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MALAYSIAN Norashid Sakid [m], *Parti Islam SeMalaysia* (PAS) youth leader
Ahmad Tajuddin Abu Bakar [m], PAS youth leader
Solehan Abdul Ghaffar [m], activist, PAS welfare unit
Alias Ngah [m], activist, PAS welfare unit
Zainun Ismail [m]
Abu Bakar Che Doi [m]
Asfawani Abdullah [m]
Ahmad Pozi Darman [m]

Eight men, arrested between 2 and 3 August 2001 under the Internal Security Act (ISA), are being held incommunicado at unknown locations. They are at risk of torture or ill-treatment.

According to a report by the National News Agency, *Bernama*, the Inspector-General of Police, Tan Sri Norian Mai, has claimed that those detained are believed to be involved in an alleged religious extremist movement and had undergone military training in Afghanistan. However, at least four of the detainees are leading members of Malaysia's largest opposition party, the *Parti Islam SeMalaysia* (PAS), Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party. Amnesty International believes they may be prisoners of conscience, detained purely for exercising their right to engage in peaceful dissenting political activities. The organization is seeking further information about the other detainees named above and the circumstances of their arrests.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Under the ISA, the police may detain without 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 detained under the ISA are denied access to lawyers and are held in solitary confinement. Many have been physically assaulted, forced to strip, deprived of sleep, food and water, told their families would be harmed, and subjected to prolonged aggressive interrogation to coerce them to confess. The detainees' sense of helplessness is exacerbated by their knowledge that no judicial or legal intervention is permitted and that family visits are entirely at the discretion of their interrogators.

The ISA has been repeatedly criticized by domestic and international human rights organizations, as it violates fundamental human rights and has been used as a tool to suppress peaceful political, academic and social activities that the authorities perceive as threats. Over 4,000 people have been detained under the act since the 1960s. In April 2001, 10 political activists, most of them senior members of the opposition party *Keadilan* were detained under the ISA. After prolonged interrogation in incommunicado detention, six of the activists were ordered to be detained for two years on the grounds of allegedly seeking to overthrow the government by militant means, including through violent street demonstrations. No evidence supporting these claims has ever been made public. They are prisoners of conscience. Two student leaders were also arrested recently under the ISA, and were later released.

PAS, Malaysia's largest opposition party, won 27 parliamentary seats in the 1999 election. A number of PAS activists have been arrested recently for defying a ban on all political gatherings. The ban has been criticized by the Malaysian Human Rights Commission, *Suhakam*.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:

- urging the authorities to guarantee that the eight men named above will not be subjected to physical or psychological torture or other ill-treatment in detention;
- calling for them to be allowed immediate and regular access to lawyers, their families and independent medical attention;
- calling for them to be released immediately if they have been detained purely for their peaceful dissenting political activities, or otherwise charged with a recognizably criminal offence;
- urging that the ISA be repealed or amended so that it no longer allows for the detention of those exercising their right to peaceful freedom of expression or assembly;
- stating that anyone suspected of threatening national security should have the opportunity to defend themselves before a court of law in proceedings that meet international standards of fairness.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of Home Affairs & Deputy Prime Minister
 Dato' Abdullah Haji Ahmad Badawi
 Ministry of Home Affairs (Menteri Dalam Negeri)
 Aras 13, Blok D1
 Parcel D, Pusat Pentadbiran Kerajaan Persekutuan
 65202 Putrajaya, Selangor
 Malaysia

Fax: + 60 3 8886 8014

E-mail: tpm@smpke.jpm.my

Telegram: Minister of Home Affairs, Ministry of Home Affairs, Selangor, Malaysia

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 (please note this number is not always available)

Telegram: Inspector General of Police, Ketua Polis Negara, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

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

Malaysia

Fax: + 60 3 26125620

E-mail: humanrights@humanrights.com.my

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 14 September 2001.