

It's a security issue, Zahid says of journo arrests

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The two Australian journalists were arrested while on duty in Sarawak last night was part of security measures to protect the Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak on his official three-day visit, Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said.

Zahid, who is also Home Minister, said local authorities placed the security of the PM and other dignitaries at the Kuching function last night a top priority.

“The action (security measures) was to ensure that journalism ethics are being adhered to...ethics in Malaysia must be ensured and security issues must be given priority by the authorities.

“All journalists should respect decisions made in the name of protecting security. I believe if Malaysian journalists are overseas, they would also have to abide by the ethics and security factors enforced in the countries,” said Zahid said, as quoted by Bernama.

He told reporters in Kuching that such measures should not be seen as a threat to press freedom.

He said the government does not prevent Malaysian or foreign journalists from covering events or interviewing Malaysian leaders but the security of VVIPs is paramount.

Zahid said this when asked on the arrests of reporter Linton Besser and camera operator Louis Eroglu from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC)'s 'Four Corners' programme.

On further actions to be taken against the duo, Zahid said he will leave the matter to the police.

“We hope that they must respect and adhere to the law,” he added.

Sarawak CID chief Dev Kumar in a statement today said the duo had “aggressively approached” Najib and the case is being investigated under Section 186 of the Penal Code for obstructing a public servant in the discharge of his public functions.

The ABC's 'Four Corners' executive producer Sally Neighbour tweeted that the arrests were related to the crew's reporting of corruption allegations involving Najib.

Both Besser and Eroglu have been released on bail and inspector-general of police Khalid Abu Bakar said.

He said the Attorney-General's Chambers will determine appropriate action against the

duo.

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