

Resolve Selangor Crisis, Seize Opportunity to Make History
Media Statement, 19 August 2014

The Joint Action Group for Gender Equality (JAG) calls for a speedy resolution to the current political crisis in Selangor. We deplore the waste of public resources and time that could have been spent on more pressing issues.

We wish to reiterate our support for a woman Menteri Besar, as part of our general call for an equal representation of women in public office. Gender should not be a barrier to women taking up decision-making positions, whether explicitly or implicitly. Malaysia has one of the lowest percentages of women as elected representatives in the Asia Pacific region. It desperately needs more women as political leaders and decision-makers.

We are concerned that outdated, sexist stereotypes of women's roles and abilities are still framing public discourse on Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail's suitability as Menteri Besar. When Lim Guan Eng became the Chief Minister of Penang in 2008, we heard fewer murmurs about his inexperience or the possibility that his father may be directing his decisions as Chief Minister from behind the scenes. Certainly, his biological functions were not considered to be relevant criteria for his office. Why the double standards for a woman MB candidate? This question applies to not just Dr Wan Azizah and Selangor, but also Menteri Besar candidates in other states.

As of right now, Dr Wan Azizah commands the support of a majority of the Selangor State Assemblypersons. JAG acknowledges, however, that if Dr Wan Azizah were to be appointed, it is under less than ideal circumstances. The Selangor political crisis has been poisoned by mud-slinging and unethical behaviour. The people expected better from Pakatan Rakyat.

Should Dr Wan Azizah become Menteri Besar, the Selangor state government must in turn become more consultative and transparent, with processes that allow the people to have a real say in matters that affect them. She must be able to push for more progressive gender policies as a priority issue, steering the state's engagement with women to move beyond handouts to economic, social and political empowerment.

Statement by the **Joint Action Group for Gender Equality**, comprising:

Persatuan Kesedaran Komuniti Selangor (EMPOWER)
All Women's Action Society (AWAM)
Association of Women Lawyers (AWL)
Perak Women for Women Society (PWW)
Sabah Women's Action-Resource Group (SAWO)
Tenaganita
Women's Aid Organisation (WAO)