

The Joint Action Group for Gender Equality

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Selangor Mufti must be held accountable for statement condoning domestic violence

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The Selangor Mufti Department's objectives include providing "advisory and guidance to the Sultan, the State Government and the society". Yet its leader is reportedly propagating misogynistic and unlawful views.

Selangor Mufti Mohd Tamyas Abdul Wahid reported stated that a man is allowed to beat his wife and children under certain circumstances. This is not only misogynistic, it is unlawful.

Penal Code section 323 criminalises "voluntarily causes hurt", and the Domestic Violence Act makes it very clear that abuse by a husband towards his wife--physical or psychological--is a crime. These laws apply to all Malaysians, irrespective of religion.

By saying what he did, Mohd Tamyas implies that Islam advocates violence in the family. We take strong exception to this as the Qur'an insistently talks about human dignity, justice and equality. It talks about love and mercy in the relationship between men and women (30:21), that men and women are each other's garments (2:187), that men and women are members, one of the other (3:195) that men and women are each other's protecting friends and guardians (9:71). To say that domestic violence is acceptable under certain circumstances is a travesty of justice and runs counter to human values.

Our country has also made this stance clear through international commitments. Having ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Malaysian government has committed to "condemn discrimination against women in all its forms".

As CEDAW General Recommendation No. 19 describes, gender-based violence including domestic violence is a form of discrimination, and that "family violence is one of the most insidious forms of violence against women". Malaysia has also ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

Mohd Tamyas Abdul Wahid's misogynistic stance is also a disservice to Malaysia's role as ASEAN chair in 2015. It is contrary to the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and Elimination of Violence against Children in ASEAN, which Malaysia signed in 2013, which acknowledges the "importance of ... [promoting] the rights of women and children, as well as to prevent and protect them from and

respond to all forms of violence, abuse and exploitation of women and children particularly for those who are in vulnerable situations, including domestic violence.”

It is obvious that any form of violence has no place in Malaysian society. Numerous leaders have spoken out strongly against domestic violence. Members of parliament YB Nurul Izzah, YB Mas Ermieyati, YB Hannah Yeoh, and YB Nancy Shukri all stood alongside Women’s Aid Organisation (WAO) on International Women’s Day last year, declaring that there is no excuse for abuse.

In November last year, Minister of Youth and Sports Khairy Jamaluddin said at a forum during the global campaign 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, that, “No culture or religion permits us to act in violence towards women and it is a gravest sin to do so.” Just last week, Minister of Communication and Multimedia Dato’ Sri Ahmad Shabery Cheek said that we must adopt “zero-tolerance” with regards to violence against women.

Domestic and gender-based violence is an abhorrent act that dehumanises women, and it must not be tolerated. It is particularly appalling that someone who claims to guide and advise the state seems to not recognise that domestic violence is a criminal offense.

The Selangor Mufti Department and Mohd Tamyas Abdul Wahid must be held accountable for his statement.

We call on all Malaysians to stand up and reject the Selangor Mufti’s extremist, misogynistic, and unlawful statement, and to stand up against all forms of violence against women. There is no justification or context which makes domestic violence acceptable. There is no excuse for abuse.

The Joint Action Group for Gender Equality (JAG)

Women’s Aid Organisation (WAO)

Sisters in Islam (SIS)

Women’s Centre for Change Penang (WCC)

Association of Women Lawyers (AWL)

All Women’s Action Society (AWAM)

Perak Women for Women Society (PWW)

Persatuan Kesedaran Komuniti Selangor (EMPOWER)

Persatuan Sahabat Wanita Selangor (PSWS)

Sabah Women’s Action-Resource Group (SAWO)

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