

PRESS STATEMENT

# Crackdown against opposition in Malaysia

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## Is Najib trying to please Mahathir ? Sedition and PPS arrest

The recent arrest of 156 Penang Voluntary Patrol Unit (PPS) and its Chairperson Phee Boon Poh seems to be the recent hard approach done by the police. This adds to the recent arrest and charging of key opposition leaders under sedition - N.Surenderan, Nizar Jamaluddin, Khalid Samad, Rafizi, Hassan Karim and RSN Rayer in the last weeks. A number of other individuals have also been questioned by the police.

The arrest is uncalled for, highhanded and an abuse of power. It goes against common sense and seems to be designed to create fear and anxiety. The IGP further makes more threatening calls asking people to investigate those who attacked him on twitter as well as going on a witch-hunt on PPS members. What a message on Merdeka day ?

If voluntary work such as done by PPS is a crime then there are many more voluntary groups doing more or less what PPS is doing. The arrest looks like yet another bad publicity stunt by the Government who recently wanted to crack down on the homeless and soup kitchen volunteers in the cities. I am sure in the next few days, we will be exposed to many more double standards of such groups existing.

The timing of the recent crackdown occurs while the Selangor State undergoes a crisis of choosing the new Menteri Besar and coincides with D<sup>r</sup>. Mahathir's open criticism on Najib for his handling of matters.

Is the recent show of force and arrest seems to be a direct respond to D<sup>r</sup>. Mahathir's attack on the Prime Minister on 18 August where Mahathir said that he is withdrawing support to Najib and even humiliated him by calling him being soft. D<sup>r</sup>. Mahathir has been critical that Najib did not manage to curb the opposition like during his time. Now Najib seems to be showing that he also can be ruthless.

In most democratic countries, the use of Sedition act is rarely or hardly used. The Human Rights Watch has termed it as a law that is a relic of colonial authoritarianism. Here it seems to be a fashion to arrest as many people under the sedition act for normal criticism of the ruling party or views of dissent. It also makes a mockery of Najib's own pledge in July 11, 2012 where Najib claims that the Sedition Act represents a "bygone era" and would be replaced by a legislation to safeguard national harmony.

What national harmony when a series of arrest takes place before Merdeka and just after the Merdeka parade in Penang, PPS members who took part in the Merdeka day celebration was arrested. While Najib spoke about a prosperous and peaceful Malaysia for future generations at his Merdeka eve speech, yet his action seems to be in contrary.

PSM calls for the Home Minister and the IGP to immediately release all PPS members who have been detained. We also demand Najib to fulfil his promise to repeal the sedition act. Merdeka has no

meaning as we continue to live under such restricted freedom and liberty.

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*Released by*

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Secretary General

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