

Lawyer: PM's threat to nail critics an abuse of power
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Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's threat to use the full force of the law against his critics is tantamount to an abuse of power, said human rights lawyer Andrew Khoo.

"Where the prime minister of the day is making such a statement, it implies that law enforcement agencies, which should be independent of political direction and political interference, will be used to go after political opponents," he told Malaysiakini in an e-mail today.

Khoo (photo), who is co-chairperson of Bar Council's human rights committee, was referring to Najib's statement yesterday where he warned those perpetrating allegations of financial misappropriation against him that the law would come after them.

"Those who continue to mount these attacks should be prepared to face the consequences of their actions.

"These gutter tactics - in some cases, criminal tactics - to overthrow the government will fail.

"Where appropriate, they will be met with the full force of the law," Najib had said.

Najib made the remarks yesterday in response to startling allegations that US\$700 million (RM2.6 billion) of 1MDB's funds were deposited into his personal banking accounts, which was concurrently reported by the Wall Street Journal and Sarawak Report.

The prime minister maintained he did not take any government money for personal gain and accused former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad of perpetrating the attacks.

Sedition Act now enhanced

Khoo said Najib's threat was sufficient grounds to do away with draconian laws which can be wrongfully used against political opponents.

"This is a strong reason why laws such as the Sedition Act, or laws relating to criminal defamation, have no place in a properly-functioning open and transparent democracy," he said.

Najib had, in 2012, promised to abolish the Sedition Act but later reneged on his pledge.

Instead, the law was strengthened earlier this year, raising the maximum jail term from two years to 20 years, and taking away the courts' discretionary powers by setting a mandatory minimum two-year jail sentence.

However, in a subsequent amendment, sedition against the government and judiciary was removed while sedition on grounds of race was introduced.

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