

# Our Story

**Sisters in Islam (SIS) is a non-governmental organisation working towards advancing the rights of Muslim women in Malaysia.**

SIS was founded in 1988 by a group of Muslim women who came together to address the injustice women face under the Shariah (Islamic law) system. Our critical reading of the Al-Quran through a hermeneutical approach opened a world of Islam that we could recognise: a world for women that was filled with love and mercy, and with equality and justice.

By the end of the 1990s, SIS activism had expanded beyond the specific issues of women's rights, into the larger issue of upholding democratic principles and fundamental liberties as guaranteed by the Federal Constitution and human rights treaties and conventions. It was thus that SIS began to take public positions on freedom of religion and freedom of expression.

Today, SIS plays a key role in the local and international women's movement by providing input in understanding Islam from a rights-based perspective, advocacy strategies and networking, and is at the forefront of an emerging Muslim women's movement to push for reform both in the understanding of Islam and also to influence laws and policies enacted by Muslim governments or groups within minority Muslim communities.

## Advocacy

SIS main advocacy is Law and Policy Reform. We have engaged with policy makers, media, NGOs and grassroots women's groups. We have formed coalitions and conducted campaigns to improve laws and policies and raise public awareness on range of issues such as matters fall under the Islamic Family Law i.e. polygamy, equal right to guardianship of children and others such as moral policing, hudud law, freedom of religion and freedom of expression.

## Research

Research has formed the basis of SIS' arguments for legal reform, the introduction of new policies, and challenges to statements made in the name of Islam that discriminate against women and violate the ethical teachings of the religion. Research has also served SIS directly in its advocacy. In 2006, SIS engaged in two major on-going research projects in the areas of Muslim family law reform and on the impact of polygamy on family life.

In addition, SIS has embarked on a global Islamic Family law reform research and advocacy project. Called **MUSAWAH**, this global movement for equality and justice in the Muslim family was launched in February 2009. In 2014, SIS in partnership with ARROW embarked on a research project 'Religious Fundamentalisms and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in the Global South'. Title of the research paper 'is National report on Malaysia. Child Marriage: its Relationship with Religion, Culture, and Patriarchy'. The project was completed in April 2018.

## Outreach & Empowerment

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## Legal advisory

SIS provides free legal advisory services to women and men on their legal rights under the Islamic Family Law and the Syari'ah Criminal Offences Law. Our legal clinic which is called **Telenisa** operates every Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 10:00am to 5:00pm (except for public holidays).