

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

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Malaysia falls short in fulfilling its promises to the UN Human Rights Council

The Malaysian government should fully implement the recommendations issued by the UN's Universal Period Review (UPR) Working Group in Geneva today, Amnesty International said. The Working Group will adopt recommendations on Malaysia made during the country's review by the Human Rights Council on 11 February.

Some of the key recommendations included calls for repealing or amending the Internal Security Act (ISA) and guaranteeing freedom of expression, information and religion. Many countries also identified Malaysia's poor record in addressing human rights abuses against refugees and migrant workers.

Amnesty International welcomed Malaysia's engagement with the UPR process, but noted that Malaysia had fallen short of many of its commitments to the UN Human Rights Council when it applied to become a member in 2006.

In 2006, Malaysia pledged itself to "the promotion of a free media, including in cyberspace, as well as the encouragement of vibrant and active civil society".

"Malaysia has failed to uphold these pledges to respect human rights, including its commitment to promote a free media, particularly the Internet. Bloggers have been charged under the vaguely worded provisions of the Sedition Act," said Donna Guest, Amnesty International's Asia-Pacific deputy director.

At least 50 people are detained indefinitely without charge or trial under the Internal Security Act. These include five leaders of the Hindu Rights Action Force (HINDRAF) who as prisoners of conscience should be released immediately and unconditionally, Amnesty International said.

Amnesty International also said that the government should speed up police reform and oversight. On 20 January, 22-year-old Kugan Ananthan died in police custody. His family and others who had seen his corpse alleged that he had been tortured to death. In December 2008 27-year-old B Prabarka claimed that police beat him, splashed boiling water on his body, and threatened to hang him.

"For Malaysia the real test of the UPR process will be whether it implements changes that have a real impact on the protection of human rights in the country. As a member of the Human Rights Council, Malaysia should follow through on its promises and take the lead in respecting, protecting and promoting human rights in the Southeast Asian region," Guest said.

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