

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

7 November 2008  
AI Index No: ASA 28/007/2008

## **Malaysia: Release of blogger welcome but more needed**

Amnesty International welcomed the release today of Malaysia blogger Raja Petra but called on the government to stop using the Internal Security Act (ISA) to control dissent.

A Malaysian high court ordered the release of blogger Raja Petra Kamarudin on the grounds that his arrest, under the Internal Security Act (ISA), was unconstitutional.

A social commentator and the editor of news blog Malaysia Today, Raja Petra was arrested on 12 September for threatening national security and potentially "causing tension among the country's multi-racial and multi-religious society".

Articles published online by Raja Petra were deemed insulting to Muslims and to the Prophet Muhammad and were thought defamatory of Malaysia's leaders. The articles in question were 'Malays, the Enemy of Islam', 'Let's send the Altantuya murderers to hell', 'I promise to be a good, non-hypocritical Muslim' and 'Not all Arabs are descendents of the Prophet'.

Judge Syed Ahmad Helmy, of the High Court in the state of Selangor, ruled that the Malaysian Home Minister Syed Hamid Albar had acted beyond his powers in having Raja Petra arrested.

The Malaysian government continues to use or threatens to use the ISA against people whom they accuse of being threats to national security, including government critics and those allegedly involved in "terrorist-linked" activities.

The ISA allows the police to arrest individuals they believe have acted, or are "about to" or "likely to" act in a way that would threaten Malaysian security, "essential services" or "economic life" (Article 73 (1)b).

After an initial 60-day detention for "investigation", the ISA allows for detention without trial for up to two years renewable indefinitely, without the detainee being charged with a crime or tried in a court of law.

The Malaysian government has used this law as a repressive measure to control dissent.

Amnesty International calls for the government to revoke the ISA immediately, and to charge with an offence and bring to fair trial, or release immediately, more than 60 people still detained under the ISA.

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