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International Christian Concern (17.12.2020) - <https://bit.ly/39k5vmS> - The High Court in Malaysia will finally deliver its decision in January 2021, after a Christian woman filed a lawsuit 12 years ago to seek official recognition of her religious freedom.

The native of Sarawak, Jill Ireland Lawrence Bill, filed a lawsuit against the government over her constitutional rights to freely practice religion and to non-discrimination, as well as the government's ban of the word "Allah" in Christian publications in August 2008.

Upon Jill Ireland's return from Indonesia in May 2008, the Home Ministry seized eight compact discs (CDs) which contained the word "Allah" at the Kuala Lumpur airport, although these were only meant for her personal use. Historically, the Malaysian government has banned non-Muslims from using "Allah" as God. Any non-Muslim religious publications containing the word "Allah," if found, risk confiscation.

In July 2014, the High Court had determined that the Home Ministry should not have seized the CDs and ordered their return to Jill Ireland. Yet the court did not address the constitutional points in the lawsuit. While the CDs were returned to Jill Ireland in September 2015, the constitutional issues in her case were deferred a few times and were only dealt with since 2017.

According to Malay Mail, she is seeking several court orders, including a declaration that it is her constitutional right to have access to Christian publications in exercising her rights to practice religion and right to education. She also argues that banning of the word "Allah" in Christian publications is unconstitutional and unlawful, stating that the government has failed to prove such use was a threat to public order.

More than 60 per cent of Malaysian Christians speak Bahasa Malaysia, and the word used for God in the Bahasa Malaysia Bible (Al-Kitab) since its translation in 1731, has been "Allah." Malay-speaking Christians in South-East Asia have also used "Allah" to refer to God as early as 1514.