

Group campaigns against draconian law
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A local rights group on Sunday called on Malaysians to speak up against a tough law which allows for detention without trial and launched a campaign to raise awareness on the issue.

The Abolish ISA Movement urged the government to scrap the "draconian" Internal Security Act - which allows the state to hold any person indefinitely without trial - and said the public were misinformed about the law.

"We are going to launch a campaign to distribute one million leaflets to increase the awareness of the public and expose as much as possible the injustices of the ISA," the group's chairman, Syed Ibrahim Syed Noh, told AFP.

"It (the ISA) is seen as a safeguard for national security but in fact it is a threat to our rights as citizens, because there is no opportunity to defend yourself in open courts," Syed Ibrahim said.

He said the leaflets had answers to 20 commonly asked questions about the act and would be distributed in high traffic areas nationwide.

"These are answers to common questions, but such answers you will not hear from the mainstream newspapers or our leaders. It is pertinent for us to provide the answers in our fight against the ISA," he said.

Malaysia is holding more than 100 people under the ISA, over 80 of whom are alleged Islamic militants. Rights groups have said they should all either be freed or brought to court.

The legislation allows for two-year detention periods that can be renewed indefinitely. The government maintains that detention without trial is needed as a first line of defence against terrorism.

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