

M'sia's human rights 'hypocrisy'
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What does it say about Malaysia when it seeks election to the UN Human Rights Council on May 13, but is unable to fill the ranks of its own human rights commissioners?

An appalled Suaram pointed to the discrepancy and concluded that human rights are clearly not a priority for the government.

The Human Rights Commission (Suhakam) has been left leader-less since the tenure of its chairperson and all the commissioners ended on April 23.

Suaram alleged that 136 allegations of human rights violations have not been investigated as a result of the failure to fill the vacancies.

Expressing concern, it said in a statement that Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's long delay in appointing new commissioners "has sidelined the issue of human rights domestically".

This is in contrast to the image projected at international level, where Malaysia successfully made a pitch for a seat in the UN body for the 2010-13 term.

The government had pledged that it will provide "increasing support for the roles and functioning of Suhakam" as well as continue to foster "meaningful and productive engagement between the government machinery and civil society".

Neither pledge, hinted Suaram, has been carried out thus far and reveal the "stark inconsistencies between pledges on human rights at the international level and the domestic realities (which) are obvious".

The process of selecting new commissioners is also problematic as it is "not at all transparent, open, inclusive and consultative".

"The entire selection process has been largely shrouded in secrecy," the NGO alleged, although a five-member selection committee has been set up to advise the premier.

"Even the names of the three appointed civil society members of the selection committee have not been officially made public."

'Remember ICC review'

Civil society groups have not been consulted either on the appointment of members of the selection committee or on the selection of new commissioners, said Suaram.

It reminded the government that Suhakam's status will be up for review by the International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (ICC) in November.

The commission may once more face the threat of a downgrade, which had been averted last year by hasty moves by the government to bring Suhakam up to scratch.

Suaram urged Najib to announce the appointments without further delay, saying Suhakam

"must fully function immediately in view of the complaints which are piling up and the serious human rights abuses which are occurring".

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