

1 December 2016

### **Malaysia: Women's rights organisation, EMPOWER's office raided**

On 28 November 2016, the office of *Persatuan Kesedaran Komuniti Selangor (EMPOWER)* was raided by the Royal Malaysian Police as part of an investigation under the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act (SOSMA).

[EMPOWER](#) is a non-governmental organisation that promotes and supports justice and democracy, with a focus on feminist and human rights principles. EMPOWER specializes in developing women's leadership, particularly among young women, indigenous women, and women in low-income communities. EMPOWER also monitors women's political participation and advocates on women's rights issues in the media, parliament, and amongst the general public.

On 28 November, Royal Malaysian Police raided EMPOWER's office in Petaling Jaya, refusing to show any form of identification to EMPOWER employees and lawyers. During the four-hour raid, EMPOWER's lawyers were also barred by police from entering the organisation's office. The police stated that EMPOWER was being investigated under Section 124c of the Penal Code and that lawyers were not allowed to meet with those detained in the office pursuant to the powers accorded under the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act 2012. During the raid, police confiscated documents. Following the raid, the members of EMPOWER who were held in the office were released.

This is the second instance in a short period of time of SOSMA being used against human rights defenders and their organisations. On [18 November](#), former executive director of EMPOWER, Ms **Maria Chin Abdullah** was detained under the same Act following a raid of Bersih 2.0's office. She was released on [28 November 2016](#). Under SOSMA, detainees can be held up to 28 days without judicial scrutiny and bail is not allowed for suspects who are charged with 'activities against parliamentary democracy'. If charges are confirmed, individuals can face up to 15 years imprisonment.

Front Line Defenders condemns the targeting of human rights defenders and their organisations, in Malaysia using the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act.

#### **Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Malaysia to:**

1. Immediately disclose the reasons of the raid on EMPOWER under the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act and return the documents confiscated during the raid, as they pertain to the organisation's legitimate human rights work;
2. Cease the use of Security Offences (Special Measures) Act against human rights defenders and their legitimate work;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Malaysia are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.