

## **Wear White To Protest Singapore Pink Gay Rally, Religious Groups Say**

**Rujun Shen**

**Reuters**, June 24, 2014

Some Christians have joined Muslims in Singapore urging followers to wear white this weekend in protest at the sixth annual "Pink Dot" gay rights rally, which attracted a record 21,000 people last year.

Singapore is seeing growing anger over issues ranging from immigration and rising living costs to gay rights – all in a country where dissent is actively discouraged and political gatherings require a permit regardless of how many people are involved.

Last year's Pink Dot rally was held just months after the High Court rejected a petition to repeal a law which criminalizes sex between men.

Ustaz Noor Deros, a Muslim teacher, launched the WearWhite movement last week, urging Muslims not to take part in the Pink Dot event on Saturday, and to wear white garments to prayers on that night as they usher in the holy month of Ramadan. Its Facebook page has attracted more than 3,000 "Likes".

"The movement's genesis was from our observations of the growing normalization of LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) in Singapore," the WearWhite website says.

That movement has been joined by Lawrence Khong, head of the Faith Community Baptist Church, and the LoveSingapore network of churches. He encouraged members of his church to wear white at this weekend's services.

Khong said that WearWhite movement was meant to defend the official position of the government.

"We cannot and will not endorse homosexuality. We will continue to resist any public promotion of homosexuality as an alternative lifestyle," Khong said in a Facebook posting.

The majority of Singaporeans appear to be against same-sex marriage, even as Pink Dot has seen growing support since it began in 2009 and attracted corporate sponsors including BP, Goldman Sachs and Google.

A study by the Institute of Policy Studies released at the start of this year found that 78.2 percent of Singaporeans felt sexual relations between two adults of the same sex was always or almost always wrong, and 72.9 percent of them were against gay marriage.

Singapore government ministers have called for restraint amid growing support for the WearWhite movement, though human rights activists say there should be clearer condemnation of discrimination.

"The state needs to come in and take on a clearer role from a legal perspective," said Braema Mathi, president of MARUAH, a human rights group.