

Barricades greet anti-ISA vigils, 36 arrested
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Riot police have barred activists from holding candlelight vigils to commemorate the Internal Security Act's (ISA) 50th anniversary in eight places around the country, with 36 activists arrested.

anti-isa vigil in petaling jaya amcorp mall At Dataran MBPJ, Padang Timur in Petaling Jaya, Selangor - which saw the earliest vigil begin at 8pm - members of the Light Strike Force (LSF) began dispersing the 300-strong crowd just as the latter began singing Negaraku while marching from the mall, through the adjacent carpark and towards the field across the main road.

As they approached the field, they were confronted by a wall of LSF shields wielded by about 30 riot police, backed by another 50 uniformed police.

anti isa vigil pj 010810 06 The officer in charge informed that their gathering was illegal and told them to disperse. When the activists refused, the LSF rushed into the group and pushed them back as police personnel from other sides began arresting the activists.

Police officers chasing the protestors out of the Dataran amid the activists' shouts of "Hidup, hidup! Hidup rakyat!", as other personnel formed a line to block more protestors from entering the square.

At least five people were arrested immediately, including Abolish the ISA movement (GMI) chief Syed Ibrahim Syed Noh, Parti Sosialis Malaysia (PSM) secretary-general S Arutchelvan and PKR supreme council member Badrul Hisham Shaharin.

anti-isa vigil in petaling jaya amcorp mall 2 The activists then retreated to the car park and entered Amcorp Mall, as the LSF and other police formed a cordon in front of the mall entrance as they arrested those dressed in red - the 'official' colour for the vigil - and wearing 'Abolish ISA' badges.

Several activists were arrested as they tried to break out of the police cordon.

'Police acted violently'

anti ISA vigil 010810 siti kasim Siti Kasim (right) from the Bar Council said this was the first time she had seen the police acted with such violence and going to the extent of arresting people even as they enter the nearby Amcorp shopping mall.

"This is very bad. Very violent and unacceptable. We are shocked," she told reporters.

Human rights group Suaram's director Kua Kia Soong also expressed shock and condemned the violence by the police.

amcorp mall anti-isa vigil in petaling jaya "It's disgusting. This possibly could have been a peaceful vigil. What is the aim of the police (doing this)? It's going to make Malaysia more like a police state.

"Today is a very important day. Laws like the ISA only exist in very few countries nowadays. This law allows the authorities to detain people without trial. It's very shameful, and for the

police to behave like this, makes Malaysia even more shameful.

anti isa vigil pj 010810 02 "This is the first time I saw the police rushing and breaking the peace in shopping mall. This is very bad for business," said Kua.

Other than Ibrahim, Arutchelvan and Badrul Hisham, the other individuals arrested and brought to the Petaling Jaya district police station included Suresh Kumar, Mohd Fiqtriy, Naquiuddin Sahar, Albert Ang Yik Chuan, Yew Hun Ng, Ng Yap Hwa, Tsuing Han See, Enalini Elumalai, Mien Lor, Thilaga Sokiapillay, Kohila Y, Bawani K, Parames E, Sivaranjani, Lee Wei Ni, E Sarawanen, Xavier Sim Yoon Han, Aiman Siew Teck Meng, Sheikh Omar, Lim Jian Xin, Muhd Firdaus Khalid, Abdul Aziz Mohammad Ahmad and Rozan Azen Mat Rasip.

'No police permit'

By around 9:15pm, the police had stopped their dispersal and arrests.

As the police transport trucks rolled out of the area, those activists inside the trucks could be heard chanting 'Hidup, hidup!', 'Mansuh ISA!' and 'Polis ganas!'

Arjunaidi Mohamed At a press conference held shortly after, Petaling Jaya police chief Arjunaidi Mohamed (left) said the organisers did not obtain a permit for tonight's gathering.

"No police permit was applied."

The police chief said further that the organisers had claimed to have been issued a permit from the Petaling Jaya City Council (MBPJ)

"But MBPJ is not the authority authorised to issue such permits. They, with their legal knowledge, should know this very well."

He went on to defend the police action on the basis of the protestors' defiance of police orders to disperse.

"We asked them to disperse, but they refused and went into Amcorp Mall.

"When they came out, they scolded the police and challenged us, so we made the arrests," said Arjunaidi.

anti-isa vigil in petaling jaya amcorp mall 3 He revealed that a total of 25 adults - six women and 19 men - were arrested for illegal assembly. Though there were children in the gathering, none was arrested, said Arjunaidi.

"There were kids involved in the demonstration. In fact, we were more than lenient with them. They only care about their purpose," he added.

Selangor CPO Khalid Abu Bakar later said that the police arrested 30 people in Petaling Jaya in total - eight women and 22 men.

It was only at 3am that those arrested were released - one by one - under police bail.

They were ordered to report back to Petaling Jaya district police headquarters on 16 August.

More arrested in Penang

In Ipoh, Perak, similarly, dozens of police officers had cordoned off the Dataran Majlis Bandaraya Ipoh and protesters were barred from entering the venue. About 200 people, nevertheless, participated in a 30-minute vigil which concluded without incident.

In Penang, the police had earlier today posted notices - signed by Georgetown OCPD Asst Comm Gan Kong Meng - around the Speaker's Square in Georgetown warning against any illegal gathering in the area.

Even before the vigil began at 9pm, two activists - Choo Choon Kai and Kris Khaira from PSM - were arrested.

penang isa vigil 010810 ocpd pcBy 8.50pm, Georgetown district police chief Gan Kong Meng asked the crowd - numbering around 100 as opposed to the 180 police personnel who had been mobilised - to "disperse in five minutes."

At the same time, about 10 persons suddenly appeared claiming to represent "those who support the ISA".

Two more activists - lawyer Darshan Singh and Ong Jing Cheng of Suaram - were subsequently taken by the police to Jelutong district police station.

All four activists were released a little after midnight under police bail after their statements were recorded. They have been directed to report back to the Jelutong police station on August 14 2010.

Lau Shu Shi of Suaram was also taken into custody after a warrant was served on her, but this was said to be over an earlier case. She has been ordered to appear in court on Monday.

In Kelantan, anti-ISA vigil coordinators Zaidi Musa and Hamidi Musa were held by the police after the anti-ISA event ended successfully.

Zaid and Hamidi were released under police bail at about 2.50am, and have been requested to report back to the Kota Bharu district police station the next day.

In a statement issued soon after the crackdown, Suaram said it "strongly condemns the police for their continued attacks on freedom of expression, a fundamental right which is guaranteed under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the federal constitution of Malaysia."

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