

**United Malaysia only weapon to kill ISA**  
**Malaysiakini.com**  
**August 14, 2010**

Suhakam's new chairman Hasmy Agam has thrown down the gauntlet to all Malaysians - if you don't want the Internal Security Act (ISA) then stand united in the fight for its removal.

The retired career diplomat enthused over a Malaysia minus the ISA, a situation which he described as 'ideal' though acknowledging things were far from that.

NONEHasmy, 66, (right) pointed out that the only when human rights could take its rightful place as an important aspect of Malaysian society was when everyone - from schoolchildren to enforcement officers - understood their rights.

"It is up to the people of Malaysia whether (or not) they want to retain the ISA in one form or another," Hasmy told during a recent exclusive interview Malaysiakini.

Hasmy, who was Malaysia's ambassador-at-large during former premier Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's administration, pointed out the issue was not as straightforward as simply demanding the repeal of the draconian law.

He said that while the government was planning on amending the ISA to address the many complaints against it, the end result would still be the ISA in one form or another and this will not pacify those who do not agree with it.

'Not in conformity'

"It is in the realm of the political process, not just Suhakam. Maybe the government wants to retain it as part of its campaign, a party platform and as something they champion... (if that's the case) Malaysia is not ready to scrap it.

"If a party that wants to retain the ISA is elected, BN or otherwise, then this is the wish of the people; (it is part of the) democratic process.

"I suppose if a party is not championing the ISA, then they are duty bound to scrap it when they form the government, that is one way of looking at it," he said.

gantang by election 040409 hindraf candle light vigil kamunting isa detainees08Hasmy was in agreement with Suhakam's position that arbitrary laws like the ISA were 'not in conformity' with the principles of human rights and that the sooner they were dropped, the better.

But despite being a self-professed idealist and being 'maybe a little naive', Hasmy knows full well that Suhakam is facing resistance from the government and its enforcement agencies, who have proven to be tough nuts to crack when it comes to extinguishing such legislation.

"It's been an issue for a long time. Suhakam has and will continue to press for the removal of the ISA. Suhakam's stance is very clear. We want it scrapped. How to get it scrapped? We have to convince the executive, the police," he said.

Relic of the past

Hasmy said the government and police had some justification given the complex make-up

of Malaysian society, and that they often quote the trauma of the May 13 racial riots in 1969 as an example.

gmi anti isa candle light vigil protest kamunting 070608 08He stressed that despite some leeway for freedom of assembly to protest against the ISA, due process and the right to representation in court for those detained under the Act, the enforcement agencies themselves did not adhere to the rules, leaving it open to abuse.

"The ISA is a relic of the past. The world is changing, the Emergency is over. There are no more communists. Why should the ISA be retained?"

"We can tighten up other laws to maintain public peace and security. Tighten up sedition laws, maybe have a terrorism act."

"(The) ISA is pretty draconian. And the security forces and authorities are (just using it) to cut corners to make their work easier," he said.

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Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/140058>