

'M'sia also should impose moratorium on maids'
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Malaysia has been urged to impose a moratorium on the hiring of Indonesian maids to ensure effective measures are in place to prevent abuse of these migrant workers.

The call came from Migrant Care, a voluntary body caring for the welfare of Indonesian workers, which regarded the existing moratorium as a failure and a futile effort as it was applied by the Indonesian government only.

It said the abuse of Indonesian maid Winfaidah in Penang proved the failure of the moratorium since it was implemented on June 26, 2009 because during that period the Indonesian embassy in Malaysia had reported that about 5,000 Indonesian maids had been sent to Malaysia.

"It means the moratorium is just a policy on Indonesia's side while Malaysia does not feel obliged to adhere to the moratorium that was decided upon by Indonesia," said Anis Hidayah, executive director of Migrant Care in its statement on the Winfaidah abuse case.

Twenty of Migrant Care's activists held a demonstration in front of the Malaysian embassy in Kuningan, South Jakarta, today to condemn the physical and sexual abuse of Winfaidah by her employer and his wife recently.

Anis Hidayah said the failure of the moratorium was a logical result due to the absence of instruments from the Indonesian government to make it effective in terms of control and adherence to the law.

"After more than a year since the moratorium was imposed, there had been no comprehensive evaluation of the policy by the Indonesian government, that it has become a half-hearted policy," she added.

In response to the Winfaidah abuse case, Migrant Care urged the government to give priority to counselling and recovery of the maid from her ordeal, as besides physical and sexual abuse, Winfaidah was also believed to be a victim of human trafficking.

It also urged the Indonesian government to investigate an employment agency in Indonesia which arranged for Winfaidah to be sent to Malaysia during the moratorium period.

"The Indonesian and Malaysian governments should also meet soon to review the memorandum of understanding between the two countries on the recruitment and protection of Indonesian migrant workers," Anis Hidayah said.

In today's demonstration, the Migrant Care activists also put up a big banner written on it in Bahasa Indonesia which means, "Malaysia, Stop the Abuse and Rape", at the main gate of the Malaysian embassy here.

They also carried placards with messages demanding for justice for Winfaidah and protection for Indonesian workers in Malaysia.

A theatrical play on the abuse of Winfaidah by the Malaysian couple who employed her was also acted out during the demonstration.

- *Bernama*

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