

The Human Rights Committee presents the Direct Talk Series

# Malaysia Has Ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2007: The Progress Now

13 Oct 2021 (Wednesday) | 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm  
This webinar carries 2 CPD points.

Malaysia became a signatory of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities ("CRPD") in 2008, and later ratified it in 2010. The commitment was the impetus for the Persons with Disability ("PWD") Act 2008. Malaysia has made reservations on two main articles of the CPRD, namely Article 15 and Article 18, and it also has not signed the CRPD Optional Protocol.

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The CRPD is intended to protect the rights and dignity of PWDs as full and equal members of society, complete with the human rights that they deserve. Parties to the Convention are required to promote, protect and ensure the human rights of PWDs, and to ensure that they have full rights to equality under the law.

This Direct Talk session, organised by the Bar Council Human Rights Committee ("HRC"), will deal with relevant issues regarding the current situation on human rights of PWDs, and how far the nation has progressed on the rights of the disabled. The Direct Talk session will also deal with important areas that should be improved for PWDs on an immediate basis.

## Speakers

**Bathmavathi Krishnan** has been an active advocate of the rights of PWDs in Malaysia for the last 42 years. She graduated from University of Malaya ("UM") in 1978 and received her Masters in Library Science at Loughborough University in 1981. She served UM Library from 1979 until 2014; her last position being the Head of Database Development Division. She has presented several papers in seminars and conferences both locally and overseas on issues pertaining to disability. Her work also involved the drafting of several memoranda to the Government on the needs of PWDs in Malaysia.



She is the current President of the Association of Women with Disabilities Malaysia, and was a member of the National Council for Persons with Disabilities (2013 to 2016). She was appointed as the first woman Senator representing PWDs at the upper house of the Parliament of Malaysia in November 2013, and served the maximum two terms until 2019.

In June 2020, Bathmavathi was appointed as a Non-Executive Director in the Board of Directors of SOCSO Rehabilitation Centre.

**Meera Samanther** served as the President of the Women's Aid Organisation ("WAO") and as the President of the Association of Women Lawyers ("AWL"). She is presently an Exco Member of AWL.



Meera was responsible in conducting a baseline survey on the working conditions of male and female lawyers in 2014, in particular to look into issues of discrimination and sexual harassment, when she was the President of AWL. Meera is a well-known advocate in the discussion sphere of gender equality issues.

In the late 1990's, Meera was involved in the initial drafting of the Sexual Harassment Bill and again in 2017 when it was redrafted. She was also involved in drafting of the Gender Equality Bill. She is currently part of the six-member team of the Law Reform Group of Harapan OKU that has been redrafting the PWD Act 2008 for the last few years.

Meera was also the Co-Chair of the Law & Policy Sub-Committee of the National Steering Committee on Violence Against Women, which was set up by the Government years back, to look at best practices and recommendations that would be included in the Domestic Violence Act.

Meera represented WAO as part of a six-member non-governmental organisation ("NGO") team in New York in 2006 to present to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women ("CEDAW") Committee, when the Malaysian Government was reporting. CEDAW is a women's convention that Malaysia had ratified to.

Meera sits on an International Advisory Council of the Coalition of Sexual Bodily Rights ("CSBR") that brings together men and women from countries all over the world that discusses, strategises, and lobbies on issues pertaining to the autonomy of women's bodily rights.

Amongst her many strides and breakthroughs for gender equality and women's rights were when she successfully campaigned and effected legislative change by pushing through an amendment made to Article 8 (2) of the Federal Constitution with the backing of the women's rights groups.

**Dr Ikmal Hisham Md Tah** is a senior lecturer in the Faculty of Law, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Shah Alam. He lectures and researches on subjects such as constitutional law, administrative law and public international law with a specific interest in disability rights law. Dr Ikmal has a PhD in Law from the International Islamic University of Malaysia with the thesis titled "Human Rights Approach to Disability within the Malaysian Legal, Policy and Institutional Frameworks." He also holds a Master of Laws (International Law) from the University of Hull, United Kingdom under the UiTM Young Lecturer Scheme scholarship in 2009. He graduated with a Bachelor of Laws (LLB Hons) and Diploma in Public Administration, both from UiTM.



He publishes many articles in books and journals, and has presented papers locally and globally on disability rights issues. Furthermore, he is also actively engaged with various activities and NGOs related to PWDs. He is a panel expert member of Sekretariat Pelaksana Inklusiviti Malaysia ("SPIM"), a think tank group on disability issues, and the legal adviser to Boleh Space, a Twitter community group for disability activists in Malaysia.

**Mohammad Faizal Che Yusof** is an advocate and solicitor, and co-heads the HRC CRPD Disability Rights Working Group. He was admitted as an advocate and solicitor of the High Court of Malaya in April 2001, and continues his legal practice in Kota Bharu, Kelantan. Being blind, Mohammad Faizal understands first-hand the struggles PWDs go through in their daily lives. Despite his disability, he was top in his studies, having won several school and state awards while in school. He is an active member of the HRC and is the voice for PWDs, having organised several forums relating to PWD and the PWD Act 2008.



Mohammad Faizal continues to be active in several societies for the blind and vision-impaired in Malaysia and travels extensively to educate people on the rights of PWDs. The blog "Bangkit OKU" was his brainchild, set up to create awareness on the issues faced by PWDs.

He holds an LL.B (Hons) 2nd class Upper degree from the University of Malaya.

**Amanda Kong Hwei Zhen** was diagnosed with congenital glaucoma at birth, which resulted in vision impairment. At a young age, Amanda aspired to pursue a career in the legal field, as she desired to champion the cause of PWDs in Malaysia.



Amanda was awarded the Outstanding Cambridge Learner Award for the Best Student in the World for Law in 2013 by the University of Cambridge. In 2016, she graduated with a Class 1 LLB (Hons) from the University of Liverpool, United Kingdom. She went on to complete the Certificate of Legal Practice ("CLP") in 2017, and subsequently read in chambers at Skrine. She was admitted as an advocate and solicitor of the High Court of Malaya in 2019.

In line with her passion to champion the cause of PWDs in Malaysia, coupled with her determination to give back to the community, Amanda joined the Make It Right Movement ("MIRM") as a Community Advocate for PWDs in 2019.

Amanda has been involved in conducting and facilitating various internal and external capacity-building and professional development workshops conducted by MIRM, with a particular focus on diversity and inclusion, financial literacy, business management, and life skills. She is frequently invited by the Kuala Lumpur Bar to moderate forums or as a panellist for sessions focusing on diversity and inclusion of PWDs. Amanda works closely with the CEO of MIRM in curating, leading, and managing projects and causes for MIRM's partners and affiliates, geared towards creating a sustained positive impact on the community by championing worthy causes such as B40 alleviation, advancements for refugees and asylum-seekers in Malaysia, mental health support projects, women empowerment, and promotion of child rights and welfare.

**Telagapathi A Marimuthu** co-heads the HRC CRPD Disability Rights Working Group. She was admitted as an advocate and solicitor of the High Court of Malaya in 1998. Her legal practice in Seremban, Negeri Sembilan includes conveyancing, banking, criminal and civil litigation, and labour disputes consultancy. She is an independent and team player with more than 21 years of working experience in local organisations.



Telagapathi has set up her own NGO, Persatuan Kebajikan Wanita Prihatin Malaysia, a grassroots organisation that actively works towards the betterment of society. She actively supports the rights of PWDs and continues to work at ground level to ensure that they receive the necessary attention and care, and that their human rights are upheld and protected.

She is an active member of HRC, and is recognised among Members of the Malaysian Bar for her humanitarian efforts and commitment to human rights.

## Moderator

**Usha Kulasegaran** is a partner at Ranjit, Thomas & Kula. She is the Co-Deputy Chairperson of the HRC, and heads the HRC-ICC (International Criminal Court) Working Group. She serves as an Officer with the International Bar Association ("IBA")'s Access to Justice and Legal Aid Committee, and War Crimes Committee, as well as the IBA's Human Rights Institute.



Usha graduated from the University of Sussex, England. She has an LL.M degree in International Criminal Law and Justice, specialising in the Rome Statute of the ICC. She attended The Hague Academy of International Law (Public International Law) and completed her research attachment on international law at the United Nations in New York. She is a Member of the International Law Association ("ILA"), and has delivered several talks on international criminal law and justice at international events and conferences.

In Kuala Lumpur, Usha is active in criminal litigation, and also assists in legal aid and human rights cases. She does pro bono matters at the local criminal courts.

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Please note that **no** additional registration will be accepted once the closing date is passed, or if the webinar is full.

We may not permit future registration if you fail to attend the webinar after registering, unless you provide an acceptable and valid reason(s).

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Should you have any enquiries, please contact:

**Satha Selvan Subramaniam** (satha@malaysianbar.org.my)

**Eden-Joy Riti Kalom** (eden@malaysianbar.org.my)

**G Shagela Nair** (shegi@malaysianbar.org.my)