



## **33 YEARS AFTER OPERATION LALANG - WILL MAHATHIR FINALLY APOLOGISE?**

*Press statement by Kua Kia Soong, SUARAM Adviser 27 October 2020*

*'No time for love if they come in the morning*

*No time to show fear or for tears in the morning*

*No time for goodbyes, no time to ask why*

*And the wail of the children is the cry of the morning'*

*(Adapted by Anne Munro-Kua from Jack Warshaw)*

*"Anne and I will never forget the night of the 27th October 1987:*

*Truly, there was no time for love that evening as we were enveloped by an electrifying anticipation and apprehension. I tried to say a meaningful goodnight to six-year old Hua Ying and two-year old Bi Hua without saying goodbye. I only managed a tender goodnight to my little ones and my strong woman as we waited in the dark of the foreboding night. 'Be brave', we kept reassuring each other.*

*'Who can sleep well on a night he thinks he is about to be arrested under the Internal Security Act for the first time?*

*'We were alert to the sound of any approaching car. There were various false alarms. Finally, at around two o'clock in the morning of the 28th October, we were awakened by the sound of car doors slamming and activity outside. Anne took a look outside the window. 'It's them,' she said. It was them. They started calling 'Dr. Soong' and 'Dr. Kua'...' (Kua Kia Soong, '445 Days Under the ISA')*

**There was no Emergency situation in 1987 either**

It is perhaps the biggest scandal of post-Independent Malaysia that we have allowed detention without trial legislations to be used during peace time. It is ironic that the butcher of the Emergency, Gerald Templar had suggested the Emergency regulations be annually renewable or they should lapse automatically. And even during the worst days of Apartheid, Nelson Mandela was allowed due process of the law; there was judicial review in South Africa all that time. Then again, during the troubles in Northern Ireland in the seventies, the British Government's detention of IRA suspects for seven days was ruled unlawful by the European Court of Human Rights. Here the Internal Security Act allowed sixty days of solitary confinement when the detainee was at the mercy of the Special Branch and renewable two-year detention orders.

Despite the abolition of the ISA, detention without trial still exists in the form of SOSMA, POTA (Prevention of Terrorism Act 2015) and POCA (Prevention of Crime Act 1959), with security provisions that are broad and vague and that will result in continuation of detention without charge and denial of basic rights.

### **Operation Lalang was the turning point for the Judiciary**

We were not the main object of Mahathir's dastardly act. The suspension of the Supreme Court judges and removal of the Lord President to ensure the result of the UMNO Team A/ Team B

case in the court was his purpose. Operation Lalang merely created the climate of fear that allowed this assault on the Malaysian Judiciary. Donald Trump cannot even do what Mahathir did in 1987!

In the twilight of his life and trying to rehabilitate his record of dictatorial rule from 1981 to 2003, will Mahathir finally show remorse and apologise for taking away the freedoms of more than a hundred innocent Malaysians simply for his political survival in 1987? Or will he persist in his ridiculous venture of trying to be PM for the third time as he nears 100 years of age?