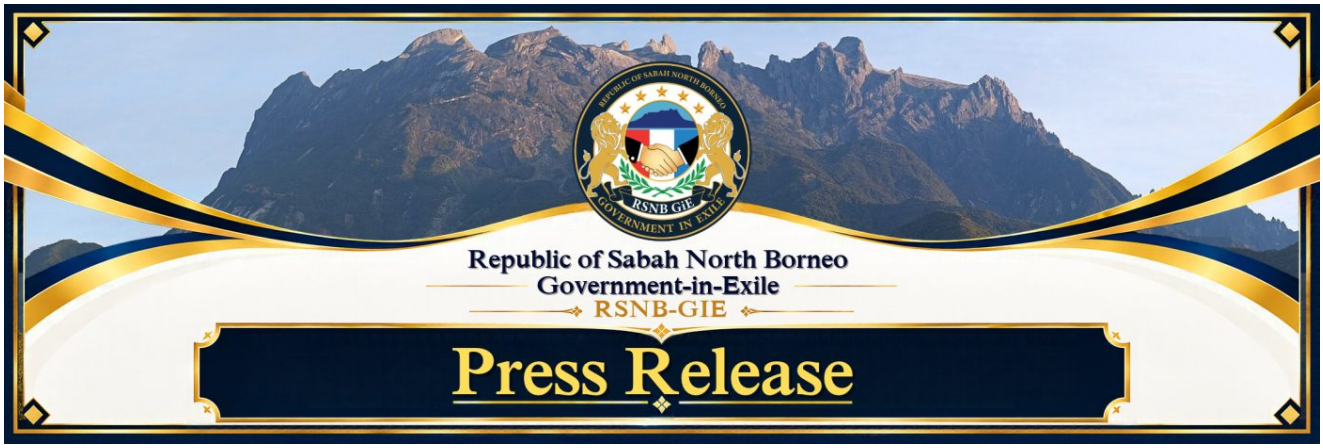
PRESS RELEASE

RSNB-GiE Challenges Claims of Legal Illegitimacy, Citing Historical Evidence of Sabah's 1963 Democratic and Constitutional Transition

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Government-in-Exile calls for independent examination of colonial representation, the 1963 United Nations Malaysia Mission and the absence of direct state legislative elections until 1967.

MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA, 18 October 2026: The Republic of Sabah North Borneo Government-in-Exile (RSNB-GiE) has reaffirmed its position concerning Sabah's right to self-determination, rejecting suggestions that its peaceful political advocacy lacks a legitimate historical or international legal foundation.

The announcement follows the publication of an expanded official press statement responding to two reports published by *The Sun Malaysia* on 18 September 2025, which questioned RSNB-GiE's legal standing and raised concerns regarding its political activities.

RSNB-GiE maintains that questions concerning North Borneo's incorporation into Malaysia in 1963 cannot be adequately examined through Malaysia's domestic constitutional framework alone. The organisation argues that a comprehensive assessment must also consider British colonial administration, the development of democratic institutions, the authority of the representatives who signed the Malaysia Agreement 1963 (MA63), and the international principles governing self-determination.

Central to RSNB-GiE's renewed historical examination is the distinction between the indirect electoral arrangements operating in North Borneo in 1963 and the first direct election to Sabah's State Legislative Assembly in April 1967.

British parliamentary records dated 20 March 1963 confirm that North Borneo's Legislative Council had previously consisted of Governor-nominated unofficial members and official members, with reforms introducing an indirect electoral-college system.

The Malaysia Agreement was signed in London on 9 July 1963, before the indirect Legislative Council elections were completed later that month.

Significantly, official Malaysian parliamentary records confirm that Sabah's first direct State Legislative Assembly election was conducted between 8 and 23 April 1967, nearly four years after Malaysia's establishment on 16 September 1963.

RSNB-GiE maintains that this chronology raises important questions concerning the democratic mandate of North Borneo's representatives at the time of the Agreement's signing.

The organisation recognises that direct legislative elections are not the only possible means of establishing self-determination. Nevertheless, it considers that the representative and consultative processes used in 1963 require examination against the standards of free and informed political choice set out in United Nations General Assembly Resolution 1541 (XV), particularly Principle IX.

RSNB-GiE has also called for further historical examination of the arrangements surrounding the United Nations Malaysia Mission, established in August 1963 to

ascertain the wishes of the peoples of North Borneo and Sarawak.

The Mission commenced its work after MA63 had already been signed. United Nations records show that British and Malayan observers attended its hearings throughout, while Indonesian and Philippine observers participated only during the final days.

The date of Malaysia's establishment was publicly announced before the Mission completed its work, and the United Nations Secretary-General's conclusions were released only two days before Malaysia came into existence.

RSNB-GiE acknowledges that Secretary-General U Thant accepted the Mission's findings and concluded that a majority of the peoples of North Borneo and Sarawak wished to participate in the proposed federation.

However, RSNB-GiE maintains that the Mission's compressed timetable, observer arrangements and wider political circumstances deserve independent scrutiny to determine whether the ascertainment process adequately reflected the freely expressed and informed wishes of the population.

The organisation emphasises that these documentary circumstances do not, by themselves, establish that the Mission acted improperly or that its findings were predetermined.

RSNB-GiE further highlights a joint petition submitted to the United Nations in September 1962 by political representatives from North Borneo, Brunei and Sarawak.

Circulated as United Nations document A/AC.109/PET.46, the petition raised concerns regarding the proposed constitutional arrangements and called for consideration of alternative political arrangements and procedures for determining the wishes of the population.

The organisation considers this document evidence that opposition to the proposed federation existed before MA63 was signed, while recognising that the petition does not establish the views of a majority of North Borneo's population.

RSNB-GiE also points to the *United Nations Juridical Yearbook 1963*, which records the international legal continuity of the Federation of Malaya following its enlargement and change of name to Malaysia.

The organisation maintains that this constitutional continuity raises questions warranting examination concerning the position of North Borneo as a British colony and the character of the 1963 constitutional arrangements. It acknowledges that continuity alone does not prove unlawful incorporation.

In response to suggestions that its political activities could threaten public order, RSNB-GiE categorically rejects the association of its peaceful advocacy with violence, criminal conspiracy or political intimidation.

The organisation reaffirms that its objectives are pursued through historical research, public education, peaceful assembly, democratic participation and lawful international engagement.

RSNB-GiE acknowledges that its establishment does not automatically confer international recognition as a sovereign government or an electoral mandate from the entire population of Sabah.

Nevertheless, it maintains that peaceful political organisations may legitimately advocate historical and legal positions concerning self-determination without such advocacy automatically constituting criminal conduct.

RSNB-GiE characterises its political cause as one of decolonisation rather than conventional secession, while recognising that this legal characterisation remains contested and has not been established by an international judicial determination.

RSNB-GiE calls upon independent historians, international legal scholars, relevant international institutions and interested governments to examine the historical circumstances surrounding North Borneo's constitutional transition in 1963.

The organisation considers that the democratic authority of colonial representatives, the procedures used to ascertain public consent, the 1962 petition, the Manila Accord and the findings of the United Nations Malaysia Mission should be examined together as part of a comprehensive historical and legal assessment.

RSNB-GiE respects Malaysia's existing international status and recognises that the relevant historical processes have not been judicially determined to invalidate MA63.

Nevertheless, it maintains that the documentary record provides legitimate grounds for further independent scholarly and legal examination.

The organisation also encourages responsible journalism, evidence-based public discussion and constructive dialogue with relevant parties, including the Malaysian Government.

RSNB-GiE reaffirms its commitment to peaceful, democratic and lawful advocacy, maintaining that the political future of Sabah must ultimately reflect the freely expressed and informed wishes of its people in accordance with applicable international law.

The full revised press statement, including supporting documentary references, is intended to be made available through the official RSNB-GiE website.

ENDS.

ISSUED BY:

Office of the President

Republic of Sabah North Borneo

Government-in-Exile (RSNB-GiE)

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