

# #MediaNetAsia14 Organisers' Statement on the Sedition Act



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As we convene a regional conference to discuss challenges to Media and Internet Freedom around Asia, we recognize and express solidarity with the ongoing movement in Malaysia for the repeal of the Sedition Act. We are deeply concerned about the recent rise of sedition cases and threats against those in the academe, civil society and journalism.

We view this issue to be fundamentally about protection of the fundamental right of every person to freedom of expression, in this particular case to speak critically about her or his government and/or its officials, without fear of physical or legal reprisal.

We find through our discussions that the Sedition Act exists in various forms in different countries. It also exists under various names to restrict critical speech about government, policies, political parties, certain social classes and institutions, or religious or cultural practices.

The Sedition Act and similar laws are also outdated. It might have been necessary for colonial governments to suppress speech of people occupied by a foreign power against their will. However, even in modern countries which have rejected the yoke of occupation, many of these laws remain or are being revived.

There is also a serious problem about how these various laws are being implemented, purportedly to keep society safe, but effectively to instil fear and self-restraint on the discussion of legitimate issues – even placing those who dare to speak out at risk.

We therefore stand with Malaysian citizens and civil society in calling for the repeal of the Sedition Act.

*Released by:*

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