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For Immediate Use

BUMIPUTERA CHRISTIANS WELCOME ARCHBISHOP'S PUSH FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

We fully support the call for freedom of religion by Sabah Catholic Archbishop John Wong and for the authorities to respect our rights to practise our faith as guaranteed by the constitution.

The Archbishop made this call at the mamangkis gathering organised by the Perpaduan Anak Negeri (PAN) Sabah – the Native Solidarity of Sabah - in Papar last Saturday (9 August 2014).

As highlighted by Archbishop Wong, we call on JPN (National Registration Department) to immediately rectify the wrong classification of Bumiputera Christians in Sabah as Muslims just because they have 'bin' and 'binti' in their names. The JPN must desist from this Islamisation drive through changing the religious status in the MyKad of these Christians.

This wrong classification of their MyKad has brought untold misery to those affected. Christians wrongly classified as Muslims are unable to get married legally. Getting married in churches would not solve their problems as these marriages cannot be officially registered. Birth of their offspring also cannot be registered as their parent's marriage is in the first place not recognised in law. This makes them illegitimate children. This presents a major in registering them in schools and in applying of their own identity cards and eventually they cannot even get married as Christians.

We have lodged an official complaint for 162 such cases of Christians wrongly classified as Muslims two years ago with JPN only to be told that all the files have been lost in the department itself and no further action could be taken.

They have also been told by JPN that the department would only rectify their religious status if they went to the Syariah Court to get a declaration that they are not Muslims. It is most ludicrous to subject Christians to the dictates of the Syariah Court.

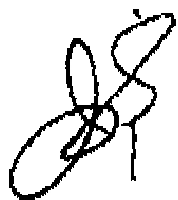
As pointed out by the Archbishop, our Christian faith is under attack, even the language we use in our Bibles, literature and worship are under siege.

The Sidang Injil Borneo Sabah filed our case in court over the illegal confiscation of our Bahasa language Sunday School publications meant for the education of our children. That was seven years ago and we are still waiting for justice to be done.

Malaysia is a signatory to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We, therefore, call on the authorities to respect and uphold this declaration, particularly Article 18:" Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance. "

As we prepare to celebrate the 51st anniversary of the formation of Malaysia on 16 September, we wish to remind the government that the cornerstone of Sabah's 20-point conditions to the Malaysia Agreement is anchored on freedom of religion. We cherish this fundamental civil liberty and will defend it without fear or favour.

We also wish to call on the authorities to rein in aggressive Islamisation in Sabah by overzealous dakwah elements from the peninsula through conversion by dubious means such as intimidation, inducement and deception. Even our children in taska and tadika pre-schools and those in residential schools and colleges are not safe from these extremist elements. They are even entering into Christian villages among the poorest areas in Sabah to convert the through such dubious means. Such deception must stop immediately. ENDS.



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(Issued by Rev Datuk Jerry Dusing, President of Sidang Injil Borneo Sabah. For further information please contact Jacqueline John, 010-5027450.)