

People's Empowerment

มูลนิธิศักยภาพชุมชน

Empowering People for a Strong Civil Society

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Press Statement

Use of ISA by Malaysian Government violation of Malay Constitution, ASEAN Charter, and International Law.

The arrest of two journalists and one Member of Parliament over the past weekend under the Internal Security Act (ISA) by Malaysian authorities, is in gross violation of the Malay Constitution, ASEAN Charter and international human rights norms, explained Chalida Tajaroensuk, Director of People's Empowerment in a statement released today.

"The ISA is intended to combat serious threats to public security, not political intimidation" said Ms. Tajaroensuk, in light of the detention of Raja Petra Kamar, Tan Hoon Cheng, and Teresa Kok. While Ms. Cheng has subsequently been released, Mr. Kamar and Ms. Kok remain in detention, deprived of access to family or legal representation.

All three were detained under Section 73(1) of the ISA based on "reasonable cause to believe that they were acting in a manner prejudicial to the security of Malaysia" reports stated. However, government sources have failed to clarify what threat, if any, the three posed.

Use of draconian measures under the ISA are permitted only under the most grave threats to public security, and not for silencing legitimate political activity and protected free speech, People's Empowerment explained. The reported publications by Mr. Kamar and Ms. Cheng are clearly protected under Article 10 of the Malaysian Constitution, establishing the right to *free speech*, while the reported charges against Ms. Kok, a popular member of the Democratic Action Party, have been publicly established as false.

As a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Malaysian government must uphold the principles of the ASEAN Charter, which it fully ratified earlier this year. Political use of the ISA by the Malaysian government is thus in clear breach of the principles of good governance, rule of law, and democracy repeatedly stated throughout the Charter.

In light of this grave breach, People's Empowerment calls on the ASEAN Secretariat to take immediate action in order to secure the release of the remaining two detainees. Such violations of basic rights and norms, no longer remain a matter of "internal affairs" but affect all ASEAN member States.

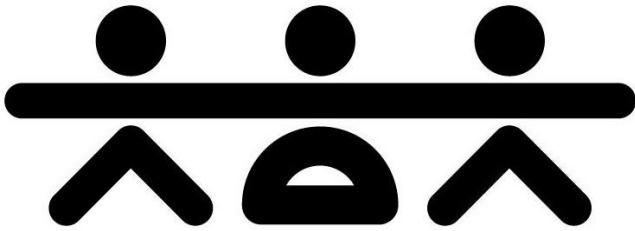
"We can not remain indifferent to the persecution of civil society in any ASEAN State," said Ms. Tajaroensuk. "Civil society across the region must take a stand to uphold rule of law and good governance in Southeast Asia", explaining People's Empowerments call for solidarity and support of the detained.

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Empowering People for a Strong Civil Society

Organization Background

People's Empowerment is a registered independent non-governmental organization (NGO), established in 2006 to address the needs of people networks in Thailand. People's Empowerment acts as the executive secretariat for a coalition of five varied community based organizations (CBO) in Thailand, and maintains a close relationship with other partner networks, both within Thailand and throughout Southeast Asia.

Our mission is to create sustainable mechanisms for individual actors, civil society members, grassroots coalitions and popular movements to work together as catalyst for positive social change.

How we work

To accomplish our mission, People's Empowerment engages in a two-pronged approach, developing people networks' organizational capacity both internally and externally. Internal development is achieved by provided training, consultation, and professional skills tailored to meet the needs of our various beneficiaries. Externally, we engage the innovative concept of **"People-to-People"** (P2P) action. We believe that providing various networks with the opportunity to directly engage with each other on common agendas, share knowledge, and develop common strategies', is central to the successes and vitality of civil society in the Thailand.

What we do

People's Empowerment works to promote a wide range of human rights and human security issues throughout Thailand and the region. We consult and support people networks and international organizations, providing both horizontal links between different organizations and vertical ties with public agents at the national, regional, and international levels.

Our activities encompass a broad range of issues, representing a cross section of Thai civil society. Examples include coordinating the Thai consultation on the ASEAN Human Rights Body and guiding the 2008 Thai National Process on ASEAN. People's Empowerment utilizes the various issues and forums to promote our main mission of creating sustainable mechanisms for individuals & people networks to work together as catalyst for positive social change in Thailand.

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