

Release suspected Islamic militants from ISA, says Suhakam
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KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 19 — The Malaysian Human Rights Commission (Suhakam) wants the authorities to release 13 suspected militants from Internal Security Act (ISA) detention as their arrests went against Datuk Seri Najib Razak's promise to repeal the law.

Suhakam chairman Tan Sri Hasmy Agam said in a strongly-worded statement today that the government should instead charge the suspects in open court and allow them legal representation.

"The Commission also calls upon the government to stop legislating laws which allows detention without trial and to deal with issues relating to terrorism issues under other existing laws; and that pending the repeal of the ISA, no more arrests will be made under this Act," he added.

The Inspector-General of Police announced on Thursday that seven Malaysians and six foreigners were arrested in Sabah on Monday under section 73(1) of the ISA to thwart their alleged efforts at reviving a militant movement in the state.

The police have not disclosed the identity of the militant movement.

Bernama Online reported, however, an English daily has linked the individuals to the Islamic Abu Omar group, better known as the Kaltim group that uses Kalimantan as its base.

According to the daily, the group was using Tawau as a transit point to amass firearms procured from south Philippines.

IGP Tan Sri Ismail Omar and Home Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein have defended the use of the ISA on the suspected militants, saying the arrests were the result of both internal and foreign intelligence received by the police.

In his Malaysia Day address, Prime Minister Najib had promised a raft of reforms including repealing the ISA to give the public more freedom.

But the prime minister later said the repeal of the law that allows for preventive detention without trial will only take place next year after two new laws are drafted to replace it.

Najib's promises of reforms, which also include doing away with annual permits for print media and a parliamentary panel on electoral improvements, came after widespread condemnation over the crackdown on the July 9 Bersih 2.0 rally.

Police dispersed tens of thousands who poured into the capital to call for free and fair elections, using water cannons and tear gas in chaotic scenes that saw over 1,500 arrested, scores injured and the death of an ex-soldier.

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