



14 December 2015

H.E. Dato' Sri Haji Mohammad Najib bin Tun Haji Abdul Razak

Office of The Prime Minister of Malaysia,
Main Block, Perdana Putra Building,
Federal Government Administrative Centre,
62502 Putrajaya, MALAYSIA
Tel : 603-8888 8000 | Fax : 603-8888 3444

Re: ANNI Letter of Concern over Budget Cut of NHRI (SUHAKAM) in Malaysia

Dear Mr. Prime Minister,

I write to you on behalf of the Asian NGO Network on National Human Rights Institutions (ANNI) to express our concerns over a significant budget cut of 50 per cent to the its operational costs of the human rights commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM). This will limit SUHAKAM's ability to conduct activities as the statutory body mandated to promote and protect human rights in Malaysia. This will result in stifling the activities of SUHAKAM as a body mandated to promote and protect human rights.

The Paris Principles stresses that one of fundamental features for a national human rights institution (NHRI) to function independently is adequate funding. It thus came as a surprise among human rights community in Malaysia and the region when the Government of Malaysia announced SUHAKAM's budget cut from 10.9 million this year to 5.5 million for 2016.

Section 19 of the 1999 Human Rights Commission of Malaysia Act (Act 597) also requires the government to provide SUHAKAM with adequate funding annually to enable it to discharge its functions. The drastic budget cut will definitely affect SUHAKAM's effectiveness to maintain its mandates and functions.

Over the years, SUHAKAM has demonstrated that it deserves its current status "A" as it has made major strides in responses to human rights issues in Malaysia, including those viewed as controversial. One of SUHAKAM's recognitions is to repeatedly urge the government to repeal the Sedition Act which has been widely criticised as incompatible with international human rights standard.

We urge the Government of Malaysia to reconsider the reduction of SUHAKAM's budget and ensure that adequate budget is provided for SUHAKAM in order for it to fulfill its functions in line with the Paris Principles and Section 19 of the 1999 Human Rights Commission of Malaysia Act. We also urge the Government of Malaysia to respect the mandate of SUHAKAM and take necessary steps to ensure an enabling environment for it to operate effectively and independently in Malaysia

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Evelyn Balais-Serrano". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Evelyn Balais-Serrano
Executive Director
Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)
Secretariat of the Asian NGO Network on NHRIs (ANNI)