

# Reporters Without Borders

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Asia - Malaysia

"State secrets"

## Blogger held under draconian Official Secrets Act

5 July 2012

Reporters Without Borders is very disturbed to learn that the blogger **Syed Abdullah Hussein Al-Attas** has been held since yesterday under the Official Secrets Act as a result of a complaint by a group of 30 people over controversial posts about the Sultan of Johor. A young woman who was with him at the time of his arrest is also being held.

"Syed Abdullah's arrest is unacceptable," Reporters Without Borders said. "Why was the complaint filed by 30 people and not the person targeted in the posts? Why did the authorities think it was necessary to detain two people because of what appears in reality to be nothing more than an ordinary defamation suit?"

"The authorities have carried out arrests and are now conducting an investigation on the basis of this group complaint, but they show no desire to investigate the documented information posted by Syed Abdullah. We insist that they explain the reasons for their actions, which are at the very least disturbing and suggest that his arrest was politically-motivated.

"Freedom of information must take precedence over any law covering state secrets, which should be invoked only in clear cases of espionage and in other very clearly defined and limited circumstances. Government officials should not, under any circumstances, be able to use state secrets as a pretext for putting themselves above the law and flouting the fundamental right to information."

Arrested at around 9:45 p.m. at the Senawang toll plaza in Seremban, southeast of Kuala Lumpur, Syed Abdullah is now being held at Air Molek police station in Johor Baru, the capital of the state of Johor. Johor criminal investigation department deputy director Muhammad Akhir Ishak confirmed today that he is being held under paragraph 8 (1) (d) of the 1972 [Official Secrets Act](#).

Judge Isa Mohamed gave the police permission to hold him for four days in order to investigate the possibly defamatory nature of his blog posts. The woman who was arrested with him and who is also being held was named as Siti Nadhirah Mohd Zain, 26.

According to the [Malaysia Chronicle](#) website, most of the 30 people who filed the complaint against Syed Abdullah at the central police station in Johor Baru were linked to the United Malays National Organisation, the prime minister's party.

The complaint described Syed Abdullah's posts about Sultan Ibrahim, the crown prince and other Johor officials as provocative, insulting and seditious. It also claimed that he had posted confidential documents.

Better known by the [blog](#) name of "Uncle Seekers" and a believer in the paranormal, Syed Abdullah is the son of a leading political writer, Syed Hussein Al-Attas. He has dedicated more than 60 posts in Malay to the theme of "[Sultan Johor Atau Kerabatnya](#)" (The Sultan of Johor or his relatives). They have included documents supporting his claims that part of the fortune left by the late Sultan Iskandar, who died in 2010, was embezzled.

When asked by his followers on Twitter to comment yesterday, Crown Prince Tunku Ismail Sultan Ibrahim posted: "Let the dog bark as much as he wants. I know the truth, Johoreans know the truth. Why should I react to bullshit?"

Syed Abdullah's posts have also referred to a lawyer, Kamal Hisham Jaafar, who is alleged to have embezzled 660,000 ringgits (151,000 euros) from a Johor-based company and who claims that a member of the Johor palace has threatened to kill him. The lawyer says he had to flee the country and cannot return to defend himself because he has received at least five death threats in the past year.

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