

Lawyers want PM to revoke ISA arrests orders, speed up change
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KUALA LUMPUR, June 30 — The prime minister should ensure the release or prosecution of 45 detainees still being held under the now-repealed Internal Security Act (ISA), the Malaysian Bar said today.

Although Parliament abolished the repressive law after it passed the replacement Security Offences (Special Measures) Act in April, the remaining ISA detainees will remain incarcerated until their detention orders expire.

The ISA replacement is part of legislative reforms announced by Datuk Seri Najib Razak in line with his transformation policies.

While praising Najib for his “progressive” views, the Bar said that the “pace of change” needs to be increased.

“The government should either charge or release the 20 Malaysians and 25 foreign nationals still being detained,” Lim Chee Wee, president of the Malaysian Bar, said in a statement today.

He said the move was necessary to “fully end the existence of the ISA” and free the country from the “negative legacy of past laws”, as well as enhance the rule of law.

He also said Najib should “intervene and revoke the detention orders”, noting that the “hallmark of his leadership is to progressively transform the nation”.

The Bar said some detainees had “recently begun a hunger strike”, while the foreign nationals “have not had any contact with their diplomatic missions in Malaysia”.

Home Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein had in April said he must individually review each ISA detainee’s case when asked if they will be freed following the repeal of the law.

“It is a case-by-case situation. If I make a mistake and release them before proper consideration, and they end up jeopardising the safety of Malaysians, the responsibility would be mine,” Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein reportedly said.

The Malaysian Bar had earlier expressed concerns on the “lack of safeguards” in the recently-passed Security Offences (Special Measures) Act 2012, a law which removes the government’s option to detain without trial and providing a maximum detention of 28 days for the purpose of investigation.

Under the ISA, an individual believed to have committed a security offence can be detained for up to two years without trial, on orders from the home minister.

According to the New Straits Times, 10,883 people had been detained under Section 8 (1) of the ISA, while 4,461 detention orders had been issued.

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