



## **SURUHANJAYA HAK ASASI MANUSIA MALAYSIA**

*HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION OF MALAYSIA*

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **PRESS STATEMENT**

#### **Ministry of Home Affairs' Statement on Comango a Setback for the Freedom of Association and Expression in Malaysia**

Kuala Lumpur (9 January 2014) - The Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (the Commission) views with deep regret and concern the statement by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA) on 8 January 2014 denouncing the Coalition of Malaysian NGOs (Comango) as a 'HARAM' organisation.

The Commission opines that such statement denies the fundamental rights of civil society groups to freedom of association and expression and undermines the effort of civil society groups and advocates in promoting and protecting human rights in this country.

The statement also reflects the failure on the part of the Ministry to recognise the important, indeed essential checks and balances role played by civil society groups in a full functioning and thriving democracy, as acknowledged and proclaimed by our Prime Minister.

The Commission calls on the Government, as a well-respected member of the United Nations, as well as the Human Rights Council, to observe and fulfil its commitment as proclaimed in the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC) Resolution 12/2 ("Cooperation with the United Nations, its representatives and mechanisms in the field of human rights") which requires states to undertake measures to protect human rights defenders and to prohibit all forms of intimidation or reprisal against people for their work to promote human rights at the international level.

The Commission calls on the Government to engage in consultations and dialogues in addressing the challenges of pluralism in the spirit of "1 Malaysia", instead of selective harassment and suppression against the Comango and other human rights groups in this country.

The Commission also urges the Government to review existing oppressive laws, particularly the Societies Act 1966, that restrict the citizens' right to form and operate their organisations. Any

suspension and review of associations must be done impartially, independently and in compliance with human rights principles which are the key foundation for a functioning democracy.

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***“HUMAN RIGHTS FOR ALL”***

**Tan Sri Hasmy Agam**

Chairman

The Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM)

9 January 2014