

Hindraf accepts PAS' offer, urges others to speak up
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The Hindu Rights Action Force (Hindraf) welcomes the offer by PAS to initiate reconciliation between the banned movement and the government, said Hindraf chairperson P Waythamoorthy.

However, the self-exiled leader who is currently in London also called for veteran politicians like Umno deputy president Musa Hitam, former MCA president Ong Ka Ting and Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) chief Joseph Pairin Kitingan to speak up against the ban of Hindraf.

p waythamoorthy "We would like to invite matured and seasoned politicians... to participate together to act as mediators for Hindraf, in all fairness as we trust they are able understand the problems faced by the Malaysian Indians as a minority and maybe able to reach out to the Umno-led government in lifting the ban on Hindraf," said Waythamoorthy in a statement.

"The aspiration of Hindraf has always been to address the grievances of the ethnic Malaysian Indians who are continuously marginalised and discriminated in every aspect of socio-economic in Malaysia," he added.

The movement was made illegal on Oct 15 shortly after some 200 Hindraf supporters visited the prime minister's 'open house' during the Hari Raya celebration on Oct 1 at the Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC).

On Oct 23, 11 others were arrested for gathering at the Prime Minister Department's in Putrajaya to submit a letter for the release of the five Hindraf leaders detained under the Internal Security Act (ISA).

Among those who were held but released the next day were Waythamoorthy's wife K Shanti and the couple's six-year-old daughter Vwashnavi.

Several days later, PAS vice-president Husam Musa led a delegation to the Putrajaya district police headquarters to reconcile matters.

"PAS and other political groups as well as non partisan groups have voiced their dissent against the government's stance in declaring Hindraf illegal as they truly understand that in reality, the Malaysian Indians are subjected to socio-economic imbalance due to unfair and unjust policies thus creating a new underclass society," said Waythamoorthy.

He added that the rights of the Indian minority were never raised until Hindraf voiced their grievances "to be treated equally and fairly."

"If the government fails to engage through these mediators, it clearly shows that the Umno-led government is least interested in addressing the Malaysian Indians dilemma but rather continue their obstinate methods in further alienating the Indians in every aspect of socio-economic development in (the country)," he said.

Front Line voices concern

In a related development, Dublin-based human rights organisation Front Line, had also come to the defence of Hindraf and voiced concern over the predicament of the 10 people who were arrested on Oct 23 for illegal gathering.

"Front Line believes that the... persons (who) have been arrested and detained solely on account of their legitimate human rights activities calling for the release of P Uthayakumar, M Manoharan, V Ganapathy Rao, T Vasanthakumar and R Kengatharan," said the organisation's director Mary Lawlor in a letter addressed to the King.

"In addition Front Line believes that the five members of Hindraf were targeted as a result of their work defending the rights of the ethnic minority Indians in Malaysia."

The organisation also expressed concern for the "physical and psychological integrity" of members of the Hindraf movement and urged the authorities to release the five detained under the ISA for their "legitimate human rights activities."

"Guarantee in all circumstances that human rights defenders in Malaysia are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals, and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment," Lawlor said citing the United Nation's declaration on human rights.

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