

NGOs: Najib's blitz bringing country to chaos
MalaysiaKini.com
Sept 21, 2014

Prime Minister Najib Razak's crackdown on dissent using the Sedition Act is bringing the country to the "brink of political chaos", said local NGOs.

"(The dragnet) gravely threatens any citizens who speak up and also rapidly depletes the government's already questionable legitimacy," said the NGO coalition Gabungan Bertindak Malaysia (GBM).

The group of 16 diverse NGOs said Najib's move to widen the dragnet that saw a former student activist being sentenced to 12 months' jail yesterday, was "destabilising" the country in several ways.

"First, the Najib government has shown that the prime minister's political promises are incredible and worthless.

"It even raises the larger question if he still controls the government apparatus especially the home minister Zahid Hamidi and inspector-general of police (IGP) Khalid Abu Bakar," said GBM.

The NGOs said Najib had reneged on his pre-election promise to repeal the colonial-era law, allegedly due to pressure from "Umno hardliners" and "warlords" who have been objecting to the repeal.

"Second, the Najib government has shown incorrigible arrogance of power by prosecuting dissidents for questioning the legitimacy of his office," it said.

Even humour seditious

Taking a swipe at BN's performance in the last general election when it only received 47 percent of the popular vote despite retaining a seat majority in Parliament, GBM said this should have prompted the PM to "reach out to his detractors for reconciliation".

Instead, said GBM, the government chose to jail the former student activist Adam Adli for calling for Najib's "minority government" to be overthrown.

Thirdly, said the NGO coalition, the dragnet has revealed Najib's "pathological intolerance" towards all kinds of expression deemed offensive, "whether it is knowledge, swearing or humour".

"Malaysia simply ceases to be a normal country in the modern civilised world," said GBM.

The coalition comprises a cross section of prominent NGOs including Islamic groups Islamic Renaissance Front (IRF) and Muslim Professionals Forum (MPF), human rights group Suaram, women's rights group Awam and Anak Muda Sarawak (AMS) among others.

GBM also pointed out how Scotland's referendum on independence was in stark contrast with how the Najib administration has threatened East Malaysians discussing the issue of possible secession with the Sedition Act.

"By choosing to stay in the UK, Scotland has shown us the real meaning of freedom and reminded us that decolonisation is really an unfinished business in Malaysia," said the coalition.

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