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Malaysia: Two more Prisoners of Conscience Released, but still more needs to be done

Two more activists have been released from detention under the Internal Security Act (ISA) in Malaysia. Badrulamin Bahron and Lokman Noor Adam were released from Kamunting Detention Centre today upon the expiry of their two year detention orders.

"This is undoubtedly a step in the right direction on the part of the government, and will come as a huge relief to their family and friends who have unnecessarily and courageously endured two years without their loved ones. However, no matter how welcome this move is, the government still needs to address the fact that hundreds of people continue to be detained without charge or trial under the ISA and other restrictive laws," Amnesty International said.

The organization continues to call for the reform or repeal of the ISA so it conforms with international human rights standards, including the right to peaceful freedom of expression, association and assembly, and the right to a fair and public trial.

Badrulamin Bahron walked free this morning. Lokman Noor Adam was initially transferred to a local police station, prior to his release on bail this afternoon by the Kuala Lumpur Magistrates' court on a pre-existing charge of illegal assembly. The two joined four other ISA detainees who were released earlier this month. Saari Sungib, Tian Chua, Hishamuddin Rais and Mohd Ezam Mohd Nor all saw their detention orders expire on 1 June and have since been freed.

Amnesty International remains concerned that, although the six are no longer held under the ISA several of them still face charges under other laws. Tian Chua, Hishamuddin Rais, Mohd Ezam Mohd Nor and Lokman Noor Adam, were all briefly detained following their release under the ISA pending the granting of bail for other pre-existing charges.

"The stacking up of charges under repressive laws has become a tool to silence dissent and is a serious violation of human rights," Amnesty International said.

Background

In April 2001 ten *reformasi* (reform) activists were arrested under the ISA whilst organizing a demonstration to mark the second anniversary of the sentencing of former Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, who was jailed for 15 years on politically motivated charges in an unfair trial. They were held for allegedly planning to topple the government through violent means. No evidence has ever been presented to support these claims and none of them have ever been tried in court on these charges.

Six of the ten detainees were issued with a two-year detention order under the ISA in June 2001.

The ISA has been condemned worldwide for allowing indefinite detention without charge or trial and for its use against people peacefully expressing their religious or political beliefs.

For more information, see:

<http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engasa280162003>

<http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engasa280062003>

<http://web.amnesty.org/pages/mys-200503-action-eng>

Public Document

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566
Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW. web: <http://www.amnesty.org>

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