

MEDIA STATEMENT

IDEAS: Medical frontliners should be prioritised and protected, not harassed and threatened

Kuala Lumpur, 17 July 2021 - The Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs (IDEAS) called upon authorities to cease its campaign of harassment of doctors in Malaysia who participated in the Code Black and Black Monday campaigns in support of the welfare of contract doctors, as they were simply exercising their freedom of expression and freedom of speech as guaranteed under Article 10 of the Federal Constitution.

IDEAS believes that authorities should consider the escalated frustrations of contract doctors, who are denied the job security and similar welfare protections that other confirmed medical practitioners currently enjoy. As well, contract-based doctors are unable to embark on their specialised training. Despite these inequities, contract doctors have been at the forefront of the COVID-19 crisis, being able to be rapidly deployed across the country.

As stated by IDEAS CEO Tricia Yeoh, "We call upon the government to drop investigations over doctors involved in the campaign, as these doctors were exercising their freedom of expression and freedom of speech, as they are constitutionally permitted to."

"We view with concern statements by the Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) that the doctors investigated by police were left traumatized and afraid after their ordeal. Given that Malaysia's healthcare apparatus have been pushed to the brink in our latest wave, the last thing we need at this time is for our medical workers to be further demotivated."

"The present arrangement of recruiting contract doctors, which was always meant to be temporary, must be improved to ensure fairness to all healthcare professionals in the public service. A long-term solution, such as conversion into permanent status, must be sought to ensure career progression and salary equity, as well as the healthcare system's sustainability more broadly."

IDEAS also disagreed with the threats issued by authorities to medical staff who have publicly shared the conditions in hospitals, as some had been doing so to express the true realities on the ground. The think tank urged the authorities to view these incidents as pleas for help from frontline workers, which should be responded to more delicately and with care.

As noted by Tricia, “We call upon the authorities to end the investigations and threats, in recognition of the fact that our medical frontliners have been working 24/7 to the point of exhaustion. We believe that a policy of transparency about the true situation on the ground and the problems present in our COVID-19 response will be a more effective strategy in the long run than our current policy of outright denial.”

“In order to combat the pandemic, Malaysia should pursue a ‘whole of society approach’, which includes the government working alongside private and civil society practitioners to address any public health and economic aid gaps within its pandemic response”, she concluded.

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About IDEAS

The Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs (IDEAS) is a nonprofit research institute, dedicated to promoting solutions to public policy challenges, focussing on three overarching missions – advancing a competitive economy, ensuring trust in institutions and promoting an inclusive Malaysia. IDEAS is Malaysia’s first independent think tank, free of personal interests and partisan influences. For more information, visit www.ideas.org.my.

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KENYATAAN MEDIA

IDEAS: Petugas Kesihatan Perlu Diutamakan dan Dilindungi, Bukan Ditekan.

Kuala Lumpur, 17 Julai 2021 – Institut Demokrasi dan Hal Ehwal Ekonomi (IDEAS) menyeru kerajaan untuk menghentikan ugutan terhadap para petugas kesihatan yang menyertai kempen *Code Black* dan *Black Monday* yang bertujuan untuk menyatakan sokongan terhadap kebajikan doktor kontrak. Kempen tersebut hanyalah satu medium kebebasan untuk bersuara dan ekspresi, seperti yang termaktub di dalam Artikel 10 Perlembagaan Persekutuan.

IDEAS percaya segala keresahan para doktor kontrak harus dipertimbangkan oleh pihak berwajib. Mereka tidak dibekalkan dengan jaminan pekerjaan di dalam sektor perkhidmatan awam dan tidak diberikan kebajikan yang sepatutnya dinikmati oleh doktor yang memegang status “tetap dalam perkhidmatan.” Mereka juga tidak boleh memulakan latihan kepakaran disebabkan status kontrak yang mereka miliki. Pada masa yang sama, khidmat mereka di barisan hadapan (frontliner) tetap diperlukan dan boleh dipindahkan ke seluruh pelusuk negara.

Ketua Pegawai Eksekutif IDEAS Tricia Yeoh menjelaskan, “IDEAS menyeru pihak kerajaan untuk menghentikan segala siasatan terhadap semua doktor yang terlibat dalam kempen *Code Black* dan *Black Monday* kerana tindakan mereka selaras dengan peruntukan Perlembagaan Persekutuan yang menjamin kebebasan untuk berucap dan ekspresi.”

“Kami memandang serius kenyataan daripada Majlis Perubatan Malaysia yang mengatakan kebanyakan doktor yang terlibat mengalami tekanan perasaan rentetan daripada siasatan ini. Memandangkan status petugas kesihatan negara kini mencapai tahap yang membimbangkan, kita perlu memastikan agar motivasi mereka tetap utuh dan tinggi.”

“Sistem perjawatan doktor kontrak harus diperhalusi bagi menjamin keadilan terhadap petugas kesihatan awam di negara kita. Sebagai penyelesaian jangka panjang, penyerapan kepada status “tetap dalam perkhidmatan” harus diselaraskan bagi menjamin perkembangan kerjaya, penyelarasan gaji dan juga kemampuan sistem perkhidmatan kesihatan negara.”

IDEAS tidak bersetuju dengan gertakan oleh mana-mana organisasi kerajaan terhadap petugas kesihatan yang berkongsi situasi sebenar di beberapa hospital baru-baru ini. IDEAS bertanggungjawab segala perkongsian situasi sebenar seharusnya ditangani dalam bentuk penyelesaian dan penambahbaikan.

Tricia menambah, “Bagi menangani penularan wabak COVID-19, Malaysia seharusnya mengamalkan “whole of society approach” – kerjasama yang erat antara pihak kerajaan dan swasta, termasuklah badan bukan kerajaan (NGO) bagi mengenal pasti dan memperbaiki kelemahan tindakan negara dalam melawan COVID-19.

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Tentang IDEAS

Institut Demokrasi dan Hal Ehwal Ekonomi (IDEAS) merupakan sebuah institut penyelidikan bukan berasaskan keuntungan, mengkhususkan kepada mempromosikan penyelesaian terhadap cabaran dasar awam berdasarkan kepada prinsip kedaulatan undang-undang, kerajaan terhad, pasaran bebas, dan kebebasan individu. IDEAS merupakan badan pemikir bebas pertama Malaysia, tanpa kepentingan peribadi serta pengaruh berpihak. Untuk maklumat lanjut, lawati www.ideas.org.my.

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