

**International Service for Human Rights
Statement at the 40th Human Rights Council
Malaysia's Universal Periodic Review Outcome
Statement to be delivered by Rizal Rozhan, Geneva, 14th March 2019**

Thank you Madame/Mr (Vice-)President.

ISHR delivers this statement in collaboration with EMPOWER Malaysia, co-secretariat member of COMANGO, the Malaysian Coalition of NGOs.ⁱ

We appreciate that Malaysia has partially accepted recommendations from Uruguay and Lithuania to promote and protect human rights defenders, including by “developing efforts to guarantee the freedoms and safety of HRDs”, and “reviewing its legislation to ensure HRDs and journalists could freely exercise their right to freedoms of expression, both online and offline, association and peaceful assembly”.

This is essential - HRDs, and in particular women HRDs, still face significant challenges. Sisters in Islam, a member of COMANGO, has been the subject of a fatwa declaring them a ‘deviant group’. When they tried to use the law to fight back, they were targeted with state-sanctioned harassment.

However, reviewing relevant laws alone will not achieve the ultimate goal of ensuring HRDs, and in particular women HRDs, their fundamental freedoms. The Government of Malaysia should additionally take steps to acknowledge promote and protect HRDs, and fully implement the UN Declaration.

The COMANGO report highlighted the need to enhance resources and make public the spending of training for government agencies on human rights, and increase spending to ensure human rights education in public schools. Although this was not clearly reflected in the UPR recommendations, awareness-raising on the universality of human rights is of utmost importance at the moment in Malaysia.

For example, although discrimination is a daily issue, public misconceptions about the international treaties led the Government of Malaysia to officially refuse to become a signatory to the ICERD.

We acknowledge and appreciate the progressive steps the Government of Malaysia has taken since the inception of Malaysia Baharu; however much more needs to be done to facilitate a vibrant democracy, and a safe and enabling environment for all defenders in Malaysia.

Thank you.

ⁱ The Coalition of Malaysian NGOs in the UPR Process, also known as COMANGO, is a coalition of 52 local rights-based organization in Malaysia contributing towards the improvement of UPR process in the country. It is the largest diverse rights-based organization of its kind and has been involved in the mechanism since 2008.