

<http://www.malaysiakini.com/letters/166050>

Marking women suspects stinks of Nazi Germany

Janarthani Arumugam

Jun 4, 11

5:38pm

Empower is outraged by the blatant abuse of police powers in their treatment of foreign sex workers as reported in the *New Straits Time* article 'Top cop: 'X' serves as identification' on June 4.

This was further exacerbated by the extremely chauvinistic remarks made by the Penang police chief Ayub Yaakob who was quoted as saying that these women had "wrecked marriages", based on some complaints he had received from the public. Clearly, this is a calculated act of justifying the outrageous abuse of power by his subordinates and effectively pulling wool over the eyes of the public.

Again, we reiterate that Ayub is sexist because he does not assign any blame to the philandering husbands who had solicited the services of the women in the first place. The fact that these 'customers' have neglected their marriage vows were conveniently overlooked, perpetuating the idea that these were lured by temptation and innocence! Such double standards practised by Ayub is very unbecoming of his office and should be exposed for what it is.

Furthermore, he has the privilege of utilising the media to demonise the women and diverting the attention of the public from the human rights violations suffered by the women. The authorities have deprived the women of dignity when they 'branded' their bodies.

Also, it is institutionalised discrimination when the authorities practice such heinous methods of marking human beings as cattle and labelling them, likening these methods to those employed by the Nazis during WWII.

Sex workers are ostracised because of the nature of their work. We must recognise that they are commodified by a larger oppressive system that exploits their sexuality and bodies. The act of marking the bodies of the women by the police is also reflective of the same kind of appropriation of the bodies of women practised by institutions. It is highly ironic that the capitalistic forces commodify women while the institutions punish the women for it.

We strongly condemn the actions of the police and demand a formal investigation to bring these human rights violators to book. We also call upon the government to institute the recommendation made by civil society for the Independent Police Complaints And Misconduct Commission (IPCMC) to check the excesses of the police.

*Janarthani Arumugam is programme officer of the rights NGO Empower.*