

**Bar Council: Government action against human trafficking politically driven**  
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**By Lisa J. Ariffin**

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 2 — The Malaysian Bar today said the government's dithering action against human trafficking is being dictated more by foreign and domestic political considerations than a sincere desire to do what is right.

"If protecting the interests of immigrants is indeed the goal, the Malaysian Bar then questions the decision of the Malaysian government to deport 11 Chinese nationals of Uighur ethnicity back to China on August 18, 2011," Bar president Lim Chee Wee (picture) said in a press statement.

Home Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein had said these 11 Uighurs were involved in human trafficking and were wanted by the Chinese government.

However, Lim insisted they should have been prosecuted here instead, and their victims of human trafficking safeguarded in Malaysia.

"There was no pressing need for the Malaysian government to deport the 11 Uighurs back to China if it genuinely wanted to address the issue of people trafficking or migrant smuggling.

"However, they have been deported to China, and nothing has been heard about protecting their human trafficking victims. There is also no information about the whereabouts of the 11 Uighurs, what has happened to them, or indeed whether or not they are still alive. One of the 11 is married to a Malaysian," Lim said.

"The deportation of the 11 Uighurs back to China raises grave concerns whether the Malaysian government refouled potential refugees or asylum seekers in violation of international law.

"We are given to understand that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Kuala Lumpur was denied access to these 11 Uighurs and was therefore unable to ascertain whether they were in a position to make an asylum claim," he added.

Lim pointed out that in the Australian situation, Putrajaya wanted to have an arrangement with the Australian government even though Malaysia did not have the requisite legal regime.

However in the Chinese situation, even though the necessary legislation was in place, the Malaysian government chose instead to relinquish legal jurisdiction over the 11 Uighurs and hand them back to China, he said.

"The inconsistent actions raise questions about the purpose and motive of the act of deportation," he said.

The Bar president added that in October 2010 eight immigration officials, who were said to have been involved in a human trafficking ring, were arrested under the Internal Security

Act 1960 and then subsequently released last month without charge.

“Again, nothing has been mentioned about protecting their human trafficking victims. By its very failure to take further legal action, the Malaysian government is placing in jeopardy its integrity in respect of human trafficking,” Lim said.

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