



## Public Statement

### **The Law Society of Upper Canada expresses its continued concern about the charges against lawyer N. Surendran in Malaysia.**

TORONTO, ON — The Law Society of Upper Canada expresses its continued concern about the charges against lawyer N. Surendran in Malaysia.

In 2014, two sedition charges were brought against N. Surendran for critical comments he made about a court verdict involving his client, Anwar Ibrahim – leader of the opposition and prisoner of conscience.

On June 24, 2016, the High Court of Kuala Lumpur found the *Sedition Act* to be constitutional and that the sedition charges brought against N. Surendran still stand. It is our understanding that N. Surendran's lawyers have filed an appeal of this decision.

The Law Society believes strongly in the independence of the legal profession and in the rule of law. Human rights organizations have indicated that Malaysia continues to use the *Sedition Act* to silence its critics and interfere with the independence of the legal profession.

The Law Society of Upper Canada urges the government of Malaysia to comply with Articles 16 and 23 of the United Nations' *Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers*.

Article 16 states:

Governments shall ensure that lawyers (a) are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference; (b) are able to travel and to consult with their clients freely both within their own country and abroad; and (c) shall not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution or administrative, economic or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics.

Moreover, Article 23 states:

Lawyers like other citizens are entitled to freedom of expression, belief, association and assembly. In particular, they shall have the right to take part in public discussion of matters concerning the law, the administration of justice and the promotion and protection of human rights and to join or form local, national or international organizations and attend their meetings, without suffering professional restrictions by reason of their lawful action or their membership in a lawful organization.

The Law Society urges the government of Malaysia to:

- a. drop the charges of sedition against N. Surendran immediately;

- b. guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of N. Surendran;
- c. guarantee all the procedural rights that should be accorded to N. Surendran, and other human rights defenders in Malaysia;
- a. ensure in all circumstances respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with international human rights standards and international instruments; and
- b. urgently repeal the *Sedition Act* and quash convictions against all individuals sentenced under it for exercising their rights to freedom of expression.

*\*The Law Society of Upper Canada is the governing body for more than 50,000 lawyers and 8,000 paralegals in the province of Ontario, Canada. The Treasurer is the head of the Law Society. The mandate of the Law Society is to govern the legal profession in the public interest by upholding the independence, integrity and honour of the legal profession for the purpose of advancing the cause of justice and the rule of law.*

- 30 -

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