



## Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

February 5, 2014

The Rev. Dr. Hermen Shastri  
General Secretary  
Council of Churches of Malaysia

Dear Dr. Shastri and Friends among the Churches of Malaysia,

It is with great sadness that we continue to witness the burden you bear in the controversy in Malaysia over the use of the word "Allah."

As we know, Christian communities in the Muslim world, and those in countries where Arabic words permeate local languages, have always used Allah as the name of God. This is not just a matter of faith, but also a reality of history and language.

In light of this, the raid by officers from the Selangor State Islamic Department (JAIS), accompanied by the police, on the premises of the Bible Society of Malaysia (BSM) on 2 January, 2014, seizing 320 copies of Bahasa Malaysia Bibles, together with 10 copies of Bibles in the Iban language, over the name of Allah brought renewed attention to the unique problem faced by Christians in Malaysia.

What is particularly disturbing about this incident is how it violates Malaysia's own constitution, in which Article 11 sets out the freedom of religion. The JAIS actions, aided and abetted by the police, are further breaches of the Malaysian government's 10-point solution announced in April 2011 which stated that Christians can import, print and distribute the Al-Kitab under certain conditions, all of which have been complied with by BSM.

This confiscation of Bibles and continued threats against individuals who advocate for the use of "Allah" are a blatant and aggressive attack on the moral and multi-cultural fabric of Malaysian society which values inter-communal harmony and utmost respect for the sanctity of all religious beliefs and books. We pray the Malaysian federal government will continue to ensure that the rights of the Christian community under the Federal Constitution, which is the supreme law of the land, not be violated.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America stands with the Christian community of Malaysia, together with all Malaysian citizens who stand for justice and the freedom of religious belief and expression. May you find strength in your faith and commitment to justice in all lands.

Sincerely,

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton  
Presiding Bishop

Cc: The Rev. Aaron Yap, Bishop, Lutheran Church in Malaysia  
The Rev. Dr. Lip Tet Thomas Tsen, Bishop, Basel Christian Church of Malaysia  
The Rev. Dr. Solomon Rajah, Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malaysia  
The Rev. Jensey Mojuin, President, The Protestant Church in Sabah