

# Joint Action Group for Gender Equality (JAG)

Press release dated 3 June 2014

## In the gang-rape case, what were they thinking?

The recent report of a 15-year-old girl allegedly gang-raped by over 30 men has stunned the nation. According to newspaper reports, police investigations have commenced and the suspects are being apprehended.

It has now emerged that a second victim, a 17-year-old girl, has also alleged that she was gang-raped in the same incident. The police have informed the media that many of the suspects tested positive for drugs and "...*tindakan mereka ini dilakukan adalah dipengaruhi oleh dadah...*" ("their actions were influenced by drugs").

While drugs or alcohol may exacerbate behavior, lower inhibitions and cloud judgments, the use of such intoxicants cannot justify or excuse the act of rape. Drug use alone does not transform a drug user into a rapist.

Here we have a group of men, supposedly under the influence of drugs, able to go to a particular place, at a particular time and target a particular person, not once but several times. The premeditated nature of the act suggests that while drugs might have lowered their inhibition, it certainly did not affect their capacity to think up and execute such a sexually violent act. Drugs do not turn a man into a rapist; a rapist mentality does.

What would make them think it was acceptable to beat a woman into submission and then use her body as a sexual object to be violently assaulted and raped repeatedly until she lost consciousness? It speaks volumes about the extent to which the objectification of women is entrenched in the minds of these men. What aspects in our culture have encouraged or allowed these men to feel entitled to abuse a woman's body in such manner?

It is bewildering to learn that many of the suspects rounded up are related to each other and that a father and his two sons were part of the group. If indeed they were part of the gang-rape, then what lesson of manhood was this father teaching his sons? Were they learning by example?

The Joint Action Group for Gender Equality (JAG) is concerned about the growing rape culture in this country - a culture which encourages male aggression and violence against women; where violence is increasingly

sexualised; where women are objectified and dehumanised; and, where survivors are blamed and perpetrators are excused. It is especially disgraceful coming from a country which is bending over backwards espousing religious values and morality.

We need to take a critical look at our society and root out all that supports this rape culture. A major part of this process would include teaching young boys and men that manhood does not equate to male aggression, sex as conquests, male privilege and misogyny.

Until and unless the sexual objectification of women stops and our society learns to internalise and practice that men and women are equal partners deserving of mutual respect, sexual molestation and assault will continue.

Only a change in mindset and attitudes towards women will begin to stop such crimes.

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The Joint Action Group for Gender Equality (JAG) comprises of the following 10 organisations:

Women's Centre for Change, Penang (WCC)  
Persatuan Kesedaran Komuniti Selangor (Empower)  
All Women's Action Society (Awam)  
Association of Women Lawyers (AWL)  
Persatuan Sahabat Wanita Selangor  
Perak Women for Women Society (PWW)  
Sabah Women Action Resource Group (Sawo)  
Sisters in Islam (SIS)  
Tenaganita  
Women's Aid Organisation (WAO)