

State of human rights 'worsening under Najib'
Malaysiakini.com
July 21, 2010

Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's first year in office marked further deterioration in the state of human rights in the nation, according to Suaram's 2009 Human Rights Report.

NONELaunched today, the report highlighted a list of repeated violations by the BN-led federal government.

Documentation and monitoring coordinator John Liu (extreme left) pointed out the increasingly serious and repeated abuse of power by law enforcement agencies.

"The abuse is not only by the police, but other agencies such as the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) and more recently by the Royal Malaysian Air Force" he told more than 30 diplomats, members of civil society and journalists at the launch.

Eight deaths in custody were reported last year, seven of these in police custody. The eighth was that of DAP political aide Teoh Beng Hock, while in the custody of MACC.

NONEThe report recorded a worrying increase in the number of people shot dead by the police. In 2007 there were 13 such deaths, increasing to 82 in 2008 and 88 last year.

"Not a single police officer is known to have been held accountable for any of those deaths," he said.

Liu claimed that there also is heightened intolerance of dissent. Mass arrests of participants at public peaceful assemblies were recorded in numbers, significantly exceeding those of previous years.

"Close to 1,000 people were arrested by the police for various acts of peaceful protest, including holding candlelight vigils, wearing black and even participating in hunger strikes," he said.

Two incidents highlight the mass arrests. During the Perak government crisis last May, 167 people were arrested, while 589 people, including minors, were held during the anti-ISA rally last August.

ISA worrying

Detention without trial is still an area of concern, said Liu.

"At the end of last year, nine Internal Security Act (ISA) detainees were still incarcerated without being tried in the courts.

NONEMore than 1,000 people were being held under the two other detention-without-trial laws - the Emergency Ordinance (EO) and the Dangerous Drugs Act (DDA)."

Suaram reiterated its demands for the government to repeal all detention without trial laws, especially the ISA.

"Until ISA, EO and DDA are repealed, Suaram will not rest (in its pursuit of human rights)," said its director Kua Kia Soong (above), who was present.

Suaram's demands include:

- * the immediate setting-up of an independent and effective monitoring body to ensure accountability in the police force and other law enforcement agencies;

- * repeal of repressive legislation like the Printing Presses and Publications Act, the Sedition Act and

the Official Secrets Act; and

* recognition of the status and rights of refugees and asylum seekers.

Also present at the launch were Suaram chairperson K Arumugam, Suaram secretariat member Masjaliza Hamzah, former detainee Mat Sah Mohd Satray and his wife Norlaila Othman.

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Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/137954>