

Key events in the history of Suhakam and human rights in Malaysia over the last decade

**Sept 9, 1999**: The Human Rights Commission of Malaysia Act 1999, Act 597 was passed and Suhakam was established.

**April 24, 2000**: Suhakam held its inaugural meeting, under the chairmanship of Tun Musa Hitam.

**Nov 5, 2000**: An opposition protest centred around the KESAS Highway in Selangor was brought to an abrupt end. A Suhakam inquiry later found the police guilty of using excessive force in dispersing the crowd.

**Nov 20, 2000**: Suhakam moved into its current headquarters at Menara Tun Razak, Jalan Raja Laut, Kuala Lumpur.

**March 13, 2001**: Kampung Medan racial clashes result in deaths. A year later, resident V. Subramaniam unsuccessfully sued Suhakam, claiming that it breached its statutory duty by failing to initiate or conduct an inquiry into the incident.

**April 24, 2002**: Tun Musa Hitam stepped down as Suhakam chairman and was replaced by former Attorney-General Tan Sri Abu Talib Othman.

**April 10, 2003**: In an extensive report, Suhakam called for the government to repeal the Internal Security Act.

**July 18, 2005**: Masked thugs attacked the headquarters of the Sky Kingdom, a sect based in Besut, Terengganu. The government proceeded to arrest the sect members.

**May 28, 2006**: The Coalition to Protest Fuel Price Hike (PROTES) held a rally at KLCC that resulted in over 20 arrests and allegations of police brutality. Suhakam conducted a public inquiry and urged that peaceful assemblies should be allowed to proceed without a licence.

**May 30, 2007**: The Federal Court rejected the appeal of Lina Joy, effectively preventing her from leaving the Islamic faith, thus calling into question freedom of religion for Muslims in Malaysia.

**Sep 8, 2007**: Protests in Batu Buruk, Terengganu, resulted in police firing live bullets at protesters. Suhakam announced a public inquiry into the matter, but this was aborted when a number of protesters were charged in the Sessions Court.

**Nov 10, 2007**: A rally by the BERSIH coalition calling for free and fair elections resulted in the arrest of hundreds of protesters.

**Nov 24, 2007**: A rally by the Hindu Rights Action Force (HINDRAF) resulted in police using tear gas and arresting its leaders under the ISA.

**April 23, 2008**: The International Co-ordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights threatened to downgrade Suhakam, criticising its lack of independence from the government.

**May 27, 2008**: Protests at the Bandar Mahkota Cheras Toll, KL, led to a public inquiry. Suhakam later found that there was excessive use of force by law enforcement personnel.

**Jan 20, 2009**: The death of suspected car thief A. Kugan while in police custody stoked public concern over the issue of police brutality.

**July 16, 2009**: The suspicious death of political aide Teoh Beng Hock while in the custody of the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) raised further concerns about human rights violations.