



MEDIA RELEASE

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GLOBAL BERSIH MAKES RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OVERSEAS VOTING REFORM

A comprehensive proposal for reform of the voting system for overseas Malaysians was submitted by Global Bersih to the Election Commission (“EC”) and Electoral Reform Committee (“ERC”) earlier this week. The proposal was made to overcome the numerous obstacles faced by overseas voters during the 14th General Elections (GE14), and to propose innovations to the overseas voting process for the future.

The proposal is based on the feedback of overseas Malaysians living in 248 cities worldwide in a survey carried out by Global Bersih in January and February 2019, as well as on discussions with EC, ERC and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Volume One sets out urgent reforms to the existing overseas postal voting system for GE 15, while Volume Two proposes innovative ideas for longer term reforms, beyond GE15.

The main recommendations for GE 15 include:

- Extending the campaign period to 25 days to accommodate the overseas postal voting system.
- Establishing an on-going and uniform overseas voting process to ensure continuity and avoid confusion.
- Redefining the legal status of overseas Malaysian voters to ensure that their right to vote from their country of residence is enshrined in the Election Regulations and no longer subject to the discretion of the EC.
- Including Malaysians residing in Singapore, Brunei, Kalimantan and Southern Thailand in the overseas postal voting system. The report also proposes that the EC should consider extending postal voting to Sabahans and Sarawakians living in West Malaysia, as well as to West Malaysians living in Sabah and Sarawak.
- Tasking a centralized Overseas Voting Office at the EC to handle all matters and queries relating to overseas voting, as well as to communicate to overseas Malaysians on the voting process in collaboration with Akademi Pilihanraya, Malaysian Foreign Missions and Malaysian diaspora civil society groups, such as Global Bersih.

Global Bersih welcomes the amendment of Article 119(1) and 119(4) of the Federal Constitution to implement automatic voters’ registration as it is one of the recommendations that is included in the proposal.

We also recommend that the online registration outlet that was introduced by SPR recently, is optimized and developed to include overseas voters registration.

Innovative methods proposed for consideration in the longer term include having Malaysian Foreign Missions collect overseas postal ballots before sending them to the EC by diplomatic bag, sending printable postal ballots electronically, and e-voting.

The full proposal can be accessed at this link:

<https://www.globalbersih.org/resources/overseas-voting-reform-proposal/>

Global Bersih is an international network of Malaysians living overseas and an endorsing organization of Bersih 2.0, a coalition of 93 Malaysian NGOs. Global Bersih works closely with Bersih 2.0 on international advocacy on electoral reform in Malaysia. It aims to support Malaysian civil society's efforts to strengthen Malaysia's maturing democracy, focusing on electoral reform, human rights and strengthening institutions. Global Bersih is a non-profit organization established under the Swiss Civil Code.

For further information, please contact:

Nirmala Devi Windgaetter
Tel: +49 172 238 9665
Email: contact@globalbersih.org

Global Bersih
10 Rue Dr. Alfred Vincent
1201 Geneva
Switzerland
www.globalbersih.org
facebook.com/GlobalBersih
twitter.com/GlobalBersih

Thomas Fann
Tel: +60 16 702 0011
Email: chairperson@bersih.org

BERSIH 2.0
A-2-8, Pusat Perniagaan 8 Avenue, Jalan
Sungai Jernih 8/1, 46050 Petaling Jaya,
Selangor, Malaysia
www.bersih.org
[facebook.com/BERSIH2.0\[OFFICIAL\]](https://facebook.com/BERSIH2.0[OFFICIAL])
twitter.com/bersih2