

Joint Statement: Police Must Take Rape Threats Seriously

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Joint Statement, 21 May 2015

Persatuan Kesedaran Komuniti Selangor (EMPOWER) and Lawyers for Liberty (LFL) are outraged by the police's decision not to suspend the policeman who had allegedly threatened to rape Maisara Amira who was detained for attending the recent May Day rally.

Kuala Lumpur police chief Tajuddin Md. Isa was reported to have said that the police officer identified will be allowed to continue with his police duty pending investigation, stating that it was not necessary to suspend him.

This "business as usual" attitude is shocking as there have been several instances of rapes and sexual assaults perpetrated by police personnel in and out of police stations. The police's apathetic attitude and inaction unfortunately sends the wrong message that they are not taking rape threats or violence against women seriously and are not prioritizing the safety and welfare of women detainees.

This apathetic attitude is further compounded by the fact that until to date, contrary to the norm, Maisara had yet to be called by the police to attend an identification parade to identify the perpetrator.

It is significant that rape threats are often made against women, particularly women who are deemed to have "transgressed" social norms. Such threats are steeped in a culture of misogyny and sexism, and are meant to make women feel unsafe and vulnerable. The police force would be well advised not to normalize such threats of violence against women or to brush it under the carpet.

EMPOWER and LFL demand for the immediate suspension of the police officer responsible and for the authorities to expedite and comprehensively investigate this very serious rape threat against Maisara.

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