

Political persecution has returned, says LFL
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DAP chairperson Karpal Singh's seditious conviction reaffirms the return of authoritarianism and political persecution, claimed Lawyers for Liberty (LFL) today.

"LFL is extremely concerned and shocked with the Kuala Lumpur High Court's [conviction](#) of Karpal for sedition where he now faces imprisonment up to three years and disqualification as member of Parliament.

"Making political or critical comments is not a crime and especially so in this particular case as Karpal was merely giving his legal opinion on the 2009 constitutional crisis in Perak and under no circumstances can it be described as seditious," said LFL executive director Eric Paulsen (*right*) in a statement.

He added that while it is true freedom of speech is not absolute and there are accepted limitations e.g. incitement to violence and hate speech the threshold for freedom of speech, however, must be high.

According to LFL, Karpal's seditious conviction, following the [dismissal](#) of Hindraf leader P Uthayakumar's appeal, clearly shows the return of authoritarianism and political persecution after a brief lull where Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak made a series of democratic reforms which turned out to be "merely a re-branding exercise and ultimately false."

"Karpal's conviction has once again reaffirmed Najib's false reformist credentials since not only has he broken the promise he had made on July 11, 2012 (when he announced that the Sedition Act would be abolished) but his administration has increased the misuse of sedition charges against opposition leaders and dissidents.

"Sedition is an antiquated and undemocratic offence and most modern states have repealed or put it into disuse. It certainly has no place in a modern and democratic Malaysia that we aspire to be," said Paulsen.

Further, he pointed out, these investigations and prosecutions are an extreme waste of valuable public funds and police and the Attorney-General's Chambers resources would have been better used to address real crimes.

"LFL therefore calls on the police and Attorney-General's Chambers to conduct themselves in a professional, fair and independent manner and not to selectively and in bad faith target opposition leaders and dissidents when government leaders and others connected to them have made more serious and offensive speeches but led to no repercussion or action," he added.