

# New fatwa aimed at protecting wives

Perlis panel: Women can leave without hubby's consent if they feel threatened

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**PETALING JAYA:** Muslim wives can leave the marital home without the permission of the husband if they feel threatened or their lives are at risk, ruled the Perlis Fatwa Committee.

It was responding to cases where abused women did not leave for fear of going against the religion.

According to the fatwa (religious edict) approved this month, the committee ruled that the women can leave if they strongly believe that life, faith, honour, family or property was in danger.

"This is the last resort and should be allowed when the wife feels that there is no other way to solve the problem," the committee said in a statement yesterday.

It said that the wives could also leave their homes if their husbands had failed to carry out their duty to provide a safe and appropriate place to live, or failed to provide enough *nafkah* (maintenance) for them.

"The wife can leave without her husband's permission and this will not be considered *nusyuz* (unreasonable disobedience) until the husband can fulfil his responsibilities," it added.

When contacted, Perlis Mufti Datuk Dr Asri Zainul Abidin said that many Muslim wives continued to endure abuse at the hands of their husbands who would claim that Islam forbids wives to leave even when faced with threats.

"We see many women being victimised. They have been misinformed that they cannot leave their homes for any reason.

"Their marriages are akin to being in prison.

"The purpose of this fatwa is to protect wives," he told The Star Online yesterday.

Dr Asri said that wives could also leave if their husbands were taking illegal drugs, had a sexually-related disease or had borrowed money from Ah Long.