

PUBLIC

AI Index: ASA 28/32/98

This is a limited action. Please restrict appeals to 10 per section.

UA 271/98 Fear of ill-treatment / Prisoners of conscience 16 October 1998

MALAYSIAShaari Sungip, President, Jamaah Islah Malaysia (JIM - an Islamic non-governmental organization), arrested on 13 October 1998
Zulkifli Nordin, lawyer
Abdul Malek Hussein, member of United Malays National Organization (UMNO), and former president of opposition parti Islam Se Malaysia youth

Amnesty International is concerned that the above-named, detained incommunicado at unknown locations, are at risk of ill-treatment.

All are detained under the Internal Security Act (ISA) -- an arbitrary and draconian act allowing for the indefinite detention, without charge or trial, or any person suspected of "threatening" national security.

There are fears that the arrest of Shaari Singip, whose non-governmental organisation is a member of a recently formed popular coalition, the Malaysian People's Justice Movement (Gerak), which is calling for the repeal of the ISA, marks the beginning of a wider government crackdown against those expressing dissenting views.

Amnesty International considers the men to be prisoners of conscience, detained solely for their non-violent political activity, expression and association.

Abdul Malek Hussein and Zulfikli Nordin were arrested on 25 and 29 September 1998 respectively, as the authorities also detained 13 other political associates (since released) of former deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Anwar Ibrahim was himself arrested under the ISA on 20 September 1998 having been dismissed from his posts on 2 September and having lead a fast-growing movement calling for political and social reforms. On 14 October the authorities announced that Anwar was no longer held under the ISA, but was remanded in custody on 10 charges of sodomy and corruption.

The ISA allows the police to detain without warrant, for an investigation period of up to 60 days, any person suspected of threatening the national security or economic life of Malaysia. The Minister of Home Affairs may subsequently, and without reference to the courts, issue detention orders of up to two years, renewable indefinitely.

In 1987, over 100 people, including prominent politicians, trade unionists, Chinese educationalists, Islamic teachers and church and community workers were arrested under the ISA, accused of provoking racial and religious tensions. At least 40 of those given two-year detention orders were adopted by Amnesty International as prisoners of conscience.

Despite repeated calls from domestic human rights groups to repeal the ISA, the government continues to assert that it is necessary in order to maintain stability in Malaysia's multi-religious, multi-ethnic society.

For further information please refer to AI documents *Malaysia: The arrest of Anwar Ibrahim and his political associates - an external briefing* (AI Index ASA 28/27/98, 3 October 1998); and *Malaysia: Convictions for sodomy follow unfair trials* (AI Index: ASA 28/28/98, 8 October 1998).

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

- expressing concern for the well-being of Shaari Sungip, Zulkifli Nordin and Abdul Malek Hussein who have been held incommunicado at unknown locations since their arrests;
- requesting that they be granted immediate access to independent lawyers, medical personnel and members of their families;
- urging that they are not ill-treated while in detention;
- calling for their immediate and unconditional release as prisoners of conscience detained solely for their non-violent political activity, expression and association;

APPEALS TO:

Prime Minister and Minister of Home Affairs

Dato' Seri Dr Mahathir bin Mohamad

Prime Minister and Minister of Home Affairs

Jalan Dato' Onn

50502 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Telegrams: Prime Minister, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Faxes: + 60 3 238 3784

Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

COPIES TO:

Deputy Minister of Home Affairs

Dato' Tajol Rosli Ghazali

Deputy Minister of Home Affairs

Jalan Dato' Onn

50502 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Faxes: + 60 3 230 1051

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 27 November 1998.