

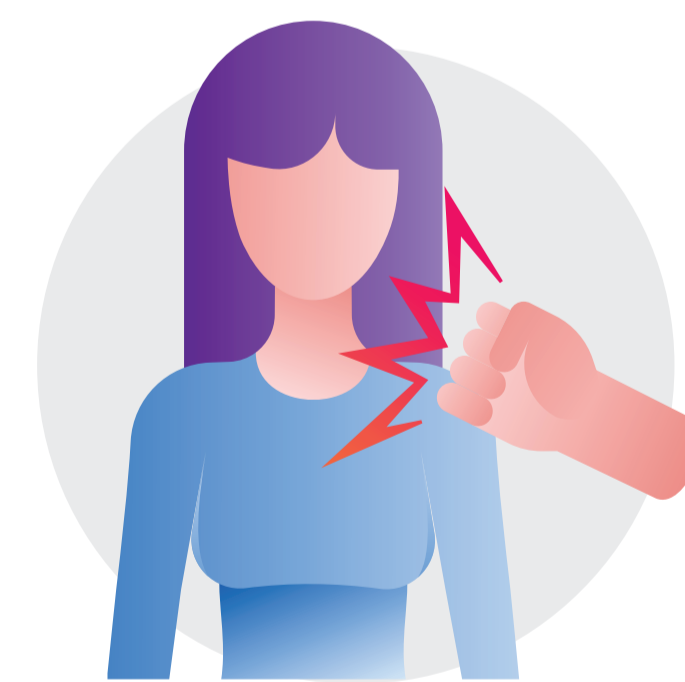
PROTECTION FROM HARASSMENT COURT

Putting victims first for more effective redress

The Protection from Harassment Court (PHC) was established on 1 June 2021 as a specialised Court dedicated to dealing with harassment matters. It has oversight of all criminal and civil cases under the Protection from Harassment Act (POHA) and provides victims of harassment with more effective and holistic recourse.

The establishment of the PHC, along with synergistic amendments to the POHA, brought about several improvements to our judicial regime to provide more effective redress against acts of harassment. Chief among these was the adoption of simplified processes for applications for Protection Orders (POs) and orders relating to falsehoods. Under the simplified track, litigants can file claims online through the State Courts' Community Justice and Tribunals System without having to travel to filing bureaux.

Other improvements to enhance protection for victims were also made through amendments to the POHA on 1 June 2021:



- (a) Where a respondent has been convicted of any POHA- or hurt-related offence against the victim, the requirement for the victim to show that a POHA provision has been contravened before his or her application for a PO is granted will be deemed satisfied. This simplifies the PO application process for the victim.



- (b) PHC judges who grant Expedited Protection Orders (EPOs) are required to consider whether a criminal investigation is warranted and if so, to refer the case to the police for investigation. This removes the need for the victim to separately file a Magistrate's Complaint to seek the Court's directions for the police to investigate into the alleged harassment act.



- (c) Where a PO is made, the PHC may make a Mandatory Treatment Order (MTO) requiring the respondent to undergo psychiatric treatment. As the MTO would be made where the PHC has reasonable grounds to believe that the respondent's psychiatric condition was a contributing factor to the contravention which led to the PO, the MTO would address the issue at source.



- (d) The seriousness of breaching a PO or EPO has been underscored through making such breaches arrestable offences in certain scenarios, such as where hurt is caused.



- (e) The protection that POs and EPOs could give to persons related to the victim has been extended. To better protect victims residing in the same residence as the harasser, it has also been made clear that domestic exclusion orders can be granted as part of a PO.



Using the State Courts' Community Justice and Tribunals System, victims of harassment can simply file their claims online instead of having to file documents in person.

A group of specialist judicial officers and court administrators hears and deals with cases filed in the PHC, to facilitate efficient and fair resolution of such disputes.

The establishment of the PHC has improved access to justice for litigants. This can be seen from an increase of over 300% in the average number of POHA applications per month from June to December 2021, compared with the average from January to May 2021 before the PHC was set up.

With the experience and knowledge gained from the first year of the PHC's operations, the State Courts will continue working with relevant stakeholders to enhance the regime for protection for victims of harassment.

Our People

Therapeutic Justice

Trust & Confidence

Strengthening
Partnerships

Developing
Our Capability

Connecting With
The Community