness and a longing for redemption," Pasay City (part of metropolitan Manila) Mayor Antonino Calixto told national television. Calixto said officials tasked to monitor the show found no violations like nudity, blasphemy and lewd conduct.

Entertainment critic Aya Yuson said the skimpy costumes of women dancers on some of Manila's noon time TV shows are even more daring than Gaga's outfit, which made her look simply "like a comic book super villain of Spiderman."

As the pop diva left, Salonga was later said to have tweeted "Lady Gaga wins" for selling more tickets due to the hype from the protests.