

Ex-ISA detainee: I was belittled, mentally abused
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Former Internal Security Act detainee Hishamuddin Rais told the High Court in Kuala Lumpur today that he was "most of the time, belittled, threatened and mentally abused" during his detention.

Arrested in 2001 on a charge of conspiring to topple the government by violent means, Hishamuddin testified that he was never questioned on the accusation against him throughout his two-year detention.

"I was not detained because I was a threat to national security, but because I was a threat to Umno's position and interests," the Reformasi activist, columnist and filmmaker asserted.

Hishamuddin was testifying as a plaintiff in a suit seeking the court's declaration that Sections 8 and 73 of the ISA, which allow for detention without trial, are unconstitutional.

He and four others, including Selangor assemblyperson Saari Sungib who testified yesterday, are also suing the then Inspector-General of Police Norian Mai for defamation.

They claim Norian (left) issued a press statement stating falsely that they were preparing to topple the government, including gathering weapons such as grenade launchers, and recruiting the help of silat instructors.

Hishamuddin in his testimony identified references to him in news clippings and photographs published on the press statement made by Norian.

"Handsome, stylish and wearing a hat. It cannot be denied that it wasn't me (in the picture)," he said.

'I quoted from books approved by Home Ministry'

"Handsome and stylish, wearing a beret and scarf as usual," he repeated several times as he went through the clippings.

Hishamuddin also said his references to uprisings in the Philippines and in Indonesia during his speeches were not seditious, and that he was merely quoting from books.

"These books are approved by the Home Ministry, and if they are seditious, then all these authors would have been hauled up," he said.

During cross-examination, senior federal counsel Azizan Md Arshad pressed for the name of the police officer who arrested him, but Hishamuddin said he had no recollection.

"So I called him fat police officer, lah," he said.

"I don't like fat people," he added later, in an apparent jibe at Azizan's size, drawing giggles from members of the public.

"Just answer the question and don't make jokes for the public gallery," Azizan responded.

The trial resumes tomorrow with the continued cross-examination of Hishamuddin and testimony from another Reformasi activist and PKR official Badrulamin Bahrom.

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