

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: NOT A PERSONAL MATTER, 26 JUN 2009

The Women's Centre for Change Penang (WCC) views with great concern the allegations made by Indonesian teenager, Manohara Odelia Pinot regarding the physical, emotional and sexual violence she has endured in her marriage to Kelantan Prince, Tengku Temenggong Mohammad Fakhry. WCC is glad to see that the Foreign Affairs Ministry has offered to help if Manohara files a complaint and we would strongly encourage Manohara to file a complaint, as well as, lodge a police report so that investigations can commence.

Domestic violence is a criminal offence. Under the Domestic Violence Act (1994), domestic violence includes causing or threatening to cause physical injury, confining a person, damaging property or forcing a person to do something she can legally refuse to do. A person found guilty of committing these acts can be charged under the Penal Code. Domestic violence has been increasing steadily in recent years. In 2007, there were 3756 cases of domestic violence reported to the police nationwide. These figures are said to only represent the tip of the iceberg as many victims tend to keep silent over the abuse they receive. Many are ignorant of the Domestic Violence Act (1994) which can actually help protect victims from further abuse.

WCC views with deep concern the comments made by the Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Muhyiddin Yassin regarding Manohara's allegations. He was reported as saying ".....this is more a personal matter" and "..... so we want to leave it as it is". WCC would like to stress that domestic violence is not a personal matter, but is of public concern, given that it is a crime. To have a Malaysian leader trivialise allegations of domestic violence to a personal matter indicates that violence against women is still not understood nor taken seriously.

Given the Malaysian government's commitment to the passing of the Domestic Violence Act (1994) and as a signatory to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the government is duty bound to investigate these allegations.

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