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<http://www.rsf.org/malaysia-five-journalists-arrested-in-31-03-2015,47747.html>

Asia - Malaysia

Five arrests

Five journalists arrested in crackdown on independent media

31 March 2015

Reporters Without Borders condemns the arrests of a total of five journalists in the past 48 hours with the aim of pressuring independent media to censor themselves and prevent them working freely.



Yesterday, the police raided the Kuala Lumpur offices of *The Malaysian Insider*, a news website also known as *TMI*, arresting managing editor **Lionel Morais**, Bahasa news editor **Amin Shah Iskandar** and features and analysis editor **Zulkifli Sulong** under the 1948 Sedition Act and the 1998 Communications and Multimedia

Act.

TMI chief executive **Jahabar Sadiq** and **Ho Kay Tat**, publisher of *The Edge* business weekly and CEO of the Edge Media Group, which owns *TMI*, were arrested today under the same two laws after responding to a summons from the police, who said all five were questioned about "inaccurate and confusing" reports published by *TMI*.

The police added that they would apply for an order to keep Jahabar and Ho in custody.

TMI reported on 25 March that the "Conference of Rulers" (rulers and governors of Malaysia's states) had rejected a proposal to amend a federal law that would pave the way for "hudud" (penalties based on Islamic law) in the northeastern state of Kelantan.

But, before being arrested, Jahabar local media outlets that the "arrests appear to go beyond just our reportage about one hudud article." *The Edge* and *TMI* have also been reporting on problems with a government-owned strategic investment fund and its ability to pay its debts.

"These arrests have the hallmarks of a warning to the entire Malaysian press, one designed to deter anyone from taking too much interest in the activities of the government and the country's leaders," said Benjamin Ismail, the head of the Reporters Without Borders Asia-Pacific desk.

"We demand the immediate and unconditional release of Jahabar and Ho. The authorities must stop

using 'respect for the law' as a pretext for their misuse of coercive measures. The ruling coalition's leaders and officials are well aware of the range of more measured responses that are available in the event of media reports regarded as 'inaccurate'."

Ismail added: "Their desire to see journalists subjected to judicial sanctions as often as possible betrays a complete lack of understanding of the fundamental nature of freedom of information and media freedom."

Reporters Without Borders has repeatedly called for the repeal of the many Malaysian laws that criminalize media offences. The authorities tolerate no criticism and often use the [Sedition Act](#) to persecute journalists. Its victims include the leading cartoonist Zunar and his employees, who [are currently the target of legal proceedings](#).

The situation of the media worsened last year in Malaysia, which is ranked 147th out of 180 countries in the [2015 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index](#).
