



MEDIA STATEMENT HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION OF MALAYSIA (SUHAKAM)

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SUHAKAM REAFFIRMS THE IMPORTANCE OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IN MALAYSIA

(KUALA LUMPUR) 22 SEPTEMBER 2025 - The Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM) notes with concern over recent reports that the president of University of Malaya Association of New Youth (UMANY) is under police investigation for statements he had made in the course of the Association's activities. It was reported that he had suggested that the matriculation system be replaced by STPM as the sole standard for admission into public universities. One may agree or disagree with his view, but it is far-fetched to say that his statement is the subject of a crime and deserves investigation under section 505(b) of the Penal Code.

SUHAKAM wishes to reiterate here that freedom of speech and expression is a fundamental right guaranteed under Article 10 of the Federal Constitution and remains an essential part of Malaysia's democratic framework. This right is also enshrined in international human rights standards, including Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Whilst 174 countries have already ratified or acceded to the ICCPR, Malaysia, sadly, has yet to be a party to this International Covenant. SUHAKAM has consistently advocated for Malaysia's accession to the ICCPR, and for national laws and practices to align with these universal principles. By doing so, it would signal Malaysia's strong commitment to human rights and strengthen its democratic institutions.

Student organisations and youth groups play a vital role in shaping democratic discourse by bringing new perspectives, asking difficult questions, and contributing to constructive debate. Their voices, regardless their political views, should be protected and encouraged, as they represent an important part of Malaysia's future leadership and democratic growth. Silencing or discouraging their participation risks weakening civic engagement at a time when inclusive dialogue is most needed. Moreover, as had been said by Justice Hishamudin Yunus in the landmark Court of Appeal case of *Muhammad Hilman Idham & Ors v. Kerajaan Malaysia* [2011] 9 CLJ 50 –

“Universities should be the breeding ground of reformers and thinkers, and not institutions to produce students trained as robots”.

We wish to add here that scholarship cannot flourish in an atmosphere of suspicion and distrust.

SUHAKAM recognises the important role of the Royal Malaysia Police (PDRM) in maintaining public order and safety. However, SUHAKAM is of the view that investigations involving matters of expression should be conducted with sensitivity, proportionality, and respect for constitutional guarantees. Hence, SUHAKAM advocates that it is high time that the PDRM and other enforcement agencies cease practising the stereotyped approach often perceived as being anti-human rights; and instead adopt a matured and professional rights-based approach in such matters. A matured and professional rights-based approach will help to strengthen public confidence and public respect in law enforcement institutions whilst ensuring that the space for open dialogue remains safeguarded.

SUHAKAM reiterates its long-standing position that freedom of expression is the cornerstone of a healthy democracy. We urge all parties to work together to foster an environment where diverse voices, especially those of youth, can be expressed openly and constructively in the spirit of building for a more tolerant, democratic and rights-respecting Malaysia.

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Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM)

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