

I was attacked by pro-government thugs

Today (25th Nov 2016) I was forced to call off my exhibition in Penang, 4 hour drive north of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia due to an attack by pro government thugs. I was verbally abused, physically attacked, and my artworks were vandalized.

More than 30 thugs stormed into my newly launched exhibition in a public area. They were aggressive, hostile and abusive. Some of them assaulted me. I was fortunate that a few members of public came to my rescue. The few policemen who turned up were unable to control the thugs and they had to call in the anti riot unit.

The thugs demanded that I take down the exhibition and some of them proceeded to destroy my artworks.

This adds to the list of harassment I received through the years:

THE HARASSMENT

Last month, the government of Malaysia imposed a travel ban on Zunar to prevent from travelling abroad.

Zunar is also now facing nine charges under the archaic Sedition Act and facing possible 43 years imprisonment and the court proceeding will start on 22nd Nov 2016. He was detained and locked behind bars twice under the Sedition Act - first time was on September 2010 for two days and on 10th of February 2015 for three days.

Five of his cartoon books have been banned by the Malaysian government on the ground that the contents are "detrimental to public order." His office in Kuala Lumpur has been raided a few times and thousands cartoon books were confiscated.

The printers, vendors, and bookstores, have been harassed. Their premises have been raided and they have been warned not to print or carry any of his books or their bussiness licence will be revoked.

Three of his assistants were arrested. The webmaster, who manages his website and online bookstore, was called in by the police for questioning.

Zunar is the only Malaysian selected by Amnesty International as the first Malaysian for their biggest annual international campaign, 'Write for Rights (#W4R) 2015'.

THE TIMELINE

17 Oct 2016 - Zunar was banned from traveling abroad by the Malaysian government. He will file a legal proceeding to challenge the ruling.

2 April 2015 - Zunar was slapped with nine charges under the archaic Sedition Act and facing possible 43 years imprisonment and the court proceeding will starts on 22nd Nov 2016.

Feb 28 2015 - More than 20 policemen raided his launching event in Brickfields, Kuala Lumpur and threaten to detain him and confiscate the book, ROS in Kangkong Land if he proceed. He had to cancel the program.

Feb 14 2015 - Hundreds of the books, ROS in Kangkong Land were confiscated by the police from the printer's lorry en-route to the launching venue.

Feb 10, 2015 - Zunar was detained and locked up for three days under the Sedition Act. He was accused to have tweeted seditious comments in relation to the Federal Court's decision which upheld the conviction of Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim.

The police opened up two separate investigations on him under the Sedition Act. One is on the tweet criticising Mr Anwar's sentence under the D5 Unit (Classified Crime). Another is on his cartoon books 'Pirates of The Carry-BN' and 'Conspiracy to Imprison Anwar'.

28 Jan 2015 - There was a raid on his office while he was on a speaking tour in London. More than 150 books were confiscated. Laws used: Printing Presses and Publications Act, Sedition Act, Penal Code.

6 Nov 2014 - Three of his assistants were arrested and taken to the police station for selling his latest cartoon books. Law used: Sedition Act.

16 Nov 2014 - The webmaster, who manages his website and online bookstore, was called in by the police for questioning. Law used: Sedition Act.

18 Nov 2014 - The police have asked the online payment gateway that handles his book transactions to disclose the list of customers who have purchased his books through the official website www.zunar.my. The company was given no choice but to disclose it. Law used: Sedition Act.

20 Nov 2014 - Zunar was brought in for questioning to the Dang Wangi Police Station in Kuala Lumpur under the 'Classified Crime Section' involving three different laws. Laws used: Printing Presses and Publications Act, the Sedition Act, Penal Code.

24 Sept 2010: Zunar was detained and locked up for two days after the publication of his book 'Cartoon-O-Phobia'. Law used: Sedition Act.

July 2010: Five of his books – 'Perak Darul Kartun'; '1 Funny Malaysia, 'Isu Dalam Kartun' Vol.1, 2, and 3 – were banned by the Home Minister on the grounds that the contents are "detrimental to public order." Law used: Printing Presses and Publications Act.

Sept 2009: His office was raided by the authorities. Five hundred (500) copies of his book titled 'Gedung Kartun' were confiscated. Law used: Printing Presses and Publications Act

THREAT AGAINST PRINTERS

Three companies which printed his books were raided. They were warned to not print his books in the future or their licence will be revoked. As a result, no printer dares to print his book. He has resorted to redacting the name of the printer to protect them. This is against the law, but he

has no choice. The law in Malaysia requires both names of printing company and publisher on all publications.

Laws used: Printing Presses and Publications Act, Sedition Act.

Assault on vendors/book stores

Bookstores' premises around the country were raided by authority and they were warned to not sell his books in the future or thier licence will be revoked.

Law used: Printing Presses and Publications Act, Sedition Act

PHILOSOPHY

1. How Can I be Neutral, Even My Pen Has a Stand
2. Talent is not a gift, talent is a responsibility
3. The can ban my books, they can ban my cartoon, but they cannot ban my mind, I will keep drawing until the last drop of my ink

Award:

- 1) "Courage in Editorial Cartooning Award 2011" by Cartoonists Right Network International
 - 2) "Cartooning For Peace Award 2016" Geneva
 - 3) Human Rights Watch Hellman/Hammett Award for 2011 & 2015
 - 4) International Press Freedom Award, Committee to Protect Journalist, New York 2015
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