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## [Support Imprisoned Malaysian Human Rights Defender Irene Fernandez](#)

On October 16, 2003, Irene Fernandez, the Director of Tenaganita (a women's non-governmental organization based in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia) was sentenced to 12 months imprisonment by the Magistrates Court for the Memorandum on "Abuse , Torture and Dehumanized Treatment of Migrant Workers in Detention Centres". The memorandum had been finalized and sent to relevant authorities and the media in August 1995.

Tenaganita compiled the Memorandum from over 300 interviews with former detainees and the information from the Sun Magazine journalists who did their own independent investigation. Irene was consequently arrested and charged in March 1996 under the Printing Presses and Publication Act 1984 for maliciously publishing false news. During the seven and half year trial, seen as the longest in Malaysia, Irene went to court 310 times for full hearing.

The trial conviction demonstrates that there is no protection for human rights defenders to articulate concerns over human rights violations. Such a trend not only curtails constructive criticism but has serious implications for all organizations involved in promotion and protection of rights of people.

The United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders calls on all nations to protect and respect human rights defenders so that they can fulfil their role and responsibilities as defenders.

Tenaganita has launched an international petition to the new Malaysian Prime Minister, Mr Abdullah Badawi. You can support the petition at: [http://www.ipetitions.com/campaigns/irene\\_fernandez/](http://www.ipetitions.com/campaigns/irene_fernandez/)

Alternatively you could write to Mr Badawi asking for a review of Irene's case and a serious investigation into conditions in migrant detention centres. His address is: Prime Minister Dato Seri Abdullah Badawi, Prime Minister's Department, 6502 Putrajaya, Selangor, Malaysia

If you want to send messages of support to Irene, please send them to: Tenaganita, 11th floor, Wisma Yakin, Jalan Masjid India, 50110 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia