

'Free Anwar' petition hits White House
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More than 18,000 people have signed a petition that was created on the White House website to release Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim from prison.

The petition was created yesterday after Anwar was sent to jail for five years after found guilty of sodomising his aide Mohd Saiful Bukhari Azlan in 2008.

The petition needs to be supported by about 80,000 more by March 12 to hit the 100,000 target required to garner a response from the White House.

The petitioners called on US to intervene in the judgment because Anwar has been a "champion for democracy and a longtime friend of the US".

The US government was also asked to take action on the statement it released earlier stating that "the conduct of the trial raised serious concerns about the rule of law and the fairness of the judicial system in Malaysia".

"Statements are not enough. The administration must follow its words with action. Anwar is a political prisoner.

"The future of democracy in Malaysia is at stake. Securing Anwar's release from prison must be a top priority in US policy towards Malaysia, to be advanced in every way possible," the petition reads.

The White House website states that "if a petition gets enough support, White House staff will review it, ensure it is sent to the appropriate policy experts, and issue an official response".

The online petition platform was created by US President Barack Obama's administration to take action on important issues that people can raise under the The First Amendment of the United States Constitution, which allows the right to petition to the government.