

ISA detainees must also be released immediately
Malaysiakini.com
October 06,2011
By N Surendran

The prime minister announced in the Dewan Rakyat yesterday that all 125 persons held under the Restricted Residence Act will be released immediately.

These persons were subjected to an antiquated and unconstitutional law, and it is only right and proper that they were freed at last.

However, the BN government continues to unconstitutionally, unjustly and unnecessarily detain persons under the Internal Security Act 1960.

This is being done despite the undertaking to repeal the ISA given by the prime minister on Sept 15.

Implied in the promise to repeal is an undeniable admission that the ISA is in fact a bad law.

If it were a good law, there would be no reason for the government to cave in to the pressure to repeal, given the BN's dogged defence of the ISA since independence.

As such, the PM and his government are perfectly conscious of the fact that ISA detainees now languishing at Kamunting detention camp are being daily deprived of their freedom under an indefensibly bad law.

Having declared that the ISA will be repealed, it is a great moral wrong for the PM and his government to continue to deprive these unfortunate individuals of their liberty, and to continue to subject their families to the pain of separation.

If the RRA detainees are to be released immediately, what is the logic in not releasing the ISA detainees?

Detention without trial is repugnant to the spirit of our Federal Constitution and to international legal norms.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights(UDHR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) both proscribe arbitrary detention.

The government must cease this hypocritical lip service to democratic ideals, and genuinely embrace change and reform.

The BN is not going to endear itself to voters by half-heartedly aping Pakatan Rakyat's reform and democratisation manifesto.

The BN's reforms are so obviously inadequate because there is no real commitment on their part to freedom and the rule of law; or remorse for their past undemocratic and high-handed actions.

In abolishing the ISA, the government must also adopt and internalise the rules and values which govern free and democratic nations.

We call upon the prime minister and his government as a matter of urgency to immediately release all detainees being held under the ISA and to formally close down Kamunting detention camp.

Copyright © 1999-2007 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd

<http://www.malysiakini.com/news/177897>