

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER FOR HOME AFFAIRS

On 18 Oct 2010, DPM Wong informed this House of what Mas Selamat had said about how he got out of the Whitley Road Detention Centre (WRDC) on 27 Feb 2008. The account given by Mas Selamat was consistent with the findings of the Committee of Inquiry (COI).

2 Investigations into what Mas Selamat did after he escaped from WRDC are still in progress. He has not been entirely forthcoming and has changed his story several times. In some instances, whether his accounts are completely truthful cannot be fully verified. Today, I will update the House on the findings that the investigators have verified through independent corroboration.

Took shelter with brother's family

3 Mas Selamat escaped from WRDC on 27 Feb 2008.

Two days later, on 29 Feb 2008, he made his way to his brother Asmom's home in Tampines to seek shelter and assistance from his grown-up niece, Nur Aini bte Asmom. Mas Selamat thought that Nur Aini was living alone. He believed that Asmom and his wife were living in their house in Johor while Asmom's son (i.e. Mas Selamat's nephew), Mahadir, was overseas. Mas Selamat believed that it would be safe for him at Asmom's house as only Nur Aini would be there and that she would render assistance to him.

4 However, Asmom, his wife Aisah, their daughter Nur Aini and son Mahadir were all living in Asmom's home. They have all independently admitted to the fact that Mas Selamat had stayed overnight in their home between 29 Feb and 1 Mar 2008. Asmom, Aisah and Nur Aini have also admitted that they had harboured Mas Selamat, providing him with shelter, food, money and clothes.

5 I will set out their respective roles in harbouring and aiding Mas Selamat on those two days.

Nur Aini

6 Nur Aini had let Mas Selamat into the flat. Her mother Aisah had reservations about allowing Mas Selamat into the flat because by that time, his escape two days earlier and fugitive status were very public and she knew that it was wrong to help him. Nur Aini, however, persuaded her mother to allow Mas Selamat to enter the flat. She gave him use of her bedroom, provided him food and water, and also assisted him by destroying material evidence, namely the clothing he wore to the flat, which included his WRDC-issued attire.

7 On 1 Mar 2008, before Mas Selamat left the flat, Nur Aini applied make-up on Mas Selamat and secured a tudung (headscarf) over his head so that he could disguise himself as a woman to evade detection and recapture. She also gave him several items, which included a set of clothes to wear, a baseball cap, water, a snack, an illumination stick, air-tight resealable plastic bags to pack the items, and a backpack which he used to store all the items. At Mas Selamat's request, she also handed to him a map of Singapore that showed part of

Malaysia.

Asmom

8 Asmom jointly owned the flat with his wife Aisah. He found out about Mas Selamat's presence in the flat when he returned from work in the early hours of 1 Mar 2008. He knew it was wrong to harbour Mas Selamat, but eventually decided to allow Mas Selamat to stay in his flat.

9 Before Mas Selamat left the flat on 1 Mar 2008, Asmom gave him S\$100 and RM100 to facilitate his escape from

Singapore to Malaysia. He also gave Mas Selamat some traditional medicine which the latter kept in his backpack.

Aisah

10 Aisah is joint-owner of the flat with Asmom. She was initially reluctant to allow Mas Selamat to enter the flat on 29 Feb. But she nevertheless subsequently went along and helped Mas Selamat. She gave him an EZ-link card and hair-net which he wore as part of his disguise, and some paracetamol.
Mahadir

11 Mahadir had returned home to the flat on the night of 29 February and became aware that his family members were harbouring Mas Selamat in their flat. He did not report the matter to the authorities. However, neither did he render any specific assistance to Mas Selamat, and nor was he in the flat most of the time when Mas Selamat was taking refuge in it.

12 The independent accounts of Mas Selamat, Asmom, Aisah, Nur Aini and Mahadir of what took place in Asmom's flat and the assistance rendered to Mas Selamat are consistent.
Information still under investigation

13 As to how Mas Selamat made his way to Asmom's flat and how he subsequently made his way to Malaysia, the account given by Mas Selamat is still subject to verification. It would hence not be productive to set it out at this time.
Offence Committed by Asmom and family

14 Asmom, Aisah and Nur Aini had knowingly harboured Mas Selamat, an escaped prisoner of the State, who they knew was the subject of a massive manhunt. Even after Mas Selamat left their flat on the evening of 1 Mar 2008, they did not reveal information concerning Mas Selamat to the authorities. On the contrary, they deliberately withheld the information when they were interviewed by the authorities on 3 Mar 2008. It was only in Oct 2010, after being confronted with the facts, that Asmom, Aisah, Nur Aini and Mahadir admitted to what had happened. Asmom's and his family's decision to harbour Mas Selamat and provide him with material support that enabled him to escape to Malaysia was very wrong, illegal, and had grave security implications.

15 Mas Selamat is a hardened and dangerous terrorist, who has been involved in various plots by the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) to mount terrorist attacks in Singapore since the 1990s. He is operationally trained and has undergone training not once but twice in Al-Qaeda camps in Afghanistan. After the Singapore

authorities disrupted the Singapore JI network in Dec 2001 and averted the terrorist plot to conduct simultaneous truck bomb attacks in Singapore, Mas Selamat plotted to mount retaliatory attacks against Singapore. Harboring Mas Selamat and assisting him to escape from Singapore placed Singapore's and Singaporeans' security in serious jeopardy as Mas Selamat would thereby be able to resume his terrorist activities of attacking Singapore.

Criminal Offence Committed

16 The Government had stated in Parliament on 28 Feb 2008 that anyone who rendered assistance to Mas Selamat would be committing a "grave offence".

17 Nur Aini, Asmom and Aisah were arrested and charged on 10 Nov 2010 under Section 130 of the Penal Code for their roles in knowingly harbouring Mas Selamat, a prisoner of State. The three have pleaded guilty to the charges and were convicted and sentenced on 18 Nov 2010.

18 For their actions, Nur Aini, Asmom and Aisah have been sentenced to 18 months, 12 months and 3 months of imprisonment, respectively. Mahadir, who had a lesser role in the matter, has been served a stern warning in lieu of prosecution.

19 Singaporeans will be understandably disappointed that Asmom and his family had helped Mas Selamat in his escape. Their actions are not a reflection on the wider Malay-Muslim community who had disapproved of Mas Selamat's deeds, and participated in the manhunt for him in 2008. We should therefore not allow this episode to affect the trust and goodwill that has been built up over the years between our different communities. Instead, this episode should reinforce how important it is for every Singaporean to unite together and assist the security agencies to overcome the threat of terrorism from a small number of persons in our society.