

## **'PM showing true colours with sedition spree'**

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The recent unleashing of the Sedition Act upon dissenting voices has revealed the prime minister's true authoritarian colours, said an international human rights group.

"The Malaysian government is increasingly using the Sedition Act to instill fear and silence in political opponents and critics.

"Prime Minister Najib Razak's crackdown on free expression has shown his true rights-abusing colours," said Human Rights Watch deputy Asia director Phil Robertson in a statement today.

He said the Act, which prohibited "vague offences" was becoming a convenient tool for the Najib government to clamp down on critics of his administration.

"The Malaysian government has apparently decided that its vaguely worded Sedition Act is its new catch-all charge against its most vocal critics.

"Najib should realize that throwing activists and opposition leaders in jail for what they say is a slippery slope to authoritarian rule."

The past months has seen the government revving up the Sedition Act 1948 - an archaic law that the colonial British had used against its local political opponents - to full force against every facet of Malaysian society from politicians to academics and even netizens.

'Najib backtracked after GE13'

Robertson noted that Malaysiakini journalist Susan Loone has not been spared the sedition crackdown, for reporting the statements of Penang executive councillor Phee Boone Poh.

He added the crackdown included the use of other laws such as "sections of the penal code that severely restrict expression", for example that against PKR vice president Rafizi Ramli (left).

Robertson reminded Najib that before the 13th general election the PM had promised to repeal the Sedition Act but had backtracked after BN's dismal election results.

"Following the election, in which the ruling coalition the BN retained power despite major losses in the national parliament, he retreated from his pledge," he noted.

He called on Najib to repeal the act, "which has repeatedly been used to prosecute people for political purposes in violation of the right to freedom of expression".

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