

Civil society leader warns of ISA blitz
Malaysiakini.com
July 21, 2010

Ghosts of crackdowns past have returned to haunt opposition and civil society leaders. with Suaram director Kua Kia Soong warning of a possible government-initiated swoop as the general elections draws close.

Speaking at the launch of Suaram's 2009 Human Rights Report in Kuala Lumpur today, he said there was a good reason why the government was still clutching on to the archaic Internal Security Act (ISA).

toni kassim book launch gathering 250609 kua kia soong "The reason is because they want to be ready for a crackdown. It is always there for them (government) in case of a rainy day," he said when queried by the press on the chances of such a blitz before the next general elections.

Kua (right) said it was certainly a possibility, adding that trouble also seems to be brewing within Umno.

"Umno seems to be unsure of what to do after the last general election (when they suffered a huge loss). They are flip-flopping as to whether to continue to be more racist and hold on to their power or to be more attentive to the human rights condition," he explained.

Therefore, the ISA seems to be just the 'safeguard' should there be major dissent amongst the people. This grim scenario came to life in 1987 when former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad unleashed his Operasi Lalang.

"There will be crackdowns as long as you have the ISA," Kua added. "I'm afraid I will be detained under the ISA again".

First family dinner in years

Former ISA detainee Mat Sah Mohd Satray, who was present at the launch, gave an account of his seven-year ISA ordeal at the Kamunting Detention Camp in Taiping.

"As long as the ISA is here, I am still at risk of being detained," he said.

Mat Sah was released in September last year. However, he was placed under restricted residence which was only lifted last month.

azlan "Although I was released, for months I was kept under watch. I had to report to a police station weekly, was confined to the Ampang area only and had to be home by 9pm. There was always someone following me around," he said.

His wife Norlaila Othman, who is a committee member of the Abolish ISA Movement (GMI), stressed that ISA should be repealed not just amended as proposed by the government.

She said her family was only able to go out for dinner together for the first time in years last month when the restricted residence order on Mat Sah was finally lifted.

"My husband was so happy that he was now a free man. We were born free, but the government had taken away seven years of his life.

"We are grateful to God for his liberty but we are not thankful to the government," said Norlaila.

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