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The Centre for Independent Journalism (CIJ) view with concern the recent delay in the renewal of the licences of three main federal opposition parties' organs, *Suara Keadilan*, *The Rocket* and

Harakah

, under the Printing Presses and Publications Act (PPPA). These licences have yet to be resolved except for

Harakah

's.

The general public has the right to know the stand and opinions of all political parties on current affairs. Denying the federal opposition parties their own publications and the right to have them distributed freely casts a further blight on Malaysia's image as a modern democracy.

The Home Ministry has cited violation of the members-only circulation ruling as one of the reasons for its delay in renewing the permit. CIJ is of the opinion that this restriction puts the federal opposition on an unlevel playing field in the present context of media ownership and control. The ownership of mainstream media – print, radio and TV – is by the State or is linked to the ruling Barisan Nasional. In addition, mainstream media themselves are restricted by the same draconian PPPA.

The delay on the Home Ministry's part appears to be yet another politically motivated action, given that the divisive NGO Perkasa, which espouses for the dominance of Malay rights, was given the licence to publish its mouthpiece *Suara Perkasa* without any impediment.

A politically motivated licencing regime has no place in a democratic system, where every citizen, organisation and political party is free to express their view in any media. We urge the Ministry to immediately allow *Suara Keadilan* and *The Rocket* to resume publication and to refrain from further actions that may harm Malaysia's standing with regard to the democratic and fundamental right to free expression.

For the longer term, CIJ reiterates its call to Parliament for media law reform, so that together Malaysians can realise Prime Minister Najib Razak's vision to free media, which he shared with journalists soon after taking office in 2009: "If we are truly to build a democracy that is responsive to the needs of all the people, we need a media – both old and new – that is empowered to responsibly report what they see, without fear of consequence, and to hold governments and public officials accountable for the results they achieve or do not achieve."

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