



# COUNCIL OF CHURCHES OF MALAYSIA YOUTH

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***For Immediate Media Release***

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## STATEMENT OF THE CCM YOUTH

### **“WITHDRAW ALL ANTI-HOMELESS MEASURES NOW”**

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**JULY 4, 2014**

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**Kuala Lumpur – July 4, 2014.** CCM Youth issued a press release today expressing its deep concern over the rapid escalation in anti-homeless measures announced by both the Ministry of Women, Children, and Community Development (KPWKM) and the Minister of Federal Territories (KWP), in oppressing not only some of the most vulnerable in society, but also the very people who are serving and helping the homeless through exercising our national values of being a *“Masyarakat Sejahtera dan Penyayang”*, or *“A Prosperous and Caring Society”* as articulated in the stated vision of the Department of Social Welfare<sup>1</sup>.

The lack of compassion and care shown by these Ministers, especially during this period in time, is particularly insensitive to the faith traditions of our nation, as millions of Malaysians fast, pray, and give out of charity.

CCM Youth denounces such measures as harsh and ruthless, especially considering that 15% of the homeless are women and that a sizeable 22% are above the age of 60 according to an unpublished Women’s Ministry 2010 survey of 1,387 persons experiencing homelessness in Kuala Lumpur. These misguided measures demonstrate a detachment from the cultural values of the people and contradict the government’s own commitment to establish a caring culture and *“meningkatkan martabat wanita di negara ini”*<sup>2</sup>, meaning *“raise the status of women in this country”* through the KPWKM. It is reprehensible to demonize all homeless as *“beggars”*, *“criminals”*, *“addicts”* or *“lazy”*, as this only stokes public hostility, endangering destitute women and street children to further violence should society turn against them.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.jkm.gov.my/content.php?pagename=visi\\_misi\\_dan\\_objektif&lang=bm](http://www.jkm.gov.my/content.php?pagename=visi_misi_dan_objektif&lang=bm)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.kpwkm.gov.my/latar-belakang>



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CCM Youth calls on the Department of Social Welfare and the Ministry of Federal Territories, to withdraw all anti-homeless measures with immediate effect. It is imperative that the government authorities find urgent civil and compassionate solutions before the nation comes under global shame yet again.

Beneath the veneer of respectability and progress that Malaysia tries to portray to the world, lies an ugly truth of the gravity of homelessness in Kuala Lumpur. CCM Youth finds it shameful that the government is intent on sweeping the matter under the carpet, so to speak, which, in this case, is just to sweep the homeless off the 2km radius of Kuala Lumpur. It is as if we are trying to hide away real problems affecting our nation.

The problem of the homeless is only but a symptom of the broader issues facing our nation, ranging from urban poverty, economic disempowerment, rural-urban displacement, financial illiteracy, mental illness, disability and so on. Criminalizing and unlawfully detaining the homeless is not only unhelpful, but unjust and immoral. Proposing to put sharp steel spikes in public spaces is not only offensive, but also dangerous to the visually impaired and the child pedestrian.

All religions teach us to value our fellow man. The Bible tells us that we are made in the God's image. Jesus calls us to help the poor, downtrodden and homeless as part of our worship to Him. In Isaiah chapter 58, verses 6 to 9, Christians are reminded that true fasting, fasting that pleases God, requires us to loosen the chains of injustice and oppression; to give to the needy; to share our food with the hungry; to give shelter to the homeless and clothes to those in need. Therefore, CCM Youth urges Christians, and society at large, to come together and stop the imposition of unfair laws that will further oppress the poor.

CCM Youth urges the public to call on the authorities, through their MPs and ADUNs, to find urgent civil and compassionate ways to deal with the city's poor, and treat the homeless with dignity. Hence, CCM Youth urges the authorities to treat the homeless fairly by considering the following measures:

- Withdraw the poorly thought out anti-homeless policies with immediate effect;
- Address the root causes of homelessness, including unemployment and job insecurity, the breakdown in families, poverty, increasing cost of living and housing, and ineffective social safety nets;



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- Provide viable alternative solutions to enable welfare aid to be given to the deserving homeless who do not have permanent addresses and/or bank accounts;
- Provide immediate support services, such as
  - Provision of emergency and temporary housing;
  - Provision of medical aid and care centres especially for those who are mentally ill or disabled;
  - Provision of welfare assistance to the elderly and women with children;
- Involve the Ministry of Urban Wellbeing, Housing and Local Government to come alongside to find permanent solutions to affordable housing in the city;
- Extend homeless assistance grants to all local councils;
- Increase research funding to survey, analyse and recommend thoughtful solutions to reducing homelessness;
- Reform archaic laws affecting the homeless, such as the Destitute Persons Act 1977 (Amended 2006)

For the sake of nation building, CCM Youth hopes that those in authority will exercise compassion and humility as God commands, by consulting and working in partnership with civil society groups and non-government agencies, to executing immediate mitigation strategies, and employing innovative longer term solutions to help the city's poor and to make Kuala Lumpur an exemplary and compassionate place to live.

Yours sincerely,

**(signed)**

Chrisanne Chin

Moderator  
CCM Youth

July 4, 2014



# COUNCIL OF CHURCHES OF MALAYSIA YOUTH

SOURCE: COUNCIL OF CHURCHES OF MALAYSIA YOUTH NETWORK

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