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### Severe punishments necessary

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IRRESPECTIVE of whether they are members of political parties or individuals, the people involved in the Al-Ma'unah deviationist movement must be severely dealt with.

As already stated, those involved in the theft of firearms from Grik military camps, kidnapping and murders must be made to suffer the full brunt of the law - mandatory death for illegal possession of firearms and death for murder and kidnapping.

The rest of its followers, whether they are Pas members or members of other political parties, must be identified and investigated.

There might be those who were misled. They should be told of their mistakes and rehabilitated.

Here the use of the Internal Security Act is justified.

The mute reaction to the use of the Act, including from its most strident opponents, is another indication of the gravity of the crime perpetrated by members of the group.

These people had not only threatened the security of the country but had committed murder and torture. They deserve not only to be detained under the ISA but be subjected to other prescribed punishments.

They had clearly chosen their targets and victims to show their hatred for and intolerance of other races and religions. They killed their non-Muslim captives and shot at a Hindu temple and a brewery.

Sadly, they called their hideous act "jihad" and some gullible Muslims and uninformed non-Muslims apparently believe them. There are even those who accused the Government of staging the incident.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said in Alor Star on Thursday that most of the group's 1,800 members were also Pas members.

He said the Government had not wanted to politicise the incident but Pas had done so by saying that the whole incident was staged by Umno.

That was why, said Dr Mahathir, the Government was forced to reveal that the majority of the Al-Ma'unah members were also Pas members and supporters.

However, he did not discount the possibility of Umno members being among the deviants.

Pas president Datuk Fadzil Noor has neither denied nor confirm the allegation, saying that he could do so only if he was furnished with a list of the group's membership.

The faster the people responsible for the arms heist, kidnapping and murders are brought to justice, the better it is for the peace-loving Malaysians and for the image of Islam, Malays and the country.