



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)
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Women's Centre for Change, Penang (WCC)

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Aiyoh... Wat Lah?! The Joint Action Group for Gender Equality announces nominees for annual sexist, misogynistic, homophobic, and transphobic awards

PETALING JAYA – The Joint Action Group for Gender Equality (JAG) announced today the nominees for the Aiyoh... Wat Lah?! Awards 2013, and opened voting to the public.

Inaugurated last year, the Aiyoh... Wat Lah?! Awards is an annual event organised by JAG to raise awareness on what constitutes sexism, misogyny, homophobia, and transphobia and to encourage higher standards of public discourse from public figures and institutions in relation to gender and sexuality.

The Awards focus on public statements and actions instead of individuals and institutions. Selected from media reports in 2012, the nominees contend for one of seven categories: "Foot in Mouth", "Insulting Intelligence", "Policy Fail", "Cannot Ignore", "Least Helpful to the Sisterhood", "Enough Already!", and "Right on Track".

A statement by Prime Minister Najib Razak is once again in the limelight as a nominee under the "Insulting Intelligence" category. The Prime Minister reportedly claimed that there is "no need for a women's rights movement in Malaysia" because equality has been given "from the start". Malaysia fared poorly in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2012, ranking 100 out of 135 countries.

The shortlist of nominees for 2012 also saw the perpetuation of discriminatory attitudes towards the LGBT community in particular, reflected in the "Enough Already!" category which highlights statements and acts that repeat sexist, misogynistic, homophobic, or transphobic messages. This year, three of the four nominees under this category targeted LGBTs, whether through organising forums and publishing guidelines to identify symptoms of homosexuality in order to stop their "spread" or by demonising LGBTs as a source of social ills and an offence to religion. The fourth nominee was the harassment against Ambiga Sreenevasan, co-chair of Bersih 2.0.

"It is sad to see religion being used to propagate prejudice against LGBTs," commented Hew Li-Sha from the All Women's Action Society (AWAM) on this apparent trend. "All religions preach tolerance and acceptance. We must be wary of the use of religion to spew hate and deny individuals their constitutional liberties and human rights," concluded Hew.

Other contenders include statements by the Prime Minister's wife Rosmah Mansor, Wanita MIC Chief Komala Krishnamoorthy, and former Minister of Women, Family and Community Development Shahrizat Abdul Jalil, each having secured a spot in the "Least Helpful to the Sisterhood" category by respectively downplaying the gender discrimination faced by women on a daily basis, implying that women politicians are not as committed as their male counterparts, and placing the burden of keeping their families together on married women.

Besides the six categories that focus on discriminatory attitudes, the Aiyoh...Wat Lah?! Awards include the "Right on Track" category. "We thought it was important to recognise positive statements and actions, as well as the individuals and institutions that took those progressive steps," said Yu Ren Chung of Women's Aid Organisation (WAO) about this category, which awards public statements or actions deemed particularly helpful in fighting discrimination on the basis of gender and sexuality.

"These nominees are extremely encouraging to us, and we hope that highlighting them at the Awards will serve to encourage others as well," Yu added.

The winners of the Aiyoh...Wat Lah?! Awards will be crowned at a public ceremony on Sunday May 26th. Ribena Berry, a character played by actor and writer Jo Kukathas, returns to host the Awards.

"I'm glad to be a part of the Aiyoh... Wat Lah?! Awards once again. Clearly the nominees take pride in being the laughingstock and making the headlines for all the wrong reasons. Let's not deny them the 'recognition' that is their due," said Kukathas.

Members of the public are encouraged to visit aiyohwatlah.tumblr.com to see the full list of nominees and to vote for the most ridiculous, cringe-worthy, and nasty displays of sexism, misogyny, homophobia, and transphobia. Voting ends April 5th.

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