

Anwar praises Maria, warns nobody safe from arrest

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Jailed PKR de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim has joined the chorus of condemnation over the detention of Bersih chairperson Maria Chin Abdullah.

In a statement last night, Anwar said if a respected civil society leader such as Maria can be detained under the Special Offences (Security Measures) Act 2012 (Sosma), no Malaysians is safe from the same fate.

The former Opposition Leader said he understood Maria's ordeal, based on his own personal experiences as a former Internal Security Act (ISA) detainee.

"During my own detention under the ISA in Batu Cantonment, where I believe Maria is also being detained, I was subjected to sleep deprivation, irregular and disorienting interrogations, and poor food and sanitation.

"A bright light was left on in my room day and night," said Anwar, who is serving a five-year jail term for his second sodomy charge.

He added Home Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi should be held accountable for Maria's detention and that his inaction since her arrest last Friday was inexcusable.

'Proud of Bersih 5'

In congratulating Maria and Bersih for the Bersih 5 rally last Saturday, Anwar noted it had gone on despite continuous threats and intimidation in the run-up to the rally.

"I am proud of what my fellow Malaysians achieved on November 19, 2016.

"It was a great display of unity and purpose, expressed in a peaceful and dignified way," he said.

Inspector-general of police (IGP) Khalid Abu Bakar yesterday claimed Maria's arrest and detention has nothing to do with politics or the rally last Saturday.

Instead, he said she is being investigated under Section 124C of the Penal Code for alleged involvement in activities detrimental to parliamentary democracy, purportedly based on "[documents](#)" found at Bersih's office during a raid last Friday.

The IGP also confirmed the investigation is being carried out under Sosma, which allows police to detain a person without trial for up to 28 days.

'What acts against democracy?'

Others have also condemned the detention, with the United Kingdom and Eire Malaysian Law Students' Union (KPUM) saying nothing of Maria's recent activities appear to fit descriptions of the alleged threat to parliamentary democracy.

"It has been alleged that the act of receiving funds from the Open Society Foundation could also constitute the reasons for her detention, but as addressed by the Malaysian Bar, such an action does not constitute an activity against parliamentary democracy as defined by the provisions of the Section 130A of the Penal Code.

"We are confident that such activities are not detrimental to parliamentary democracy, and any attempts to commit such an activity should not fall within Section 124C of the Penal Code," the union said in a [statement](#) today.

At home, artists have embarked on various campaigns in support of Maria's release, such as Sharon Chin's '[One Artwork A Day](#) Until Maria Chin Abdullah is Released'.