

**No need for constitutional court**  
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There is no need for the establishment of a Constitutional Court when present courts are capable of interpreting the Federal Constitution correctly, said newly appointed Bar Council president Ambiga Sreenevasan.

"To me, it (the constitutional court proposal) is a quick-fix solution," she told malaysiakini in a recent interview.

She said calls for such a court arose recently following a shift from previous interpretations of the Federal Constitution by the judiciary in religious conversion cases.

Ambiga said in 1994, a five-member panel of Supreme Court judges including then Lord President Abdul Hamid Omar, unanimously held that non-Muslims should not be subject to Syariah law.

"There has been a shift since then. To me, (the Supreme Court decision) is the correct approach. They took a very clear cut approach - that if you are non-Muslim, you cannot be subject to Syariah law, even if one spouse has converted to Islam," she said.

Ambiga also stressed that the Bar Council would continue to support the Article 11 coalition, of which the council is a member.

"What we would like to see is people who disagree with Article 11 to attend the sessions they conduct and to argue their point of view, instead of just (negatively) labeling Article 11.

"The easiest thing to do in the world is to label someone and use that as an excuse to not listen to what they have to say," she said.

### **Review 88' 'judicial crisis'**

Article 11 is a coalition of NGOs that holds inter-religious dialogues and forums. Their activities had drawn flak from certain Muslim groups.

Previously, they had managed to hold four forums in several states, two of which were disrupted by protests.

Last July, Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi urged the coalition to cease their activities.

Another project which Ambiga would spearhead is for the government to review the sacking of former Lord President Salleh Abbas.

"We are pursuing this. Our first aim is to get the authorities to review the matter. Failing which, we have to look at other alternatives by which we can bring to the fore what we consider as injustices at the time," she said.

She said past Bar Council presidents who had lived through the era would also be roped in to help work out strategies to pursue the matter.

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