



Global Bersih Press Release

5 August 2020

ELECTION COMMISSION SHOULD EXTEND POSTAL VOTING FOR SABAHAN VOTERS LIVING OUTSIDE SABAH

Global Bersih urges the Election Commission to give Sabahan voters living outside Sabah the option of postal voting during the upcoming snap election for the Sabah State Legislative Assembly which will take place 60 days from the date of dissolution. This option should be provided to the many Sabahan voters living in other states in Malaysia, as well as to those residing outside Malaysia, including in neighboring ASEAN countries (Singapore, Brunei, Indonesia, and Southern Thailand)

The Election Commission has an important responsibility to ensure that all Malaysians can, in practice, exercise their constitutional right to vote. Providing the option of postal voting would help address several practical barriers which would prevent many Sabahan voters residing outside Sabah today from exercising their right to vote.

Firstly, given that the country is still in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, obliging Sabahans to travel back to their state to cast their ballot papers will present a health risk for those travelling as well as for those with whom they will come into contact. This would counter the efforts made by health authorities to contain the pandemic by raising the risk of creating new clusters of infected individuals. Secondly, the cost of travel to and back from Sabah represents a financial burden, which will be particularly heavy for those who have experienced loss of income during the MCO period.

Global Bersih would also like to bring the Election Commission's attention to the temporary suspension of the international postal delivery service that was announced by Pos Malaysia on 31st July (<https://bit.ly/2XwH6Wd>), and urge the Election Commission to ensure that the system put into place for Sabahan voters residing out of Sabah is workable and takes into account the problems in the postal system.

We have previously submitted electoral reform proposals along these lines to the Election Commission, including recommendations to allow postal voting for Malaysians residing outside their constituencies and living overseas, including in ASEAN countries. It will continue to play its part in encouraging overseas Malaysians to participate in the electoral process, including for the coming election in Sabah, and urges the Election Commission to facilitate this by expediting the reform efforts to improve the overseas voting registration system.

Global Bersih would also like to encourage Malaysians to sign an online petition urging EC to allow postal voting for Sabahans living in Sarawak and Peninsular which was endorsed by Bersih 2.0:

<https://www.change.org/p/suruhanjaya-pilihan-raja-malaysia-benarkan-pengundi-sabah-di-sarawak-dan-semenanjung-malaysia-untuk-mengundi-pos>



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