



All Women's Action Society (AWAM)

Released on 19 May 2014

AWAM's response to the Star on the use of photos of a bikini-clad Filipino actress in an attempt to smear the DAP candidate in the Teluk Intan by-election, Dyana Sofya

It concerns AWAM greatly that women continue to face such a hostile environment in the political arena. The reality is that women continue to face discrimination, marginalisation and even violence in various fields including in politics. When we talk about violence, we do not only mean physical violence. Sexist comments, campaigns that target women's speech, bodies and behaviour are also part of this continuum of violence that women face in the public sphere. Women, more so than men, face certain repercussions if they do not conform to dominant codes of behaviour, dress and speech.

We need to be serious about fielding women, who demonstrate their integrity and commitment to the interests of the *rakyat*, in politics. Despite formally allowing women to participate in politics, societal pressure in Malaysia still actively discourages women from doing so, and this includes attempts to humiliate or demean female politicians in an effort to push women away from politics. It is representative of a culture which is hostile towards women in public and political spaces. Such behaviour and remarks often go unrebuked and are clearly discriminatory in nature. As a party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Malaysia needs to step up its efforts to enhance women's participation at the decision making level at both public and private sectors in line with the progress made in women's education.

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