

**Proham declines EC's invite to observe polls**  
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The Association for the Promotion of Human Rights (Proham) has declined an invitation from the Election Commission (EC) to serve as an domestic election observer.

Proham is the second organisation to have declined the invitation after the National Institute for Democracy and Electoral Integrity (NIEI).

Its chairperson Simon Sipaun said this was because the organisation did not have the experience, expertise, personal and resources to effectively undertake the responsibility of election observations at the grassroots.

"However, Proham will continue to play a role at the macro policy level in monitoring policies in line with human rights principles and ensure that 'free and fair elections' is enhanced in the electoral process," said Simon, in a press release late this evening.

Sipaun said Proham has yet to receive an official letter of appointment but have participated in several discussions with the EC on drafting the terms and conditions for observation and drawing up an action plan with other organisations.

"Proham thanks the EC for the confidence placed and recognition that it is a non-partisan human rights organisation comprising former members of Suhakam and the Dzaidin Commission," he said.

Other groups invited by the EC to be observers in Peninsula Malaysia are graft watchdogs Transparency International Malaysia (TI-M), independent pollster Merdeka Centre and think tanks Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs (Ideas) and Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute (Asli).

#### Venice Declaration

While congratulating the EC for recognising the importance of non-partisan domestic and independent election observation, Sipaun said Proham urged the commission to adopt an open door policy.

"(The EC should) enhance engagement and participation of all civil society organisations especially those who have electoral reform and election monitoring as their core focus.

"This open process will enhance the credibility and professionalism of the EC," said Sipaun.

Sipaun added that Proham had recently hosted a discussion entitled "Domestic Election Observation and GE 13: Benchmarking to International & Global standards" on July 16, 2012, which was attended by nine civil society organisations and representatives from the EC.

He said that civil society actors had unanimously agreed that the EC should adopt the "Declaration of Global Principles for Non-Partisan Election observation and monitoring by citizens organisations" and "Code of conduct for non-partisan citizen election observers and monitors" also known as the Venice Declaration.

Sipaun explained that the Venice Declaration should be used as the guiding principle for the appointment, accreditation, terms and conditions for non-partisan election observation in Malaysia.

"Such a move was felt will restore confidence in the appointment and selection process which was recently criticised by many civil society organisations," he said.

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