



27 October 2015

Set Up Committee to Address Persistent Perceptions of Racial Discrimination

The Workers' Party welcomes the signing of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) on October 19, 2015 and its expected ratification in 2017. The Workers' Party strongly believes in the aspirations laid out in the National Pledge, and Singaporeans should continually better the realisation that we are "one united people, regardless of race, language, or religion." Acceding to and ratifying ICERD is an important step towards our national vision.

All societies have room to improve on the treatment of racial minorities. Singapore is no different. Even as we celebrate the achievements of our multiracialism, Singaporeans should be mindful of areas where we can do more. It is important for a multiracial society like Singapore to ensure that racial minorities recognise that they can always be confident of a safe, inclusive environment where they are accorded the human dignity each and every person rightly deserves.

A specific area that Singapore can work on as a society is to examine structural factors and institutional practices that may reinforce persistent perceptions of discrimination among racial minorities in Singapore. We are mindful that conditions fuelling such perceptions might not have been purposefully established or maintained. This makes it all the more important for Singaporeans to examine what we can all do to live up to the spirit of our National Pledge and the ICERD in eliminating all forms of racial discrimination and preserving our national pillar of multiracialism.

The Suara Musyawarah Committee Report on the concerns and aspirations of Malay-Muslim Singaporeans, published in July 2013, highlighted persistent perceptions of discrimination that would be, in the long run, unhealthy for our racial harmony. In May 2014, Member of Parliament for Aljunied GRC Muhamad Faisal Abdul Manap proposed the formation of a committee made up of government representatives, Members of Parliament and community leaders to address these perceptions of discrimination among Malay-Muslims.

In light of the signing of the ICERD, the Workers' Party believes the formation and functioning of a multiracial committee is the best way forward to study and address



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persistent perceptions of discrimination among all minority communities. If the committee finds these perceptions to have some basis in institutional practices, then the findings will inform the Government to take the necessary action to rectify these practices. If these perceptions are found to have no basis, then the findings will allow the Government to work with affected communities to correct the perceptions. The committee will also serve as a useful national platform for inter-cultural conversations to promote mutual understanding and respect.

Singapore has made significant strides in multiracial integration and countering racial discrimination over the decades. Such steps are especially important for a highly diverse and multiracial society where physical space is limited and population density is rising. These conditions also mean that Singaporeans should constantly look to work on success in addressing racial discrimination and perceptions of discrimination, while conscientiously seeking to address shortcomings to strengthen our multiracialism.

Links:

[The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination](#)

[The Suara Musyawarah Committee's Report](#)

[Transcript of Mr Muhamad Faisal's speech and debate in Parliament on 26 May 2014](#)

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