

PRESS STATEMENT

23 August 2024

CIJ In Solidarity with Malaysiakini Journalists Barred from Police Event

The Centre for Independent Journalism (CIJ) is alarmed by the [recent incident where Malaysiakini journalists barred from covering a police event today despite receiving an invitation to said event](#). Further, this comes right after [three Malaysiakini journalists were called in for investigation regarding their sources on an article about an alleged police reshuffle](#). This action taken by the authorities sets a egregious precedent for journalists in Malaysia, their roles in our society and, the way media freedom and freedom of expression as an extension is governed in Malaysia. It is alarming that the police and their spokespersons can flex their power with impunity.

This arbitrary denial of Malaysiakini's access to the event raises serious concerns about the transparency in Bukit Aman's decision-making process. There is a lack of due process, especially given the fact that the officer in charge could not even provide the justification for the denial of access. We are no longer in an era of "aku yang menurut perintah" (blindly following orders). All public servants, paid by taxpayers money, are accountable to the public and in this case, must provide clear justification in accordance to rule of law in denying access. Transparency in police procedures as well as any decision-making process by the State is crucial in upholding democratic values and ultimately ensuring the public's interests are met.

Barring these journalists have set a precedent that journalists cannot carry out their role as fair, unbiased watchdogs of society and the State. This selective enforcement of media access coming after said investigation regarding the police reshuffle article further exacerbates this sentiment conveyed by the authorities as it increasingly highlights how journalists are unable to report on matters if it does not align with the agenda of the State. This effectively undermines the principle of a free and fair media landscape that upholds the fundamental role of the media as the fourth pillar of democracy.

As such, CIJ demands that the Minister of Home Affairs and Minister of Communication provide clarification on how these decisions related to the media are made and the due process in enforcing such decisions. The media and the public deserve full transparency on how decisions affecting the media's right to exercise its functions are made. Further, CIJ calls for the government to expedite the establishment of a Malaysian Media Council that is multistakeholder, independent and free from government interference so it may function and institute a dispute resolution mechanism more conducive to resolving conflicts like this while actively preserving media freedom, democratic values and the public interest. CIJ hopes that our allies, Malaysiakini, and the media as a whole can receive justice and fairness as promised by the Madani government.

23 August 2024

Wathshlah G. Naidu
CIJ Executive Director

For further inquiries, please contact Lim Jih-Ming at comms@cijmalaysia.net

The Centre for Independent Journalism is a non-profit organisation that aspires for a society that is democratic, just and free where all peoples will enjoy free media and the freedom to express, seek and impart information.