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# Malaysia: CSOs Stand in Solidarity with Individuals being Silenced or Censored for Dissent

Saturday 27 June 2020, by Civil society organisations (CSO) (Date first published: 19 June 2020).

We, the undersigned civil society organisations (CSO), strongly condemn the continued use of repressive laws as tools of suppression by the new Malaysian government to silence dissent and opposing views.

We note that since the change of government at the federal level in March this year, the State has been increasingly using Section 233 of the Communications and Multimedia Act (CMA) and laws such as the Sedition Act 1948, the Peaceful Assembly Act 2012 and Sections 504 and 505 of the Penal Code to silence freedom of expression, speech and assembly. We find such attempts to be similar to strategic lawsuits against public participation tactics where legal action is brought against human rights defenders with the intention to censor, intimidate and silence critics until they abandon their criticism. This is an especially dangerous form of retaliation from the government because of its potential to create a wider chilling effect on the media, civil society and activists, but disguised as a legitimate lawsuit.

..we call on the government, and its other State apparatus, to:

- End and refrain from the continued use of these intimidating measures and repressive laws to threaten and silence those exercising their fundamental human rights and speaking on behalf of the public and those marginalised in these very trying times and halt all ongoing investigations;
- 2. Withdraw all charges against human rights defenders, media and opposition members who are being investigated or charged under the above-mentioned repressive laws;
- 3. Enact a right to information law and repeal or amend repressive laws such as the Printing Presses and Publications Act (PPPA), the Official Secrets Act (OSA), the Sedition Act and Section 233 of the CMA, so that these laws are not utilised arbitrarily to stifle all manner of speech, and;
- 4. Create an enabling environment that promotes critical thinking, healthy debates, transparency and accountability from the government as well as measures focused on building the people's trust in the government not further undermining the people's human rights.

End this culture of bullying and suppression now!



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