

**Press Release**

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Prolonged Delay in Second Reading of Citizenship Amendment Bill Adds to Malaysian Mothers' Suffering

Family Frontiers expresses deep disappointment over the [prolonged delay](#) in the constitutional amendment to entrench the right of Malaysian mothers to confer citizenship automatically to their overseas-born children. Seventeen months have passed since the [MADANI government first committed to table the constitutional amendment](#) in February 2023, yet this promise remains unfulfilled. As a result, Malaysian mothers are left in a state of anxiety and uncertainty, continuing to feel like second-class citizens.

How much longer must Malaysian women endure such treatment?

Even in 2024, Malaysian mothers are forced to return to Malaysia in the late stages of pregnancy to secure Malaysian citizenship for their babies, risking their lives and health. Additionally, many are compelled to leave their husbands and other children behind due to financial constraints, facing childbirth without the support of their loved ones. Is this the reality that Malaysia intends to perpetuate for its women who want their children to call this nation their home?

Non-retroactive Amendment: A Major Concern

The biggest concern regarding the amendment to Article 14(1)(b), Part II, Sections 1(b) and 1(c) of the Second Schedule of the Federal Constitution is its non-retroactive nature. This excludes mothers who have campaigned tirelessly for years, leaving out children whose citizenship applications under [Article 15\(2\)](#) are still pending or have been rejected without explanation. Those overseas who cannot resubmit in Putrajaya and those facing application obstacles are also affected. More importantly, it excludes overseas-born children of Malaysian mothers now over 21 and ineligible to apply, including some whose mothers have passed away, perpetuating historical discrimination.

Ongoing Struggles

While we acknowledge the Ministry of Home Affairs' proactive measures to address the backlog of citizenship applications under Article 15(2), the discretionary nature of this provision and the rejections without reasons make it impossible for all overseas-born children to obtain approvals. For instance, a mother from our network received a rejection for one child's application and an approval for another within three days of each other despite having similar applications.

Additionally, mothers dealing with health issues, custody disputes, single parenthood, and financial strain remain uncertain about their futures. If the amendment is not implemented soon, retroactively and retrospectively, more Malaysian women will face these challenges.

Call to action

We urge the government to consider the counterproposal by the Malaysian Citizenship Rights Alliance (MCRA) to the Citizenship Amendment Bill, which includes suggestions for the proposed amendment. Each day that passes without this constitutional change undermines the rights of Malaysian women and their children. Delaying this further risks denying more overseas born children of Malaysian women citizenship and subjecting them to the unequal impacts of current citizenship laws.

In alignment with MADANI values and Malaysian ideals, our laws should not contribute to the separation and suffering of families. Instead, they should honour the role of mothers in developing future generations and protect their children.

We stand resolute in asking the Government to no longer delay the amendment to Article 14(1)(b), Part II, Sections 1(b) and 1(c) of the Second Schedule of the Federal Constitution and ensure it is applied retroactively. The remaining regressive amendments must be decoupled and halted.

Quotes by concerned Malaysian mothers and a Malaysian youth

1. *We feel disappointed by the continued disregard for the rights of Malaysian mothers and women. In 2024, women constitute half of the voting population and are equal contributors to the economy, yet our treatment by the government remains unequal.*
- Pamela Yeh, a Malaysian mother impacted by the country's unequal citizenship laws.
2. *The MADANI government appears to be trifling with the promise they made to Malaysian women before they were voted in. We were promised equal rights to citizenship. When PM Anwar Ibrahim told the Malaysian diaspora in Berlin earlier this year that "it is done!", we of course assumed that it was! Imagine our disappointment to realize that the amendment is far from done; not only was it drafted to exclude Malaysian women with existing applications for children already born, the second reading of the bill has been postponed. My daughter is now 12, and my son 5; the process for both my children began when they were infants! Malaysian women deserve better, we truly do.*
- Shamila Unnikrishnan, a Malaysian mother impacted by the country's unequal citizenship laws.
3. *The postponement of the constitutional amendment bill on citizenship laws to the next Dewan Rakyat meeting means we must endure another three months of waiting for its crucial debate. The government must address why this critical issue isn't prioritised, leaving affected mothers & children in limbo. Each delay is a setback in the pursuit of justice for those affected.*

"Imagine the heartbreak of future mothers in a land where their children may be denied citizenship despite a lifetime of belonging."

- Aaliyah Danial, a concerned Malaysian youth.

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Submitted by - Association of Family Support & Welfare Selangor & KL (Family Frontiers)