

JOINT MEDIA STATEMENT

17 October 2023

Update to the Detention of Kean Wong, editor of Rebirth: Reformasi, Resistance, And Hope in New Malaysia

We, the undersigned organisations and individuals, stand in solidarity with Kean Wong, editor of “Rebirth: Reformasi, Resistance, And Hope in New Malaysia” as he undergoes investigation under the Sedition Act 1948, Printing Presses and Publications Act 1984 and the Communications and Multimedia Act 1998.

This book was banned on 1 July 2020 under the Printing Presses and Publications (Control of Undesirable Publications) Order 2020 as the government deemed it potentially prejudicial to public order, security, and national interest. This case was further investigated in 2020 under the Emblems and Names (Preventing Unlawful Use) (Amendment) Act 2016, Section 4 (1) of the Sedition Act 1948, Section 8 (1) of the Printing Presses and Publications Act 1984 as well as Section 233 of the Communications and Multimedia Act 1998.

On 16 October 2023, Kean Wong was detained at the Kelana Jaya Immigration Department while applying for passport renewal and he was taken into police custody at Dang Wangi police station. As of 17 October 2023, the Magistrate has issued a further 24-hour remand order.

Kean Wong’s arrest, after 3 years from the time the book was banned, demonstrates the State’s concerted effort to suppress the public’s ability to both inform and to speak out without fear of censorship.

We urge the authorities to cease all investigations with immediate effect and demonstrate their commitment to upholding the rights bestowed upon the people by the Federal Constitution of Malaysia and under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The Sedition Act and the Printing Presses and Publications Act are archaic legislations with broad provisions, often arbitrarily used as a weapon to silence any critic. We remind the government of its early promise to repeal the Sedition Act, and the Printing Presses and Publications Act, as well as call for the immediate repeal of both the Acts and all other legislations, including Section 233 of the Communications and Multimedia Act, that restrict the freedom of expression. In the interim, we request that a moratorium be imposed, pending repeal or amendment of such legislations.

We ask all interested parties to support the protection of the inherent right of all to freedom of expression, by standing in solidarity with us against the violation of Kean Wong’s right to speak out.

17 October 2023

For further inquiries, please contact Wathshlah Naidu at +60122851949 and Sevan Doraisamy at +60169708370.

Organisations

1. Centre for Independent Journalism
2. SUARAM (Suara Rakyat Malaysia)
3. Malaysia Design Archive
4. Association of Women Lawyers
5. Amnesty International Malaysia
6. Justice for Sisters
7. Deaf Advocacy and Well-being National Organisation, Malaysia
8. Aliran
9. ARTICLE 19
10. North South Initiative
11. GERAK (Pergerakan Tenaga Akademik Malaysia)
12. Persatuan Penulis Berbilang Bahasa (PEN Malaysia)
13. CIVICUS
14. Tenaganita
15. EMPOWER
16. KOMAS
17. Parti Sosialis Malaysia
18. Beyond Borders
19. Freedom Film Network
20. Sisters In Islam

Individuals

1. Danesh Prakash Chacko
2. Yong Li Zen
3. Sheryll Stothard
4. Debbie Stothard
5. Chen May Yee
6. Sharaad Kuttan
7. Subatra Jayaraj
8. Wong Chin Huat
9. William Mangor
10. Siti Kasim
11. Anthony Choy
12. Kee Thuan Chye
13. Zaharom Nain
14. James Chin
15. Anil Netto
16. Nadira Ilana

17. Sumit Mandal
18. Pauline Leong
19. Masjaliza Hamzah
20. Zikri Rahman
21. Jeremy Lim
22. Ivy N Josiah
23. Zainah Anwar
24. Marina Mahathir
25. Rusalina Idrus
26. Thomas Fann
27. Rahayu Mumazaini
28. Andrew Khoo
29. Beverly Joeman
30. Syahid Abdullah
31. Khoo Gaik Cheng
32. Jac sm Kee
33. Sonia Randhawa