



International Office  
Internet Freedom desk  
47 rue Vivienne - 75002 Paris (France)  
Tel: 331-4483-8471 / Fax: 331-4523-1151  
internet@rsf.org

**The Honourable Dato' Sri Mohd Najib bin Haji Tun Abdul Razak**

Office of the Prime Minister of Malaysia  
Blok Utama, Bangunan Perdana Putra  
Pusat Pentadbiran Kerajaan Persekutuan  
62502 Putrajaya  
MALAYSIA

No.Fax: 03-88884333

---

Paris, 9 April 2009

Dear Prime Minister,

Reporters Without Borders, an international press freedom organisation, would like to congratulate you on your appointment as Malaysia's Prime Minister.

We hail your first decisions as head of government, which have been to release 13 people held under the Internal Security Act (ISA) and to lift a temporary ban on two opposition party newspapers. These measures are an important step towards respect for free expression and civil rights in your country.

However, we would like to share with you our concerns about the situation of press freedom and free expression in Malaysia.

We are worried about the danger that the ISA represents as a political tool for pressuring opposition activists and supporters. We would like to draw your attention in particular to the situation of bloggers and to the threats and harassment to which they are subjected.

Lawyer and Hindu minority rights defender P. Uthayakumar was arrested on 13 December 2007 under article 8 of the ISA for posting a letter to British Prime Minister Gordon Brown online. The conditions in which he is being held have led to a deterioration in his general state of health and his release is now a question of survival. Prime Minister Brown has told us he is determined to follow Mr. Uthayakumar's situation closely. We therefore hope you will decide to free him.

One of Malaysia's most famous bloggers, *Malaysia Today* website editor Raja Petra Kamarudin, is the target of prosecutions on various charges including sedition and criminal defamation. His freedom is also threatened by the government's appeal against his release by a Shah Alam court on 7 November. Also known as RPK, he has already spent 56 days in prison under the ISA. This judicial harassment violates his fundamental rights to individual freedom under article 5 (1) of the constitution, freedom of expression under article 10 (1) (a) and freedom of religion under article 11. We urge you to respect the constitution and to ensure respect for the rights and freedoms he enjoys as a Malaysian citizen. There is an urgent need to withdraw the charges against him.

We welcome your determination to press ahead with lifting the restrictions on free speech and free debate in Malaysia and ending the harassment of civil society actors, including journalists, bloggers

and online activists. These actors are nowadays a significant source of information for Malaysian citizens. This arena of debate must continue to grow as provided for by article 10 of the constitution, which guarantees free expression.

The ISA's repeal is an essential step in Malaysia's democratisation. Your country has exceptional human and natural resources and its current economic development is an unquestionable success. However, the repeated violations of human rights and free expression are extremely damaging for Malaysia's image abroad. We are aware of the complexities of managing a multicultural society but the ISA is definitely no guarantee of stability, less still for maintaining social harmony.

Repeal of the ISA, the Printing Presses and Publications Act 1984 and the Sedition Act would be a major political decision that would make you, Prime Minister, the pioneer of real democratisation in Malaysia.

We hope you will give this request your careful consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. Julliard', written over a horizontal line.

Jean-François Julliard  
Secretary-General  
Reporters Without Borders