

## **MEDIA STATEMENT**

**23 February 2024**

### **CIJ's Response to the Cabinet's Approval of the Malaysian Media Council**

The Centre for Independent Journalism (CIJ) sees the [Cabinet's approval of the Malaysian Media Council](#) (MMC) as a step in the right direction and sets a hopeful precedent for the tabling of the bill establishing said MMC in the next parliamentary session in June 2024.

In this regard, CIJ would like to reiterate that the recommendations of the [Protem Committee tasked to establish the MMC](#) be adopted fully. The following considerations must be undertaken to ensure that the MMC plays an effective role as the authority who shall set the standards for the media environment in Malaysia:

- 1) The MMC is to be set up as an independent multistakeholder mechanism. By ensuring the inclusion and involvement of multiple stakeholders, including media owners/publishers, journalists and other media workers, civil society and academia, the MMC can represent the voice of all people within the media industry in Malaysia to its utmost. It should also be independent as this would allow it to function as arbiters of media standards in Malaysia without political or business expediency. The MMC can only keep the public interest at its center without government interference.
- 2) The bill needs to establish a clear mandate of the role of the MMC. This mandate should effectively provide the MMC the ability to establish and harmonize standards regarding the media as its primary role. Further, its crucial role in setting up an independent dispute resolution mechanism needs to be defined and instituted within this mandate as articulated by the Protem Committee. The MMC's role should be grounded in international human rights and democratic values that empower the media to be the voice of a diverse and pluralistic society. The ultimate function of the MMC should be to promote, protect and defend media freedom in Malaysia.
- 3) The MMC must be adequately resourced. This funding can come from the taxpayers' money and channelled through the Ministry of Finance. These resources would imbue the MMC with the agency to be a proactive actor in guaranteeing that media freedom is in accordance with international standards and at the interest of the public and the right to information.

- 4) It is also critical that government undertake a complete reform of the archaic and repressive laws which undermine media freedom in Malaysia, including placing an immediate moratorium on the use of repressive laws like the Printing Presses and Publications Act (PPPA) 1984, the Official Secrets Act (OSA) 1972, the Sedition Act 1948 and Section 233 of the Communications and Multimedia Act (CMA) 1998, and proceeding with an urgent review to either amend or repeal said laws. Proceeding this way will also go beyond the usual rhetoric or provisions in the Bill and guarantee media reforms and a commitment to uphold our constitutional rights.

It is CIJ's hope that these considerations are taken into account and executed to its utmost. CIJ urges the government to continue to involve the Protem Committee in the finalisation of the Bill as well as ensure constructive engagement with the media and civil society organisations as it moves towards tabling the Bill in June 2024.

The MMC should be an authority in its own right!

**23 February 2024**

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*The Centre for Independent Journalism is a non-profit organisation that aspires for a society that is democratic, just and free where all peoples will enjoy free media and the freedom to express, seek and impart information.*