

**Malaysian Govt Mocks Freedom Of Assembly And Embarrasses The UN Human Rights Council
With Its Membership**

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The Peaceful Assembly Bill 2011, tabled by the Barisan Nasional government at the Dewan Rakyat on 22 November 2011, is a mockery to the basic tenets of rights and freedoms provided for in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) to which Malaysia is a signatory.

Further - given this legislative development and the BN government's consistent breach of international conventions, covenants, and fundamental principles of human rights - Malaysia's membership in the United Nation's Human Rights Council serves only as an embarrassment to the UN body.

The promised national reforms by the federal government have not been visibly introduced and a conservative, manipulative, and autocratic regime still leads our forward-thinking citizens while ruining the reputation of our developing nation and diminishing the vast economic prospects available to the country.

The Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, Nazri Abdul Aziz, has again insulted the rakyat's intellect - and made a mockery of the concept of peaceful assembly - by introducing ludicrous proposals in the abovementioned bill. These propositioned amendments are in breach of Article 20, and numerous other articles, contained in the UDHR.

The Bill's requirements of a 30-day notice for a gathering of citizens, alongside other unreasonable restrictions such as a ban on street assemblies and gatherings outside places of worship, are just plain preposterous proposals by the government.

The organising of impromptu assemblies, especially to raise objections and concerns on pressing public issues, is curtailed by a need for a lengthy notice-period and thereafter the ability of the police to stop such protests arbitrarily. This is unconstitutional to say the least.

While acknowledging the government's intention to do away with the need for police permit applications for an assembly (via planned amendments to the Police Act), it is evident that the Peaceful Assembly Bill places continued unchecked and unyielding power in the hands of the police.

Fear of 'people power'

The Bill is as well introduced at a time when BN's political opponents, especially the Pakatan Rakyat, have gained ground in successfully representing and meeting the needs of Malaysians; particularly within the states it governs.

The PM, it seems, is worried about BN's ability to continue to govern the country given that Pakatan Rakyat is a reliable alternative and growing as the preferred choice among the people to

represent them.

It further appears that Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak is running scared of an irked society who have shown a keenness and the ability to mobilise themselves in the face of an inept government.

The Barisan Nasional government has had over 5 decades to prove itself worthy of being the chosen administrators of the country. However, it continues to fail miserably to govern the nation via means that uphold rights, freedoms, and justice. It further denies Malaysians the ability to develop as a society that is rooted in a demonstratively liberal and functioning democracy.

Democracy spells ‘people power’. However, the above draconian Bill merely spells it as ‘people powerless’. The BN government indeed intends to turn the nation into a police state.

Malaysians need to decide, come the time, if they truly want to retain a government that curbs the rakyat’s freedoms, tramples on their basic rights, insults their intelligence, and mismanages the economy by blowing away the taxes of their hard-earned incomes. Or should we choose to move the nation forward with leaders who believe in – and uphold – the freedoms and rights of the rakyat.

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