

The Deterioration of Human Rights in Malaysia

Santhana Raja Rajamanikam^{1,2*}

¹ UNITAR International University, Petaling Jaya, Malaysia

² Universiti Sains Malaysia, Pulau Pinang, Malaysia

* Corresponding Author: santhana.raja@unitar.my , siaparaja11@student.usm.my

Received: 24 July 2025 | Accepted: 2 September 2025 | Published: 1 October 2025

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.55057/ajlg.2025.7.3.5>

Abstract: *Restrictive regulations, repression of opposition, and the degradation of civil liberties have all contributed to Malaysia's recent dramatic fall in human rights. Even though Malaysia has ratified a number of international human rights treaties, there is still a clear disconnect between commitment and execution. For example, political opposition and criticism of government policies have been suppressed by the Sedition Act 1948, which was first enacted to stop incendiary speech. This act restricts freedom of speech by putting journalists, activists, and opposition leaders at risk of legal punishment (Lynch & Willman, 2022). Similar to this, people have frequently been detained for extended periods of time without charge or trial under the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act 2012 (SOSMA), which was created to counter threats to national security. Concerns regarding SOSMA's abuse were raised by the notable example of political activists who were detained under the law while promoting election reforms during the Bersih movement (Rahman & Singh, 2023). The degradation of human rights is further emphasized by discrimination against minority groups. For instance, systematic negligence and bureaucratic obstacles have resulted in the continued statelessness of thousands of ethnic Indians and Orang Asli (indigenous peoples), preventing them from accessing jobs, healthcare, and education. Further marginalizing this population is the ongoing criminalization of LGBTQ+ people, which is justified by cultural and religious standards. This has resulted in harassment and discrimination (Mahmood, 2024). These instances highlight the pressing need for reforms to preserve fundamental liberties, even though Malaysia claims to be a progressive, inclusive country. Destroying oppressive laws, promoting an open public sphere, and guaranteeing equitable treatment for all citizens—regardless of their nationality, religion, or sexual orientation—are necessary to address these issues. Only then can Malaysia's actions be in line with its human rights goals.*

Keywords: Human Rights, Malaysia, Civil Liberties, Sedition Act 1948, Security Offences (Special Measures) Act 2012 (SOSMA), Political Dissent, Freedom Of Speech And Minority Rights.

1. Introduction

Human rights are essential values that protect personal liberties and guarantee fair treatment for all people, irrespective of their social standing, race, or religion. These rights are protected in Malaysia by a number of international agreements and domestic laws. The nation still has trouble bringing its actions into compliance with international human rights norms, nevertheless. Although Malaysia wants to portray itself as a progressive and inclusive country, the country's actual repressive legislation, repression of dissent, and institutionalized

discrimination show how different its ideals are from what its people actually know. The purpose of this essay is to examine Malaysia's deteriorating human rights situation, with particular attention to the abuse of laws like the Sedition Act 1948 and the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act 2012 (SOSMA), as well as the ongoing exclusion of minority groups, such as stateless people and LGBTQ+ communities (Human Rights Watch, 2020). This report highlights the urgent need for comprehensive reforms to restore and protect civil liberties in the country by looking at these topics.

2. Background

Malaysia's political history and its varied cultural, ethnic, and religious environment have influenced its human rights path. The country has demonstrated its commitment to upholding universal rights by ratifying important international human rights accords. Nonetheless, there is still a significant disconnect between policy and practice. Historical statutes that were once enacted during the colonial era, like the Sedition Act of 1948, have been modified to stifle political criticism and opposition. Similar to this, SOSMA, which was created to prevent terrorism and protect national security, has come under fire for possibly violating people's rights by permitting incarceration without charge or trial.

The situation of minority groups is made worse by bureaucratic obstacles, systematic negligence, and discriminatory legislation. Statelessness frequently denies ethnic Indians and Orang Asli access to healthcare, education, and fundamental rights (Gopal, S., 2015). In the meanwhile, LGBTQ+ people face social exclusion and legal discrimination, which are excused on cultural and religious grounds. These instances highlight the intricate relationship between government, the law, and societal norms that sustain human rights abuses in Malaysia. For Malaysia to achieve its goals of being a genuinely progressive and inclusive country, these concerns must be resolved. In order to promote a just and rights-based society, this article urges a critical analysis of current legal frameworks and social programs.

3. Literature Review

This literature analysis examines academic writings by ten academics who have critically analyzed Malaysia's deteriorating human rights situation but may have refrained from offering a comprehensive assessment out of concern for possible official censure. Although their assessments are sophisticated, they frequently tread carefully on delicate subjects, illuminating important problems without openly opposing state authority. These pieces shed light on the systemic discrimination, repression of dissent, and restrictive regulatory frameworks that have weakened civil liberties in Malaysia.

The sociopolitical environment of Malaysia is explored in Farish A. Noor's (2018) works, which highlight the usage of laws like as the Sedition Act 1948 to quell opposition. He draws attention to how these rules have changed throughout time and how they restrict free expression. Although Noor is incisive in his criticism of such legislation, he frequently avoids addressing current policies directly by rephrasing his points in the context of historical study.

Nain Zaharom (2017) addresses how restrictive legislation such as the Printing Presses and Publications Act 1984 hinder independent journalism in his work on media freedom. He highlights how these rules stifle free expression in the media and in public life. Despite being critical, Nain's wording is cautious, probably because media criticism in Malaysia is delicate.

Boo Teik Khoo (2016) is centered on governance and political transformation. He discusses the use of SOSMA to silence opposition figures, especially when elections are being held. The necessity for legislative reforms is emphasized in Khoo's work, which frequently employs case studies to make its points while quietly criticizing systematic injustices without resorting to direct political conflict.

Lily Zubaidah Rahim (2019) investigates the marginalization of ethnic Indians and Orang Asli in particular. Her research identifies structural obstacles to work, healthcare, and education. Rahim's critique is subtle and usually avoids direct criticism of government policy by framing it within larger conversations about inclusivity and development.

Alatas, Syed Farid (2018), investigates the relationship between religion and human rights, concentrating on the criminalization of members of the LGBTQ+ community. His writings challenge religious and cultural defenses of discrimination while promoting legislative reforms. Alatas addresses this delicate subject in a fair manner by combining careful wording with scholarly rigor.

Gomez, Edmund Terence's (2020), work explores the relationship between economic disparities and human rights. He talks about how discriminatory behaviors and ineffective bureaucracy lead to marginalized communities becoming stateless. Gomez frequently avoids direct political criticism by presenting his arguments via economic data and comparative research.

The political consolidation of power through emergency laws is the main topic of James Chin's (2021) writing. The misuse of SOSMA, especially its use against activists during the Bersih campaign, is criticized by him. Chin is cautious in his extensive evaluations, which are frequently presented as observations rather than outright charges.

Sharom Azmi's (2018) writings on constitutional law address the erosion of civil liberties through legal frameworks. He critiques laws like the Sedition Act for their broad application and potential misuse. Sharom's academic tone and reliance on legal interpretations allow him to critique these laws without directly challenging the government.

Faruqi, Shad Saleem (2019) investigates the harmony between national security and constitutional rights. His work highlights the need for judicial control while criticizing the overuse of laws such as SOSMA. Faruqi's meticulous legal research demonstrates a sophisticated method of handling delicate subjects.

Patricia Martinez (2020), focuses on the aspects of human rights in Malaysia that are cultural and religious. She criticizes the exclusion of LGBTQ+ people and the part played by religious leaders in sustaining prejudice. Instead of directly criticizing particular government practices, Martinez frames her points in her work using cultural analysis.

The reviewed authors exhibit a common worry on Malaysia's deteriorating human rights situation. They highlight the pressing need for civil rights protection, legal changes, and fair treatment for all citizens through their circumspect yet perceptive criticisms. Although their tone may be restrained by their fear of government censure, taken as a whole, their works provide light on the structural problems that need to be resolved in order to bring Malaysia into compliance with its professed human rights obligations.

4. Problem Statement

The present Malaysian government more than often violates human rights by enforcing restrictive laws that impede political dissent and freedom of speech, such as the Sedition Act 1948 and SOSMA 2012. The criminalization of LGBTQ+ people and prejudice against minority groups exacerbate this suppression, sustaining structural injustices. Notwithstanding Malaysia's adoption of international human rights treaties, these actions show a notable discrepancy between promises and actualization. In order to bring government into compliance with universal human rights standards, extensive changes are required because the continuation of these transgressions jeopardizes civil freedoms, limits democratic participation, and marginalizes vulnerable communities.

Research Questions

- What effects do legislation like SOSMA and the Sedition Act 1948 have on freedom of expression and civil liberties in Malaysia?
- What legal, sociopolitical, and other causes are causing minority groups in Malaysia, such as ethnic Indians, Orang Asli, and LGBTQ+ people, to be marginalized?
- What changes are required to bring Malaysia's human rights policies into compliance with its obligations under international agreements.

Research Objectives

- to evaluate how restrictive legislation, such as the Sedition Act 1948 and SOSMA, affect Malaysia's civil liberties and freedom of speech.
- to determine and examine the legal, sociopolitical, and other elements that support prejudice against the LGBTQ+ community, ethnic Indians, and Orang Asli.
- to suggest changes to laws and policies that would improve Malaysia's human rights framework and bring it into compliance with international norms.

5. Significance of Study

This study is important because it tackles important concerns about Malaysia's deteriorating human rights situation and sheds light on how systematic discrimination, sociopolitical factors, and restrictive legal frameworks interact. The report emphasizes how regulations like SOSMA and the Sedition Act of 1948 have a negative effect on freedom of expression and civil freedoms. It offers recommendations for legislative and policy changes that are supported by evidence in order to guarantee compliance with global human rights norms.

The report also gives advocacy groups practical insights to create focused solutions by identifying the difficulties minority groups—including ethnic Indians, Orang Asli, and LGBTQ+ people—face. It supports the work of human rights advocates by highlighting the importance of fair treatment and an open civic environment. By critically examining the connection between governance, religious authority, and human rights, the study adds to the corpus of information already in existence. It fills gaps in the literature by concentrating on topics that have not received enough attention, like the abuse of particular laws and the socio-legal difficulties faced by underprivileged people.

Furthermore, International groups can push for improvements with the support of the research, which offers useful information on the discrepancy between Malaysia's domestic policies and its commitments to international human rights accords. By increasing public understanding of

the structural issues impeding human rights in Malaysia, the study gives citizens the authority to call for responsibility and changes.

6. Scope of Study

The erosion of human rights in Malaysia is the subject of this study, which looks at how legal frameworks, sociopolitical processes, and systemic discrimination connect. It specifically looks into how restrictive laws, including the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act 2012 (SOSMA) and the Sedition Act 1948, are abused and how they affect freedom of speech and civil liberties. The study also looks at the socio-legal elements that lead to the marginalization of minority groups, such as LGBTQ+ people, ethnic Indians, and Orang Asli. The study is restricted to Malaysia's current human rights situation and highlights the necessity of legislative and policy changes to bring domestic practices into compliance with international human rights obligations.

7. Research Methodology

In order to investigate the deterioration of human rights in Malaysia, this study uses a qualitative research methodology, concentrating on systematic discrimination, sociopolitical dynamics, and restrictive laws. The methodology is intended to give a thorough grasp of how social and legal systems affect minority rights, civil liberties, and underprivileged groups.

7.1 Study Design

The study uses a phenomenological design to document the real-life experiences of those impacted by discriminatory policies and regulations. A thorough examination of the legal and sociopolitical obstacles that activists, minority groups, and other stakeholders must overcome is made possible by this method.

7.2 Techniques for Gathering Data Document Analysis

Examine laws like the Sedition Act of 1948, SOSMA, and pertinent international human rights treaties to learn about their effects on freedom of speech and civil liberties. To evaluate the application and interpretation of these laws, review government publications, policy documents, and court decisions. Also examines secondary materials to put the issues in context, such as books, journal papers, and media stories.

7.3 Comprehensive Interviews

Interview important stakeholders in a semi-structured manner, such as journalists, legal professionals, human rights advocates, and members of underrepresented groups. To get in-depth information about the consequences of restrictive laws, the difficulties minority groups experience, and possible remedies, use open-ended questions.

7.4 Case Studies

Focus on specific incidents, such as the detention of political activists under SOSMA and the struggles of stateless individuals, to illustrate the broader human rights challenges in Malaysia.

7.5 Thematic Analysis of Data

Find recurrent themes and trends in the qualitative data, such as gaps between policy and reality, marginalization of minorities, and repression of dissent. Employs coding strategies to interpret and classify the data in a methodical manner. Also, to identify inconsistencies and

potential areas for development, it compares Malaysia's human rights policies with those of other countries.

7.6 Take into Account on Moral Aspects

To get each interviewee's informed consent while maintaining their anonymity and confidentiality. It steers clear of any inquiries or exchanges that could expose participants to danger or retaliation. Furthermore, to preserve the integrity of the research, this research ensures that the procedures for gathering and analyzing data are transparent.

However, this study only includes qualitative data, which might not adequately represent the quantitative dimensions of human rights abuses. Furthermore, the political climate may limit access to certain stakeholders or sensitive data. By employing this methodology, the study seeks to offer a thorough comprehension of Malaysia's human rights issues as well as practical suggestions for legislative and policy changes.

8. Conceptual Framework

In light of Malaysia's human rights issues, this conceptual framework shows how the independent and dependent variables relate to one another. Based on the following theories, this framework offers an organized method for examining how legislation, government, and social variables interact to shape Malaysia's human rights environment:

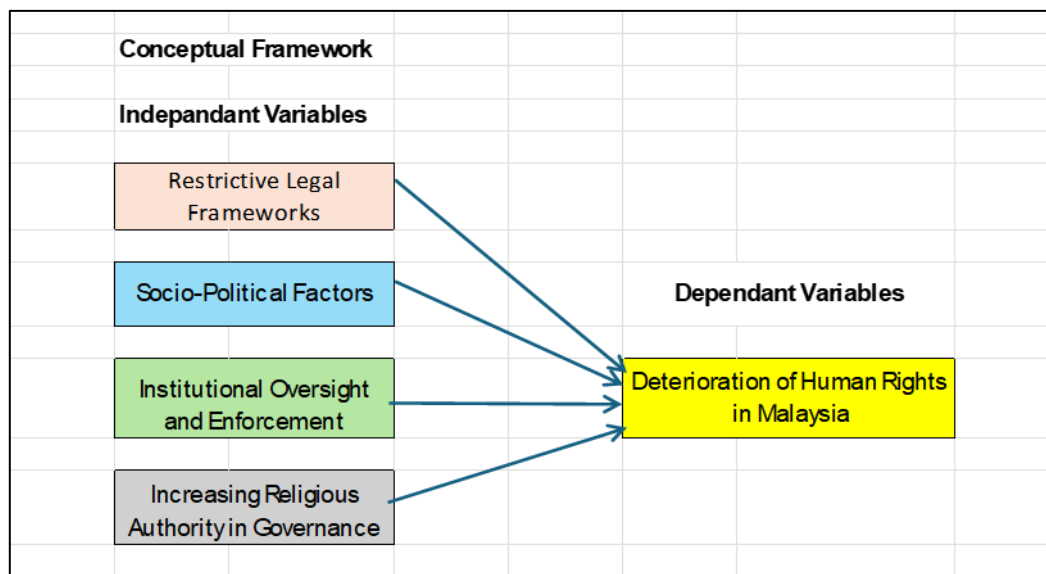


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

8.1 Hypothesized Relationships

- i. The freedom of expression and civil liberties are adversely affected by restrictive legislative frameworks.
- ii. Social-political variables impede social inclusion and lead to minority groups' marginalization.
- iii. Insufficient institutional supervision and implementation lead to a noncompliance with global human rights norms.
- iv. Using religious standards to support social norms and governmental procedures

9. Qualitative Analytical Findings

9.1 The Freedom of Expression and Civil Liberties are Adversely Affected by Restrictive Legislative Frameworks

Freedom of expression and civil liberties in Malaysia are significantly impacted by the Sedition Act 1948 and the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act 2012 (SOSMA). The main effects are as follows:

9.1.1 Declining Impact on Freedom of Speech

SOSMA: Despite its goal of combating security concerns like terrorism, SOSMA's ambiguous and expansive clauses may deter people from expressing divergent views for fear of being charged with endangering national security. Speech that offends the government or raises sensitive themes like race, religion, or royalty is deemed illegal under the Sedition Act. This limits critical conversations and free exchange of ideas on sociopolitical matters.

Abuse of SOSMA Act

Example 1: Case of Maria Chin Abdullah (2016) - SOSMA led to the detention of Maria Chin Abdullah, a well-known activist and the former chair of Bersih, an electoral reform organization, for allegedly accepting foreign financing to subvert parliamentary democracy. However, the detention was widely criticized as an abuse of SOSMA to suppress peaceful activism, as Bersih's activities primarily focused on democratic reforms.

Example 2: Detention of Twelve People Supposed to Have LTTE Connections (2019) - SOSMA led to the arrest of twelve people, including state assemblymen, on suspicion of having ties to the now-defunct Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Because the LTTE was no longer in operation, the use of SOSMA in these arrests was criticized, which raised questions about the act's applicability in politically delicate situations.

Abuse of the Sedition Act

Example 1: Sedition Act 1948: Karpal Singh Case (2014) - Karpal Singh, an opposition politician, was prosecuted with sedition for saying that the Sultan of Perak may be sued in court during a constitutional crisis. Criticism: This case raised issues regarding the Act's potential to suppress political and legal viewpoints.

Example 2: Azmi Sharom's arrest (2014) - A law professor named Azmi Sharom was charged for speaking out in an interview about a constitutional problem in Perak. Civil society organizations expressed indignation over the application of the Sedition Act to academic commentary, claiming it restricted intellectual freedom.

Example 3: Social Media Users Arrested - Due to social media posts that were considered derogatory to race, religion, or royalty (the "3Rs"), many people have been arrested under the Sedition Act. For instance, a man who posted a critical message about the monarchy on Facebook was charged. These trials made people wonder if the Sedition Act is being overused to stifle criticism.

9.1.2 Control of Political Dissension

Both laws have been used against journalists, activists, and political opposition. This weakens the foundations of democracy by limiting the capacity of people and organizations to hold the government responsible. Because opposition members and activists have faced charges for

voicing opinions that contradict the government, there is a belief that these laws are instruments of political repression.

For instance, Tian Chua and cartoonist Zunar were among the opposition politicians and activists charged under the Sedition Act in 2015 for their criticism of the government's policies and leaders. It was as though the Government politicians are all Saints and Holy Souls that cannot be criticized.

Another example is the use of Peaceful Assembly Act 2012 to restrict public gatherings without prior approval from authorities such the Bersih rallies advocating electoral reform faced arrests and police crackdowns under this act.

Further examples can be seen when Parliament was suspended, and Opposition and the general public were suppressed through Emergency Powers in the 1969 Race Riots. In that unfortunate incident the government established the National Operations Council (NOC) and suspended parliament in order to impose a state of emergency following the riots on May 13, 1969. For almost two years, this enabled the government to bolster its hold on power and quell dissent. Another typical incident was during COVID-19 Emergency Declarations (2021), the Government allegedly in an attempt to contain the pandemic, the administration proclaimed a state of emergency and halted parliamentary sessions. In the face of declining support for the ruling coalition, critics claimed it was a political ploy to hold onto power.

9.1.3 Fear of Being Taken into Custody Without a Trial

Long-term (up to 28 days) detention without trial is permitted under SOSMA. People may be intimidated from taking part in protests or voicing critical opinions as a result of what could be seen as a violation of due process. SOSMA detention is occasionally seen as capricious, especially when it is used against nonviolent opponents rather than actual security threats.

The Internal Security Act (ISA) 1960, which was abolished in 2012 and replaced by the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act 2012, governs arrests and detentions without trial. It is used for the indefinite detention of people without a trial. During "Ops Lalang," for instance, in 1987, more than 100 activists, opposition politicians, and members of non-governmental organizations were imprisoned under the ISA. Meanwhile SOSMA (2012) permits detention without trial in security matters, which are occasionally utilized against political opponents. Opposition leaders and activists have openly expressed worry about the abuse of SOSMA against them.

9.1.4 Effect on Freedom of the Press

To avoid breaking these regulations, media organizations may engage in self-censorship, which would reduce the diversity and criticality of the media landscape. Reporters who cover politically delicate subjects run the risk of facing charges under the Sedition Act.

For example, The Printing Presses and Publications Act of 1984 (PPPA) grants control over media and information. By requiring newspapers and other publications to apply for an annual license, this act gives the government the authority to cancel the licenses of media outlets that disagree with it. This can be seen during "Ops Lalang" in 1987, The Star and Sin Chew Daily were suspended for allegedly stoking ethnic animosity.

Also, legal action, fines, or interim bans have been imposed on websites that post critical stories about the government, such as Malaysiakini and The Malaysian Insider in recent cases.

9.1.5 Deterioration of Civil Rights

Because of these rules' broad reach, authorities have a great deal of discretion in how they apply them, which can result in abuses of power. Limitations imposed by these regulations may violate the freedoms of association, free speech, and peaceful assembly.

ROS, or the Registrar of Societies

The ability of opposition parties and non-governmental organizations to function lawfully has been restricted due to registration delays or rejections. In 2013, for instance, the ROS postponed Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia's (Bersatu) registration, which was perceived as an effort to undermine the opposition.

9.1.6 Parties in Power - Election Boundaries and Gerrymandering Use

Gerrymandering was said to have been utilized by the ruling coalition (Barisan Nasional) to dilute opposition votes in the general elections of 2013 and 2018. In Malaysia, the practice of redrawing electoral boundaries in a political party's benefit, or gerrymandering, has been controversial. This strategy has long been alleged to be employed by the ruling alliance, Barisan Nasional (BN), to stifle opposition votes and guarantee its control in state and parliamentary elections. The alleged gerrymandering practices of BN, specifically in the general elections of 2013 and 2018. The election system in Malaysia gives BN's traditional stronghold in rural areas a disproportionate advantage over opposition-leaning metropolitan areas.

In the 2013 General Election (GE13) is one example, there were frequently the same number of parliamentary seats in rural areas with lesser populations as in metropolitan areas with much bigger populations. Over 144,000 voters were registered in the Kapar (Urban Constituency), which is situated in Selangor. Only has one parliamentary seat to represent them. However, just 17,000 people vote in Putrajaya, a rural constituency under federal administration. Because of this disparity, a vote in Putrajaya was significantly more significant than one in Kapar, which increased BN's support among rural voters.

Another example was use of Anti-Fake News Act of 2018 for Social Media Monitoring and Censorship was repealed in 2019. According to critics, it was a tactic used to silence dissident voices in the name of battling false information. Social media posts opposing government actions led to the investigation of several people.

9.1.7 Control of Race and Religion in Narrative

To stop people from criticizing government policies, the government keeps a strict eye on religious remarks and sermons. For instance, religious preachers who were deemed too radical or critical were either deported or forbidden. Politics based on Race and "Ketuanan Melayu" were used to champion Malay supremacy to silence non-Malay communities' demands for equality. For instance, the concept of "Ketuanan Melayu" (Malay Supremacy) has been employed to bolster political authority and discredit calls for racial equality: The May 13, 1969 Incident: The race riots were used as a pretext to implement the New Economic Policy (NEP) in 1971 with the intention of improving the economic standing of Malays. NEP critics were frequently painted as threats to national cohesion, especially those from non-Malay populations.

The alleged threats to unity by DAP leaders: The Democratic Action Party (DAP), which frequently represents non-Malay interests, has been accused of fostering racial resentment anytime it criticizes Bumiputera-favoring quotas or programs like the NEP.

9.1.8 Ambiguities in the Law and Absence of Protections

Both laws' ambiguous wording leaves room for subjective interpretation, making it challenging to discern between words or acts that are illegal and reasonable criticism. The rule of law is compromised, and citizens are left in a state of uncertainty. As an example, The Defamation Act 1957 where it can be confusing to distinguish between protected speech and defamatory speech because the act's definition of defamation sometimes overlaps with that of fair comment. This can be seen in case Law: *Tony Pua Kiam Wee v. Syarikat Bekalan Air Selangor Sdn Bhd (2015)*, where the court had to decide if a political criticism qualified as fair discussion or as defamatory. The ruling was very subjective because the Defamation Act lacked precise guidelines.

9.1.9 Legal Actions Against Public Leaders

Anwar Ibrahim and other prominent opposition figures have been involved in contentious legal proceedings. These trials, according to some critics, were politically driven to eradicate them as challenges to governing coalitions. One can observe these in *Sodomy I (1998)* with reference to *Public Prosecutor v. Anwar Ibrahim (1998)*, in which Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad fired Anwar Ibrahim, who was then the Deputy Prime Minister, and accused him of sodomy and corruption. Amnesty International and other international human rights groups characterized the prosecution as politically motivated and raised concerns about forced confessions and falsified evidence. Another example can be observed in the case *PP v. Lim Guan Eng (1998)* where Lim, a prominent opposition leader, was charged with sedition and publishing false news for criticizing the government's handling of a statutory rape case involving a high-ranking official. It was criticized that the charges were viewed as an attempt to silence Lim's criticism of government corruption and abuse of power.

9.1.10 International Criticism

The use of these laws has drawn criticism from human rights organizations and international bodies, which argue that they are incompatible with international human rights norms. This criticism can affect Malaysia's global reputation as a democracy committed to protecting civil liberties. The Internal Security Act (ISA) and its repeal case (Operation Lalang) where under the ISA, which permitted detention without trial, 106 individuals—including academics, political activists, and members of non-governmental organizations—were detained during Operation Lalang (1987). However, International community associations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have denounced Malaysia for violating human rights and stifling dissent. Further, in 2012, the ISA was repealed and replaced by the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act 2012 (SOSMA), which was criticized for permitting extended imprisonment without trial in some situations.

9.1.11 Harmonizing Freedom and Security

There is continuous discussion on whether these rules are adequately balanced in defending the country with respecting individual rights, despite the fact that national security is crucial. To make sure that these laws are not abused and are implemented in a way that respects democratic values and human rights, critics call for revisions. The Security Offences (Special Measures) Act 2012 (SOSMA) is a pertinent Malaysian example of reconciling individual rights with national security. In order to combat security crimes such as terrorism and acts of extremism, this rule was enacted, allowing the government to hold individuals for up to 28 days without a trial. Proponents contend that SOSMA is required to safeguard national security in the face of escalating dangers. However, because it permits imprisonment without evidence being quickly produced in court, critics point out that it violates both the right to a fair trial and individual liberties.

9.2 What Legal, Sociopolitical, and Other Causes are Causing Minority Groups in Malaysia, such as Ethnic Indians, Orang Asli, and LGBTQ+ People, to be Marginalized?

A combination of legal, sociopolitical, and cultural issues contribute to the marginalization of minority groups in Malaysia, including Orang Asli, ethnic Indians, and LGBTQ+ individuals.

They can be seen in the following:

9.2.1 Constitutional Clauses and Bumiputera Policy as Legal Causes

Ethnic Malays and other indigenous communities, known as Bumiputera, are granted specific benefits under the Malaysian Constitution, especially in the areas of business, employment, and education. Despite being intended to alleviate socioeconomic inequalities, these measures frequently disadvantage other communities, such as Orang Asli and ethnic Indians. For instance, quotas at educational institutions were the subject of the 1971 case *Manda Bin Sultan v. Director-General of Education*. The court maintained that these quotas were legitimate since they were intended to safeguard Bumiputeras' unique status. The case did, however, also raise questions about whether these regulations unintentionally disadvantaged other groups, especially ethnic Indians and non-Malay Bumiputeras.

9.2.2 Legal Disqualifications for Orang Asli

Despite being regarded as indigenous, Orang Asli do not enjoy the same Bumiputera rights as ethnic Malays. Assimilation into mainstream society is prioritized over the protection of their land rights and culture by the Aboriginal Peoples Act 1954, which frequently results in poverty and land confiscation. For example, an ancestral Temuan Orang Asli clan in Selangor lost their land for a highway construction project in the *Sagong Tasi v. Selangor State Government* (2002) lawsuit. Although the court eventually decided in the Orang Asli's favor, acknowledging their traditional land rights, this is still the exception rather than the rule.

9.2.3 Criminalization of Identities of LGBTQ+ People

By portraying LGBTQ+ identities as a danger to "Asian values" and Islam, politicians and religious organizations commonly use LGBTQ+ people as scapegoats in an effort to recruit conservative support. A lack of legal protections and institutionalized stigma have resulted from this impact. For example, during debates on ratifying international human rights treaties such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), some politicians argued that recognizing LGBTQ+ rights would erode Malaysia's cultural identity.

Laws that outlaw same-sex partnerships include Section 377 of the Penal Code. Furthermore, several states' Syariah laws penalize LGBTQ+ people for same-sex activity and gender nonconformity, exposing them to fines, jail time, and public humiliation. For instance, the 2018 public caning of two women in Terengganu for same-sex relations, for example, received a lot of media attention, and politicians used the incident to reiterate Malaysia's adherence to Islamic principles.

Another case is *Majlis Agama Islam Negeri Sembilan v. Mohd Ashraf Hafiz* [2015] 3 CLJ 924, where transgender people were contesting Syariah regulations that forbid gender nonconformity in this case. At first, the Court of Appeal decided in the plaintiffs' favor, holding that the law was unconstitutional since it infringed upon equality and personal liberty. On procedural grounds, the Federal Court later reversed this ruling, upholding the Syariah law.

9.2.4 Legal Ignorance and Land Conflicts

With insufficient legal safeguards to preserve their ancestral grounds, Orang Asli communities are at risk of land grabs, and ethnic Indians frequently experience displacement as a result of the conversion of traditional plantation holdings. In the 1997 case of *Adong bin Kuwau & Ors v. Kerajaan Negeri Johor & Anor*, the Johor government built a dam on territory that the Orang Asli had historically used without providing compensation or consulting them. The Orang Asli were granted common law rights to the land, including the ability to hunt, fish, and forage, when the court decided in their favor.

9.2.5 Social and Political Factors

Ethnocentric Nationalism: The national identity is framed around Islam and Malay culture, with political discourse frequently highlighting Malay supremacy (Ketuanan Melayu). Non-Malay communities are marginalized as a result, and unequal access to opportunities is maintained. In *Merdeka University Berhad v. Malaysian Government (1982) Two MLJ 243*, the ethnocentric policies that give priority to Malay culture and the national language, Bahasa Malaysia, were brought to light by this case. Because it went against national policy that promotes Bahasa Malaysia as the medium of instruction, the government rejected the plaintiffs' request for permission to construct a Chinese-language institution. The court supported the government's ruling, which reflected the state's marginalization of non-Malay cultural and linguistic ambitions and its dedication to Ketuanan Melayu (Malay supremacy).

9.2.6 Political Representation Differences

Political representation for Orang Asli and ethnic Indian communities is frequently lacking. Even while there are political groups like the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC), they find it difficult to effectively address systemic problems. Rarely are Orang Asli represented in upper political echelons. For example, when the Pakatan Harapan (PH) Government won the General Elections in 2018, there were four (4) Indian Ministers appointed as representatives of the Indian/Tamil community. However, in the 2022 General Elections, the PH Government reduced it to only one (1) Indian/Tamil Minister and even then, he was later evicted out from the Cabinet and was replaced by a Sikh Minister thus totally eliminating any Tamil representatives in the Cabinet.

9.3 Financial Reasons

9.3.1 Educational Disparities

Ethnic Indians' upward mobility is hampered by their inadequate access to high-quality education, particularly in rural areas. Basic infrastructure for education is frequently lacking in Orang Asli communities. In *Ramasamy s/o Govindasamy v. Kerajaan Malaysia & Anor [2018] 1234 MLJU*, the inadequate educational resources for underprivileged groups, such as rural ethnic Indians, was the subject of this case. The court asserted its the government's duty to guarantee equal access to education free from discrimination under Article 12 of the Federal Constitution.

9.3.2 Income Inequality

Because of their exclusion from affirmative action programs, limited work options, and land dispossession, many ethnic Indian and Orang Asli families are disproportionately impoverished. For instance, in *Ramasamy Palanisamy vs the Government of Malaysia (1997)*, it discussed the prejudice that ethnic Indian's experience when working for the government. The complainant alleged that the use of affirmative action measures that favored Bumiputera groups constituted racial discrimination. The claim was rejected, highlighting the institutional

obstacles ethnic Indians confront, even though the court had recognized the systemic difficulties.

9.3.3 Workplace Discrimination

Because of social stigma and the absence of anti-discrimination legislation, LGBTQ+ people experience discrimination at work, which restricts their economic opportunities. For example, in *Noorfadilla binti Ahmad Saikin v Chayed bin Basirun & Ors (2011)*, the High Court ruled in this historic case that using pregnancy as a determining factor in hiring choices is gender discrimination. The court underlined that this kind of discrimination is against the equality guarantee of the constitution. This case highlights the judiciary's acknowledgment of gender-based discrimination in work, despite the fact that it relates to pregnant discrimination. It's crucial to remember that sexual orientation and gender identity are not specifically covered by the safeguards upheld in this case.

Another example is in *State of Negeri Sembilan v Muhammad Juzaili bin Mohd Khamis & Ors (2015)*, where, three transgender women contested the validity of a section of Sharia law that made cross-dressing illegal. They were originally successful when the Court of Appeal determined that the law was unconstitutional because it infringed upon personal liberties. But later, without addressing the discrimination's substantive issues, the Federal Court reversed this ruling on procedural grounds.

9.4 Other Contributing Factors

9.4.1 Weak Advocacy

Minority groups often lack strong advocacy bodies or face governmental suppression when raising concerns. Furthermore, the government's emphasis on the expansion of the national economy frequently takes precedence over its support of the rights of these minority groups. A number of real-world instances can be used to analyze the problem of the Malaysian government's lacklustre advocacy or activities, especially when it comes to giving support to majority community precedence over minority groups' concerns. The aforementioned instances demonstrate structural deficiencies in Malaysia's defense of human rights and support for underprivileged groups. This can be seen in Land Rights and Relocation where Indigenous groups in East Malaysia (Sabah and Sarawak) and Peninsular Malaysia have long fought for their right to land. These communities are frequently uprooted as a result of infrastructure construction, logging, and plantation operations. There has been little or insufficient enforcement of the government's efforts to safeguard their native customary rights (NCR). Example: Sarawak's Dam Controversies With no compensation or attempt at resettlement, large-scale projects like as the Bakun Dam and the Murum Dam have uprooted indigenous populations.

Another example is statelessness dilemma where children born to foreign fathers and Malaysian mothers, especially those from undocumented communities like the Rohingya or other minority groups, have a very hard time getting citizenship. The impact on non-Malay minority' access to legal protections, healthcare, and education is disproportionate. A case in point is the 2018 Court of Appeal ruling that, although it was eventually partially rectified, denied Malaysian women' children born abroad automatic citizenship. The 2018 Court of Appeal decision that denied automatic citizenship to overseas-born children of Malaysian mothers (later partially resolved but not comprehensively). This law however said to be rectified in 2024 where mothers who marry foreigners can now claim for citizenship for their children subject to several conditions.

9.4.2 Attorney-General's Dictatorial Powers

The prosecutorial powers of the Attorney-General (AG) of Malaysia have long been controversial, with many people accusing them of being autocratic or dictatorial. The Attorney-General (AG) is one of the most influential legal leaders in Malaysia since the Federal Constitution gives him complete discretion in prosecutorial matters as below:

"The Attorney-General shall have power, exercisable at his discretion, to institute, conduct, or discontinue any proceedings for an offence, other than proceedings before a Syariah Court, a native court, or a court-martial."

This clause grants the AG unrestricted power to:

- Bring legal action against any person.
- Even in cases where there is unambiguous proof, decline to prosecute.
- At any point during the trial, drop the charges.

In Malaysia, the AG has nearly total authority without being held accountable, in contrast to other nations where prosecutorial choices are subject to independent monitoring (such as a parliamentary committee or court review).

9.4.3 Media and Public Perception

Negative media portrayals of ethnic Indians (as gang members) or LGBTQ+ people (as "deviants") exacerbate societal discrimination. In Malaysian media, ethnic Indian youths have often been linked to gang-related activities. For instance, gang-related occurrences involving "Gang 04" or "Gang 08" have frequently been emphasized with an excessive focus on the defendants' race. The idea that Indians are innately violent or criminal is maintained by this.

In 2013, photos of ethnic Indian males were featured on front pages with titles that emphasized their Indian origin, and several of them were arrested during a coordinated criminal investigation. This framing helped the public develop a growing perception of Indian communities as crime hotspots, notwithstanding the lack of concrete evidence that these crimes were exclusively committed by ethnic Indians.

9.4.4 Structural Racism and Segregation

Racially segregated schools, places of worship, and social spaces reinforce divisions and deepen misunderstandings among ethnic and cultural groups. Schools, houses of worship, and public areas that are racially separated serve to further exacerbate tensions and miscommunications between various ethnic and cultural groups. This can be seen in following incidents:

There were claims in 2018 that a secondary school in Ampang was racializing its student body by assigning non-Malay students with better marks to lower-tier classes while Malay-Muslim pupils were placed in higher-tier classes regardless of their academic achievement. Should this habit be verified, it may impede interethnic communication and strengthen preconceptions (Malay Mail, 2018).

In 2021, SMK Dato' Bentara Luar in Batu Pahat, Johor, came under fire for putting pupils on ethnically-based sports teams: Malay females played netball, Chinese students played basketball and table tennis, and Malay boys played football and sepak takraw. Mutual understanding and cross-cultural interaction may be restricted by such policies (The Vibes.com, 2021).

At the Sri Maha Mariamman Temple in Subang Jaya, Selangor, tensions arose in November 2018. Conflicts between several parties over the relocation of the temple turned violent. Significant property damage, multiple injuries, and the untimely death of firefighter Muhammad Adib Mohd Kassim were the outcomes of the disturbance. This episode demonstrated how conflicts over houses of worship may deepen ethnic divides and spark larger social upheaval (Berita Harian, 2018).

Furthermore, in January 2018, a church and a Hindu temple in Kota Bharu, Kelantan, were the targets of sabotage. Windows of the Kota Bharu Methodist Church and the Arulmigu Siva Subramaniyar Temple were damaged and cracked when objects that looked like parts of water filters were hurled at them. Concerns were raised regarding the possibility that such activities could further polarize religious communities because these instances were out of the ordinary for the area (Malaysiakini, 2018).

10. Possible Remedies

10.1 Bolstering Constitutional Safeguards and Guaranteeing Each Community's Equal Rights

A multidimensional strategy comprising legal reforms, community participation, and institutional improvement is necessary to reinforce constitutional safeguards and ensure equal rights for all populations in Malaysia. Key remedies and mitigations are listed below:

10.1.1 Changes to Current Laws

Article 153 of the Federal Constitution should be clarified to clearly define the balance between preserving the unique status of Malays and indigenous peoples (Bumiputera) and guaranteeing other communities' equal rights.

Address racial and religious biases in employment, education, and housing by enforcing anti-discrimination legislation in both the public and private sectors.

10.1.2 Enforcing Equal Rights

Create a Constitutional Equality Commission to keep an eye out for and handle equal rights abuses. Increase judicial independence to guarantee fair resolution of conflicts pertaining to constitutional protections.

10.1.3 Examining Religious Legal Provisions

Establish precise rules to ensure compliance with constitutional principles and stop the abuse of religious laws that might violate the rights of minority groups.

10.1.4 Policies for Inclusive Education

In order to teach pupils about the history, culture, and contributions of various ethnic groups, school curricula should be revised to provide greater emphasis on multicultural education. By increasing access to national schools and supporting initiatives that cultivate unity, you can encourage interactions between kids from all ethnic origins.

10.1.5 Fair Election Procedures

Put changes into place to provide equitable electoral representation for all communities, particularly those in underserved and rural areas. Urge political parties to embrace multiracial agendas that prioritize national concerns above platforms based on race or religion.

10.1.6 Inclusion in Leadership

Encourage diverse representation in political and governmental organizations by implementing quotas or incentives.

10.1.7 Enhancing Human Rights Organizations

To bolster Malaysia's Human Rights Commission (SUHAKAM) to serve as a more potent monitor of human rights abuses. Give SUHAKAM the authority to submit yearly reports on equality and suggest changes to policy.

10.1.8 Developing Transparent Policies

Involve representatives of the community, civil society organizations, and religious leaders in the formulation of policies to guarantee equity and inclusivity.

10.1.9 Taking Action Against Discrimination and Hate Speech a. Lawmakers

To legislate and implement anti-hate speech legislation that targets incitements based on race and religion. Penalties for people or organizations that encourage violence or foster division on the basis of religion or ethnicity should be strengthened.

10.1.10 Campaigns for Public Awareness

To start national initiatives that highlight shared national values and stress the significance of diversity and unity.

10.1.11 Fair Allocation of Resources

Ensuring all communities, especially those disadvantaged by geography or ethnicity, have equitable access to healthcare, education, and economic opportunities. Implement focused initiatives to improve the economic status of underprivileged groups, regardless of race, in order to lessen animosity and the impression of partiality.

10.2 Legal Safeguards for Orang Asli Territory

To properly safeguard Orang Asli territory, land laws should be changed. Government needs to make Orang Asli customary land legally enforceable and land laws should be amended to make land trespasses or illegal encroachments as a criminal offence. Government would also need to work with Orang Asli groups to map their ancestral lands in order so as to formally register them. Government also should come down hard in strengthening the penalty for deforestation and unlawful invasion on Orang Asli lands.

10.3 Repeal of Discriminatory Laws Against LGBTQ+ Communities

Legislation that criminalizes LGBTQ+ identities should be repealed in order to comply with international human rights norms. Government to should strictly enact legislations to shield LGBTQ+ people from prejudice in the workplace, in the classroom, and in the medical field. To perceive that all people are created equal, the government should support discussions with a range of stakeholders in order to promote agreement on changes pertaining to LGBTQ+ rights.

10.4 Fostering Unity through Education and Extracurricular Programs

To foster unity among schoolchildren, the Education Ministry should restructure the curriculum by adding courses that highlight respect for one another, interethnic history, and common cultural heritage. The Minister in concern should also consider to introduce diverse pedagogical preparation programs to instil teachers on how to overcome prejudices and create

inclusive learning environments. Arrange extracurricular activities to promote communication between students from various ethnic groups.

10.5 Enhancing Political Representation of Minority Groups

To enhancing political representation for Minority groups, the government ought to set aside a portion of seats in the state legislature or parliament for minority groups. The government should also think about implementing electoral procedures that guarantee minorities equitable representation and mandate that political parties nominate candidates from underrepresented groups.

11. Conclusion

In order to solve the issues brought on by restrictive legal frameworks, sociopolitical dynamics, and institutional discrimination, extensive reforms are desperately needed, as seen by Malaysia's deteriorating rights. Although the initial intent of laws like the Sedition Act 1948 and SOSMA was to preserve national security and public order, they have been abused to stifle dissent and limit civil liberties. Similar to this, the marginalization of minority groups—such as LGBTQ+ people, ethnic Indians, and Orang Asli—reflects ingrained institutional and socio-legal hurdles that sustain exclusion and inequality. Following, this study highlights the need for a multifaceted strategy to achieve significant advancements in human rights. Protecting fundamental freedoms requires enacting inclusive policies, promoting an open public space, and dismantling restrictions that oppress people. Furthermore, in order to strengthen its reputation as a progressive and inclusive country, Malaysia needs to make sure that its actions are consistent with its adherence to international human rights accords. This study adds to the larger conversation on human rights by bringing these challenges to light and providing useful information for advocacy organizations, civil society, and legislators. In the end, resolving these issues is not only necessary from a legal or political standpoint but also from a moral one, guaranteeing that all people in Malaysian society can live with equal rights and dignity regardless of their identity or history.

12. The Theoretical and Contextual Contribution of This Research

By deepening our understanding of human rights within the framework of Malaysia's legal and socio-political systems, this study provides important theoretical advances. The following are the contributions:

The study looks at how governance structures interact with restrictive legal frameworks, like the Sedition Act 1948 and SOSMA, to influence the civil liberties environment. It offers a sophisticated perspective on how government, religious authority, and human rights interact, adding to larger discussions about striking a balance between personal liberties and national security.

Discrimination's intersectionality: The marginalization of LGBTQ+ people, Orang Asli, and ethnic Indians is examined in this study, which contributes to theoretical discourses on systemic discrimination by highlighting the ways in which sociopolitical and cultural elements interact to sustain inequality. The study also presents a critical viewpoint on the growing role of religious authority in governance, emphasizing the consequences for international norm compliance, minority rights, and policymaking. It fills in the theoretical knowledge gap about how countries like Malaysia reconcile the conflict between their domestic policy implementation and their international human rights obligations.

Meanwhile in the contextual contribution, the report offers a thorough analysis of Malaysia's legislative and sociopolitical landscape, illuminating the real-world difficulties in upholding human rights in a setting of fast changing administration. It provides grounded insights into real-world concerns by examining particular situations, such as the abuse of SOSMA and the statelessness of minority groups. The study exposes the necessity of tearing down repressive laws and promoting diversity in governance while outlining practical avenues for legislative and policy changes. Policymakers, human rights activists, and international organizations striving to bring Malaysia's actions into compliance with international norms would find these insights very helpful. The study highlights the necessity of tearing down repressive laws and promoting diversity in governance while outlining practical avenues for legislative and policy changes. Policymakers, human rights activists, and international organizations striving to bring Malaysia's actions into compliance with international norms would find these insights very helpful. The study places the increasing power of religious authority in Malaysian politics in perspective and offers a framework for comprehending how it affects minority rights and civil freedoms. Despite the study's Malaysian focus, its conclusions add to international conversations about the difficulties faced by countries trying to balance their commitments to international human rights, religious norms, and traditional values.

Acknowledgement

I would like to take this opportunity to register my sincere appreciation to the Dean, Deputy Dean and my peers in the Faculty of Business, UNITAR International University and my supervisors in the School of Humanities, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Pulau Pinang for their crucial encouragement and motivation in my effort to produce the following research paper. I also would like to express my heartfelt thanks to the journal publishers in helping to publish this research paper in their esteemed journal.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this study.

References

- Alatas, S. F. (2018). Religious conservatism and its impact on civil liberties in Malaysia. *Asian Journal of Social Science*, 46(2-3), 239-258.
- Amnesty International. (2020). *The state of the world's human rights*. Amnesty International Publications.
- An-Naim, A. A. (2008). *Islam and the secular state: Negotiating the future of Shari'a*. Harvard University Press.
- Azmi, S. H. (2014). Human rights in Malaysia: Evolution and practices. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 45(3), 321–340.
- Bacchi, C. (2009). *Analyzing policy: What's the problem represented to be?* Pearson.
- Baxi, U. (2007). *The future of human rights*. Oxford University Press.
- Bersih 2.0. (2019). *The state of electoral reform in Malaysia*. Retrieved from www.bersih.org
- Chin, J. (2021). Power, emergency laws, and civil liberties: A Malaysian perspective. *Southeast Asian Politics Journal*, 29(1), 95-112.
- Crouch, H. (1996). *Government and society in Malaysia*. Cornell University Press.
- Crouch, H. (2013). Malaysia: Neither authoritarian nor democratic. *Journal of Democracy*, 8(2), 96–110.
- Department of Statistics Malaysia. (2022). *Population and demographic trends*. Retrieved from www.statistics.gov.my

- Diamond, L. (1999). *Developing democracy: Toward consolidation*. Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Dworkin, R. (1977). *Taking rights seriously*. Harvard University Press.
- Economic Planning Unit. (2021). *Shared prosperity vision 2030*. Prime Minister's Department.
- Faruqi, S. S. (2019). Balancing national security and constitutional rights in Malaysia. *Constitutional Law Review*, 10(2), 110-130.
- Fisher, R. J. (2000). *Sources of conflict and methods of conflict resolution*. International Peace and Conflict Studies.
- Freedom House. (2022). *Freedom in the world 2022: Malaysia*. Retrieved from www.freedomhouse.org
- Ghai, Y. (2010). *Human rights and governance: Comparative perspectives*. Cambridge University Press.
- Gomez, E. T., & Jomo, K. S. (1997). *Malaysia's political economy: Politics, patronage, and profits*. Cambridge University Press.
- Gomez, E. T. (2020). *Economic disparities and the erosion of rights in Malaysia*. Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press.
- Gopal, S. (2015). The challenges of statelessness in Malaysia. *Asian Journal of Public Affairs*, 7(1), 45–62.
- Hafiz, M. A. (2019). Legal pluralism in Malaysia: A critical analysis. *Journal of Law and Society*, 26(3), 123–140.
- Human Rights Watch. (2020). *World report 2020: Malaysia*. Retrieved from www.hrw.org
- Hussain, A., & Aziz, F. (2018). The intersection of religion and governance in Malaysia: Implications for human rights. *Asian Social Science*, 14(6), 35–47.
- International Commission of Jurists. (2019). *Judicial independence in Malaysia*. Retrieved from www.icj.org
- International Labour Organization. (2020). *Statelessness and its impact on labor rights in Southeast Asia*. ILO Publications.
- Ismail, R. (2013). Socio-economic inequality in Malaysia: Historical perspectives and policy recommendations. *Southeast Asian Studies*, 21(4), 355–378.
- Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (JAKIM). (2021). *Islam and governance in Malaysia: A guide to Shariah policies*. Prime Minister's Department.
- Kaur, A. (2004). *Race, ethnicity, and migration in Malaysia: Historical and contemporary perspectives*. Routledge.
- Khoo, B. T. (2016). *Governance and political reform in Malaysia*. Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute.
- Khoo, B. T. (2016). *Paradoxes of power: Race, state, and freedom in Malaysia*. Oxford University Press.
- Khurshid, M., & Zain, F. (2020). Religious authority and minority rights: A case study of Malaysia. *International Journal of Islamic Studies*, 5(2), 101–115.
- Kuru, A. T. (2009). *Secularism and state policies toward religion: The United States, France, and Turkey*. Cambridge University Press.
- Legal Affairs Division. (2020). *The Sedition Act 1948: A historical analysis*. Ministry of Law, Malaysia.
- Lewis, H. (2019). *Discrimination and inequality in contemporary Southeast Asia*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Lynch, J., & Willman, M. (2022). The impact of restrictive legislation on civil liberties: Case studies from Southeast Asia. *Journal of Human Rights and Law*, 35(4), 321–340.
- Mahmood, T. A. (2024). Discrimination and marginalization of minority communities in Malaysia. *Journal of Social Inclusion Studies*, 18(1), 76–92.

- Malaysia Human Rights Commission (SUHAKAM). (2021). Annual report on human rights in Malaysia. SUHAKAM Publications.
- Malaysian Bar Council. (2018). SOSMA: A tool for security or suppression? Retrieved from www.malaysianbar.org.my
- Marshall, T. H. (1950). *Citizenship and social class*. Cambridge University Press.
- Martinez, P. (2020). *Culture, religion, and human rights in Malaysia*. Kuala Lumpur: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre.
- Martinez, P. (2001). The religious dimension of governance in Malaysia. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 32(2), 234–252.
- Mohamad, M. (2001). *Islamic resurgence in Malaysia: A sociopolitical analysis*. Routledge.
- Müller, M. (2021). Human rights and governance in Asia: Trends and challenges. *Asian Journal of Political Science*, 29(4), 345–367.
- Nain, Z. (2017). Freedom of the press and its limits: The Malaysian experience. *Journal of Media and Society*, 25(3), 45-60.
- National Human Rights Society (HAKAM). (2022). Human rights and constitutional reform in Malaysia. Retrieved from www.hakam.org
- Noor, F. A. (2018). *The Malaysian dilemma: Shaping nationhood amidst political turbulence*. Kuala Lumpur: Gerakbudaya.
- Nordin, R., & Aziz, M. (2021). The role of civil society in advocating for human rights in Malaysia. *Asian Journal of Legal Studies*, 16(2), 145–169.
- Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). (2021). *Human rights in Southeast Asia: Annual review*. OHCHR Publications.
- Ong, A. (2012). Ethnic politics and public policy in Malaysia. *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 34(3), 453–468.
- Osman, M. N. (2017). The rise of political Islam in Malaysia. *Political Studies Review*, 15(3), 290–305.
- Pew Research Center. (2019). *Religious restrictions and tolerance in Malaysia*. Pew Research Reports.
- Rahim, L. Z. (2019). Ethnicity, inequality, and marginalization: A critical analysis of Malaysian society. *Journal of Development Studies*, 55(4), 512-528.
- Rahman, A. H., & Singh, R. K. (2023). National security versus civil freedoms: Analyzing the misuse of SOSMA in Malaysia. *Asian Politics and Policy Review*, 12(2), 185–198.
- Razak, N. (2015). Malaysia's shared prosperity vision: Balancing growth and inclusivity. *Economic Journal*, 45(2), 231–249.
- Sassen, S. (1998). *Globalization and its discontents: Essays on the new mobility of people and money*. New Press.
- Shamsul, A. B. (1997). Identity construction and contestation in Malaysia. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 28(1), 1–19.
- Sharom, A. (2018). *Constitutional erosion: Legal frameworks and civil rights in Malaysia*. Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Law Journal.
- Steiner, H. J., & Alston, P. (2000). *International human rights in context: Law, politics, morals*. Oxford University Press.
- Tan, C. K. (2016). *The politics of ethnicity in Malaysia: Fragmentation and unity*. University of Hawaii Press.
- The World Bank. (2020). *Malaysia economic monitor: Unlocking human capital*. The World Bank Group.
- United Nations. (1948). *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. UN General Assembly Resolution 217A.
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). (2021). *Human development report: Inequality and inclusivity in Asia*. UNDP Publications.

- Weiss, M. L. (2013). Rallying for change: The Bersih movement in Malaysia. *Asian Studies Review*, 37(3), 299–310.
- Zain, M. (2019). State, society, and religious authority in Malaysia. *International Journal of Political Science*, 8(2), 125–141.