



CSOs Welcome the Referral of the FOI Bill to the PSSC: The Process Must Be Transparent, Inclusive and Meaningful

14 July 2026

ARTICLE 19, the Centre for Independent Journalism (CIJ) and Center to Combat Corruption and Cronyism (C4 Center) welcome the Malaysian government's decision to [refer](#) the highly [regressive Freedom of Information Bill 2026](#) to the Parliamentary Special Select Committee (PSSC), under Standing Order 81(1) of the Dewan Rakyat, following the first reading in Parliament on 13 July 2026.

We acknowledge that this [decision](#) was made in response to demands from civil society and other stakeholders, given the significant shortcomings in the Bill. The current [FOI Bill undermines](#) the very foundation of the right to information and fosters a culture of secrecy instead of promoting transparency and openness.

While we welcome the step, we want to emphasise that this will only be meaningful if the work of the PSSC is transparent, inclusive, participatory and genuinely open to reforming and improving the FOI Bill 2026 in its entirety.

The PSSC must be bipartisan and include representation from both the government and the opposition to enhance credibility, in accordance with proper parliamentary procedure. The Members of Parliament (MPs) must have established experience and demonstrate a commitment to human rights, the right to information, and/or democratic governance. The PSSC should be chaired in a manner that inspires public confidence and reflects Parliament's commitment to bipartisan scrutiny. Its membership should also reflect political balance, gender diversity, and representation from both Peninsular Malaysia and Sabah and Sarawak.

To ensure a credible and meaningful process, we call on the PSSC to:

1. **Review the Bill holistically.** It should not merely endorse the existing draft Bill but also review it, including its scope, exemptions, proactive disclosure obligations, appeals process, oversight mechanism, accessibility, sanctions, timelines for disclosure, and its relationship with the Official Secrets Act 1972 and other secrecy laws that may undermine the legislation's effectiveness. The substantive review should be conducted against international standards, [CSO Model Right to Information Bill](#) and the government's own reform commitments.
2. **Engage fully and meaningfully with civil society organisations (CSOs), academics,** and other relevant stakeholders to ensure an open, transparent, and participatory approach to developing the Bill, fostering public trust and enhancing the effectiveness of the legislative framework. This should also include further calls for public participation and to publish all written submissions, meeting schedules, and the PSSC's deliberative process wherever possible, subject only to legitimate confidentiality concerns.
3. **Benchmark the Bill** against international best practices and principles of the right to information, Malaysia's constitutional guarantees under Article 10(1)(a) and other fundamental liberties under Part II of the Federal Constitution, and Malaysia's obligations under international human rights law.
4. **Ensure the revised draft Bill is published before the PSSC finalises its report,** allowing stakeholders to comment on proposed amendments rather than only the original Bill, prior to the subsequent readings.
5. **All inputs from the PSSC must be meaningfully considered and reflected in the drafting process,** and they must align with what is collectively agreed upon by the PSSC; the committee should recall the Bill if it does not align with international human rights standards.

We wish to emphasise that the process should not **unduly delay** the legislation; the goal is to improve the Bill, not postpone the reform indefinitely.

We urge the government to take this call to action seriously. It is essential to implement a progressive FOI law based on the principle that an informed public is crucial for a functioning democracy. A robust and progressive FOI framework shifts power from the state to the people, promoting maximum transparency, accountability, and public

participation in governance, and ultimately reaffirming public confidence in the Madani government. Let's ensure that we get this done correctly and meaningfully this time.

Our organisations are committed to contributing to this process in a constructive, meaningful and effective manner.

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