

## **LAWASIA ECHOES CONCERN OVER USE OF THE *SEDITION ACT* IN MALAYSIA**

LAWASIA, the Law Association for Asia and the Pacific, has noted the considerable concern expressed by its member organisation, the Bar Council Malaysia, in reaction to the many recent instances of use of the *Sedition Act 1948* in Malaysia, including against lawyers.

It is wholly supportive of the efforts of the Malaysian Bar in protesting these actions, observing that the *Sedition Act* has long been viewed by the region's legal community as an outmoded and repressive piece of legislation that should not be used to stifle legitimate freedom of expression in modern Malaysia.

LAWASIA further notes the international concern at these developments, as expressed by a spokesman for the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in a media release of 16 September, where the UNHCHR calls on the Malaysian government to cease its use of this legislation, to repeal or amend it and to drop charges against those who are facing prosecution under it.

LAWASIA joins its voice to that of the Malaysian Bar in calling into question what appears to be an excessive and discriminatory use of this and other legislation, aimed at curtailing the rights of Malaysians to express fair criticism of the government that serves them. It views with serious concern instances cited by the Malaysian Bar where provisions of the *Sedition Act* have been invoked against lawyers and legal academics for giving opinions on matters of law and the Constitution.

As an organisation representing the legal profession of the Asia Pacific region, it especially supports the Malaysian Bar's call on authorities to respect universally-agreed principles related to the roles and requirements of lawyers, as well as the responsibility of governments to ensure that they are able to carry out these roles without hindrance.

**Isomi Suzuki**

**PRESIDENT**

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