
MALAYSIATian Chua [m], Vice President, Parti Keadilan Nasional (PKN)
Mohd Ezam Mohd Noor [m], National Youth Chief, PKN
Haji Saari Sungip [m], PKN activist
Hishamuddin Rais [m], media columnist and social activist
Raja Petra Kamaruddin [m], Director of Free Anwar Campaign
N. Gobala Krishnan [m], Secretary General, PKN Youth
Abdul Ghani Harun [m], PKN Youth Central Committee member

Malaysian police have detained at least seven leading members of one of Malaysia's main opposition parties, *Parti Keadilan Nasional*, National Justice Party. They are being held incommunicado at the Bukit Aman national police headquarters in the capital, Kuala Lumpur, where they are at risk of torture or ill-treatment.

Those named above were arrested a few days before a demonstration they were reportedly planning to mark the second anniversary of the sentencing of prisoner of conscience Anwar Ibrahim, the former Deputy Prime Minister, who has been imprisoned since 1998 on politically motivated charges of sodomy and abuse of power. They were apparently also planning to submit a memorandum to the Malaysian Commission on Human Rights. The Inspector General of Police, Tan Sri Norian Mai, has reportedly said that further arrests will be made, but rejected to disclose the names of those being sought.

Since 1998, the authorities have forcefully suppressed a series of predominantly peaceful demonstrations organized in support of Anwar Ibrahim, and to call for political reform. Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad was recently reported to have accused opposition parties and their alleged foreign supporters of plotting to overthrow the government through street violence. He also said he was willing to "break from so-called international norms" to preserve peace. Amnesty International believes the real reason for the arrests is to suppress legitimate peaceful dissent, and considers the detainees to be prisoners of conscience. The Malaysian Human Rights Commission called for their immediate release on 11 April.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The detainees are held under the Internal Security Act (ISA), a draconian law which allows the police to detain without a warrant any person deemed a threat to the national security or economic life of Malaysia for up to 60 days for investigation. The Minister of Home Affairs can then extend the period of detention for up to two years, without reference to the courts, by issuing a detention order, which is renewable indefinitely.

Those arrested under the ISA are held in incommunicado detention. Former detainees have testified that they were forced to strip, physically assaulted, subjected to sleep deprivation and prolonged aggressive interrogation to coerce confessions. They were also threatened with indefinite detention. When held under the ISA in 1998, Anwar Ibrahim was subjected to a potentially fatal assault while being interrogated by the then Inspector General of Police.

Domestic and international human rights organization have repeatedly called for the repeal of the ISA, as it violates fundamental human rights and has been used as a tool to suppress peaceful political, academic and social activities perceived as threats by the authorities. It has been used to detain

scores of prisoners of conscience, including prominent politicians, trade unionists, teachers, religious activists and community workers. It has also been used as a threat against the legitimate activities of non-governmental organizations. It was most recently used against supporters of Anwar Ibrahim in 1998.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send faxes/express/airmail letters in English or your own language:

- calling for the immediate and unconditional release of those named above, who have been detained solely for their peaceful dissenting political activities;
- urging the authorities to guarantee that they will not be tortured or ill-treated in detention;
- calling for them to be allowed immediate access to lawyers, families and medical attention;
- urging that the ISA be either repealed or amended so that it no longer allows for the detention without trial of those exercising their right to peaceful freedom of expression or assembly.

APPEALS TO: (Please note that it can be difficult getting through to Malaysian fax numbers. Please be patient and keep trying):

Minister of Home Affairs and Deputy Prime Minister

Dato' Abdullah Haji Ahmad Badawi

Menteri Dalam Negeri

Jalan Dato Onn,

50502 Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia

Fax: + 60 3 230 1051 or + 60 3 230 1217

Salutation: Dear Minister of Home Affairs

Inspector General of Police

Tan Sri Norian Mai

Ketua Polis Negara

Ibu pejabat Polis Diraja Malaysia

Bukit Aman

50502 Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia

Fax: + 60 3 22731326

Salutation: Dear Inspector General of Police

COPIES TO:

Chairman, Human Rights Commission (SUHAKAM)

Ybhg. Tan Sri Musa Hitam

Suruhanjaya Hak Asasi Manusia Malaysia

29th Floor

Menara Tun Razak

Jalan Raja Laut

50350 Kuala Lumpur

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and to diplomatic representatives of Malaysia accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 23 May 2001.