

# Sarawak Ministers' Fellowship

45 Ground Floor, Lorong 4F, Jalan Keranji,  
Tabuan Desa, 93350 Kuching, Sarawak.

3<sup>rd</sup> March 2017

P214 Selangau  
YB Datuk Joseph Entulu Anak Belaun,  
Pejabat Menteri Di Jabatan Perdana Menteri,  
Aras 4, Blok Barat, Bangunan Perdana Putra,  
Pusat Pentadbiran Kerajaan Persekutuan,  
62505 Putrajaya

[joseph@pmo.gov.my](mailto:joseph@pmo.gov.my)

Dear Datuk Joseph Entulu,

## **Re: Syariah Courts (Criminal Jurisdiction) Act 1965 (Act 355)**

Greetings from the Sarawak Ministers' Fellowship. We are a coalition of pastors, churches, Christian NGO's and concerned Christians in Sarawak. We trust this letter finds you in good health and enjoying blessings from Allah, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

We are concerned about the Rang Undang-undang 355 which seeks to amend the **Syariah Courts (Criminal Jurisdiction) Act 1965 (Act 355)** now before parliament and fixed for voting in early March 2017. We are writing to you, firstly, to seek your stand on the Bill. Secondly, we would very much like you to make a commitment and pledge to do your utmost for the continued wellbeing, peace and justice of the non-Muslim community including of course the Christian community in Sarawak and Malaysia in general. Last but not least we would like to ask that when the time comes to vote, you will attend Parliament and vote against the Bill guided by the principles upon which Malaysia was founded in 1963.

Sarawak is a Christian majority State and we are fully aware that contrary to the government's assertions Rang Undang-undang 355 is part of the government's agenda. If the Bill is passed it will give rise to inter-religious conflict. The on-going progressive erosion of religious freedom is like an ever-tightening noose with no sign of letting up.

Key historical documents relating to the formation of Malaysia are littered with emphases on the safeguards for religious freedom based on the spirit and concept of "complete freedom of religion" as a stated pre-condition for the people of Sarawak to assent to the formation of Malaysia. One example is:

*"... the religion of Malaysia shall be Islam. The observance of this principle shall not impose any disability on non-Muslim nationals professing and practising the other religions and shall not imply that the state is not a secular state."* Extract of memorandum submitted by Alliance Party to the Reid Commission

*"... The observance of this principle shall not impose any disability on non-Muslim nationals professing and practising their own religions and shall not imply that the State is not a secular state. ... There is nothing in the draft Constitution to affect the continuance of the present position in the States with regard to the recognition of Islam or to prevent the recognition of Islam in the Federation by legislation or otherwise in any respect which does not prejudice the civil rights of individual non-Muslims.*

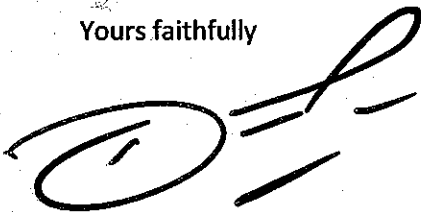
**Response of the Reid Commission**

The amendment to the Federal law will open the doors for any state legislature to make laws empowering the Sharia Court to impose punishments permitted by Islamic law, except the death penalty. The ramifications for non-Muslims are serious, all-pervading and could lead to injustice and breaches of the Federal Constitution and the Malaysia Agreement 1963.

We seek your early and public affirmation you stand with all Sarawakians in your commitment to the essential and fundamental tenets of the Malaysia Agreement 1963 and the Federal Constitution. The outcome could be a parallel criminal justice system with secular penalties for non-Muslims and draconian hudud penalties for Muslims.

Please feel free to either reply to the undersigned, or make a media statement in which case a letter would be unnecessary. You can also respond by email to [<kmf.kch@gmail.com>](mailto:kmf.kch@gmail.com).

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'D' followed by several horizontal strokes and a vertical line.

Reverend Daron Tan  
Chairman,  
Sarawak Ministers' Fellowship