Repression against ethnic Indians protesting against discrimination in Malaysia

Today, The Equal Rights Trust urged Abdullah bin Ahmad Badawi, the Prime Minister of Malaysia, to immediately release from detention P. Uthayakumar, M. Manoharan, R. Kenghadharan, V. Ganabatirau and T. Vasanthakumar; and to ensure that everyone, without distinction of any kind, including ethnic origin and political or other opinion, is effectively protected from arbitrary arrest and charges for exercising their rights to freedom of expression and assembly.

In recent weeks dozens of activists of civil society organizations and opposition parties in Malaysia, have been prevented by the police from exercising their rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. Many were arrested and charged with offences ranging from sedition to organizing illegal protests or obstructing police officers in carrying out their duties.

In a serious breach of international human rights law on 13 December 2007, five officials of the Hindu Human Rights Action Force, including four lawyers, who recently engaged in non-violent activities to highlight perceived discrimination of ethnic Indians in Malaysia, have been detained for two years under the Internal Security Act, on the grounds that they pose a threat to national security. This legislation, introduced in 1960 to combat communist insurgents, allows for detention of up to two years without a warrant, trial and without access to legal counsel.

For a detailed account of recent events and the ERT position regarding multiple breaches of international human rights law in these incidents, go to:

http://www.equalrightstrust.org/ertdocumentbank/Letter%20to%20Malaysian%20PM%20Dec%202007.pdf

Here you can read the letter to the Malaysian Prime Minister.