

Najib Has Taken The Rakyat For A Ride!

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The much-heralded reforms promised by Najib to bring us into a new era of liberalism has exploded in the face of the rakyat as a sham, a shameful promise.

We were promised that the ISA would be revoked – and the rakyat rejoiced prematurely. The joy was short-lived when it was revealed that two other laws would replace the ISA, retaining the obnoxious detention without trial. The same undemocratic features of the ISA will now come under a new name, gravely disappointing the rakyat.

We were promised easier democratic freedom of assembly without the need for police permit. The rakyat applauded this sensible approach, which seemed to guarantee the right of assembly as enshrined in the Federal Constitution. With the presentation of the Peaceful Assembly Bill, now they realise that they have been deluded once again.

The Barisan Nasional is not capable of respecting the peoples' human rights or honouring its solemn word. The BN is only used to restricting our rights, denying our freedom, controlling our space, destroying our faith in the electoral process, trampling upon our judiciary and completing ignoring what is fair and just.

Old habits die hard and that is the reason it is unwilling to surrender those rights that are justly due to the rakyat. It may proclaim that it is prepared to revoke restrictive laws but in reality it is incapable of returning these rights to the people. It can only rule forcefully; it cannot govern according to the rule of law.

We cannot and should not expect the BN to return our rights. It is not a realistic expectation. We have to take possession of our rights. We have to claim our democratic space; we have to defend our freedom.

It is in this spirit that the lawyers have decided to march on Tuesday, 29 November 2011 from the Lake Gardens to the Parliament in protest against the sham Peaceful Assembly Bill, which has made a mockery of our right to assemble peacefully and spontaneously.

This Bill imposes many unjust restrictions and conditions and subjects organisers and all participants to heavy penalties. It is clearly meant to discourage and stop peaceful protests from ever taking place. We cannot tolerate this. We cannot condone this undemocratic Bill.

Aliran urges every freedom-loving Malaysian to be part of the Bar Council march to Parliament – the March for Freedom! Let us gather peacefully and march orderly to parliament to convey how upset and disappointed we are with this Bill that was promulgated without consultation with the public.

This is not a Peaceful Assembly Bill - it is a Bill against the Freedom of Assembly. It completely

ignores Article 20 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states: "Everyone has the right to freedom of assembly and association."

ALIRAN EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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