



## Malaysia: Quash youth activist Wong Yan Ke's conviction, uphold freedom of expression

The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) and Suara Rakyat Malaysia (SUARAM) condemn the [conviction](#) of youth activist Wong Yan Ke.

Wong's conviction represents Malaysia's tightening grip on civic space, particularly against youth defenders who have been leading the country's political activism in recent years.

We urge the Government of Malaysia to quash Wong's conviction. Likewise, we call on the government to uphold its responsibility to protect the people's right to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression.

### Silencing Dissent

Wong works as a human rights defender in SUARAM, a human rights non-governmental organisation which monitors civil & political rights in Malaysia. During his university years, Wong was a prominent student activist.

On 9 October 2023, Wong was found guilty of violating Section 504 of Malaysia's Penal Code, which criminalises expressions that are deemed to provoke others and disturb public peace. He was fined RM 5,000 (USD 1,200). The court ordered that Wong spend three months in jail should he fail to pay the fine.

The case came about in October 2019 when Wong staged a [protest](#) during his graduation ceremony at the University of Malaya, calling for the resignation of then Vice-Chancellor Abdul Rahim Hashim for his alleged racist remarks during the Malay Dignity Congress.

In response, the university lodged a complaint to the police, which later produced a charge against Wong. Leading up to the delivery of the case verdict by the court, he was subjected to approximately [70](#) court visits.

## **Call to Action**

FORUM-ASIA and SUARAM call on the Government of Malaysia to immediately quash Yan Ke's conviction.

The Malaysian Government should cease the criminalisation of human rights defenders and repeal provisions that are used to stifle protest and dissent, including those in the Penal Code and others such as Sedition Act 1948 and Section 233 of the Communications and Multimedia Act 1998.

We also urge the government to ratify the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and adhere to international standards regarding freedom of expression.

'Freedom of expression is the bedrock of democracy. Hence, the need to ensure that each and every individual is capable of forming and expressing their opinions without fear of reprisals. Malaysia must protect the rights of human rights defenders, particularly the youth, to speak truth to power and to demand accountability from those holding positions of authority. This is what sets democratic and authoritative governments apart,' said Mary Aileen Diez-Bacalso, Executive Director of FORUM-ASIA.

'This conviction demonstrates the State's blatant disregard for our constitutional right to freedom of expression, hijacking and selectively applying this fundamental freedom on the basis of arbitrary 'provocation' or 'insults.' University campuses are not just spaces for academic discourse, they are also launchpads for social change. By silencing Wong, the State is further entrenching the culture of intolerance for critical debate, undermining human rights and oppressing vulnerable groups including human rights defenders. This threatens the inclusive democracy that all Malaysians seek. Stop criminalising human rights defenders and faithfully uphold universal human rights instead,' said Sevan Doraisamy, Executive Director of SUARAM.

FORUM-ASIA and SUARAM are in solidarity with Yan Ke and all human rights defenders in Malaysia.

**About FORUM-ASIA:**

**The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)** is a network of 85 member organisations across 23 countries, mainly in Asia. Founded in 1991, FORUM-ASIA works to strengthen movements for human rights and sustainable development through research, advocacy, capacity development and solidarity actions in Asia and beyond. It has consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council, and consultative relationship with the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights. The FORUM-ASIA Secretariat is based in Bangkok, with offices in Jakarta, Geneva and Kathmandu. [www.forum-asia.org](http://www.forum-asia.org)

**About SUARAM:**

**Suara Rakyat Malaysia (SUARAM)** is a non-governmental organisation established in 1989 to monitor and advocate for the respect of human rights in Malaysia. Through its consistent and uncompromising work, it has established itself as one of the key human rights organisations, one to which Malaysians turn for information and support. [suaram.net](http://suaram.net)

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