



For Immediate Release

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Malaysia: Chair of Electoral Reform Movement – Bersih 2.0, Maria Chin Should be Released



(Photo Credit: Edgar Su-Reuters)

(Seoul, 24 November 2016) The Asia Democracy Network (ADN) condemns the arbitrary arrest and detention of Maria Chin Abdullah, the chairperson of the electoral reform movement, Bersih 2.0, on broad and dubious charges of undermining parliamentary democracy.

We deplore the police for invoking the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act 2012 (SOSMA) in detaining Maria Chin Abdullah. It is mala-fide and an abuse of power as the SOSMA was originally passed by the government on justification to fight terrorist and gave the police extensive powers of detaining a person for a maximum of 28 days without trial.

Campaigning for free and fair election is not a crime, and certainly is not a security issue. Free and fair election does not undermine parliamentary democracy but building it.

The Malaysian government should prosecute Maria Chin Abdullah and prove the charges against her in court or else she should be released. It is a blatant violation of the right to be presumed innocent before proven guilty by detaining Maria Chin Abdullah for a prolonged 28 days under the draconian SOSMA merely to investigate charges against her.

The presumption of innocence, the burden of proof is on the prosecution that a person is innocent until proven guilty, is a legal right and also regarded as an international human right in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Therefore, the police should investigate and gather sufficient evidence to prove their case against Maria Chin Abdullah before an arrest is made.

The arrest and detention of Maria Chin Abdullah is clearly in bad faith as it was made a day before the Bersih 5 rally, which was attended by 150,000 protesters calling for sweeping institutional reform, including clean elections and the stepping down of Prime Minister Najib Razak after 700 million USD was found to be channeled into his personal bank accounts in the 1MDB scandal.

We are gravely concerned with the detention conditions of Maria Chin Abdullah under the SOSMA with no bail allowed and limited access to her lawyers and family members. She is detained in solitary confinement in a secret detention cell with no windows, no mattress and blanket and the lights are kept on 24 hours, which deprives her of sleep. Such detention conditions constitute a form of torture under international human rights laws.

We call on the Malaysian government to release Maria Chin Abdullah immediately and unconditionally.

For inquiry, please contact:

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