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<http://www.rsf.org/malaysia-website-reporter-arrested-and-09-09-2014,46919.html>

Asia - Malaysia

Absurd charge

Website reporter arrested and charged under Sedition Act

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Susan Loone is facing up to three years in jail over an interview with the leader of an allegedly illegal organization

Malaysiakini news website reporter **Susan Loone** is facing a possible three-year jail term under the 1948 Sedition Act following her arrest in George Town, the capital of the northwestern state of Penang, on 4 September for interviewing the detained leader of an allegedly illegal local organization.

Loone was arrested after she interviewed Penang state councillor Phee Boon Poh by phone while he and other members of the citizens' militia he heads, the Voluntary Patrol Unit, were in police custody.

She was interrogated for hours at George Town police headquarters and was then finally released on bail late in the evening. Before freeing her, the police confiscated her mobile phone as part of their investigation, took her fingerprints and made her sign a document recording her arrest.

She was arrested as a result of a complaint brought by Perkasa, a far-right group that advocates Malay supremacy in multi-ethnic Malaysia, and by other groups allied in the Coalition of Penang Malay Representatives.

The complaint accused her of defaming the police because, in her report of the interview with Phee, published by *Malaysiakini* on 1 September, she quoted Phee as saying he felt he had been "treated like a criminal."

Section 4 of the Sedition Act says: "Any person who prints, publishes, sells (...) distributes or reproduces any seditious publication (...) shall be guilty of an offence and shall, on conviction, be liable for a first offence to a fine not exceeding 5,000 ringgit (1,200 euros) or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding three years or to both."

"*The charges that Loone is facing are totally baseless and violate her freedom to inform others,*" said Benjamin Ismail, the head of the Reporters Without Borders Asia-Pacific desk.

"*Journalists who interview people in the course of their reporting cannot be held responsible for what their interviewees say. Malaysia's journalists will continue to be exposed to this kind of political reprisal as long as the repressive and obsolete Sedition Act is not repealed. We urge the authorities to drop the charges against Loone.*"

Phee and around 150 other members of the Voluntary Patrol Unit were arrested while participating in an Independence Day parade on 31 August. The Voluntary Patrol Unit is regarded as illegal because it is not registered with the Registrar of Societies. Most of them, including Phee, were released the next day. Phee has also been charged under the Sedition Act.

Malaysia is ranked 147th out of 180 countries in the 2014 [Reporters Without Borders press freedom index](#).
