



**Controversial cartoonist vows to carry on
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A Malaysian political cartoonist being held by police said today that he will not quit highlighting

controversial issues, as rights activists demanded his freedom.

Zulkifli Anwar Ulhaque (*right*) - better known as Zunar - uses cartoons to confront contentious issues such as the sodomy trial of opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim and police shootings.

He was arrested by police on Friday just hours before he was due to launch his new book. Police also seized 70 copies of his latest work, called "Cartoon-O-Phobia".

"I will continue to draw," the defiant cartoonist told *AFP* from the Sepang police station, south of Kuala Lumpur.

"This government is weak. Anything said against them is considered a threat," Zunar said.

On Saturday, police obtained a one-day remand order from a magistrate to investigate Zunar under the harsh Sedition Act.

Rights activist S Arulchelvan, of human rights group Suaram, criticised the arrest as an abuse of power and said it was an attempt to sabotage the book launch.

"We condemn Zunar's arrest. We demand his immediate release. I was at the launch. A lot of people have placed orders for the book," he said.

The 80-page comic book had a caricature of Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's wife on the front cover and contained cartoons that touched on numerous controversial issues.

Najib, who took office in the mainly Muslim country in April last year, had promised to promote openness and transparency but has since faced accusations that his administration is trying to silence critics.

Major newspapers and broadcasters are closely linked with the ruling coalition, so the Internet has become a lively forum for dissent and debate.

Unlike the mainstream press, the web and online media in Malaysia have remained relatively free, despite occasional raids, bans and government criticism.

Lawyer Fadiyah Nadwa Fikri told *AFP* that Zunar could be freed late Saturday after police record his statements.

- AFP



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