

16 October 2018

Attn:

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)  
Palais Wilson  
52 rue des Pâquis  
CH-1201 Geneva, Switzerland.

Dear High Commissioner,

Please refer below for a joint letter of complaint submitted to the Law Society of Singapore in May 2018, by a group of parents affected by divorce in Singapore.

This issue concerns the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, of which Singapore has been a signatory since 1995.

**It has come to our attention that thousands of children are being abused in the divorce process in Singapore, and many lose contact with one biological parent after the divorce.**

**A disproportionate number of young children from separated families also suffer serious physical and sexual abuse inflicted by a step-parent or a family friend.**

This is a national (and possibly global) crisis. We would like to urge the UN to delve deeper into this issue and encourage serious reform of the family law system in Singapore and around the world.

Please let us know if you require more information and the next steps.

Thank you.

Family Justice Reform SG

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16 May 2018

Law Society of Singapore  
39 South Bridge Road  
Singapore 058673

**Attention: Head, Conduct Department**

Dear Sir / Madam,

**JOINT COMPLAINT UNDER SECTION 85(1) OF THE LEGAL PROFESSION ACT**

1. We are a group of parents who have been or are currently affected by divorce and/or other proceedings in the Family Justice Courts. It has come to our knowledge and attention that a sizeable number of your Members within the Family Law Practice are engaging in unethical, dishonest and abusive tactics while representing their clients in these proceedings.
2. This joint complaint is being made against the named, non-exhaustive list of family lawyers – listed in **ANNEX B** – for **professional misconduct under Section 85(1) of the**

**Legal Profession Act**, and for “conduct that is below the standards expected of a lawyer as a member of an honourable profession” (as stated on the Law Society’s website).

3. The list of unethical, dishonest and abusive tactics adopted by these family lawyers include, but is not limited to:

**a. Instigating child abduction, emotional and psychological abuse and parental alienation**

Signatories to this complaint have been victims of child abduction, child abuse and/or parental alienation. Parents contemplating divorce have been instigated by the named lawyers to abduct children and deny the other parent access – to foment conflict and gain advantage in divorce and other proceedings. Such alienation tactics, which often continue post-divorce, subject children to tremendous psychological and emotional abuse, and deprives them of the protective buffer of a quality relationship with the alienated parent. Such behaviour is clearly contrary to “conduct expected of a member of an honourable profession”.

**b. Gross overcharging and unethical billing practices**

Family lawyers currently charge extortionary rates for divorce and other related proceedings, ranging from a few thousand dollars to over \$100,000. They even charge for reading emails and answering phone calls. Other tactics include demanding money whenever a court filing deadline was approaching and threatening to discharge themselves if their demands were not met. It is deeply concerning that some committee members of the Law Society’s Family Law Practice have publicly expressed their support for such extortionary practices and unethical charges.

**c. Dishonesty and misrepresentation**

Most of, if not all, the parents who are signatories to this complaint have encountered dishonest behavior by family lawyers. These include outright lying, misrepresenting their client’s positions, misrepresenting their client’s legal position, making misleading statements, instigating clients to exaggerate or make up events, and acting in cahoots with other family lawyers to perpetuate conflict between parties in divorce. Such dishonest and unethical behavior not only take advantage of families at a time of great vulnerability, but also prevents amicable settlement and perverts the course of justice.

**d. Perverting justice**

As solicitors well-versed with court processes and legal sophistry, some of the named family lawyers have sought to use their privileged information to hoodwink their clients and unrepresented Singaporeans into making decisions which are against their interests. Some of the signatories to this complaint have been threatened with lawsuits by family lawyers or forced to sign consent agreements under duress, including giving up matrimonial assets, care and control or access rights to their children. Such acts have an undue effect of perverting the course of justice and cause a miscarriage of family justice.

**e. Abuse of court process and the family justice system**

The above actions to prolong disputes and encourage litigation adds unnecessary burden to the family court system. More crucially, divorcing parties and their children become victims to these appalling and abusive tactics, often with lasting adverse consequences on the family. The combination of tactics and behavior described above are certainly not isolated events but orchestrated ones instigated by family lawyers. They represent a significant abuse of Singapore’s family justice system.

4. We call on the **Law Society**, the **Family Justice Court** and the **Ministry of Law** to take firm action against these named family lawyers – to put an immediate stop to these unethical, dishonest and abusive practices which are rampant in the family court system.

5. We also call on the **Government and related agencies** to undertake a fundamental review of Singapore’s family justice framework to ensure that it protects the welfare and interests of families in Singapore, and delivers positive outcomes for children and families caught in divorce.

6. As some of the signatories to this letter have ongoing family court proceedings, a redacted list of the names and signatures of the affected parents can be found in **ANNEX A** below.

7. For the purpose of correspondence, please contact the below-named:

[Redacted]

By the undersigned in **Annex A**,

**ANNEX A – PARENTS WHO SUPPORT THIS JOINT COMPLAINT**

[7 signatories - Redacted]

**ANNEX B – LIST OF FAMILY LAWYERS WHO ARE SUBJECT OF COMPLAINT (NON-EXHAUSTIVE)**

[Redacted]