

EAIC tainted by commissioner's defence of alleged killer cop, says PKR lawyer
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KUALA LUMPUR, June 10 — The Enforcement Agency Integrity Commission's (EAIC) role in checking lock-up deaths is compromised as one of its commissioners is defending a policeman accused of murdering a detainee, PKR said today as it reiterated calls for tangible police reform.

The opposition party's head of legal and human rights affairs, Latheefa Koya, claimed that EAIC commissioner Datuk Salehuddin Saidin is among the legal team defending one of the three policemen recently charged with the murder 32-year-old of N. Dharmendran, and urged Putrajaya to rescind its support for the EAIC in favour of forming the much-publicised Independent Police Complaints and Misconduct Commission (IPCMC).

"This is in serious conflict considering Datuk Salehuddin will have to defend his client and at the same time is expected to be independent and objective when looking into the complaints and misconduct of policemen," Latheefa said.

She also said in her statement that the Dharmendran case was not Salehuddin's first, listing three other examples in which the lawyer had defended men in blue accused of killing detainees, or acted for those found guilty of professional misconduct in custodial deaths.

According to Latheefa, Salehuddin had represented former police constable V. Navindran, who had been charged with causing grievous hurt to suspected car thief, A. Kugan, 22, while in custody leading to the latter's death in 2009 and which sparked a huge public furore.

He had also acted for a senior forensic pathologist from Serdang Hospital, Dr Abdul Karim Tajudin, who was found guilty by the Malaysian Medical Council of lying in the first autopsy report that stated Kugan had died of "water in the lungs" after a second report found the detainee to have died as a result of severe beatings.

Salehuddin had also defended the policemen accused of torturing and splashing boiling water on a 27-year-old car park attendant, B. Prabakar, held in police custody in 2008.

"The government must withdraw its continuous support of EAIC if it is actually serious about resolving death and torture in police custody," Latheefa said, and repeated PKR's call for the set up of the IPCMC and a guarantee for its independence to ensure professional investigation is carried out without fear or favour.

The EAIC, formed in 2011 to monitor the police force as well as 18 other law enforcement agencies, has come under fire following the growing number of deaths in lock-ups.

It had announced a task force to look into custodial death on June 5.

Nine people have died under the police's watch in the first five months this year, reviving a 2005 royal panel's proposal for the IPCMC to be established.

But yesterday, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Paul Low said the federal government prefers revamping the EAIC to setting up the IPCMC.

His statement that the EAIC was different only in name from the IPCMC drew more brickbats from opposition parties.

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