

Najib must learn to accept criticism, says global NGO
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Malaysia's Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak should learn to accept criticism and not respond with legal threats, Reporters without Borders (RSF) said today.

The Paris-based NGO that defends press freedom and reporters' rights worldwide said there were other ways for a national leader to express disagreement with media reports.

"The threat of legal action against news media on behalf of a serving prime minister constitutes a potential threat to freedom of information," said Benjamin Ismail, head of the Asia-Pacific desk for RSF as reported saying on its website.

"As a public figure, Najib Razak must learn to accept criticism. He has other ways to make his views known and to express disagreement, in particular using his right of reply."

On Thursday, Najib and Umno, through law firm Hafarizam Wan & Aisha Mubarak, demanded a retraction and an unconditional apology from Malaysiakini of two 'Yoursay' articles, compilations of readers' comments on the government's handling of the Terengganu crisis.

In particular, the complainants were upset over six readers' comments in the two articles entitled 'A case of the PM reaping what he sows' and 'How much will Najib spend to keep Terengganu?'

The articles referred to the two-day Terengganu fiasco whereby three Umno state assemblypersons, including ex-menteri besar Ahmad Said quit the party to become Independents, triggering a crisis in the BN ruling state government.

However, the crisis was defused after Najib and Ahmad apologised to each other in a private conversation over what the latter claimed was a "misunderstanding", and the trio retracted their resignations.

'Highly unusual'

In the RSF article, Malaysiakini's editor-in-chief Steven Gan is also quoted saying that Najib's actions were "highly unusual".

"I think this is first time in Malaysia that a sitting PM is planning to sue a media organisation," Gan told RSF.

In response to Najib's demands, Gan has offered the prime minister a right of reply to be

published.

RSF also noted in its report that Malaysia ranks 147th of 180 in its 2014 World Press Freedom Index.

Formed in 1985 by journalists, Reporters Without Borders has consultant status at the United Nations and Unesco.

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