

Over 400 people mark 25th anniversary of ISA arrests

YAHOO! NEWS



By [Ewen Boey](#) / Yahoo! Newsroom - Sat, Jun 2, 2012



[View Photo](#)

Ex-detainees of "Operation Spectrum" present at the "That We May Dream Again" event. (Yahoo! photo)

More than 400 people gathered at Hong Lim Park's Speakers' Corner on Saturday to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the first arrests and detentions in Singapore of alleged Marxist conspirators.

Human rights non-governmental organisation MARUAH and Function 8, a citizen-led move to facilitate civic discussions, remembered those who had been arrested in "Operation Spectrum" between 1987 and 1988 for their alleged involvement in a "Marxist conspiracy" to topple the government.

The two groups also called for the abolition of the Internal Security Act (ISA), under which such detentions without trial have been made.

Playwright Alfian Sa'at and Singapore Democratic Party treasurer Vincent Wijesingha, among others, aired their personal views on why they believe ISA is no longer applicable today.

"I think today's turnout was really invigorating, because I think hopefully people in Singapore are getting concerned on a lot of issues that matter to them, and are willing to stand and speak up for these issues... I think we will have a better civil society who will engage the government on issues that will matter to them," said MARUAH president Braema Mathi.

Present as well were eight ex-detainees of 1987, who shared their experiences with members of the public in a breakout session after the event. The 24 who had been detained under the ISA were a mix of social workers, church workers and professionals.

Teo Soh Lung, one of the 24 who had been detained, said, "I'm actually happy with the turnout and the weather. The turnout is beyond my expectations. I think the young people is the most important in the crowd. The younger ones may not know (about what happened).

William Yap, the only former detainee to have spoken on stage, said, "There were so many people who wanted to speak. All the ex-detainees were prepared to speak, but we thought we should give our guests precedence. Since there was nobody going to speak in Mandarin, they asked me and I said okay... I got some feedback and people were quite happy with the speech."

The event also featured exhibits of the detention cells and interrogation rooms, which were set up in two weeks by the ex-detainees themselves, with the help of some of their friends.

The organisers also urged the public to support the call for the abolition of the ISA by signing a petition.

"This is a very difficult issue to come and talk about the ISA and 'Operation Spectrum', and yet there are number of people who are willing to support their names with IC numbers. I'm very proud of Singaporeans," said Braema.

The MARUAH president added that their organisation, together with Function 8, intend to take 2012 to raise awareness of this issue and plan for more activities.

That We May Dream Again



Sun, Jun 3, 2012 **The ex-detainees, with supporters and speakers.**