



Press Statement

Sabah Law Society Supports SUHAKAM's Position on the Proposed Citizenship Amendments

The Sabah Law Society fully supports SUHAKAM's concerns regarding the proposed amendments to the Federal Constitution on citizenship. These amendments pose significant risks to the rights of vulnerable communities, particularly stateless children, foundlings, and those born to permanent residents, especially in Sabah.

While many Members of Parliament from Sabah have yet to take an official stand on the matter in Parliament, we applaud and support the recent position expressed by some leaders that the amendments should not apply to Sabah. There are valid concerns that these changes could negatively affect the population, particularly rural communities who already face challenges in accessing proper documentation, thereby increasing the risk of statelessness. Additionally, the possibility that these amendments could open doors for illegal immigrants is a significant concern.

These amendments, particularly the removal of automatic citizenship for children born to Malaysian permanent residents, would disproportionately affect various marginalized communities in Sabah. This includes both the communities in the interior regions and along the coastal areas, who already struggle with access to essential services like education and healthcare. If the amendments proceed, these groups may face further disenfranchisement.

Given these concerns, the Sabah Law Society strongly believes that any changes to the citizenship framework should not apply to Sabah. The diversity of communities across the state, each facing distinct challenges, must be respected and safeguarded.

We urge the Federal Government to reconsider the proposed amendments, ensuring that any changes do not undermine the rights and dignity of Sabah's people.

The Sabah Law Society calls for comprehensive consultations with all relevant stakeholders, including those directly affected by statelessness, before any amendments proceed. Citizenship is a fundamental human right, and it is essential that the protections afforded by the Federal Constitution remain intact, especially for vulnerable communities in Sabah.

The SLS is of the strong opinion that the amendments proposed may not be progressive for Sabah but regressive.

SLS stands with SUHAKAM in calling for a fair and inclusive process that ensures the rights of all individuals are upheld, and that no one is left behind.

Mohamed Nazim Maduarin
President
10th October 2024