

18 December 2019

Malaysia: Judicial harassment of Sevan Doraisamy

On 17 December 2019, human rights defender **Sevan Doraisamy** was questioned for an hour by the Royal Malaysian Police in relation to a human rights forum organised by his non-governmental organisation, SUARAM. The forum discussed the effects of the “draconian” Security Offences (Special Measures) Act of 2012.

[Sevan Doraisamy](#) is part of the Citizen Action Group On Enforced Disappearance (CAGED), a coalition of 48 civil society groups which was formed at the beginning of May 2017 to monitor cases of enforced disappearances and assist the families of missing victims. He is the executive director of Suara Rakat Malaysia (SUARAM), a non-governmental human rights organisation working on enforced disappearances, the right to trial, and freedom of expression. He also acts as the spokesperson for CAGED.

On 17 December 2019, Sevan Doraisamy was called in for questioning by the Bukit Aman’s Classified Criminal Investigation Unit in relation to a public platform co-hosted by SUARAM. The forum which took place on 25 November 2019, discussed the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act of 2012 (SOSMA), with the intention of educating the public about the oppressive aspects of the law. Particular focus was given to the arrest and detention of twelve alleged Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) members who were charged under the Act. The human rights defender is could be investigated under Section 505(b) of the Penal Code that deals with statements “that induce the public to commit an offence against the state”. If found guilty, Sevan Doraisamy may be punishable with a fine or imprisonment of up to two years.

This is not the first time that Sevan Doraisamy has been investigated for his human rights work. In his five years at SUARAM, the defender has been called in for questioning on ten separate occasions. In October 2019, he was placed under investigation after assisting in a case where victims alleged that they were wrongfully detained and abused during detention. On 16 May 2017, he, along with two fellow human rights defenders, were summoned by police for questioning over a statement they released, alleging that various abductions perpetrated between November 2016 and February 2017 in Malaysia were enforced disappearances. SUARAM and its employees are constantly called in for investigations pertaining to the several platforms and gatherings they organise to promote human rights. The organisation has now called for an open discussion with the inspector-general of police to prevent further intimidation and harassment of those who work in defence of human rights.

Front Line Defenders condemns the repeated and ongoing judicial harassment of human rights defender Sevan Doraisamy, which it believes is solely motivated by his human rights activities. Front Line Defenders believes he is legitimately exercising his right to freedom of peaceful assembly and expression.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Malaysia to:

1. Immediately cease the investigation into Sevan Doraisamy;
2. Engage in a productive collaboration with human rights defenders working on enforced disappearances and cease all further forms of harassment or intimidation against them;

3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Malaysia are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions, including judicial harassment.