



NUMAN AFIFI

Born: 30 April 1991, in Penang, Malaysia

Organisations: Pelangi, Jejaka

Numan Afifi is a Malaysian activist and community organiser. He is the founder of the Pelangi human rights campaign and also an organisation called Jejaka, a group for gay, bi and queer male youth.

Both are of huge importance to LGBTQ+ people in Afifi's homeland, where both the colonial-era law against sodomy and Sharia law criminalise gay sex. Punishments include caning, fines and jail sentences of up to 20 years.

In 2018, Afifi resigned from his role as press aide to Malaysia's then Youth and Sports Minister, Syed Saddiq, after just a week, following threats related to him being gay and an activist, all arising from public and media pressure whipped up by opposition forces.

"I had to leave the office as a result of prejudice and discrimination which shows that there's still a long way to go for LGBTQ+ people in politics and in sport. We had an agenda to have more inclusion in youth programming but my mandate was cut short, as the first openly gay man in public service in Malaysia." (The Pride House Podcast, May 2022)



The Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM) described Afifi's forced resignation as "extremely troubling", and he returned to activism.

In March 2019, he gave a speech to the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva in which he read out a statement from Malaysian LGBTIQ+ organisations that was critical of the country's human rights record.

A smear campaign against him was orchestrated by pro-government groups and on his return to Kuala Lumpur, Afifi was summoned for questioning by police which he described as "intimidation".

With his organisations, he continues to campaign for LGBTQ+ rights against a worsening political backdrop.

"There's a lot of hateful rhetoric [in Malaysia]... and the government has not done anything to curtail hate speech, even though they say that Malaysia upholds human rights. An election is set to happen soon, and we're seeing more hate speech and most of it is perpetrated by politicians themselves." (The Pride House Podcast, May 2022)

Image credit

<https://twitter.com/NumanAfifi/status/1046745889891528704>
@NumanAfifi, October 2018