

Malaysia: Call for immediate resignation of Siti Zailah Mohd Yusoff, Deputy Minister of Women

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The Joint Action Group for Gender Equality (JAG) demands for the resignation of Siti Zailah Mohd Yusoff as Deputy Minister of Women, Family and Community Development for her statement in support of domestic violence.

In a two minute video released on social media, the deputy minister shared marital advice including recommending that husbands to use a “gentle but firm physical touch” on their wives. As a minister who is meant to uphold gender equality and the rights of women to protection and safety, this is abhorrent, denies women the right to equality, their right to dignity and to be free from degrading treatment. It is grossly in error and a demonstration of failed leadership.

The Deputy Minister must step down for normalising domestic violence, which is a crime in Malaysia as well as for perpetuating ideas and behaviours that are opposed to gender equality. During the movement control order (MCO) period in 2020 and 2021 alone there were 9,015 police reports on domestic violence, these statistics may not include reports received by NGOs and other support organisations. There is often stigma and fear attached to reporting domestic violence and this is made worse by statements such as those of Siti Zailah.

Malaysia is a party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and is, according to the 12th Malaysia Plan, committed to the goal of gender equality in all arenas. More importantly, Malaysia has been elected to the United Nations Human Rights Council with the promise of prioritising the rights of vulnerable groups including children and women. However, a public statement against gender equality and promoting gender-based violence at the ministerial level is in direct contradiction to this.

In calling for her resignation, we urge the Malaysian government to take seriously its role on the Human Rights Council and the commitment to protect women and children in the country. We also believe that the Minister of Women, Family and Community Development, Datuk Seri Rina Harun and Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob must take immediate action on the matter.

Endorsed by the following JAG member organisations:

1. Women’s Aid Organisation (WAO)
2. Sisters in Islam (SIS)
3. KRYSS Network
4. Sarawak Women for Women Society (SWWS)
5. EMPOWER
6. Women’s Centre for Change (WCC)
7. Association of Women Lawyers (AWL)

8. All Women's Action Society (AWAM)
9. TENAGANITA
10. Family Frontiers
11. Sabah Women's Action Resource Group (SAWO)

About JAG:

The Joint Action Group for Gender Equality (JAG) is a coalition of 14 women's rights organisations in Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah, and Sarawak. Since 1985, we have been advocating for gender equality and social justice in Malaysia within a feminist framework. We leverage on our diverse expertise and amplify women's voices to raise public awareness and advocate for law reform. We uphold international human rights standards in promoting justice, equality, and non-discrimination

Collective

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P.S.

Sisters in Islam

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