

**Najib's right to clamp down on dissent, says Shahidan  
Malaysian Insider  
Oct 28, 2015  
By Elizabeth Zachariah**

Datuk Seri Najib Razak has the prerogative to act against dissenting voices as this was within his powers as prime minister, a Cabinet member said today in rebuttal to a new report by a global human rights group about Malaysia's clampdown on freedom of expression.

Refuting allegations that Putrajaya was abusing laws to criminalise peaceful expression, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim said Najib had been fair in all his actions.

"The remarks are in reference to some of the prime minister's actions but it is Najib's jurisdiction to do so," he told reporters at the Parliament lobby today, referring to [findings in a recent report](#) by international group Human Rights Watch (HRW).

"It was his (Najib's) jurisdiction and he did not go against it. He has conducted his responsibilities fairly."

The New York-based watchdog released a report yesterday documenting Putrajaya's alleged abuse of laws to criminalise peaceful expression and urged Najib to stop treating criticism as a crime.

Titled "Creating a Culture of Fear: The Criminalisation of Peaceful Expression in Malaysia", the 145-page report accused Najib of breaking his promises to repeal repressive and draconian laws and also reminded him of his pledge to "uphold civil liberties" when he took office in April 2009.

HRW said the Najib administration, particularly since 2013, had used a range of broad and vaguely worded laws "to harass, investigate and arrest" individuals for peaceful expression.

The level of repression intensified since late last year amid increasing public criticism of Putrajaya's treatment of former opposition leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, now serving jail time for sodomy, and over plans to impose the goods and services tax which was rolled out in April this year.

HRW also noted the "spiralling corruption scandal" involving state-owned investment firm 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB), which led the government to block websites and suspend newspapers reporting on the scandal.

"Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak and the Malaysian government have repeatedly broken promises to revise laws that criminalise peaceful expression. Instead, Malaysia has gone on a binge of prosecution of critics," said HRW Asia director Brad Adams.

HRW said it had written to the home minister, Attorney-General, inspector-general of police (IGP) and chairman of the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) for their views on issues raised in the report, but none responded.

However, Shahidan today invited the group to list down examples of their allegations against the Malaysian government.

“We want their examples. They should come and talk to us.” – October 28, 2015.

Copyright © 2015 Edge Insider Sdn Bhd

Source:

<http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/najibs-right-to-clamp-down-on-dissent-says-shahidan>