

SOLIDARITY STATEMENT FOR PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE ANWAR IBRAHIM

We, the undersigned human rights organizations, stand in solidarity with Anwar Ibrahim, condemn the politically motivated charges and trial that led to his imprisonment, and call for his immediate and unconditional release.

August 10, 2015, marks Anwar Ibrahim's 68th birthday and 182 days spent as a prisoner of conscience. Prior to his imprisonment, Anwar Ibrahim was the head of Malaysia's opposition and a prominent Muslim leader. The trial that led to his conviction was condemned as not meeting international standards for fair trials by numerous independent observers who monitored court proceedings.

Anwar Ibrahim's conviction on charges of sodomy on February 2015 raised serious doubts about the independence of Malaysia's judiciary. The irregularities in the proceedings appeared to chime with a long-standing effort by the ruling coalition to disqualify him from holding political office and from fulfilling his elected role as a Member of Parliament and leader of the opposition.

We also note with great concern Anwar Ibrahim's deteriorating health and the difficulties he continues to face in receiving proper medical attention in Sungai Buloh Prison, Selangor State. Anwar Ibrahim's poor detention conditions are indicative of wider problems within the Malaysian prison system.

We call on the Malaysian authorities to uphold the rule of law and human rights, in particular the right to a fair trial, including by ensuring that the judiciary is completely independent from the executive branch.

We also express our grave concern over the continued crackdown on freedom of expression and political dissent in Malaysia. The ongoing arrest, detention and criminal proceedings against dozens of government critics under repressive laws, such as the 1948 Sedition Act, and the increasing harassment and censorship of independent media, represent a major setback for human rights in the country. The rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly are enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and guaranteed by Malaysia's Constitution. The continued use of repressive legislation to suppress fundamental rights is severely damaging Malaysia's international reputation.

We therefore urge the Malaysian government to take immediate steps to repeal or amend all laws that impose unreasonable and disproportionate restrictions on the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. These laws include the 1948 Sedition Act, the 1959 Prevention of Crime Act, the 1984 Printing Presses and Publications Act, the 2012 Peaceful Assembly Act, and the 2012 Security Offences (Special Measures) Act. Instead, human rights, including the rights to freedom of expression and peacefully assembly, should be protected by law in accordance with international human rights law and standards.

In addition, we call on the Malaysian government to repeal Article 377 of the Criminal Code and abolish sodomy as a crime. This colonial-era provision, which bans private consensual homosexual acts, is blatantly discriminatory and has no place in a modern and rights-respecting nation. United Nations (UN) human rights mechanisms have repeatedly called for a repeal of such legislation because it violates a number of key human rights, including the rights to equality and to privacy.

We firmly believe that the Malaysian government must listen to the people's calls for reforms. Authorities must respect all human rights promote transparency and good governance and uphold the rule of law.

The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
Amnesty International
Article 19
ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights (APHR)
Suaram
Global Bersih