

**UN ticks off Malaysia on Sedition Act, again**  
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In a second statement against the use of the Sedition Act, the United Nations called on Malaysia to amend the law to ensure it meets human rights standards.

“It is time for Malaysia to adjust its legislation, including the 1948 Sedition Act, to be in line with international human rights standards, and take firm steps towards the effective enjoyment of the right to freedom of expression,” four UN special rapporteurs said in a joint statement.

The government is currently mooting a new National Harmony Bill to replace the controversial Sedition Act. However, despite this it has unleashed a crackdown on political dissidents with dozens of individuals arrested under the law in recent weeks.

The UN special rapporteurs said they had addressed the issue of the Malaysia’s Sedition Act “on several occasions”, including during their visits to Malaysia.

In particular, UN special rapporteur on freedom of expression Abid Hussain had expressed concern on the use of the Act to curb peaceful assembly as early as 16 years ago.

“The Sedition Act is reportedly used in a way that prevents Malaysians from expressing and debating, freely and openly, a diverse range of political opinions and ideas,” the experts lamented.

The rapporteurs, who are from the UN Human Rights Council, also noted that Malaysia had as recent as March committed to addressing international concerns over the use of the Sedition Act.

Scathing NYT editorial

The experts are special rapporteur on freedom of expression David Kaye, special rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association Maina Kiai, special rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders Michel Forst, and special rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers Gabriela Knaul.

Special rapporteurs are individuals appointed by the UN Human Rights Council to, among others, investigate allegations of human rights violations.

Last month, the UN Human Rights Commissioner’s office expressed concern over the “arbitrary” use of the Sedition Act in Malaysia.

The ticking off came days before Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak addressed the UN

General Assembly at the UN headquarters in New York.

On Tuesday, leading United States' newspaper The New York Times, in a scathing editorial, criticised the Najib government for its continued use of the Sedition Act, describing the clamping down on dissent as "deplorable".

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