

## **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS A SERIOUS CRIME!, 28 MAY 2013**

According to recent newspaper reports, a woman was suspected to be beaten to death by her husband in Kuala Lumpur. It was also reported that there were some new and old bruises on the victim's body. During the 10 years of marriage, she has reportedly lodged at least 10 police reports on the violence.

Last January, another newspaper reported that a woman was forced to marry her rapist when she was 16 years old. Sadly, she had to endure domestic violence over the past 12 years and has made 20 police reports. When she was filing for a divorce, her right cheek was slashed and her right thumb was chopped off. She was threatened with "your life for a divorce".

Looking at these two tragic cases, the numerous police reports lodged were like "water off a duck's back". In the end, there was no effective action taken to the effect that one wife is suspected to have lost her life due to her husband, while the other was seriously injured and lives in fear for her life.

The above are mere two examples for the year 2013. According to the Royal Malaysia Police, during the period of 2007 up to February 2012, a total of 18,124 domestic violence cases have been reported. In the year 2012, cases of domestic violence referred from Penang Hospital to Women's Centre for Change (WCC) Penang have increased by as high as 300% over 2011. The extreme spike in the cases is extremely worrying.

Domestic violence is a serious crime that requires immediate attention as it jeopardises the future of abused women and children. This type of crime has longstanding and deep impact on families and society. It should not be treated as a mere family issue.

The Domestic Violence Act has been gazetted since 1994 to certify that domestic violence is a crime against society. The main aim of the Act is to protect women and other family members that have been abused amongst others through the enforcement of protection orders or prosecution in court. Unfortunately, after 19 years of the law being in force, the reality is that the quality of its enforcement is in decline.

WCC often receives complaints from victims of violence against certain enforcement officers, saying that their reports of abuse have been ignored. Several victims have instead been accused of causing the violence despite the fact that investigations are yet to be initiated. This results in them heading home frustrated, having to suppress their pain and suffering and giving up on the case.

If this practice continues, society will lose faith in enforcement agencies and feel hopeless in obtaining the required protection. It is a sad state in our country if the

Act remains as empty promises and violence reign supreme. The victim's right to protection must be prioritised over the supposed shame to the family.

Abused women must be protected from continuous beatings through consistent implementation of the law by enforcement agencies.

WCC strongly holds that all reports of violence must be handled with prudence, efficiency and effectiveness by well-trained and empathetic enforcement officers. This is the only way to handle domestic violence.

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