

Report fails Pak Lah over human rights
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Human rights have regressed and protective systems for such rights have collapsed under Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's administration in 2006, according to a Suaram report.

In the Malaysian Human Rights Report 2006: Civil and Political Rights, Suaram reported increases in religious intolerance, as well as police brutality and abuses of illegal immigrants.

"Human rights under the 'Mr Nice Guy' Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's administration has regressed further in 2006," Suaram's executive director Yap Swee Seng told a press conference at the launching of the report in Kuala Lumpur today.

Yap said there was an "alarming collapse" of the system and institutions for the protection of human rights.

Referring to the report, Yap said the biggest problem was the increase of police brutality.

"The culture of impunity is very prevalent in law enforcement ... they (the police) act as though they are above the law and untouchable," Yap said.

Nine people died while under the custody of the police last year, according to the report; an increase from six deaths the previous year.

Yap said that "systemic impunity" continued under the Internal Security Act (ISA), the Dangerous Drugs Act (DDA) and the Emergency Ordinance (EO).

He said despite the call by Abdullah to grant trial for two Malaysians-born alleged terrorists held by the US at Guantanamo Bay, more than 2,000 people are detained without trial "in our own backyard."

Culture of vigilante

The report also highlighted incidents indicating a growing religious intolerance - a proposal by Takaful Malaysia to prohibit 'Deeparaya' greetings amongst employees, the syariah courts encroachment into matters involving non-Muslims, the Lina Joy case and the street protests against interfaith proponents Article 11.

Suaram also criticised the government for encouraging a "culture of vigilante" through the People's Volunteer Corp (Rela).

Yap said untrained civilians were deployed "in the hunting down of illegal immigrants with bounty."

"The government practically let loose the Rela to run wild with raids on a weekly basis ... Rela [took] laws into their own hands abusing not only the refugees ... but also the local residents and foreign tourists," said Yap.

"The government has repeatedly defended the Rela despite large numbers of complaints," he

added.

Yap said a stronger check and balance system should be enforced and called for the government to set up the Independent Police Complaints and Misconduct Commission (IPCMC).

Political will

He also called for recommendations by the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (Suhakam) to be enforced.

"Abdullah's government must show greater political will in restoring public confidence in the system and institutions for the protection of human rights.

"Failing which his own credibility would be seriously questioned and the people shall judge in the coming general election."

This year's Suaram Human Rights Award was won by the Chin Refugee Committee and the Kampung Jelutong Plantation Community.

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