

Headline	Detention without trial necessary in proposed Anti-Terrorism Act		
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Detention without trial necessary in proposed Anti-Terrorism Act

KUALA LUMPUR: A legal expert says it may be necessary to incorporate detention without trial in the proposed Anti-Terrorism Act if the government is really serious about enacting fresh laws to fight terrorism in the country.

Assoc Prof Dr Ahmad Martadha Mohamed, however, said the government should set a maximum period of only one year for such detention to give time to the authorities to investigate and gather the necessary evidence.

The two-year detention, as provided for under the repealed Internal Security Act (ISA), was probably too long and could give rise to objections by certain quarters, the dean of the College of Law, Government and International Studies at Universiti Utara Malaysia told Bernama.

Ahmad Martadha was asked to comment on the Home Ministry's proposal to introduce the Anti-Terrorism Act to fight terrorism and thwart efforts to recruit volunteers in the name of 'jihad' (holy war).

Home Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi reportedly said the act was proposed to, among others, enhance the existing laws, namely the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act 2012 and Prevention of Crime Act.

Ahmad Martadha said the United States, through the Patriot Act, also used detention without trial and "offenders would be detained in Guantanamo Bay for a long period of time before being brought to court".

He also said that life imprisonment or long-term imprisonment should also be included under the Anti-Terrorism Act to check those intending to get involved

in terrorist activities.

Looking at the threat of extremism that was now rampant and increasingly worrying, he said, not only laws but special task forces were also needed to study and keep under surveillance the spread of this threat so that preventive measures could be streamlined with the proposed act.

"In Sabah, for example, the government set up a special task force comprising, among others, the police and military to address security issues in the country's waters. Hence, a similar force should be formed to address issues of extremism," he said.

Ahmad Martadha said that if the Anti-Terrorism Act came into being, it would become a vital preventive mechanism against actions that could jeopardise national security.

"When the ISA was repealed, the country did not have any special legislation to curb activities that threatened security, and this is most worrying," he said.

International Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM) constitutional law expert Assoc Prof Dr Shamrahayu Abdul Aziz said a preventive mechanism was vital to check terrorism.

"We need preventive laws. Without such legislation, we will be subjected to worry as is the case now ... worry about the spread of militancy and aggressive action that can jeopardise the security of not only individuals but also the nation," he said.

Hence, awareness on the importance of preventive laws was necessary so that the people truly understood the role of legislation to ensure their safety and the security of the country, he added. - Bernama