

NOT A ROUTINE INVESTIGATION, 24 SEP 2012

The Joint Action Group for Gender Equality (JAG) strongly condemns the government's selective harassment of human rights group Suara Rakyat Malaysia (SUARAM).

In the past three months, SUARAM has come under attack by the Companies Commission of Malaysia (CCM) and no less than five other government bodies. SUARAM directors, staff and former staff have been summoned and interrogated by the CCM and has been publically vilified, including by the Domestic Trade, Cooperatives and Consumerism Minister. Furthermore the timing of this investigation amidst SUARAM's revelations in the Scorpene case has even been questioned by Amnesty International.

This is not a routine investigation.

SUARAM has stated its commitment to legitimate scrutiny in accordance with the law, a commitment that is shared by JAG, and has fully complied with the on-going investigations. The government must acknowledge this pledge of cooperation and conduct a professional, impartial, orderly, and respectful investigation instead of using its powers to bully the organisation and its officers and seek to intimidate other organisations. This includes allowing SUARAM access to its lawyers throughout the investigation, providing notice of visits and required documentation, and ceasing its public vilification of SUARAM in the media.

Active participation of NGOs strengthens the government and the country. SUARAM, one of the most prominent human rights groups in the country, plays a critical role in ensuring that strong democratic channels remain open in Malaysia.

JAG will continue to work with SUARAM, and stand up for SUARAM throughout these on-going investigations. JAG urges the government to end its continuing harassment of SUARAM.

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

Women's Aid Organisation (WAO)

Sisters In Islam (SIS)

Women's Centre for Change, Penang

All Women's Action Society (AWAM)

Perak Women for Women Society (PWW)

Sabah Women Action Resource Group

Persatuan Kesedaran Komuniti Selangor (EMPOWER)

Persatuan Sahabat Wanita Selangor (PSWS)

