

IN THE FAMILY JUSTICE COURTS OF THE REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE

[2026] SGFC 59

SSP 2379 of 2025

Between

YCF

... Applicant

And

YCG

... Respondent

JUDGMENT

[Family Law – Personal Protection Order – Emotional or Psychological Abuse]
[Family Law – Personal Protection Order – Necessity]

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**YCF
v
YCG**

[2026] SGFC 59

Family Court — SSP 2379 of 2025
Magistrate Nathaniel Tan
8 April 2026

28 April 2026

Magistrate Nathaniel Tan:

1 SSP 2379/2025 is the ex-wife Applicant's application for a personal protection order (“PPO”) and stay away order (“SAO”) against the ex-husband Respondent. The protected persons in this application are the Applicant herself and the parties' two daughters.

2 This application was the latest episode in a long line of protracted proceedings between the parties dating back to 2020, when their divorce was filed in the Syariah Court. In particular, the parties have been embroiled in litigation over a litany of issues such as maintenance, child access, alleged breaches of Syariah Court orders, and a previous PPO application by the Applicant which was dismissed. In this court alone, there have been no less than ten actions taken out since 2020 including the present application, all of which by the Applicant.

3 I heard the trial of this matter on 8 April 2026 and dismissed the application *ex tempore*. As both parties have since applied for the transcripts of the trial presumably because of their ongoing dispute on child access in the Syariah Court, I now give the full grounds of my decision even though the factual circumstances and the issues in this matter were largely unremarkable.

Brief Background

4 The parties were married on 8 March 2014 in Singapore. They have two daughters born to their marriage, aged 10 years and 7 years respectively. Their marriage was dissolved in the Syariah Court on 25 May 2023. The ancillary orders were also granted on 25 May 2023. The parties were granted joint custody of their two daughters, with sole care and control to the Applicant. The Respondent was granted supervised visitation to the children at the Divorce Support Specialist Agency (“**DSSA**”) for eight sessions, with an access review by the court to follow.

5 On 2 July 2024, shortly after the first supervised visitation session, the parties received an email from the DSSA stating that the Respondent’s supervised visitation sessions at the DSSA would be suspended. It is not disputed the Respondent has not had any access to the children since.

The Law

6 To succeed in her application, section 60A of the Women’s Charter 1961 (the “**Charter**”) provides that the Applicant must prove the following on a balance of probabilities before a PPO may be granted:

- a) that the Respondent has or is likely to commit family violence; and

- b) that the PPO is necessary for the protection or personal safety of the protected persons.

7 In addition, an SAO may also be granted if the Applicant is able to establish on a balance of probabilities that it is necessary for the protection or personal safety of the protected persons (see section 60B(2) of the Charter). While the Applicant is not technically required to establish family violence to obtain an SAO, the court may only grant an SAO if a PPO is also made (see section 60B(1) read with section 58 of the Charter).

The Incident on 26 November 2025

8 The Applicant relies only on one incident which took place in the afternoon of 26 November 2025 at the Applicant's residence, wherein she has been residing with the parties' daughters. The incident should first be set in its proper context. It is not disputed that the Respondent had only seen the daughters an average of once or twice a year since the parties began living separately in October 2020. Aside from the one and only DSSA supervised visitation session in 2024, all of these were a result of the Respondent going to the Applicant's residence in a bid to see the daughters. Each time, the Applicant would refuse to allow the Respondent to spend any time with the daughters and would lodge a police report claiming that the Respondent was attempting to harass or intimidate her or the daughters. At the trial before me, the Applicant confirmed in no uncertain terms that she had made a police report every time the Respondent appeared at her residence since they separated, and that all of these police reports (except for the police report for the 26 November 2025 incident) were exhibited in her witness statement. These contextual incidents are explored in more detail at [19] to [20] below.

9 Returning to the incident on 26 November 2025, the parties do not dispute that the Applicant had withheld disclosure of her current residential address from the Respondent. The Applicant asserts that she did so because she and the daughters wanted “*peace of mind*” and “*privacy*”. Therefore, when the Respondent appeared physically at her residence on that day, the Applicant claims that she was “*deeply alarmed*”, and that her daughter was “*extremely shocked*”.

10 The parties’ accounts diverge as to why the Respondent went to the Applicant’s residence on that day. According to the Applicant, the Respondent went there under the guise of wanting to effect personal service of his documents in separate maintenance proceedings between the parties. As the Applicant rightly highlighted, this was inconsistent with the court’s directions for the documents to be served by email. She therefore alleged that the true purpose of the Applicant’s unexpected appearance at her residence was to harass her and the children, emphasising that there was no access order in place allowing him to see the children. The Respondent sought to explain that he had attempted to effect personal service of his documents only because he was unable to do so by email due to technical difficulties. Needless to say, the Respondent vehemently disputes the allegation of harassment.

11 The incident on 26 November 2025 was captured by the CCTV camera positioned at the entrance of the Applicant’s home. The footage was submitted by the Applicant as part of her evidence. They show that it was one of the parties’ daughters who had first encountered the Respondent on that day as she was about to leave the home to go to the playground downstairs. The daughter then ran back into the house and told the Applicant about the Respondent’s presence. Shortly thereafter, the Applicant came to the door to confront the

Respondent. Although the Applicant had claimed that the Respondent refused to leave when asked to do so, the CCTV videos show something else: when the Applicant came to the door, the Respondent offered a peace greeting to her. Before he could say or do anything else, the Applicant began yelling at him, demanding that he leave the premises immediately and threatening to call the police. The Applicant then shut and locked the door of the home, whereupon the Respondent left the documents on the floor by the door before leaving the premises. The police subsequently arrived at the Applicant's residence; according to the Applicant, this was around 20 minutes from the time that she called them.

The Applicant's Case

12 With the benefit of the videos, there could be little dispute as to what had actually transpired at the Applicant's residence on 26 November 2025. Rather, the parties' respective accounts differ mainly on whether the Respondent's conduct constitutes harassment or abuse. I therefore start with the Applicant's assertions. The main thrust of her arguments was that the Respondent's conduct in suddenly appearing at her residence to effect personal service of his documents, despite the court's directions for service to be effected by email and the fact that she had not disclosed her address to the Applicant, amounted to emotional or psychological abuse within the definition of section 58B(4) of the Charter.

13 Even if I take the Applicant's case at its highest, I am unable to agree with her assertions. For one, I could not see anything in the Respondent's conduct on that day that would come close to the threshold of abuse. There is nothing in the Applicant's evidence to suggest that the Respondent had said or

done anything more than appearing at her residence to hand the documents to her. The Applicant's witness statement is conspicuously silent on whether the Respondent had even exchanged any words with her or their daughters on that day, save for a bare allegation that he had "*moved forward and insisted on handing documents*" to her. When pressed at the trial, and only after the CCTV videos were played, the Applicant admitted that the Respondent had *not* in fact said anything directly to her apart from offering a peace greeting. Furthermore, by the Applicant's own admission, she had closed and locked the door almost immediately; the videos show that this took place within seconds of the Applicant noticing the Respondent's presence, but not before she yelled at him. It is also not disputed that the Respondent left the premises immediately after leaving the documents on the floor. By any objective measure, there was nothing untoward about the Respondent's conduct on that day.

14 A comparison between the Respondent's conduct (as alleged by the Applicant), and the type of conduct envisaged in the illustrations at section 58B of the Charter reproduced below, further buttresses the point:

“(a) X spreads false rumours to third parties about X's spouse being promiscuous. X's spouse finds out about the rumours and is distressed. X has committed emotional or psychological abuse against X's spouse.

(b) X is prone to smash furniture in X's house when X is angry. This behaviour causes X's child to be distressed and in fear of personal injury. X has committed physical abuse, as well as emotional or psychological abuse, against X's child.

(c) X repeatedly makes demeaning comments to belittle and humiliate Y in front of their children. X threatens to stop giving Y a monthly allowance if Y contacts Y's family or friends or seeks help. Y suffers mental harm as a result. X has committed emotional or psychological abuse against Y."

15 Plainly, the Respondent's conduct on 26 November 2025 does not come anywhere close to the level of egregiousness of the illustrations at section 58B of the Charter.

16 I move on to consider the alleged mental harm suffered by the Applicant and/or the children. The threshold of such mental harm is not low. As the court made clear in the recent case of *XZU v XZV* [2026] SGFC 31 at [38] to [39]:

"38 Notably, Section 58B(4)(b) also defines emotional and psychological abuse as conduct or behaviour that causes or may reasonably be expected to cause mental harm to a person, including thoughts of suicide or inflicting self-harm. Again, the focus is on the emotional, psychological or mental harm to the victim which is serious.

*39 Taken together, it is my considered view that **there must be demonstrable emotional, psychological or mental harm suffered by the victim as a result of the perpetrator's actions for there to be a finding of emotional or psychological abuse. Such emotional, psychological or mental harm has to go beyond ordinary feelings of frustration, indignation, annoyance and unhappiness which is inherent in everyday life.**"*

[emphasis added in bold]

17 It is apposite to note from the foregoing passage that the mental harm suffered must be *demonstrable*. But this was not the case here. I explain.

- a) First, the Applicant had made a multitude of bare statements about the serious mental harm and distress that she and the children had suffered due to the Respondent's conduct. These statements were, however, uncorroborated by any objective evidence.
- b) Second, there is no evidence that the Applicant had even sought any professional help for herself or her daughters for the alleged mental harm that was suffered. Indeed, it only came to light at the trial that the children are currently undergoing counselling which was ordered by the Syariah Court in the parties' ongoing access dispute. I further note the Applicant's admission that such counselling only began around two weeks prior to the date of the trial on 8 April 2026, despite the Syariah Court having ordered it in or around October/November 2025. It was not even made clear whether these counselling sessions were intended to serve a therapeutic or forensic purpose.
- c) Third, and leaving aside the foregoing evidentiary difficulties, it bears reiteration that the Respondent's conduct on 26 November 2025 did not go beyond the pale. In my view, therefore, a reasonable person in the Applicant's or the children's position on that day could not have been tormented, intimidated, harassed or distressed, nor suffered any serious mental harm, as a consequence of the Respondent's conduct (see the approach in *XXW v XXX and others* [2026] SGFC 23 at [54] to [55] ("*XXW*").

18 In the round, I find that the Applicant has failed to discharge her burden of proving that the Respondent had committed family violence on 26 November 2025.

PPO Not Necessary

19 Even if I am wrong in my findings above, I would nevertheless hold that a PPO is not necessary for the protection or personal safety of the Applicant and/or the children. This is notwithstanding the contextual incidents dating back 2021 that the Applicant had included in her witness statement but not in her complaint, which she urged me to consider. In particular, the Applicant alleged that the Respondent had been harassing her and the children by leaving gifts of food and toys at her residence, sometimes through a proxy such as one of his siblings, over the past five years or so. Each time, the Applicant would refuse to accept these gifts and would throw them away. Much like the incident on 26 November 2025, the Applicant would also prevent the Respondent from seeing or speaking with the children. The broader argument appeared to be that the 26 November 2025 incident was not an isolated one when considered against the backdrop of the contextual incidents.

20 In my view, these contextual incidents do not take the Applicant anywhere. For one, they are extremely infrequent, happening around once or twice a year and typically during the Ramadan period. In this regard, I accept the Respondent's explanation that he had wanted to leave gifts of food and toys for the children during that period because of the significance of the occasion. I also accept that the Respondent was only trying to catch a glimpse of his children whom he had hardly seen since the parties began living separately in October 2020. While the Applicant may have found this annoying, and while

the Respondent may not have been welcome at the Applicant's residence, there was simply nothing improper about the Respondent leaving gifts of food and toys for his children, let alone at a frequency of only once or twice a year.

21 For completeness, I turn to consider the emails sent by the Respondent's current wife in December 2025, as well as the Facebook posts made by the Respondent in 2020. These were likewise not included in the Applicant's complaint but subsequently raised in her witness statement. In summary:

- a) The Applicant had submitted copies of two emails sent by the Respondent's current wife to her in December 2025. In these emails, the Respondent's wife had expressed her concerns about the ongoing disputes between the Applicant and the Respondent, and the potential impact of these disputes on the parties' daughters. The Respondent's wife also pleaded with the Applicant to allow the Respondent to see the children, and conveyed that she would "*pray*" for the Applicant and for a "*peaceful resolution*" to the parties' disputes.
- b) The Applicant had also submitted screenshots of five Facebook posts by the Respondent in December 2020. In these posts, the Respondent insinuated, amongst other things, that the Applicant was a "*scammer*" and a "*bad mother... who puts the child in Toxicity and Childhood Trauma*". The Respondent further suggested in these posts that the Applicant was "*after [his] money*" and practising "*black magic*".

22 Neither the emails nor the Facebook posts aid the Applicant's case.

23 Beginning with the emails, there is no evidence that these were sent at the Respondent's behest in the first place. Even if they were, it is self-evident

from the tone and words used that they are not inflammatory or abusive in any way. Again, the Applicant may have felt annoyed or unhappy when she received those emails, but that does not rise to the level of emotional or psychological abuse. Moreover, these emails were addressed only to the Applicant and not the children; the Applicant would presumably not have let the children read the emails. There was also nothing to stop the Applicant from blocking all emails from the Respondent's current wife. I therefore declined to place any weight on them.

24 As regards the Facebook posts, the Respondent candidly admitted at the trial that he had made them in 2020 in a state of frustration while the parties were in the throes of their separation and divorce. The contents of the posts suggest that the breakdown of the marriage was weighing heavily on the Respondent's mind at the material time. More importantly, the Applicant confirmed at the trial that she was no longer connected with the Respondent on social media. While the Applicant alleged that the Respondent had since continued making social media posts of a similar nature about her, there was no evidence before me that this was still being done. This allegation also does not square with her admission on the stand that she had accessed the Respondent's Facebook posts on her own accord because his was a public-facing Facebook account. In my view, it would fly in the face of logic for her to look these posts up on her own volition if they were as distressing as she had claimed. As such, even if these posts by the Respondent amounted to emotional or psychological abuse, the factors above would militate against the necessity of a PPO.

25 For the forgoing reasons, I find that a PPO is not necessary for the protection or personal safety of the Applicant and/or the children. There is

nothing before me to suggest that they require any protection from the Respondent at all.

26 Two things must be remembered in the final analysis. The first is the oft-repeated and almost banal point that a PPO will not lightly be ordered because of the penal consequences that follow its breach (see *UNQ v UNR* [2020] SGHCF 21 at [28]). It has therefore been said that a PPO is “*a tool of last resort*” that is only deployed in deserving cases where a party is trapped in a cycle of abuse and can no longer manage his or her relationship with the abuser (see *XXW* at [30]). This was plainly not the case here.

27 The second is that the function of a PPO is to protect and not to punish (see *WSD v WSE and another matter* [2024] SGFC 1 at [40]). I would go one step further to say that protection is the *core* purpose of a PPO. In this connection, a PPO may not be deemed necessary if it is going to be used instead for a collateral purpose such as to obstruct one’s access to his or her children. While I make no finding as to the Applicant’s motives in taking out this application, it is of some concern that this application was filed amidst ongoing child access proceedings in the Syariah Court between the parties, given that the Respondent has not had any meaningful access to the children for some time. Indeed, it is not disputed that neither the Applicant nor the children had even seen the Respondent since 26 November 2025 (aside from attendances in court).

Conclusion

28 The Applicant’s application for a PPO is unmeritorious and thus dismissed. It follows that her application for an SAO must also fail (see section 60B(1) read with section 58 of the Charter).

29 As both parties are self-represented, and considering the Respondent's failure to attend a pre-trial mention on 14 January 2026 without a valid excuse, I order each party to bear their own costs notwithstanding the dismissal of the application.

Nathaniel Tan
Magistrate

The Applicant in person and unrepresented;
The Respondent in person and unrepresented.