

## Seeking Recourse from Harassment: Process of Action in the POHA Tribunal

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### I. Introduction

- 1 Criminal and civil cases under the Protection from Harassment Act (“**POHA**”) are often dealt with under the Protection from Harassment Court (“**PHC**”). Established in June 2021 pursuant to the Protection from Harassment (Amendment) Act 2019, the PHC was enacted to make it easier for the layman to seek recourse when dealing with harassment incidents (both online and offline).<sup>2</sup>
- 2 In harassment cases, time is of the essence. A quick response is important to minimise widespread implications for the victim and, in some instances, safeguard the victim from further harm. The PHC plays a vital role in providing an accessible, expedited route of legal recourse.
- 3 This piece seeks to provide a practical overview of the process of commencing a claim under POHA. Depending on the claim, this can take place in the PHC, Family Courts (“**FC**”), and/or the Magistrate’s Court.<sup>3</sup> It begins with the two preliminary steps a prospective applicant should work through before filing: *first*, assessing whether the conduct engages an eligible ground under POHA (Part II) and *second*, identifying the remedies available and deciding which to seek (Part III). It then sets out the key steps for commencing a claim in the PHC (Part IV).

### II. Preliminary step 1: Assessing eligibility of the claim to be heard in the PHC

#### Figure 1

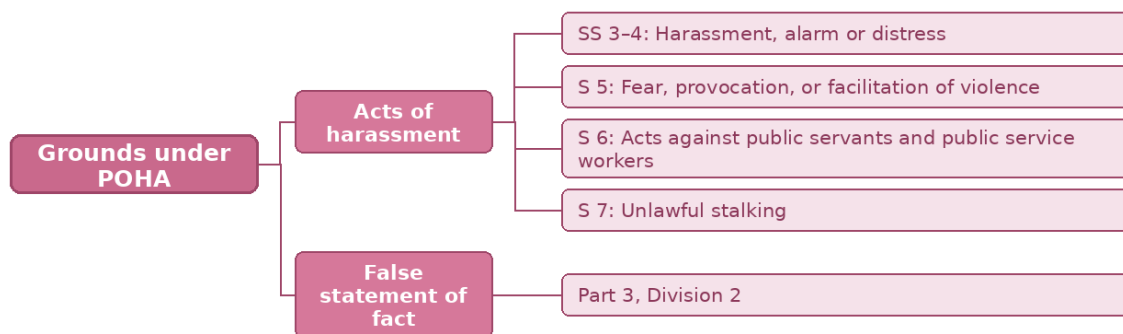
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<sup>2</sup> *Singapore Parliamentary Debates, Official Report* (7 May 2019), vol 94 (Edwin Tong Chun Fai, Senior Minister of State for Law).

<sup>3</sup> See POHA s 16G.

### Preliminary Step 1: Assessing Eligibility of the Claim (Grounds Under POHA)



4 The PHC can only hear cases that engage one of the statutory grounds under POHA (see Figure 1). Either civil<sup>4</sup> or criminal<sup>5</sup> actions can be commenced on these same grounds. However, the applicable standard of proof differs. Civil actions require the court to be satisfied on the balance of probabilities, while criminal actions require proof beyond reasonable doubt. The remedies for civil versus criminal actions also differ (see Part III).

5 Breaches of sections 3 to 7 also apply where the acts are directed at persons “related” to the applicant. A “related” person is someone about whose safety or well-being the applicant would reasonably be expected to be seriously concerned.<sup>6</sup>

#### A. *POHA sections 3 to 7: Acts of Harassment*

##### (1) *POHA sections 3-4: Acts causing harassment, alarm or distress*

6 For claims under sections 3 and 4, the conduct must first involve one of the following acts:

- a. using threatening, abusing, insulting, sexual or indecent words or behaviour;
- b. making any threatening, abusive, insulting, sexual or indecent communication; or
- c. publishing any identity information of the target person or someone related to the target person.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Protection from Harassment Act 2014 (2020 Rev Ed) (“POHA”) s 11.

<sup>5</sup> POHA s 3(2), s 4(2), s 5(2), s 6(3), s 7(2).

<sup>6</sup> POHA s 2.

<sup>7</sup> “Identity information” means any information that identifies or purports to identify an individual: POHA s 2.

(a) Section 3: Intentionally causing harassment, alarm or distress

- 7 Section 3 applies if the above conduct is carried out with the **intention to cause** harassment, alarm or distress to the victim and, as a result, causes harassment, alarm or distress to the victim or another person.<sup>8</sup> What amounts to “harassment, alarm or distress” or “threatening, abusing or insulting” communication is determined according to the common-sense meaning of those words.<sup>9</sup>

(b) Section 4: Perceived harassment, alarm or distress

- 8 Unlike section 3, section 4 does not require intention and would apply so long as the aforementioned conduct is heard, seen, or otherwise perceived by any person likely to be caused harassment, alarm, distress or humiliation.<sup>10</sup>

(2) *POHA section 5: Acts causing fear, provocation or facilitation of violence*

- 9 Section 5 applies where:

- a) threatening, abusive or insulting communication<sup>11</sup>
- b) is made with the intention to either
  - i. cause the victim to believe that unlawful violence will be used against them, or
  - ii. provoke the use of unlawful violence by the victim or another person against any other person,<sup>12</sup> and
- c) the victim must also be likely to believe that such violence will be used or provoked accordingly.<sup>13</sup>

(3) *POHA section 6: Acts against a public servant and public service workers*

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<sup>8</sup> POHA s 3(1).

<sup>9</sup> *Benber Dayao Yu v Jacter Singh* [2017] 5 SLR 316 at [31].

<sup>10</sup> POHA s 4(1).

<sup>11</sup> POHA s 5(1).

<sup>12</sup> POHA s 5(1)(a).

<sup>13</sup> POHA s 5(1)(b).

10 Section 6 applies to conduct towards public officers specifically. It applies where indecent, threatening, abusive, insulting, sexual or indecent words, behaviour or communication are used towards public servants<sup>14</sup> or public service workers in relation to the execution of their duty,<sup>15</sup> if done:

- (a) with the intent to prevent or deter them from carrying out those duties; or
- (b) in consequence of anything done in the lawful discharge of those duties.<sup>16</sup>

(4) *POHA section 7: Unlawful stalking*

11 Unlawful stalking is prohibited by section 7, when the following elements are satisfied:

- (a) There was a course of conduct involving acts or omissions associated with stalking;
- (b) which caused harassment, alarm, distress or humiliation to the victim; and
- (c) the offender either intended to cause harassment, alarm or distress or humiliation to the victim or knew or ought reasonably to know that the conduct was likely to do so.<sup>17</sup>

12 Examples include following the victim or related person, loitering near their home and keeping them under surveillance.<sup>18</sup> In determining whether there is a “course of conduct”, the court may consider factors such as the frequency, duration and circumstances of the conduct.<sup>19</sup> A single episode suffices if the offending conduct persists for longer than would “reasonably be considered sensible in the circumstances”<sup>20</sup> – for example, a singular occasion of following an individual around for several hours.<sup>21</sup>

**B. *POHA Part 3: False statements of fact***

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<sup>14</sup> See POHA s 6(5); “public servants” is defined in the Penal Code 1971, which includes, but is not limited to, officers in the Singapore Armed Forces, judicial officers and officers of the government.

<sup>15</sup> See POHA s 6(5) and Protection from Harassment (Public Service Worker) Order 2014; “public service workers” is defined as individuals who belong to a prescribed class of employees or workers that provide any service which is essential to the wellbeing of the public or the proper functioning of Singapore, including healthcare professionals employed by MOH and public transport officials.

<sup>16</sup> POHA s 6(1).

<sup>17</sup> POHA s 7(2).

<sup>18</sup> POHA s 7(3).

<sup>19</sup> POHA s 7(5).

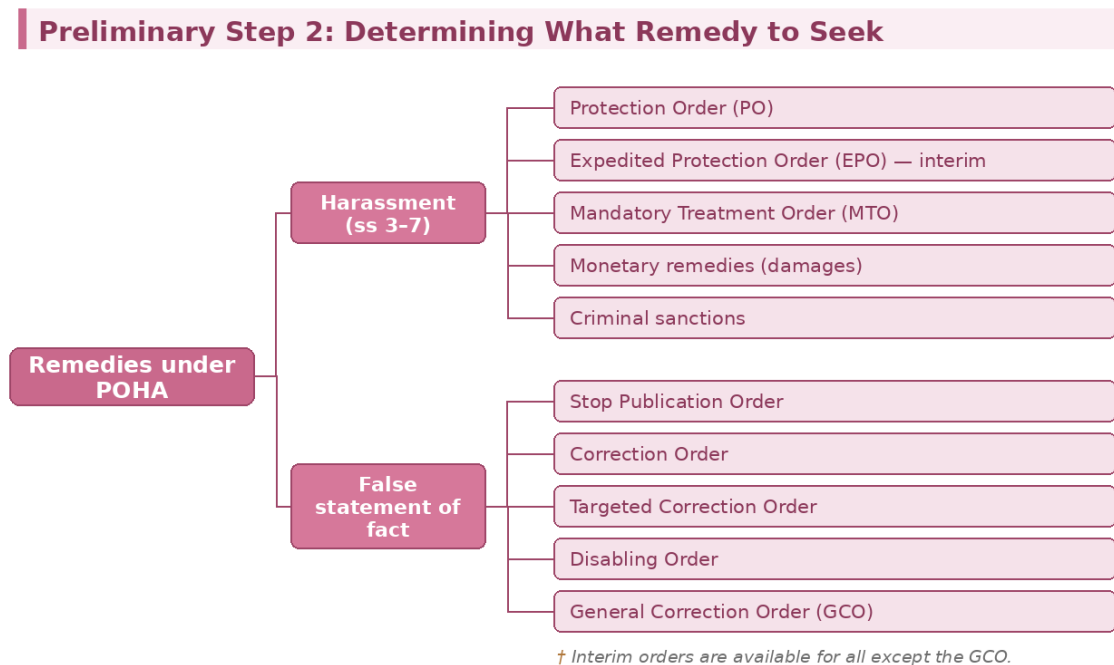
<sup>20</sup> *Lee Shing Chan v Public Prosecutor and another appeal* [2020] 4 SLR 1174 at [21].

<sup>21</sup> *Lee Shing Chan v Public Prosecutor and another appeal* [2020] 4 SLR 1174 at [23].

- 13 False statements of fact are also caught under POHA.<sup>22</sup> A false statement of fact is one which a reasonable person would regard as a representation of fact and which is false or misleading – whether wholly or partly, and whether on its own or context.<sup>23</sup> However, making a false statement of fact is not a criminal offence; only civil remedies may be sought in relation to them.<sup>24</sup>

### III. Preliminary step 2: Deciding the remedy to be sought

Figure 2



- 14 For acts of harassment under sections 3 to 7, where criminal action is brought against the alleged harasser and they are found guilty, the court can impose punishments including fines, imprisonment, and community orders (where appropriate).<sup>25</sup> Where a

<sup>22</sup> POHA Part 3, Division 2.

<sup>23</sup> POHA s 2(2).

<sup>24</sup> POHA s 2(2).

<sup>25</sup> POHA s 9.

civil suit is brought instead, monetary remedies may be awarded where the court considers it just and equitable.<sup>26</sup>

- 15 Non-monetary civil remedies are available against both acts of harassment and false statements. These remedies come in two forms – final and interim.
- 16 Final orders are made at the end of the application and remain in force after the court proceedings end. Interim orders provide only temporary protection while proceedings are ongoing, losing effect once the application for the corresponding final order has been determined or discontinued. They must be applied for together with the corresponding final orders.<sup>27</sup> The PHC will aim to conduct hearings for interim orders within 48 to 72 hours, or within 24 hours where the applications involve risk of violence or online doxxing.<sup>28</sup>
- 17 For cases of harassment, an applicant may apply for a Protection Order (“**PO**”) and/or a Mandatory Treatment Order (“**MTO**”). For cases of false statements, an applicant may apply for five types of orders, directed variously at the publisher of the statement, internet intermediaries and at prescribed third parties.

#### **A. Protection Order**

- 18 The court may grant a PO where it is satisfied that
  - a) the alleged harasser has contravened any of sections 3 to 7 of POHA;<sup>29</sup>
  - b) the alleged harasser is likely to continue that breach or commit another;<sup>30</sup> and
  - c) it is “just and equitable” in the circumstances to make the order.<sup>31</sup>
- 19 A PO may require the alleged harasser to:

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<sup>26</sup> POHA s 11(2). Monetary remedies are not available for offences in relation to public servants under section 6.

<sup>27</sup> Singapore Courts, “Understand the outcomes of a protection from harassment application” <[https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/civil/understand-outcomes-protection-from-harassment#po](https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/civil/understand-outcomes-protection-from-harassment#po;)> (accessed 20 June 2026).

<sup>28</sup> *Singapore Parliamentary Debates, Official Report* (7 May 2019) vol 94 (Edwin Tong Chun Fai, Senior Minister of State for Law).

<sup>29</sup> POHA s 12(2)(a).

<sup>30</sup> POHA s 12(2)(b).

<sup>31</sup> POHA s 12(2); *Singapore Parliamentary Debates, Official Report* (13 March 2014) vol 94 (K Shanmugam, Minister for Law).

- a. cease from conduct specified in the order,<sup>32</sup> including not occupying the shared residence or a specified part of it, regardless of ownership;<sup>33</sup>
- b. remove publications/ communications constituting the harassment and not to publish anything similar;<sup>34</sup> or
- c. attend counselling or mediation.<sup>35</sup>

20 Notably, where the harassment involves a published communication, the PO may also require *third parties*, such as publishers or website administrators, to remove the offending communication.<sup>36</sup>

21 The corresponding interim order is the Expedited Protection Order (“**EPO**”), which the court has the discretion to grant in urgent cases, where the offending conduct is likely to have “a substantial adverse effect on the applicant or his or her day-to-day activities”.<sup>37</sup> Applicants should be aware that if an EPO is applied for and granted, the court may refer the matter to the police for criminal investigation. The civil proceedings would be paused until the criminal matter is dealt with.<sup>38</sup>

22 Failure to comply with a PO or EPO without reasonable excuse is a **criminal** offence.<sup>39</sup>

## ***B. Mandatory Treatment Order***

23 Where a PO is granted, an MTO may additionally be granted if the harassment is attributable to an underlying psychiatric condition.<sup>40</sup> An MTO requires an alleged harasser to undergo psychiatric treatment for a period of up to 36 months.<sup>41</sup>

## ***C. False Statement Orders***

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<sup>32</sup> POHA s 12(2B)(a).

<sup>33</sup> *Singapore Parliamentary Debates, Official Report* (13 March 2014) vol 94 (K Shanmugam, Minister for Law).

<sup>34</sup> POHA s 12(2B)(b).

<sup>35</sup> POHA s 12(2B)(c).

<sup>36</sup> POHA s 12(2E).

<sup>37</sup> POHA s 13(1)(a)(iii).

<sup>38</sup> POHA s 13A(2).

<sup>39</sup> POHA s 10(1).

<sup>40</sup> POHA s 13B(1).

<sup>41</sup> POHA s 13B(3).

24 For online falsehoods, the court may grant five different types of orders where the court is satisfied that a false statement of fact<sup>42</sup> was made and it is just & equitable in the circumstances to grant the order.<sup>43</sup>

(1) *Orders against the person who publish the false statement*

25 The court may (i) order the publisher to stop publishing the false statement and not to publish any similar statement (Stop Publication Order (“**SPO**”)),<sup>44</sup> or (ii) publish a correction alongside a notice that the court has determined the statement to be false (Correction Order (“**CO**”)).<sup>45</sup>

(2) *Orders against internet intermediaries or third parties*

26 The court may also direct an internet intermediary whose service was used to publish the false statement, (iii) to publish a correction (Targeted Correction Order (“**TCO**”))<sup>46</sup> or (iv) disable access to the material (Disabling Order (“**DO**”)).<sup>47</sup>

27 Finally, where the court is satisfied that the statement has caused or is likely to cause serious harm to the reputation of the subject, the court may also require a prescribed third party *not* responsible for publishing the statement - such as a news outlet or broadcaster – (v) to publish a correction (General Correction Order (“**GCO**”)).<sup>48</sup>

28 Corresponding interim orders are available for all of these orders except the GCO. To grant an interim order, the court needs to be additionally satisfied that the false statement has caused, or is likely to cause, harm to the subject.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> See paragraph 13 of this article.

<sup>43</sup> POHA Part 3, Division 2.

<sup>44</sup> POHA s 15A(1).

<sup>45</sup> POHA s 15B(1).

<sup>46</sup> POHA s 15D(1).

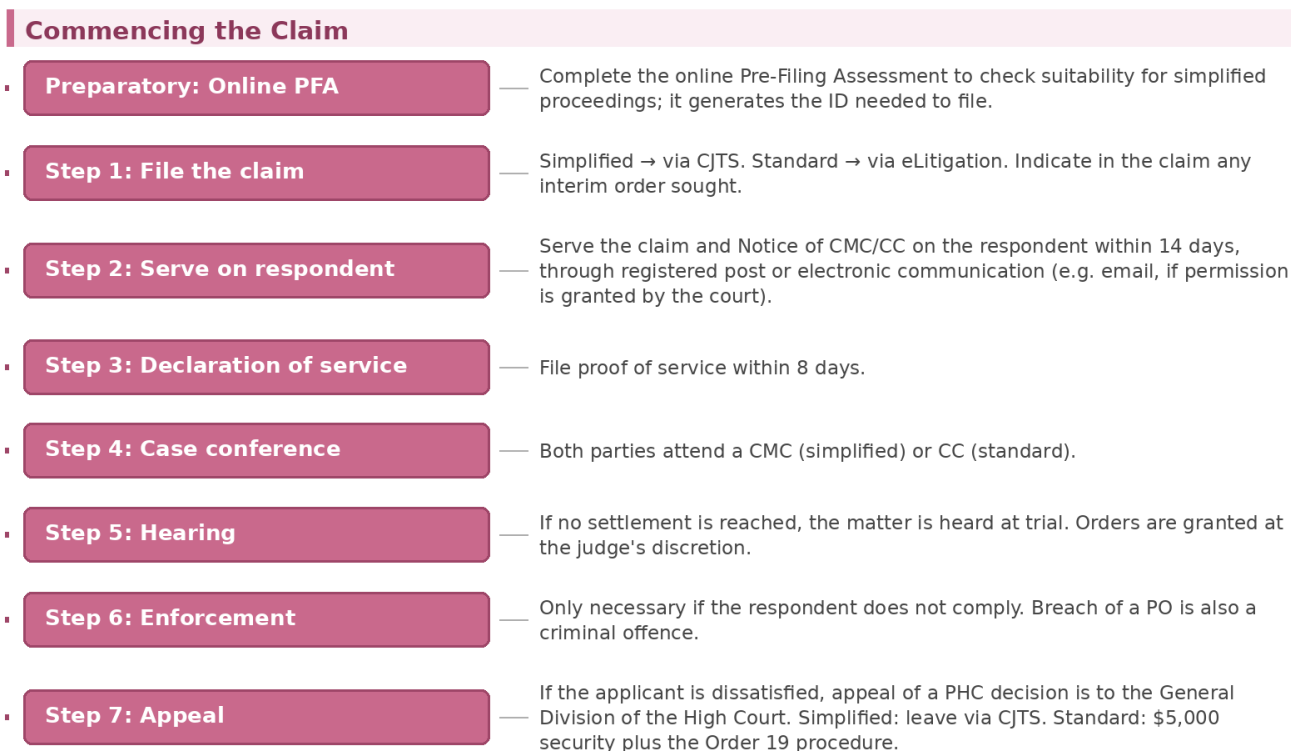
<sup>47</sup> POHA s 15C(1).

<sup>48</sup> POHA s 15E(1); *Singapore Parliamentary Debates, Official Report* (7 May 2019) vol 94 (Edwin Tong Chun Fai, Senior Minister of State for Law).

<sup>49</sup> POHA s 15E(1)(a)(iii), s 16A(1)(a)(iii), 16AA(1)(a)(iii), 16B(1)(a)(iii), 16BA(1)(a)(iii).

## IV. Commencing a Claim in the PHC

Figure 3



### A. *Step 1 – Identifying where to file your claim*

29 Having identified the applicable ground under POHA and the remedy sought, the applicant must decide which proceedings to apply for: criminal or civil.

#### (1) *Criminal proceedings*

30 Applicants seeking criminal sanctions should first file a police report.<sup>50</sup> If the police decline to pursue the matter, the applicant may file a Magistrate's Complaint in the Magistrate's Court (*not* the PHC).<sup>51</sup> The Magistrate's Court may refer the matter for

<sup>50</sup> Singapore Courts, "Before making an application for protection from harassment: understand the remedies and the appropriate court to make your application" <<https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/civil/before-making-an-application-protection-from-harassment>> (accessed 21 June 2026).

<sup>51</sup> Singapore Courts, "Magistrate's Complaints" <<https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/criminal/magistrates-complaints>> (accessed 21 June 2026); *Singapore Parliamentary Debates, Official Report* (5 October 2022) vol 95 (K

criminal mediation, order police investigations, permit a private prosecution or dismiss the complaint.<sup>52</sup> Only where the criminal proceedings are allowed to proceed – whether through police investigation or a permitted private prosecution – would the matter be heard in the PHC.

(2) *Civil proceedings*

(a) Protection of Harassment Court or Family Court?

31 There are two possible venues for applicants here: the PHC and the FC.

- a) Applicants seeking civil remedies should generally commence proceedings in the PHC.<sup>53</sup> A victim below 21 must have a representative file for proceedings on their behalf.<sup>54</sup>
- b) The Family Court (“FC”) may also hear POHA applications for **non-monetary** remedies where there are related FC proceedings and court permission has been granted.<sup>55</sup> In cases of family violence, applicants may also consider applying for a Personal Protection Order in the FC,<sup>56</sup> which targets not just harassing behaviour but also physical abuse, emotional abuse and coercive control.<sup>57</sup> Further, applying to the FC allows the FC to grant family-specific orders unavailable in the PHC, such as a Domestic Exclusion Order removing the aggressor from the shared home.<sup>58</sup>

(b) Simplified or standard proceedings?

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Shanmugam, Minister for Law), Written Answer to Questions on Outcome of Cases filed with Protection from Harassment Court Since its Operationalisation.

<sup>52</sup> Singapore Courts, “Magistrate’s Complaints” <<https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/criminal/magistrates-complaints>> (accessed 21 June 2026).

<sup>53</sup> Elaborated on in part III of this article.

<sup>54</sup> Rules of Court (2021 Rev Ed) O 4 r 2; Singapore Courts, “How to file and serve a protection from harassment application” <<https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/civil/how-to-file-serve-protection-from-harassment>> (accessed 21 June 2026). A litigation representative must be at least 21 years old and would usually be the victim’s parent or legal guardian.

<sup>55</sup> POHA s 16I; Singapore Courts, “Before making an application for protection from harassment: understand the remedies, and the appropriate court to make your application” <<https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/civil/before-making-an-application-protection-from-harassment>> (accessed 21 June 2026).

<sup>56</sup> See Singapore Courts, “Apply for a personal protection order” <<https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/family/apply-personal-protection-order>> (accessed 27 June 2026).

<sup>57</sup> Women’s Charter 1961 (2020 Rev Ed) (“**Women’s Charter**”) s 58B; *Singapore Parliamentary Debates, Official Report* (4 July 2023), vol 95 (Sun Xue Ling, Minister of State for Social and Family Development).

<sup>58</sup> Women’s Charter s 60B.

32 Proceedings in the PHC may be commenced under simplified or standard proceedings. Simplified proceedings apply where:

- a) any monetary compensation sought does not exceed SGD 20,000;
- b) the relevant acts occurred within 2 years before filing and;
- c) the application must be filed without any co-claimants and against no more than 5 alleged harassers.

33 Simplified proceedings involve lower filing fees, a more informal process and less strict rules of evidence than standard proceedings.<sup>59</sup> In contrast, standard proceedings are conducted under the ordinary rules of evidence, where evidence needs to be given through sworn written statements (affidavits).<sup>60</sup> Judges thus take a more proactive role in simplified proceedings, with the court able to take evidence directly from parties and inform itself in such manner it thinks fit.<sup>61</sup>

## ***B. Step 2 – Filing and serving the POHA claim***

### *(1) Step 2a – Filing the claim*

#### **(a) Simplified Proceedings**

34 Simplified proceedings claims are filed through the Community Justice Tribunals System (“CJTS”). Prior to filing, applicants must complete an online pre-filing assessment to determine the claim’s suitability for simplified proceedings and generates an ID required for filing.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Singapore Courts, “Before making an application for protection from harassment: understand the remedies, and the appropriate court to make your application” <<https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/civil/before-making-an-application-protection-from-harassment>> (accessed 21 June 2026).

<sup>60</sup> Rules of Court (2021 Rev Ed) O 9 r 8.

<sup>61</sup> Ministry of Law, “Commencement of Protection from Harassment Court on 1 June 2021” (31 May 2021) <<https://www.mlaw.gov.sg/news/others/commencement-of-protection-from-harassment-court-on-1-june-2021/>> (accessed 10 August 2026).

<sup>62</sup> Singapore Courts, “How to file and serve a protection from harassment application” <<https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/civil/how-to-file-serve-protection-from-harassment>> (accessed 21 June 2026).

- 35 The applicant provides their personal details, the alleged harasser's details, the particulars of their claim, the remedies sought (including any interim orders), and any supporting documents.<sup>63</sup> After paying the filing fees (between \$30 and \$60), the applicant selects a Case Management Conference date.<sup>64</sup>

(b) Standard Proceedings

- 36 Standard proceedings claims are filed either through e-Litigation by the applicant's lawyer if represented, or in person at the State Courts Service Bureau if unrepresented.<sup>65</sup> The applicant must prepare:<sup>66</sup>

|                                                              | Applying for a PO                                                                                                    | Applying for an FSO                         |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Originating Application ("OA")                               | Form 1 in the Second Schedule of the Supreme Court of Judicature (Protection from Harassment) Rules 2021 ("SCJPHR"). | Form 8 in the Second Schedule of the SCJPHR |
| Supporting affidavit                                         | Form 2 in the Second Schedule of the SCJPHR                                                                          | Form 9 in the Second Schedule of the SCJPHR |
| Supporting documents the applicant wishes to use as evidence | Prepared in the required format                                                                                      |                                             |

(c) Interim Orders (Both Pathways)

<sup>63</sup> Singapore Courts, "How to file and serve a protection from harassment application" <<https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/civil/how-to-file-serve-protection-from-harassment>> (accessed 21 June 2026).

<sup>64</sup> Singapore Courts, "How to file and serve a protection from harassment application" <<https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/civil/how-to-file-serve-protection-from-harassment>> (accessed 21 June 2026).

<sup>65</sup> Singapore Courts, "How to file and serve a protection from harassment application" <<https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/civil/how-to-file-serve-protection-from-harassment>> (accessed 21 June 2026).

<sup>66</sup> Singapore Courts, "How to file and serve a protection from harassment application" <<https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/civil/how-to-file-serve-protection-from-harassment>> (accessed 21 June 2026).

37 When an interim order is sought, this *must* be indicated in the claim form (simplified proceedings) or in Part C of the supporting affidavit (standard proceedings).<sup>67</sup> **Only interim orders corresponding to the final orders applied for may be sought.**

(2) *Step 2b – Serving a POHA application*

38 After filing, the applicant must serve the relevant documents on the alleged harasser within 14 days - for simplified proceedings, the claim and notice of the CMC; for standard proceedings, the endorsed documents.<sup>68</sup> For interim orders, service of the claim to the alleged harasser need not precede the hearing for them, but such interim orders will only take effect after service.<sup>69</sup>

39 Service may be effected by registered post.<sup>70</sup> Thus, applicants uncomfortable with personal contact need not face the alleged harasser.

40 Where the alleged harasser's address or even identity is unknown, service can be done through other means with the court's permission – including email or social media.<sup>71</sup> A PO / FSO can thus be filed against anonymous accounts so long as they are identifiable by a unique identifier, such as an IP or website.<sup>72</sup> POs/FSOs can be served on multiple accounts too, which deals with the situation where an anonymous user uses different online accounts to publish the same content.<sup>73</sup>

(3) *Step 2c – Declaration of Service*

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<sup>67</sup> Singapore Courts, "Before making an application for protection from harassment: understand the remedies, and the appropriate court to make your application" <<https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/civil/before-making-an-application-protection-from-harassment>> (accessed 21 June 2026).

<sup>68</sup> Singapore Courts, "How to file and serve a protection from harassment application" <<https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/civil/how-to-file-serve-protection-from-harassment>> (accessed 21 June 2026).

<sup>69</sup> Singapore Courts, "How to file and serve a protection from harassment application" <<https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/civil/how-to-file-serve-protection-from-harassment>> (accessed 21 June 2026).

<sup>70</sup> Singapore Courts, "How to file and serve a protection from harassment application" <<https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/civil/how-to-file-serve-protection-from-harassment>> (accessed 21 June 2026).

<sup>71</sup> Singapore Courts, "How to file and serve a protection from harassment application" <<https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/civil/how-to-file-serve-protection-from-harassment>> (accessed 21 June 2026).

<sup>72</sup> Singapore Courts, "How to file and serve a protection from harassment application" <<https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/civil/how-to-file-serve-protection-from-harassment>> (accessed 21 June 2026).

<sup>73</sup> Singapore Courts, "How to file and serve a protection from harassment application" <<https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/civil/how-to-file-serve-protection-from-harassment>> (accessed 21 June 2026).

- 41 Proof of service must be filed within 8 days – a Declaration of Service via CJTS (for simplified proceedings)<sup>74</sup> or a Memorandum of Service (Form 21 in the Second Schedule of the SCJPHR) via e-Litigation (for standard proceedings).<sup>75</sup>

**C. *Step 3 – Case Management Conference/Case Conference***

- 42 Both parties must attend a court session facilitated by a judicial officer, intended to give them the opportunity to resolve their dispute – called a Case Management Conference (“CMC”) for simplified proceedings and a Case Conference (“CC”) for standard proceedings.<sup>76</sup> Prior to attending the conference, parties should be prepared to explain their case to the PHC in detail.<sup>77</sup> Absence may lead to a default order *i.e.* an automatic judgment in favour of the attending party.<sup>78</sup>
- 43 Given the sensitive nature of POHA claims, an applicant requiring administrative or emotional support, may apply under the Community Courts and Tribunals Scheme to have a family member, friend or volunteer attend court with them.<sup>79</sup>
- 44 The parties may settle at the conference. If not, the court may refer the case for mediation or counselling.<sup>80</sup> If a settlement is still not reached there, the parties will be given a further conference date, and the case may then be scheduled for trial in the PHC.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Singapore Courts, “How to file and serve a protection from harassment application” <<https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/civil/how-to-file-serve-protection-from-harassment>> (accessed 21 June 2026).

<sup>75</sup> SCJPHR r 53(3) and r 56(3); Singapore Courts, “How to file and serve a protection from harassment application” <<https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/civil/how-to-file-serve-protection-from-harassment>> (accessed 21 June 2026).

<sup>76</sup> Singapore Courts, “At your protection from harassment case management conference or case conference” <<https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/civil/at-protection-from-harassment-case-management-conference-or-case-conference>> (accessed 22 June 2026).

<sup>77</sup> Singapore Courts, “Before going to court for your protection from harassment application” <<https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/civil/before-going-to-court-protection-from-harassment>> (accessed 23 June 2026).

<sup>78</sup> Singapore Courts, “At your protection from harassment case management conference or case conference” <<https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/civil/at-protection-from-harassment-case-management-conference-or-case-conference>> (accessed 22 June 2026).

<sup>79</sup> State Courts Practice Directions 2021, Part XIX paragraph 132. Singapore Courts, “Seek help for a tribunal or simplified POHA case: Community Courts and Tribunal Friend Scheme” <<https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/legal-help-support/cct-friend-scheme>> (accessed 23 June 2026).

<sup>80</sup> Singapore Courts, “At your protection from harassment case management conference or case conference” <<https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/civil/at-protection-from-harassment-case-management-conference-or-case-conference>> (accessed 22 June 2026).

<sup>81</sup> Singapore Courts, “At your protection from harassment case management conference or case conference” <<https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/civil/at-protection-from-harassment-case-management-conference-or-case-conference>> (accessed 22 June 2026).

#### ***D. Step 4 – Hearing in the PHC***

- 45 POHA matters can be sensitive and are typically heard in chambers (i.e. privately) rather than in open court (which the public can view). At the hearing, the applicant and alleged harasser present their case and evidence. Both parties may call witnesses, which he or she must check is willing to attend and whose identity the court must be informed of in advance.<sup>82</sup>
- 46 At the end of the hearing, the judge may make a decision on the spot, postpone the judgment to a later date, or fix further hearing dates. The judge may grant only part of, or all of the orders sought.<sup>83</sup>

#### ***E. Step 5 – Appealing against a decision in the PHC***

- 47 If an applicant is not satisfied with the decision of the PHC judge, they may file an appeal to the General Division of the High Court.<sup>84</sup>
- 48 For simplified proceedings, the applicant must first apply for and obtain permission to appeal on CJTS within 7 days after the date of the judgment.<sup>85</sup> The applicant must also serve notice of the application to appeal on the alleged harasser within 7 days after the day the application is filed in CJTS.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Singapore Courts, “At your protection from harassment hearing” <<https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/civil/at-protection-from-harassment-hearing>> (accessed 23 June 2026).

<sup>83</sup> Singapore Courts, “At your protection from harassment hearing” <<https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/civil/at-protection-from-harassment-hearing>> (accessed 23 June 2026).

<sup>84</sup> Singapore Courts, “Appeal against a protection from harassment decision by a judge in the Protection from Harassment Court” <<https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/civil/at-protection-from-harassment-hearing>> (accessed 23 June 2026).

<sup>85</sup> SCJPHR r 40(2); Singapore Courts, “Appeal against a protection from harassment decision by a judge in the Protection from Harassment Court” <<https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/civil/appeal-protection-from-harassment-decision-judge>> (accessed 23 June 2026).

<sup>86</sup> SCJPHR r 40(4); Singapore Courts, “Appeal against a protection from harassment decision by a judge in the Protection from Harassment Court” <<https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/civil/appeal-protection-from-harassment-decision-judge>> (accessed 23 June 2026).

- 49 Once permission has been granted, the applicant must file a notice of appeal to the General Division of the High Court within 7 days from the date permission was given.<sup>87</sup> The notice of appeal filed to the General Division of the High Court must also be served on the alleged harasser within 14 days after the date on which the permission to appeal is given.<sup>88</sup>
- 50 The process of appeal for standard proceedings is found under Order 19 (Division 2) of the Rules of Court 2021. It is not necessary to obtain permission from the court to file an appeal under standard proceedings. However, the applicant must provide security of \$5,000 for the alleged harasser's cost of appeal and file a certificate of security. Within 14 days of the date of the judgment by the PHC, a notice of appeal must also similarly be filed to the High Court.<sup>89</sup>

***F. Step 6 – Enforcing a PO/FSO order***

- 51 Failure to comply with a PO/FSO is a form of contempt of court.<sup>90</sup> Thus, in the event of non-compliance, the applicant may apply for a committal order.<sup>91</sup> Under a committal order, the court *may* impose a fine or imprisonment as punishment for failure to comply with the PO/FSO.<sup>92</sup>
- 52 For POs, as a breach is a criminal offence,<sup>93</sup> the applicant may also file a police report against the alleged harasser.

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<sup>87</sup> Singapore Courts, "Appeal against a protection from harassment decision by a judge in the Protection from Harassment Court" <<https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/civil/appeal-protection-from-harassment-decision-judge>> (accessed 23 June 2026).

<sup>88</sup> SCJPHR r 41(2)(a).

<sup>89</sup> Rules of Court (2021 Rev Ed) O 19 r 14. Though, the time for filing and serving the notice of appeal may be extended by the General Division of the High Court at any time.

<sup>90</sup> Singapore Courts, "Enforcing protection from harassment order" <<https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/civil/enforce-protection-from-harassment-order>> (accessed 23 June 2026).

<sup>91</sup> Rules of Court (2021 Rev Ed) O 23 r 2.

<sup>92</sup> Singapore Courts, "Enforcing protection from harassment order" <<https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/civil/enforce-protection-from-harassment-order>> (accessed 23 June 2026).

<sup>93</sup> POHA s 10(1).

- 53 However, applicants should be wary that enforcement does not guarantee the alleged harasser adhering to the order and they ought to weigh the pros and cons before proceeding.<sup>94</sup>

## V. Conclusion

- 54 The PHC, and the simplified and expedited process its enactment introduced has been a welcome and vital development in Singapore's legal system. Further, the step-by-step guidance available on the SG Courts website (see [here](#)) has made filing claims in the PHC even more accessible.
- 55 Even so, harassment and online falsehood victims continue to face difficulties navigating the CJTS and understanding the grounds under POHA on which their claims should be brought. Scope remains to improve accessibility, particularly as new forms of harassment such as deepfakes emerge.
- 56 Encouragingly, legislative developments beyond POHA, including the Online Safety (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act 2022 and the Online Safety (Relief and Accountability) Act 2025, have emerged. These will hopefully complement the PHC and continue to strengthen the protection afforded to victims of harassment in Singapore.

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<sup>94</sup> Singapore Courts, "Enforcing protection from harassment order <<https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/civil/enforce-protection-from-harassment-order>> (accessed 23 June 2026).