

17 JANUARY 2018

TO ALL NEWS EDITORS

PRESS STATEMENT FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

News statement regarding sexual harassment of members of the media

KUALA LUMPUR (17 JANUARY 2018) - The National Union of Journalist (NUJ) acknowledges the presence of sexual harassment faced by media professionals in the course of doing their jobs.

This is exacerbated by the need to maintain good ties with contacts, who may abuse that relationship. We also understand that proving sexual harassment cases is a difficult and often humiliating process for those affected.

That makes it all the more important for those affected to report these cases, and for media professionals to set clear boundaries with their contacts to reduce the risk of being placed in vulnerable situations.

We also urge editors and company management to be there to support their staff. Harassment cannot be assumed to be part of "business as usual".

As the National Union of Journalist, we are here to look out for welfare of journalist and to ensure they are able to do their jobs without obstruction.

This includes supporting and assisting wherever necessary to media professionals affected by sexual harassment.

The Union also urges those in a position of power over journalist, including politicians, not to take advantage of journalist.

Reiterating our earlier reply to MalaysiaKini, those in power must ensure their interactions with media are done professionally and with integrity.

Media professionals also need to be bold in stepping forward against their harassers.

The Union also wants to elaborate on the reply given by its President Mohd Taufek Razak to news portal Malaysiakini's questions regarding a report by Asian Correspondent 'Female journalists, male politicians and the epidemic of sexual harassment in Asean'.

We realise that the dressing and appearance of journalist should not be blamed as a cause of sexual harassment.

We do not endorse such a stance. The Union also regrets the impression given by specific remarks that appeared to victim blame.

Included are the questions posed by MalaysiaKini and our replies in full:

Q1: Is sexual harassment towards female reporters a widespread culture in Malaysia?

The issue of sexual harassment towards female journalists by politicians is not new in Malaysia. It had been an ongoing challenge for female journalists.

NUJ wants to give a fair comment without blaming any parties, as it is human nature that men would be attracted to women while women would want to get the attention of a men they were interested in. The reverse applies.

It is not a culture, but a facet of daily life. However, it is how this is acted upon that differentiates whether or not it becomes sexual harassment.

In the context of attractive female journalist, harassment can easily happen even if both parties consent to it, in reference to getting a news story.

It could lead to negative exposure if it involves other factors like the way a journalist communicates, a journalist's approach when conducting interviews, and the boundaries set by the female journalist herself.

NUJ suggests, in the view that sexual harassment is part of the challenges faced by female journalists, that they present themselves in an appropriate manner and be firm while on duty.

For example, do not dress in an overtly sexy outfit, decline interviews at inappropriate places like night clubs or politicians' homes.

Female journalists must have integrity and an appropriate manner to obtain news.

Q2: Should the accusations be investigated?

To have those accusations investigated, that depends on how the incident occurred, as it is difficult to prove whether sexual harassment has occurred.

If the journalist has concrete evidence like a recording, witness or such, it is best to lodge police reports. The problem is victims are either embarrassed to lodge police reports, or put in an awkward position in order to maintain good ties with the politician.

There are specific cases where matters are revealed or police report is made when there is no longer good ties with the said politicians. That is similar to accusations of rape, after a relationship goes bad.

Q3: What action should be taken by police or political parties against such accusations?

Just exposing this to the media is not enough. What needs to be done is for journalist to come forward together, with concrete evidence.

What needs to be done is, journalists should boldly step forward with strong evidence. But this is hard to do at this point.

The police should also play a role by engaging both parties to meet. But remember, no one would be willing to admit guilt if there is no evidence against them.

For politicians, NUJ calls on them not to take advantage of reporters, and instead ensure their interactions are done professionally and with integrity.

On Behalf of the NUJ Executive Council,



MOHD TAUFEEK BIN RAZAK
President