

## **Malaysia's shame**

### **Scolded and beaten for refusing to be fleeced – KLCC cabbies brutally attack visitor**

PETALING JAYA, 3 November 2014 - You think you'd be safe in Malaysia's premier shopping center, the iconic KLCC. However, for Kavya Kriti, her experience turned into a nightmare, concluding in a violent physical assault. Who were the perpetrators? The cabbies we are expected to trust to ferry us around safely.

"I had a swollen face, bruises on my head and neck" Kayva recounts. "The guy attacked me twice, second time because we dared to click pictures of the cab's number plate to lodge a police complaint."

Sadly such incidences of intimidation and violence are not unusual. In Malaysia, women continue to face verbal and physical abuse on the streets and in public spaces.

"Women are still expected to be silent when they face abuse" says Lee Wei San, Assistant Programme Manager at the All Women's Action Society (AWAM). "Any other reaction is considered 'unbecoming' or 'unladylike'. Even worse, some believe that women 'ask for it' when they speak out against injustice or violence."

"It's outrageous that refusing to be fleeced invites a violent verbal and physical beating," exclaims Timothy Upai Lindris, AWAM's Assistant Programme Officer. "This is exactly why I am taking part in the White Ribbon Campaign. I don't want my mother or sisters subjected to such treatment."

The case of Kavya Kriti being beaten up at KLCC by cab drivers for speaking out against harassment after she refused to pay an exorbitant fare, is a reflection of the kind of oppression and discrimination women continue face everyday. Shockingly, despite her friend calling for help, bystanders did not come to her assistance.

"Women who speak out are often silenced through violence and discrimination. How can we live in a society that continues to treat women as inferior, and which condones such violence?" asked Ho Yock Lin, AWAM's President. "This is unacceptable. Violence against women is a human rights issue. And that is everyone's responsibility."

"We all have a role to play in speaking out and taking action when we see violence and discrimination against women," says Lee. "We must, each of us, make a conscious decision that violence against women is not acceptable and take collective responsibility not to be indifferent to such an injustice."

AWAM also calls for action by government agencies, such as SPAD, to address and monitor the behaviour of cab drivers. This includes training programmes as well as measures for stricter enforcement to curb violent behavior.