



جمعية العلماء ومدرسي الإسلام بسنغافورة

PERSATUAN ULAMA DAN GURU-GURU AGAMA ISLAM (SINGAPURA)
SINGAPORE ISLAMIC SCHOLARS & RELIGIOUS TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

PERGAS

MEDIA STATEMENT

8 November 2013

PERGAS' REPOSE TO THE TUDUNG ISSUE FOR FEMALE MUSLIMS AT THE WORKPLACE

Referring to Pergas' initial response that was published in Berita Harian on 31 October 2013, Pergas stated its deep concern on the issue surrounding the tudung or hijab among Muslim women at the workplace.

2 Pergas would like to take this opportunity to thank the Minister-In-Charge of Muslim Affairs, Dr Yaacob Ibrahim, and the Malay-Muslim Members of Parliament for accepting an invitation for a dialogue which was held on 5 November 2013. The purpose of the Pergas-initiated dialogue was to reach a mutual agreement that would benefit the country as well as the local Muslim community.

3 Through this dialogue session, Pergas was made aware of the efforts by the Minister as well as the other Malay-Muslim MPs. We truly appreciate their contributions in advancing the well-being of the Malay-Muslim community, which may have been less publicised to some segments of the community. This includes efforts in advocating the tudung in the workplace. We consider this dialogue as part of their sincere efforts in addressing the issues faced by the Muslim community.

4 Pergas recognises that some efforts undertaken by the Minister and MPs on issues faced by the Malay-Muslim community have shown development and progress. However at the same time, Pergas strongly feels that the attempt to resolve the tudung issue is still unsatisfactory.

5 Pergas acknowledges the government's viewpoint on the tudung as announced on 5 November 2013. However as an association representing the Islamic scholars and religious teachers in Singapore, Pergas truly hopes the policy

would be continuously reassessed and reviewed to fit the aspirations of the local Muslim community who believe that the wearing of tudung has never hindered any kind of integration among Singaporeans. In fact, it contributes by enhancing Singapore's image as a country that is inclusive and harmonious.

6 Therefore, Pergas would like to reiterate that its position on this issue remains unchanged, which is the tudung is an important religious obligation and one which symbolises a woman's dignity and decency. Pergas is concerned to hear the grievances of fellow Muslims who face difficulties in fulfilling the religious obligation in covering the *aurat* due to the tudung restriction in some workplaces.

7 Meanwhile, Pergas recognises and appreciates the willingness by some government agencies for allowing Muslim women to fulfill this religious obligation. Such flexibility should be extended to all government agencies as it will reflect the government's effort in promoting multiculturalism, and be made an example for the private sector.

8 In alignment with the principles of individual rights and religious freedom, Pergas truly hopes that Muslim women who are wearing the tudung are given equal opportunities and treatment in their workplace or in finding employment.

9 Pergas feels that aside from asking for the community's understanding and patience, the government should also have a clear timeline and concrete plan for allowing the tudung in the workforce, gradually if not immediately. Moreover in this era of new political landscape, the authorities cannot afford to restrict the community's discussions on this issue.

10 Moving forward, Pergas is of the view that the tudung issue requires long-term measures and ongoing efforts. Therefore, Pergas has outlined several specific measures which include setting up a taskforce on the tudung issue. This taskforce comprises members of the Pergas Council, Pergas Senior Advisors (Masyayikh), and members of the public including the non-Asatizah. Among the immediate tasks is to propose an action plan not only in the short term, but also for the long run.

11 Pergas also encourages all Muslim organisations to play their roles and strive in their efforts in realising this goal.

12 At the same time, Pergas would also like to remind all Muslims to fully understand the concept of hijab as a whole. This religious obligation on Muslim women goes beyond the aspects of clothing and tudung. Hijab also requires one to maintain good moral qualities that reflect a Muslim's moral values.

13 In addition to taking heed of the freedom to don the tudung, Pergas also urges the Muslim community to not neglect issues closely associated to the community. These issues include the exercise of religious consciousness and duties such as the importance of performing prayers and abstaining oneself from wrongdoings. In addition to that, other social issues facing the Malay-Muslim community have to be given due attention such as divorce, homelessness, the rise of Muslim inmates in prison, and also lagging educational standards, among others.

14 Pergas would also like to advise the community at large to stay calm and ensure that proper conduct is practised in relaying their views on the tudung issue, which should be done in objective and mature manner, so as not to insult or offend any disagreeing party.

15 We hope that the government's support to allow Muslim women employees to perform their religious obligation will motivate them further and increase their work productivity, and in turn develop the economy and enhance the prosperity of the country.

**SINGAPORE ISLAMIC SCHOLARS AND RELIGIOUS TEACHERS ASSOCIATION
(PERGAS)**