

## **ISA rallies: Both sides to defy police order**

**Malaysiakini.com**

**Jul 29, 2009**

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Whether they are for or against the Internal Security Act (ISA), two sets of protestors are determined that their respective rallies will proceed on Saturday - in direct defiance of a police order.

The Abolish ISA Movement (GMI by its Malay abbreviation) and Majlis Permuafakatan Ummah (Pewaris) separately said today that they are adamant about staging their gatherings despite a police warning yesterday.

GMI president Syed Ibrahim Syed Noh (right) further said his movement will not attend a meeting with the police today as requested.

"It would not make any difference if we meet the police today, because they have already issued a warning. Besides, we are in the midst of preparing for the rally," he said.

Instead, GMI will submit a letter to the police to inform them about the rally and its objectives.

Pewaris deputy president II Rahimuddin Md Harun, when contacted, stressed that his movement intends to defend Malays and the nation by standing up for the security law.

The decision was reached in spite of a meeting two days ago, at which the police urged the movement to cancel its rally.

"The police are not the ones who should decide what is best for the country," he said when contacted today.

Yesterday, Kuala Lumpur chief police officer Muhammad Sabtu Osman had warned both movements against proceeding with their rallies, saying this would be an unlawful assembly as well as a threat to public order.

The rallies are being called on the 49th anniversary of the passage of the ISA. The tough legislation allows the government to detain political dissidents - among others - for two years without a trial. The detention period may be extended indefinitely.

**Black versus white**

GMI represents more than 83 NGOs, political parties, student bodies, women's rights groups and human rights organisations. Pewaris represents 12 Malay NGOs.

GMI supporters have been told to wear either black or red, while Pewaris wants supporters to wear white on Saturday.

Based on their initial programme, the pro-ISA (see map below) movement will gather at three locations - Pasar Seni, Masjid Negara and Padang Merbok - in Kuala Lumpur before walking to Dataran Merdeka at 2pm. There, they will sign a 60-metre banner in support of the ISA.

GMI plans to start its rally at 2pm from three locations - Sogo shopping complex, Masjid Jamek and Masjid Negara.

Both sets of protestors will then converge on Istana Negara, where they will hand their memorandum to a palace official, to be submitted to the Agong Mirzan Zainal Abidin.

A face-off is expected on this final stage of the procession, as both sets will use the same route to get to the palace.

Pakatan Rakyat bigwigs including PKR de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim, PAS spiritual leader Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat (left) and DAP veteran leader Lim Kit Siang are expected to join the GMI rally.

Pewaris may lack the presence of public figures after Umno Youth chief Khairy Jamaluddin advised the movement against going ahead with the rally because the government is in the process of reviewing the ISA.

Rahimuddin therefore expects that ISA supporters will be outnumbered by anti-ISA protestors - to begin with, Pewaris only has about 5,000 members.

"Besides, we do not have any money to spend on preparations. We don't even have flyers to inform the public about our cause, unlike GMI which has many sponsors especially from Pakatan leaders," he claimed.

Past protests on Kuala Lumpur streets - including the Bersih and Hindraf rallies of 2007 - were met with police action including the use of tear gas and water cannon.

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