



**SUHAKAM CALLS FOR IMMEDIATE SUSPENSION OF EVICTIONS AND
FOR HUMANE SOLUTIONS IN SEMPORNA**

KUALA LUMPUR (14 AUGUST 2024) - The Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM) recently conducted a fact-finding mission to Semporna on 17 and 18 July 2024, following the eviction and demolition activities carried out by the authorities in June 2024. This mission made a disturbing and critical finding: the eviction and relocation processes have been undertaken in an inhumane manner and without adequate consultation with the affected communities, in particular, the indigenous group of people known as Bajau Laut.

The Bajau Laut live primarily at sea and traditionally built their houses on stilts above water. Their culture and livelihood are tied to the sea. A significant number of the Bajau Laut are illiterate, uneducated and impoverished, due to their nomadic seafaring lifestyle. They are a marginalised community. However, be that as it may, they do not deserve to be treated the way they are now being treated by the authorities.

These ongoing evictions have led to severe consequences for the Bajau Laut community, including displacement from their homes and a significant disruption to their livelihoods. Such actions, taken without meaningful consultation, not only disregard the voices of those most affected but also violate the fundamental principles of transparency and respect for human rights and the rights of indigenous people.

SUHAKAM respectfully reminds the authorities responsible for the evictions that Malaysia voted in favour of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP), both at the Human Rights Council and at the General Assembly with no reservations. UNDRIP contains extensive provisions for the recognition and protection of indigenous lands, territories and resources. Although the UNDRIP is stated to be non-binding, there is still a moral obligation and genuine expectation for the Malaysian Government to pursue the standards as stipulated in the UNDRIP.

SUHAKAM urges the immediate suspension of all current eviction operations and activities in Semporna. These evictions, carried out without proper dialogue or engagement with the communities involved, undermine the basic human rights to adequate housing, livelihood and participation in decisions that affect their lives.

In light of these serious concerns, SUHAKAM advocates for the establishment of a dedicated committee comprising community representatives, government officials, and other key stakeholders. This committee should be tasked with devising a fair and sustainable long-term solution that respects the rights and livelihoods of the affected communities while addressing the broader needs of the region and Malaysia as a nation. The committee must be established immediately, and SUHAKAM is prepared to actively participate as a member.



**MEDIA STATEMENT
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION OF MALAYSIA (SUHAKAM)**

SUHAKAM remains committed to supporting a resolution that not only upholds the human rights of the Bajau Laut and other affected communities in Malaysia but also ensures that future actions in the region are guided by principles of fairness, respect, and inclusivity.

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**Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM)
14 August 2024**