



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)

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Aiyoh... Wat Lah?! Awards back to crown sexist, misogynistic, homophobic and transphobic statements and policies

Kuala Lumpur, 26 May 2013 – The waiting is over and the winners have been crowned, albeit unwillingly, in the second edition of the **Aiyoh... Wat Lah?! Awards**. In this annual spoof awards where nobody wants to win, winners can at least celebrate their success in grabbing headlines for the wrong reasons.

Organised by the *Joint Action Group on Gender Equality (JAG)*, the **Aiyoh... Wat Lah?! Awards** aims 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. More than 1,700 people voted to choose the winning public statements or policies in the various awards categories.

Topping the list in the ***Insulting Intelligence*** category is Prime Minister and former Women, Family and Community Development Minister Najib Razak's reported statement claiming that "There is no need for a women's rights movement in Malaysia because equality has been given 'from the start'." Winner of the ***Foot in Mouth*** category is a statement "I don't sleep with my son, I'm not gay," reportedly made by former Law Minister, Nazri Aziz, and taking the limelight in the ***Least Helpful to the Sisterhood*** category is former Women, Family and Community Development Minister, Sharizat Abdul Jalil's reported statement, "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."

Hew Li-Sha, Assistant Programme Officer at the All Women's Action Society said, "It's interesting to note that the winning statements in the *Insulting Intelligence* and *Least Helpful to the Sisterhood* categories received a thumping victory compared to the other nominees. This clearly shows the outright rejection by the public on the government's *syok sendiri* statements in regards to their contribution in advancing the rights of women."

Winning the ***Cannot Ignore*** category is an allegation that women have a tendency to exaggerate about a sexual act, reportedly made by High Court judge Zamani Abdul Rahim when overturning the conviction of a kindergarten operator accused of raping a four-year old child. Other nominees in this category include court-related cases i.e., the banning of Seksualiti Merdeka, dismissing the application of ex-Guppy women workers who challenged their forced early retirement due to gender discrimination, and dismissing an application to challenge a law that makes it illegal for Muslim men to dress as women.

The summons received by a woman hairdresser in a Kota Bharu mall for cutting a male customer's hair took the crown in the ***Policy Fail*** category, closely followed by the runner up – the official Friday sermon 'Awat Valentine' by the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) which reportedly warned couples not to take part in Valentine's Day celebration as it could lead to idolatry.

Topping the list in the ***Enough Already!*** category is the continued harassment of Ambiga Sreenevasan, co-chairperson of Bersih 2.0 and woman human rights defender. The harassments include, among others, the 'bottom exercises' conducted by ten men from the Malay Armed Forces Veterans Association in front of Ambiga's house and a statement made by a former member of parliament calling her a 'traitor to the Agong' and a call to 'sentence her to hang'.

"The *Enough Already!* category aims to highlight a public statement, act or policy that displays sexism, misogyny, homophobia and transphobia that is repeated over a period of time. It is apt that the public recognised the severity of the vicious, sexist, racist and homophobic attacks made against a respected woman human rights defender such as Ambiga. This goes on to show that such acts are totally unacceptable and have no place whatsoever in Malaysia," said Tashia Peterson, EXCO member of Women's Aid Organisation.

Li-Sha added, "It is equally important to recognise those who are making the right efforts to fight discrimination on the basis of gender and sexuality. The *Right on Track* category aims to do just that." Winning the ***Right on Track*** category is the amendment by the Dewan Rakyat to its Standing Orders to prohibit members of parliament from making sexist remarks.

"We are glad to note that finally, government officials are banned from making sexist statements in parliament. As public figures must lead by examples, how can a culture of respect be created if the representatives of the *rakyat* are tolerated when making such offensive statements," said Syarifatul Adibah, Senior Programme Officer of Sisters in Islam. "Also to be commended are the runner-ups in the *Right on Track* category, such as the setting up of the Penang Women's Development Corporation and the fining of a Selangor state assemblyperson for making a sexist remark," added Adibah.

The awards ceremony was held at Leonardo's, Bangsar and hosted by Jo Kukathas as the irrepressible Ribena Berry. Guests and members of the public turned up in cheerful spirit to have a good laugh, and most importantly to do their bit in fighting discrimination.

Members of the public are encouraged to nominate sexist, misogynistic, homophobic and transphobic statements made by public figures in 2013 for the awards next year by visiting aiyohwatlah.tumblr.com.

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For further information please contact:

Yu Ren Chung, Advocacy Officer, Women's Aid Organisation at renchung.wao@gmail.com or (010) 225-7971 (m), (603) 7957-5636 (o)