

Journalists must be consulted on press council development

Several journalist groups in Malaysia have come together to urge thorough consultation on the establishment of a press council in Malaysia. The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) welcomes the move by several groups, including IFJ affiliate National Union of Journalists (NUJ), Peninsular Malaysia and echoes its calls that journalists must be consulted in the development phases.



Following the elections in May 2018, the clamps on Malaysia's media have loosened. With consultations starting for a new press council. Credit: Manan VATSYAYANA / AFP

The Malaysian Media Council Journalists Alliance consists of the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) Malaysia, IFJ's affiliate, and other organisations which are Institute of Journalists (IOJ) Malaysia, Gerakan Media Merdeka (GERAMM), Sabah Journalists Association, and Foreign Correspondents Club of Malaysia (FCCM).

In the joint statement on Thursday March 8th, the Alliance said that whilst they welcomed the formation of a media council, the proposal submitted to the government by a group of publishers in the media industry was not made public or shared with all journalists. Aside of that, journalists were also not been invited to take part during the consultative process. Therefore, the journalists cannot endorse any submitted proposal that has not been seen or reviewed in detail by journalists at all levels of the industry.

"We believe it is essential that journalists be involved as they are the largest stakeholders in the media landscape, and have driven the formation of media councils around the world. We also believe that any effort towards the creation of a media council will be futile if it's not in tandem with the repeal and/or amendment of certain repressive laws such as the Printing Presses and Publications Act 1984," the Alliance said.

The Alliance also call on all journalists to participate in their Media Council Survey [online](#). This survey will end on March 31st 2019, and results will be considered heavily in the Alliance's proposal. The Alliance invited others journalists groups which has the similar interest to join by March 31st 2019 and contacting them at geramm.media@gmail.com.

The IFJ said: *"The establishment of a press council in Malaysia is an important step forward in the attempts to strengthen press freedom in the country. However we echo the concerns raised by the Alliance*

regarding the engagement of key stakeholders. Journalists and unions must be engaged and consulted in the process which will ensure a robust council is established that supports Malaysia media."

In 2018 the IFJ visited Malaysia following the elections and published a situation report **Fighting for Media Reform in the 'New Malaysia'** and also published the first **IFJ South East Asia Media Freedom Report - Underneath the Autocrats** which documents working conditions, journalist safety and impunity in Malaysia.

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