

MEDIA STATEMENT

16 October 2023

CIJ's Response to the Investigation of Kean Wong, editor of *Rebirth: Reformasi, Resistance, And Hope in New Malaysia*

Centre for Independent Journalism (CIJ) condemns the authorities' investigation of Kean Wong, editor of the book, "Rebirth: Reformasi, Resistance, And Hope in New Malaysia," on 16th October 2023 allegedly under the Sedition Act.

CIJ sees this matter as indicative of how the state has used its authority to censor fellow Malaysians' freedom of expression as enshrined in Article 10 of the Federal Constitution of Malaysia.

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 as well as contrary to law due to its subject matter which covers the 1MDB scandal and Malaysia's political transition to the Pakatan Harapan government. 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.

In the first place, CIJ deems that this case serves as another example of how the current legislation in Malaysia governing the freedom of expression allows for arbitrary use of power by the state to censor the public at the expense of both the public's interests and basic human rights.

Thus, the arrest of Kean Wong after 3 years since the publication of the book, showcases the state's commitment to suppressing the public's ability to both inform the public and to speak out no matter how warranted.

CIJ implores the authorities to release Kean Wong with immediate effect so that they may demonstrate that they continue to uphold the rights bestowed upon the public by the Federal Constitution of Malaysia.

In accordance with this, CIJ calls for the immediate repeal of the Sedition Act and a moratorium of its use pending repeal as well as all other acts that restrict freedom of expression.

In following these recommendations, CIJ hopes that we can create a society that is unafraid to express ourselves and engage in open discourse with one another.

CIJ is calling on any interested parties

16 October 2023

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.