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MALAYSIA: Anwar's ill-treatment in custody raises serious concern

Amnesty International today condemned the reported severe ill-treatment of former Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim while in detention, and reiterated its call on Prime Minister Mahathir to release him, and other prisoners of conscience held under the Internal Security Act (ISA), immediately and unconditionally.

The organization also expressed serious concern about eye-witness testimony of beatings of detained pro-reform protesters

Reports that Anwar had been severely beaten while blindfolded and handcuffed, and denied access to a doctor for five days heighten concern for the safety of at least 16 of his political associates who continue to be denied access to lawyers and their families.

“Anwar's treatment at the hands of the police shows the government's blatant disregard for basic human rights. If a high-profile figure can be subjected to such treatment, we fear for the safety of those who are not so well known and who continue to be denied access to lawyers and their families,” Amnesty International said.

“Prime Minister Mahathir must order an immediate investigation into these reports and bring those responsible to justice. He must also allow all detainees held under the ISA immediate access to lawyers, medical personnel and families – in line with international legal standards.”

“The continuing arrest of Anwar' associates under the ISA, which was also cited to deny Anwar bail after he was charged today with the bailable offences of ‘unnatural sex acts’ and corruption, reinforces Amnesty International's belief that this is a politically motivated prosecution,” the organization argued.

“News that the two Anwar associates recently sentenced to six months in jail for ‘allowing Anwar to sodomize them’ have retracted their confessions saying they were not given voluntarily, is yet another indication that the charges against Anwar have no real basis.”

Under the Malaysian penal code homosexual acts between consenting adults are deemed to be “against the order of nature” and punishable by up to 20 years' imprisonment and whipping. Amnesty International is also calling for the immediate and unconditional release of prisoners of conscience Sukma Darmawan and Munawar Ahmad Aness – the Anwar associates jailed for six months for sodomy.

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