

Rafizi probed again, now for Sedition Act
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Police have initiated a probe against opposition lawmaker Rafizi Ramli under the Sedition Act, in what is seen as another attempt by Putrajaya to stifle dissent through the draconian act.

The Pandan MP was told to give his statement to the police at 5pm today over his Malay-language book "Reformasi 2.0: Fakta Kes Anwar", which details the facts surrounding PKR de facto leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's sodomy cases.

"Umno bloggers have orchestrated the whole campaign this past month to lodge a police report against the book, so I was aware that police reports have been made against me. I supposedly tarnished the image of the judiciary with my book," Rafizi told The Malaysian Insider.

"But what is more worrying is that there is this constant pattern in which authorities use the law selectively to silence their critics. This is why we are seeing so many opposition leaders being charged this past year."

Early this month, DAP vice-chairman Teresa Kok was charged under the Sedition Act for her satirical Chinese New Year video "Onedurful Malaysia". In February, the late Karpal Singh was also found guilty under the same act for having questioned the Perak Sultan over the 2009 Perak constitutional crisis.

Last year, PKR vice-president and Batu MP Tian Chua was served under the Sedition Act for remarks over the Sulu incursion of Lahad Datu, Sabah in February last year.

He and social activists Hishamuddin Rais and Adam Adli Abd Halim had also been charged with the same act in May last year, for remarks at a forum at the Kuala Lumpur and Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall that month.

The slew of charges flies in the face of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak's pledge in 2012 to abolish the act, as part of reform promises made to halt a slide in support for Barisan Nasional.

"The authorities, whether it's the police or the Attorney-General, jump at any opportunity to initiate legal action against the Pakatan leadership, when voicing out public interest is part and parcel of our obligation to the public as politicians," said Rafizi.

"While at the same time Isma (Ikatan Muslimin Malaysia) makes statements that are downright abusive and meant to anger and divide the public, but no action is taken against them.

"I have no doubt there is a pattern developing in which authorities are very keen to levy charges against the opposition. This is symptomatic of what is happening in other countries, where the law is a tool used by authoritarian regimes when they cannot face the opposition."

Rafizi said he was unperturbed by the police investigation, as it was not the first time he had been probed.

"It is a job hazard, so I would never consider myself the victim, as that is exactly what they want me to feel: small and victimised. In fact, it's not very smart of them to do this, as it will just make my book more popular," he said, adding that his book had already sold more than 20,000 copies.

Rafizi said he would cooperate with the police throughout the investigation, and give or withhold statements as according to his rights.

But he did voice concern that politicians younger who are less bold than him may be daunted by the constant crackdown against political dissent.

“It’s worrying, because this is always used against politicians, and the junior ones may not have the same kind of bravado I have. It may work. It will definitely limit the democratic space in the country.” – May 14, 2014.

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