



PRESS STATEMENT

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Malaysian AIDS Council denounces LGBT conversion therapy

KUALA LUMPUR, 22 December 2018 – The Malaysian AIDS Council (MAC) responds to the article “Here's How Malaysia ‘Cures’ LGBTs With Conversion Therapy” alleging its involvement in the Mukhayyam programme led by JAKIM and state religious authorities with the intent of rehabilitating the sexual orientation and gender identity of LGBT people.

The Mukhayyam programme was conceived as a means for JAKIM and religious authorities to provide a safe, non-judgmental space to the transgender community to participate in religious activities and to reach out to them with assistance to improve their livelihoods through job opportunities. There was no imposition of rehabilitation and it was in this early iteration of the programme circa 2011 that MAC was involved with the sole purpose of elevating the socioeconomic status of transgender people who were bereft of employment due to discrimination^[1].

However, in its later iterations, the programme deviated from its original intent. It was when rehabilitative and reparative components were introduced that MAC dissociated itself from the Mukhayyam programme.

MAC remains firm and steadfast in its stand that LGBT people do not require rehabilitation to correct their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Guided by scientific evidence and principles of human rights, MAC denounces any measures to intervene health behaviour that lacks scientific credence and violates an individual's rights to health, dignity, safety and protection.

LGBT conversion therapy is universally rejected by the global scientific community not only for lacking scientific merits and its dubious methods to “cure” non-heteronormative sexualities, but also for its harmful effects on an individual resulting in emotional (and in some cases, physical) trauma without any of its desired “curative” outcomes.

Propagating conversion therapy only fuels stigma, fear and discrimination against LGBT people, a key population that is disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS in Malaysia. It has absolutely no place in ending AIDS.

Ending AIDS requires evidence-based approach that respects the human rights of all individuals impacted by HIV/AIDS. Conversion therapy sets back the progress in HIV science especially in the area of treatment and prevention which in Malaysia has reversed the epidemic among people who inject drugs in under 10 years. Now, more than ever, HIV science has given us new and more effective tools to combat the spread of HIV thanks to the advent of antiretroviral treatment – treatment as prevention and U=U (undetectable HIV viral load equals untransmissible).

MAC calls upon all stakeholders in the national AIDS response including JAKIM and other religious authorities to divert its focus to promoting health, care and compassion and its resources to prevention, treatment and support for LGBT people and other key populations vulnerable to HIV/AIDS.

Ends

[1] Malaysian AIDS Council. "HIV & Islam: Responsible Religious Response to HIV & AIDS in Malaysia" (2011). Page 19. Retrieved <http://fileserv.idpc.net/library/hiv-and-islam.pdf> on 22 December.

About Malaysian AIDS Council

Malaysian AIDS Council (Malay: Majlis AIDS Malaysia, abbrev: MAC) was established in 1992 under the Ministry of Health (MOH) with a mission to represent, mobilise and strengthen non-governmental organisations and communities who were working with HIV/AIDS issues. MAC works with its partner organisations in a diverse range of activities from advocating and policy reforms; developing awareness and communication materials; creating public awareness campaigns; conducting and organising workshops and seminars; rolling out prevention and education programmes; providing care and support services and psychological counselling.