

Justice for Sameera

Ensure thorough investigation & hold perpetrators accountable

We, the undersigned, are deeply saddened by the senseless murder of Sameera Krishnan, a young transgender woman on 23rd February 2017 at about 3:30 a.m. in Kuantan, Malaysia. Not only was she attacked with a knife and slashed in the hands, arms, head and legs, she was also shot three times. Sameera worked as a florist in Kuantan and is described by family and friends as a soft-spoken and a down-to-earth person. Her funeral was held on Friday, 24th February, which happened to be her birthday.

We welcome the prompt investigation of the murder by the police, and look forward to the outcome of the investigation, and justice being served. Sameera's murder is allegedly linked to a previous case that involves her abduction and rape by a couple of gang members in February 2015. The case is still on going, and Sameera was set to appear in court next month.

As we await the outcome of the investigation and the motives of the murder by the police, it is important to acknowledge that transgender women often experience brutal and extreme forms of violence due their gender identity. Compounding the violence is the lack of protection, persecution of trans people, the negative perception of transgender persons in society and discrimination among other things.

Between 2007 and 2016, at least 10 cases of murder have been [reported in the media](#). However, many other cases of hate crime and violence are unreported and undocumented. In these 10 cases, the trans women were subjected to brutal violence, including being beaten to death with a hammer, strangled, gagged, stabbed multiple times, physically assaulted, pushed from a building, drowned in a water retention pond, etc.

Media reporting and misgendering

The misgendering of Sameera received wide criticism by the public and transgender activists as well as groups, including the Malaysian Tamil Trans Women Association. The media showed gross insensitivity and disrespect towards transgender persons, and complete disregard to the trauma and loss faced by Sameera's family members and loved ones.

Several media reports of her murder, especially articles in the Malay language misgendered Sameera as '*pondan*', '*lelaki berperwatakan perempuan*', '*lelaki transeksual*', 'transgender in woman's attire', and 'transvestite' in their headlines or article. While some media, including Harian Metro changed their headlines from "*Pondan*" (negative term used against trans women and cisgender gay men, especially effeminate gay men) to "*Mak Nyah*" (an acceptable colloquial term to describe transgender women) there was a lack of consistency and meaningful effort in these changes. For example, an article by Harian Metro entitled '*Mak Nyah maut ditembak, ditetak*' still contained '*lelaki berperwatakan perempuan*' (man with women characteristics) in its article. In addition, Mutiara FM, a local radio station in a morning programme, referred to Sameera as a transgender man, and laughed at her gender identity.

Consistent and intentional misgendering is a form of violence, and it degrades and dehumanizes transgender persons. In addition, misgendering has adverse and long lasting impact trans people's self-esteem. We urge everyone to use accurate, affirming and respectable terms such as "*mak nyah*", trans woman, "*perempuan*" or "*wanita transgender*", and transgender women. (See [media analysis](#) and [media guides](#) by Justice for Sisters)

The violence experienced by transgender persons does not happen in vacuum, and it is symptomatic of the marginalization and lack of inclusion of trans people in society. It is important that we dismantle all forms of stigma and discrimination faced by transgender persons that continues to place trans people in vulnerable situations.

All persons, regardless of gender identity should be protected from violence. We urge the authorities and the media, especially journalists and editors to treat trans people with respect and dignity, and bring the perpetrators of Sameera's brutal murder to justice.

Terminologies

Assigned sex at birth – identity assigned based on genitals, typically, female, male, etc. however, sex or sex characteristics refer to a combination of chromosomes, internal and external sexual organs, secondary sex characteristics, and hormones.

Gender identity – personal sense of identification (typically, girl, boy, gender fluid or queer etc.) based on how one feels and sees themselves. Typically, gender identity is also assigned at birth according to genital based on assumption. However, gender identity and sex are two separate things, and do not have to be consistent, aligned or match.

Cisgender – a person whose sex assigned at birth 'match' their gender identity

Transgender – a person whose sex assigned at birth 'does not match' their gender identity

Trans woman – a transgender person whose gender identity is a girl/woman

Trans man – a transgender person whose gender identity is a boy/man

Gender queer – a person identifies as neither girl/woman or boy/man, non-binary, combination of gender categories or other forms of gender identity

See [gender bear](#) for more information

Endorsed by: *(in alphabetical order)*

1. All Women's Action Society (AWAM)
2. Association of Women Lawyers Malaysia (AWL)
3. Justice for Sisters (JFS)
4. Sisters in Islam (SIS)
5. PELANGI — Campaign for Equality and Human Rights Initiative
6. Tirunangai Uthavi Karagal
7. Persatuan Tamil Thirunangai Malaysia
8. Voice of Community (VOC)
9. The G-Blog
10. Transmen of Malaysia (TOM)
11. Persatuan Kesedaran Komuniti Selangor (EMPOWER)
12. Perak Women for Women Society (PWW)
13. Seksualiti Merdeka
14. SEED Malaysia
15. Women's Aid Organisation (WAO)
16. Pertubuhan Kebajikan Sinar Pelangi (PKSP)
17. Women's Centre for Change (WCC)
18. Persatuan Promosi Hak Asasi Manusia