

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Whither 'New Malaysia'? Resolve Political Turmoil Now or Risk National Security**

The current political turmoil striking Malaysia is dangerous and a threat towards national security. As of date, it has already impacted our economy. On Monday, RM43 billion was wiped out from the KL Stock Exchange. Instead of launching a fresh economic stimulus package this week, we are faced with the sudden and unnecessary collapse of the government. The Covid-19 outbreak and now political unrest is not only a blow to our fledgling economy but also further impedes our social cohesion.

The main concern regarding security is the question on who is taking charge of ensuring public safety. This situation can easily be exploited by any parties with malicious intent, be it terror groups or hateful extremist groups, to make an attack or to plan any disruption. We have to always remember that we have porous borders, and having all eyes on the center will leave our borders and the people living there vulnerable. With no clear government, it is not clear who is in charge of what, and who is responsible to make difficult decisions.

This turmoil is also creating unnecessary anxiety and insecurity among the public. The flip-flopping of our politicians is eroding the public's trust. This can anger and frustrate the public even more, which again, can easily be exploited by extremist groups. At the very least, it can make the public disengage with the political process, which will not be healthy for the country's democracy.

What is clearly absent is the voice of civil societies speaking against the flip-flopping. Clearly, civil societies and the public in general were blindsided by the recent events, making them unable to react in a timely manner. This vacuum is giving room for the politicians to do back-door dealings and posturing. At the same time, hateful rhetoric and fearmongering has already started in public discourse, particularly in social media, and there is a lack of voice of reasons to call for calm and rational thinking, to not escalate the situation further. Civil societies need to quickly fill in this gap, while pushing for solutions that prioritize the public, rather than the political establishment.

Malaysia is technically without a government, without public support and fractured political lines. Rumours are circulating that a Unity government will be established consisting of all political parties including the opposition. Setting up a unity government at this stage would not be wise. This mess is a result of backdoor dealings and political wrangling from the same parties rumoured to be part of the proposed unity government, which will erode public trust even further in the current political system and pave the way towards chaos. The sound option is to set up an interim Cabinet consisting of technocrats — experts and professionals to administer government functions while we prepare to conduct a General Election in the coming months. The country cannot have a government that does not have the mandate of the public.

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