

EDITOR, NEWS DESK

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

END THE CULTURE OF SENIORS PUNISHING JUNIOR

KUALA LUMPUR (28 SEPTEMBER 2026) - The Children's Commissioners (CC) of the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM) extend deepest condolences to the family of the Form Two student who reportedly died after being found unconscious at a boarding school in Kuala Pilah, Negeri Sembilan.

The CC take the reported incident seriously, particularly reports that preliminary police investigations are examining whether the incident was connected to alleged disciplinary action by a senior student against the deceased, reportedly because the junior was believed to have breached hostel rules. Police have stated that the actual cause of death remains under investigation. The CC stress that no conclusion should be drawn at this stage regarding the guilt, intention or criminal or disciplinary liability of any child involved. The identities and personal details of all children must strictly be protected.

The CC's concern is therefore not to determine who is at fault in the present case, but to address a broader child-safeguarding issue: Whether any student, including a prefect, dormitory leader, senior student or student leader, assume the authority to punish another student? The answer must be clear: students must never be given, or assume for themselves, the authority to punish other students.

Student leaders may appropriately remind fellow students of school or hostel rules, serve as positive role models, assist with appropriate monitoring, encourage compliance and report suspected misconduct to teachers, wardens or the appropriate school authorities. However, they must not conduct their own investigation; determine that another student is guilty; devise or impose their own punishment; use physical force; threaten or intimidate another student; humiliate or coerce another child; or take any disciplinary action into their own hands. Being a prefect, dormitory leader, senior student or student leader is not a license to punish another child.

Malaysia Has a Formal Framework for School Discipline

Malaysia has an established framework for managing student discipline. The *Surat Pekeliling Ikhtisas KPM Bil. 3 Tahun 2026 - Garis Panduan Pengurusan Sekolah Selamat* provides for alleged misconduct to be handled through a formal school disciplinary process, including investigation by a teacher appointed by the school principal or head of institution. Disciplinary punishment is to be imposed through the appropriate school authority and in accordance with the applicable KPM procedures.

In restricted situations where corporal punishment is permitted, it may only be administered by the PGB or a teacher specifically authorised to do so, subject to the strictest requirements. This reinforces a fundamental principle: disciplinary action must be undertaken through the school's formal disciplinary process and by persons authorised under the relevant KPM rules and procedures-not by students against fellow students.

Wardens Have a Duty of Care in Boarding Schools

The *Garis Panduan Pelantikan dan Portfolio Warden Asrama KPM, Versi Februari 2025* further establishes the responsibilities of wardens in boarding schools. Wardens perform their responsibilities *in loco parentis*, with duties relating to the welfare, safety and discipline of students. The Chief Warden is responsible for hostel discipline, while wardens are responsible for ensuring compliance with hostel rules and taking appropriate action in accordance with established procedures. Importantly, reports made by the Chief or members of the Hostel Committee and Dormitory Leaders are to be reviewed and investigated by the warden for appropriate follow-up action.

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THE OFFICE OF THE CHILDREN'S COMMISSIONER OF THE
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION OF MALAYSIA (SUHAKAM)

The intended division of responsibility must therefore remain clear. Student leaders may observe, remind and report concerns to the appropriate school authorities, while wardens and school authorities are responsible for reviewing reports, conducting investigations and taking appropriate disciplinary action in accordance with established procedures. Student leaders must never assume the role of investigating alleged misconduct, determining guilt nor imposing punishment on another student.

End the Culture of 'Vigilante' Discipline

The CC are concerned that practices such as *'teach the junior a lesson'*, *'settle it in the dorm'* or *'seniors disciplining juniors'* must never become normalised within boarding-school culture. School rules cannot be enforced through students taking the law into their own hands against other children. Seniority status or a student leadership position cannot confer disciplinary authority.

Every student, including a child alleged to have breached a school rule, remains a child entitled to safety, dignity and fair treatment. This is consistent with the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), including protection from violence and the principle that the best interests of the child must be a primary consideration.

In this regard, CC call on the Ministry of Education to:

- i. Issue a clear nationwide reminder that prefects, dormitory leaders and other student leaders have no independent authority to impose or administer disciplinary punishment against other students.
- ii. Review student leadership Terms of Reference across boarding schools to ensure their roles are clearly defined as: REMIND - MONITOR - REPORT. PUNISHMENTS ARE STRICTLY PROHIBITED.
- iii. Audit informal disciplinary practices in boarding schools, including senior students punishing juniors, student-imposed physical punishment, informal 'student courts', fines or penalties, humiliation, degrading treatment and other coercive practices. This should be undertaken as a preventive safeguarding measure, without prejudging the present case.
- iv. Strengthen the warden system by ensuring that wardens are accessible, adequately trained and sufficiently resourced to discharge their responsibilities for student welfare, safety and discipline in accordance with the 2025 KPM Warden Guidelines.

The CC reiterate our condolences to the family of the deceased student and respects the ongoing investigation. All parties are urged to refrain from speculation and from sharing information that could identify or further harm the children involved.

This tragedy must prompt a careful review of informal disciplinary practices in boarding schools. No student should ever believe that they have the authority to punish another child. Student leadership must build responsibility and a culture of care-not create a parallel disciplinary system among children.

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Children's Commissioners (CC)
Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM)
28 September 2026