

**UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS ZEID RA'AD HIGHLIGHTS
ARBITRARY DETENTION OF MALAYSIAN OPPOSITION LEADER ANWAR
IBRAHIM IN ANNUAL REPORT TO HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL**

*Anwar only prisoner of conscience anywhere in the world
mentioned by High Commissioner by name*

Geneva – In remarks to the Human Rights Council earlier today presenting his annual report, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad spoke to shrinking democratic space in Malaysia. He highlighted the ongoing imprisonment of Anwar Ibrahim, which he described as arbitrary, as emblematic of the country's retreat from democratic principles. His remarks, in full, were as follows:

In Malaysia, democratic space continues to be limited, with the Government applying "sedition" and other charges to an ever-widening circle of journalists, human rights defenders, political opponents and critical voices. The enactment of the Prevention of Terrorist Act and the National Security Council Act, without proper human rights safeguards, and without transparent and consultative process, is also a matter of concern. The imprisonment of a former opposition leader, Anwar Ibrahim - whose detention has been ruled arbitrary by the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention - is emblematic of a broader democratic malaise.

Anwar is a Malaysian opposition leader and a former Deputy Prime Minister. He led a diverse opposition coalition, cutting across race and religion, to win 52 percent of the popular vote among Malaysians in the country's 2013 parliamentary elections. He is now imprisoned on fabricated charges because he is a democratic threat to Prime Minister Najib Razak. Amnesty International designated him a prisoner of conscience; the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention determined his detention is arbitrary in an October 2015 opinion.

Since his imprisonment in February 2015, Anwar has suffered numerous human rights and due process violations. These include the consistent denial of access to adequate medical care and treatment for his existing injuries as well as new conditions that arose from his detention. Of recent concern is that, as of March 3, 2016, Anwar has lost access to his counsel. He had been effectively denied the use of his lawyers, as visits with them were restricted to only one hour per week, despite the fact that there are 16 ongoing civil and criminal cases. As such, Anwar has had no choice but to discharge his counsel and to represent himself.

High Commissioner Zeid's strong statement of support joins others in condemning Anwar's imprisonment. US Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Samantha Powers, called it an "unjust jailing," and Human Rights Watch referred to it as a "travesty of justice." The Governing Council of the Inter-Parliamentary Union called in a Resolution for "the authorities to do everything possible to address this situation," and the European Parliament issued a Resolution on Malaysia urging the immediate release "of all political prisoners, including ... Anwar Ibrahim."

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