



NOMINEES

The Aiyoh... Wat Lah?! Awards is an annual event organised by the Joint Action Group for Gender Equality (JAG) intended to raise awareness on what constitutes sexism, misogyny, homophobia, and/or transphobia and to encourage higher standards of behaviour from public figures and institutions in relation to gender and sexuality.

The Joint Action Group for Gender Equality (JAG) comprises:

All Women's Action Society (AWAM)

Sisters in Islam (SIS)

Women's Aid Organisation (WAO)

Perak Women for Women Society (PWW)

Persatuan Kesedaran Komuniti Selangor (EMPOWER)

Persatuan Sahabat Wanita Selangor (PSWS)

Sabah Women's Action Resource Group (SAWO)

Tenaganita

Women's Centre for Change, Penang (WCC)

To the best of our knowledge, these nominations have not been retracted or disputed.

CATEGORY: FOOT IN MOUTH

Nominee	Background and basis for nomination
1. “Pakai sarung tangan pegang isteri nanti tak terasa.”	Defence Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi is alleged to have made this remark when handed a pair of gloves by women’s rights activists as part of the Wanita Suara Perubahan campaign calling for clean governance.
13 March	<i>This remark suggests that the act of standing in solidarity with women's rights advocates in calling for good governance is relatively unimportant or at least not as important as the ability to feel up one's wife. The sexual nature of this remark in such a context is also no accident but draws on the sexist linking of women to sex objects.</i>
2. “I don’t think beautiful girls will want the indelible ink to mar their pretty hands or nails. How are they supposed to paint their nails afterwards? They might not even want to meet their boyfriends after voting or they might not even vote.”	People’s Progressive Party (PPP) president M. Kayveas reportedly voicing his disagreement with one of Bersih 2.0’s demands that the Election Commission introduce the use of indelible ink to prevent voter fraud and calling on women to protest its implementation.
10 June	<i>This statement portrays young women as vain creatures who would put boyfriends and subjective notions of prettiness above their duties and rights as citizens to vote in the general elections. It further stereotypes women in roles that uphold traditional and mainstream media-inspired notions of femininity.</i>
3. “I don’t sleep with my son. I’m not gay.”	De-facto Law Minister Nazri Aziz when asked about his son’s relationship with a Sabahan timber trader. Nazri reportedly said he does not keep up with his son’s dealings as the latter is neither his wife nor his lover.
1 November	<i>Nazri was trying to absolve himself of his son’s actions by claiming that he knew nothing because he does not sleep with his son and is not gay. This logic links the incestuous act of a father having sexual relations with his son to homosexuality. It also suggests that a father who slept with his son would be properly called “gay”. The link between homosexuals and paedophiles as well as those who commit incest is one that is all too commonly made, but in fact, there is no such link.</i>
4. “Women are easier to bully and tackle. Women never change. They always like to bring lots of money in their handbags. That is why they	Malaysian Crime Prevention Foundation executive committee member Robert Phang was reported as blaming snatch thefts on women for carrying expensive handbags and a lot of money.
	<i>This remark relies on and perpetuates a number of myths about women, not</i>

are attacked. That's the problem."

27 June

least being that they are weak and stubbornly cling to their desire for branded handbags. Further, instead of focusing on institutional measures that can be taken to protect everyone's right to be free of crime, Phang took the easy route of victim blaming. Instead of what brand of handbags, gender stereotypes and the design of our public spaces are more likely to render women vulnerable to snatch theft.

CATEGORY: INSULTING INTELLIGENCE

Nominee	Background and basis for nomination
1 The ban on Irshad Manji's roadshow on grounds that her lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) ideology contradicts Malaysia's position as an Islamic country and would spread "fahaman songsang".	In justifying the ban on writer Irshad Manji's roadshow to launch her book "Allah, Kebebasan & Cinta", Minister in the Prime Minister's Office Jamil Khir Baharom reportedly said that Manji's "ideology was clearly against Malaysia's position as an Islamic country and the norms of Malaysian society". Ismail Mina Ahmad, the president of Muafakat, reportedly claimed the book "invites people to free themselves from a religion with its own interpretation of religion".
19 May	<i>This ban and the statements made against Manji's book manifests homophobia and an intolerance for differing views and interpretations of religion. It is hard to fathom how one's sexual identity can be a threat to the nation, and unsurprisingly, this link has never been proved. Instead of denigrating books and their authors, we should read and decide for ourselves whether religion, liberty, and love can coexist or not.</i>
2 There is no need for a women's rights movement in Malaysia because equality has been given "from the start."	Prime Minister and Women, Family and Community Development Minister Najib Razak reportedly claimed that there is no need for a women's rights movement in Malaysia because equality has been given "from the start", that Malaysia is "way ahead" of developed nations in terms of women's rights, and that all this has led to great success among Malaysian women "to the extent that the men are said to be an endangered species". The Prime Minister reportedly said this at the government's Women's Day celebration.
2 October	<i>In the 2012 Global Gender Gap report, Malaysia was ranked 100 out of 135 countries. Saying there is no need for a women's rights movement ignores what the movement has done – and is still doing – to achieve gender equality. There is still very much more to be accomplished before we can say there is no need for women's rights.</i>
3 Pakatan Rakyat is "like a gay marriage where one doesn't know who is the father and who is the mother."	Puad Zarkashi, a member of parliament (BN-Batu Pahat), reportedly said this in evaluating the opposition coalition, claiming it was not clear who was in charge and that there were redundancies of positions.
	<i>Our heteronormative society has socialised us to believe that in any relationship,</i>

- 21 November *there must one person playing a “man” role and another playing a “woman” role. This ill-informed statement implies first of all that there is something wrong and unnatural with gay marriage, and that gay couples automatically make a bad partnership.*
- 4 Extremists introducing “budaya negative” including street demos and LGBT practices are more dangerous than communists. National Social Extremist Threat Division Assistant Director Mohd Sofian Md Makinuddin reportedly claimed that extremists, including those who bring “budaya negative” like street demonstrations and LGBT practices are more dangerous than communists as they have access to social media. He reportedly said this while presenting a working paper at a forum on government transformation and safety.
- 29 July *LGBTs are not a threat to the country. The real threat comes when we discriminate against people based on their sexual orientation. In fact, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights guarantees the right to freedom of expression and assembly.*
5. LGBTs have no rights under the Federal Constitution. Statement by Mashitah Ibrahim, Deputy Minister in the PM’s Office, and *de facto* Deputy Minister of Islamic Affairs, claiming that the Federal Constitution only prohibits discrimination against men and women, not LGBTs.
- 19 June *While the Article 8(2) of the Federal Constitution is silent on sexuality per se, it is preceded by Article 8(1) that says “All persons are equal before the law and entitled to the protection of the law”. Further, this argument ignores the fact that the Constitution has other provisions that guarantee all Malaysians fundamental civil liberties. This attempt by the Deputy Minister to argue otherwise is an ingenious interpretation of the country’s supreme law and reeks of homophobia and transphobia.*

CATEGORY: POLICY FAIL

- | Nominee | Background and basis for nomination |
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| 1. Official Friday sermon to warn Muslims of the “trap” of Valentine.

10 February | The Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) issued a federal Friday sermon titled “Awas jerat Valentine” (Beware Valentine’s trap). The text of the sermon reportedly included the message that asking someone to be his or her “Valentine” could lead to idolatry, and that “it is clearly an act that is against the Islamic faith”.

<i>By issuing this circular JAKIM is abusing its position of power to encourage the moral policing of individuals based on its narrow interpretation of morality. It insults the faith and intelligence of Muslims by assuming that they will be influenced against Islam by celebrating the day.</i> |

2. A woman hairdresser fined for cutting a man's hair. A woman hairdresser in a salon in a Kota Bharu mall was summoned by the municipal council for cutting a male customer's hair. Kota Bharu municipal council secretary Mohd Anis Hussein reportedly explained that unisex service is banned in the town's hair salons, and that the ban was needed to prevent any unnecessary suspicion or unhealthy interaction between sexes.
- 22 November

This policy, aimed at segregating women and men, is based on the need to control women and on the notion that women are nothing more than sex objects. In this instance, such segregation is also problematic because it jeopardises women's right to livelihood. The by-law has been suspended in its application on salons owned by non-Muslims pending a study.

CATEGORY: CANNOT IGNORE

- | Nominee | Background and basis for nomination |
|---|---|
| <p>1. Dismissing the application of ex-Guppy women workers who challenged their forced early retirement.</p> <p>13 August</p> | <p>In 2001, eight women workers from Guppy Plastic Industries were forced to retire after a new company regulation stipulated that women must retire at 50 years of age while men are to retire at 55. The women filed a gender discrimination complaint at the Industrial Court. While the Industrial Court decided in favour of the women, the High Court overturned the decision and ruled in favour of the company. The Court of Appeal dismissed the women's subsequent appeal. The women took the case to the Federal Court, but their application for leave to appeal was refused, partly on the basis that the company was following industry norms of the time.</p> <p><i>The judiciary has an obligation to uphold the law, including international law, not supposed industry norms. The company's discriminatory retirement policy is not in line with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which Malaysia ratified in 1995, and the judgement is a blatant disregard of the convention. A law was passed in 2012 stipulating a minimum retirement age of 60 in the private sector for both women and men. While this is a positive step, women workers who faced discrimination before the law was passed also deserve justice.</i></p> |
| <p>2. "We will ensure that any deviant culture, such as the behaviour of the LGBTs and deviant thoughts such as liberalism and pluralism, will not get any place in this country."</p> <p>25 June</p> | <p>Prime Minister Najib Razak reportedly made this remark at an event to launch the Ulama Secretariat and his book.</p> <p><i>It is disappointing that the Prime Minister chose populist rhetoric over defending fundamental rights enshrined in the Federal Constitution and concepts described in the Rukun Negara. As the leader of a diverse nation, he should celebrate and affirm this diversity instead of perpetuating discriminatory attitudes towards minority groups.</i></p> |

3. “We must not forget who is involved in this rape allegation, even if she is an adult, in which women have a tendency to exaggerate about a sexual act.”
5 September
- High Court judge Zamani Abdul Rahim reportedly made this statement when overturning the conviction of a kindergarten operator accused of raping a 4 year-old child, on the basis that the victim’s testimony was unreliable. The judge also reportedly stated that it was common knowledge that children find it hard to differentiate fact from fantasy.
- This statement perpetuates the tendency to blame the victim instead of the perpetrator, at one of the highest levels of government. It shows a complete lack of understanding when dealing with child or women victims of sexual crimes. Studies show that false or exaggerated rape claims are in fact rare.*
4. Dismissing Seksualiti Merdeka’s application for a judicial review on the police ban of their event.
1 March
- The police banned Seksualiti Merdeka, an annual event which provides a safe space for people of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities to come together to share knowledge about human rights, stating that the event was being investigated for being a threat to national security and harmony. Seksualiti Merdeka sought leave for the court to review the ban. High Court judge Rohana Yusof ruled that the police’s actions were not amenable to judicial review and the application was academic.
- The ban of Seksualiti Merdeka circumvented due process and denied its organisers and participants, which include stigmatised and vulnerable communities, their freedoms of expression and assembly. The dismissal of the judicial review overlooked these points and undermines rights guaranteed under the Federal Constitution.*
- 5 Dismissing the application challenging a law that makes it illegal for Muslim men to dress as women.
11 October
- The Section 66 of the Syariah Criminal (Negeri Sembilan) Enactment 1992 provides that it is an offence for any male person to wear women’s attire or pose as a woman in public. Four transwomen challenged the Enactment for violating their rights to personal liberty, equality, freedom of movement, and freedom of expression as enshrined in the Federal Constitution. High Court judge Siti Mariah Ahmad in dismissing the challenge ruled that Part II of the Federal Constitution is exempted by section 66 of the Enactment.
- This ruling has potentially created a dangerous precedent for future cases, as the judge seemingly placed Syariah law above the Federal Constitution. Meanwhile, transwomen in Negeri Sembilan and other states continue to face harassment from authorities and risk being fined up to RM1,000 and jailed up to six months if convicted.*

CATEGORY: LEAST HELPFUL TO THE SISTERHOOD

Nominees	Background and basis for nomination
1. "It's what wives must do, we give strength to our husband." 13 January	Rosmah Mansor, wife of Prime Minister Najib Razak, told women to stand by their husbands to help strengthen the family institution in an interview over a national public radio station. <i>This statement by the Prime Minister's wife places the burden of building a strong and successful family institution on married women via giving their husbands unconditional support. The call for women to place blind faith in their husbands is also problematic because it expects women to stand by their men, even if it is not in their best interests to do so. While Rosmah claimed that she drew strength from her husband (and children), it is significant that this is not the same as him "giving strength" to her.</i>
2. "Some women prefer to become senators instead of elected representatives, simply because of the less work that comes with a senatorship." 11 September	Wanita MIC Chief Komala Krishnamoorthy reportedly made this response to concerns among MIC women leaders that the party may not field women candidates in the 13th general election. <i>This remark implies that women politicians are not as hardworking or committed as their male counterparts. In an attempt to justify this, Komala claimed that women want to be active in politics but 'still want to have time for their personal lives'. They had, she said, a problem with their mentality in being elected representatives. Not only is this view premised on a stereotype of male and female politicians, it also ignores the obstacles that women are confronted with in the field, including unsupportive male (and female) party members.</i>
3. "It is because of the achievements of the UMNO-Barisan Nasional government that... we don't need to be activists, we don't need to burn our bras to get gender equality." 1 December	Shahrizat Abdul Jalil, former Minister of Women, Family and Community Development, reportedly said this during her winding-up speech as Wanita UMNO head at the UMNO General Assembly. <i>While it is true that Malaysian women have made progress since Independence, this claim falsely attributes their success solely to the BN ruling government. Specifically, it ignores the obvious contributions of the local women's movement. At the same time, it overplays the achievements gained under BN rule, evident in the fact that gender discrimination and sexism continue to be real challenges for many women on a daily basis.</i>

CATEGORY: ENOUGH ALREADY!

Nominee	Background and basis for nomination
1. Justifying hatred towards LGBTs using Islam.	<p>(1) Nooh Gadot, adviser to Majlis Agama Islam Negeri Johor, reportedly said that Muslims who are against religious law that prohibits same-sex relationships are “murtad”, and anyone who practices same-sex relationships, or befriends, cooperates, conspires, or agrees with the practice have committed a religious offence. (17 Jan)</p> <p>(2) Zahrain Hashim, at the time an Independent MP, reportedly claimed, “Political parties based on religion should not keep quiet on this issue. If they remain silent, they are being hypocrites because I believe no religion in the world accepts the LGBT culture.” (13 Apr)</p> <p>(3) Malay Rights organisation Jaringan Melayu Malaysia led an “anti-free sex and LGBT” rally; their president, Azwan Din Hamzah claimed that efforts to legitimise LGBTs would destroy the country and religious values. (21 Apr)</p> <p>(4) Abdul Rahim Sinwan, Deputy President of Persatuan Peguam Muslim Malaysia, reportedly claimed the “LGBT lifestyle” conflicts with Islam as the official religion of the Federation, in a speech at a forum entitled “LGBT’s Demands: Its Conflicts under the Federal Constitution” at the Universiti Teknologi Malaysia. (22 Apr)</p> <p>(5) Muhammad Uthman El Muhammady, a fellow with the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC), reportedly claimed that LGBTs have not only insulted human intelligence in making their demands, but also betrayed Islam and human civilisation while delivering a paper at a workshop entitled “LGBT invites the Wrath of God” at the Universiti Teknologi Malaysia. (22 Apr)</p> <p><i>People have used religion time and again to justify discriminatory and hateful actions and language. Though some may oppose the idea of diverse gender orientations and sexual identities, or worse, exploit this antagonism to gain political mileage, the rights of sexual minorities to be free from discrimination and violence must be respected in accordance with universal human rights standards.</i></p>
2. Efforts to stop the “spread” of LGBTs	<p>(1) Baharum Mohamad, MP for Sekijang, in parliament called for the creation of a “homosexual rehabilitation centre” to aid those with “homosexual tendencies” or engaged in same-sex relationships to stop such behaviour. (21 Mar)</p> <p>(2) Deputy Education Minister Mohd Puad Zarkashi reportedly said that parents and teachers need to be educated on spotting signs of LGBT tendencies among youth so they can steer their children away from this “unnatural practice” after launching a parenting seminar on LGBTs. (17 Jun)</p>

(3) Guidelines to identify gay and lesbian symptoms were published by Yayasan Guru Malaysia Bhd and Putrajaya Consultative Council of Parent-Teacher Associations. The guidelines were launched at a seminar officiated by the Deputy Education Minister Mohd Puad Zarkashi. (13 Sep)

Humans come in all shapes and sizes, including differing degrees of masculinity and femininity. Systematic efforts to bully those who do not conform to the imposed dominant sexual norm only increase the discrimination faced by people with diverse gender orientations and sexual identities. Therapies to “cure” LGBTs lack medical justification and threaten health, according to the World Health Organisation.

3. Continual harassment of Ambiga Sreenevasan, co-chairperson of Bersih 2.0 and woman human rights defender.
- (1) Nasharudin Mat Isa, then PAS central committee member, reportedly stated that Ambiga was unfit to lead Bersih 3.0 because of her links to the LGBT community. (23 Apr)
- (2) Around ten people from the Malay Armed Forces Veterans Association (PVTM) did “bottom exercises” in front of Ambiga’s house. The exercises consisted of the men leaning over and shaking their bottoms in the direction of her house. (15 May)
- (3) Around 200 people, including members of the right wing Malay NGO Perkasa, pelted stones and eggs at attendees of an event that planned to feature Ambiga. (19 May)
- (4) A group of 50 persons calling themselves “Halau 1.0” and led by Gerakan Belia Gagasan 1Malaysia President Shahrul Nasrun Kamaruddin gathered in front of Ambiga’s house, shouting “Bersih kotor!” (Bersih is dirty) and “Halau Ambiga!” (Chase away Ambiga). They also delivered a memorandum titled “10 Reasons why Ambiga should be expelled from Malaysia”. (24 May)
- (5) Member of Parliament for Sri Gading Mohamad Aziz said at parliament, "Can we not consider Ambiga a traitor to the Agong and sentence her to hang?" He later retracted his statement if he “hurt the feelings” of fellow Barisan Nasional leaders, but did not apologise to Ambiga. (27 June)

These attacks in the wake of the Bersih 3.0 rally in April 2012 have targeted Ambiga as a human rights defender. Many of the attacks did not simply cross the line of decency but were also sexist, racist, and homophobic. Unfortunately, opposition to woman public figures and women human rights defenders in particular frequently takes the form of sexist “humour” and harassment. These attacks form a campaign designed to intimidate Ambiga into silence. The government has implicitly condoned these attacks through its failure to acknowledge and take measures to prevent them.

4 Labelling LGBTs as causes of social ills like HIV/AIDS. (1) Mashitah Ibrahim, Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister’s Office, reportedly said in parliament that LGBTs would lead to social issues like prostitution, drug abuse, and the risk of HIV infection. She added that LGBT-related problems could be due to gender confusion arising from a “unisex lifestyle.” (Mar 22)

(2) “Program Jelajah BEST!” organised by Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (JAKIM) and Jabatan Agama Islam Negeri (JAIN) raises awareness among teenagers about social ills like the spread of HIV/AIDS through homosexuality. This was reported by Mashitah Ibrahim to a question of what the government was doing to stop spread of LGBTs. (19 Jun)

(3) Defending the inclusion of “public morality” as a reason for limiting human rights in the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration, Rosmah Mansor reportedly said, “You know why HIV and AIDS occur... how it is being spread. Now the number of people suffering from HIV is alarming. What is it you want? Do you want to allow this... or do you want to contain it – then this is the way we all should live.” (23 Nov)

HIV/AIDS affects all segments of the community, not just the LGBT community. Between 1986 and 2007, less than 2% of reported HIV-positive cases involved individuals who likely obtained the virus due to same-sex relationships. Prevention and treatment efforts should be based on sound research, not on prejudices that uncritically glorify “sexual morality” and stigmatise HIV-positive individuals.

CATEGORY: RIGHT ON TRACK

Nominee	Background and basis for nomination
1. Setting up of Penang Women’s Development Corporation by the Penang Government.	The Penang Government established the Penang Women’s Development Corporation (PWDC) which began operations in January 2012 to “mainstream gender into the policies and programmes” and “to work towards gender and social justice”.
3 January	<i>Despite much talk by our political leaders about improving women’s status in the country, Penang is the first state to walk the talk by setting up a women’s machinery at the state level and ensuring that there are funds for its operations. This important effort includes programmes on gender-responsive budgeting.</i>
2. Two women judges elevated to the Federal Court.	Federal Court Justices Zaleha Zahari and Zainun Ali were sworn in bringing the total number of women Federal Court judges in Malaysia’s history to five.
4 April	<i>The appointment of the fourth and fifth women judges to the Federal Court recognises the role of women in the judiciary. It is hoped that with more women</i>

judges at the High Court level (30 out of 62 High Court judges are women), there will be even more appointments of women to the highest court in Malaysia in the near future.

3. Amendment by the Dewan Rakyat to its Standing Orders prohibiting MPs from making sexist remarks.

28 November
 4. State assembly taking action against sexist state assemblyperson, by fining him RM1,000 for his remark.

30 November
 5. Appointment of Malaysia's first woman mayor by the Selangor government.

20 December
- With this amendment, Standing Order 36(4) now reads, "It shall be out of order for Members of the House to use offensive language or make a sexist remark."
- Over the years, a number of Parliamentarians have been allowed to get away with various sexist statements in the House. With the amendment to its Standing Order, the Dewan Rakyat finally indicated that it would no longer tolerate such offensive behaviour.*
- After fellow state assemblyperson Gan Pei Nei filed a motion against Mohd Isa Abu Kassim for making the sexist remark, "Jangan sampai terlupa jaga hutan kita sendiri" (Remember to take care of your own forest) directed at executive councillor Elizabeth Wong, the Selangor State Legislative Assembly fined Mohd Isa RM1,000.
- Like the nomination above, the stand taken by the Selangor State Legislative Assembly against the sexist legislative member is to be applauded.*
- The Selangor government appointed Alinah Ahmad as Petaling Jaya mayor effective 1 January 2013.
- This is a positive step towards breaking the glass ceiling for women decision makers in public life. In 2011, there were seven women who headed local municipalities. Alinah Ahmad, however, is the first woman to head a city council.*