

**Veto the Bersih ban, Mr PM**  
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COMMENT The Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections (Bersih 2.0) has been declared an illegal organisation effective 1 July 2011.

A statement issued by the Registrar of Societies (ROS) says that the declaration was made by Home Minister Hishammuddin Hussein (right) under Section 5 of the Societies Act 1966.

According to the ROS statement, Bersih is not a registered organisation. The statement claims that Bersih has been actively creating confusion and causing anxiety among the people.

It says that Bersih has been distributing handbills containing propaganda aimed at toppling the BN federal government.

The ROS statement says that Bersih has undermined the nation's sovereignty and disrupted the harmonious environment among the country's multi-racial population, and also caused disrepute to the country's image, and is a threat to public order, security, and economic development and prosperity.

Bersih had earlier announced plans to hold rallies in Kuala Lumpur, Sabah and Sarawak on July 9 to mobilise concerned citizens to demand for a clean, fair and transparent electoral process.

**Unilateral decision**

The home minister's unilateral decision to ban Bersih is certainly something any right-thinking and fair-minded believer in democracy and the rule of law will not be able to accept as just and constitutionally valid.

The rights to freedom of expression and assembly are enshrined in our federal constitution, and embraced as essential fundamental divine rights of all peoples in all democratic nations of the world, and revered in the Charter of Human Rights of the United Nations, of which Malaysia has been a proud member since it gained its independence on 31 August 1957.

The home minister's action in declaring Bersih an illegal organisation is a direct violation of the human, civil and constitutional rights of the country's citizens.

Human rights are the fundamental foundation upon which the total life, life-style and well-being of a human person is built and developed upon.

Human rights ensure that the spiritual, moral, intellectual, emotional, physical, social and cultural aspects of an individual's existence is treated appropriately with value, dignity, honour, respect, and affection, and any violation of the basic human, civil and constitutional rights of any citizen of the nation should be regarded with contempt and condemnation.

**Not a subversive movement**

Bersih, which means "clean" in Bahasa Malaysia, is not a subversive movement out to create a violent revolution to overthrow the government of the day.

It is simply a coalition of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and certain political parties to seek and promote a legal reformation and transformation of the current very unsatisfactory and unacceptable electoral process in the country.

The allegations that Bersih is being funded by foreign sources, in particular by Christian interests, to destabilise the nation, and is a movement to bring about the resurgence of communism are uncalled for

and unwarranted, and a real despicable attempt to create hatred and contempt among the various races.

Those who made such allegations should be the one arrested and charged for sedition, not the Bersih advocates.

Bersih has specifically demanded that several changes be instituted for the present election laws and practices to ensure that elections are conducted in a fair, just and transparent manner.

Among the reforms Bersih proposed are (1) a complete and thorough cleaning of the electoral rolls to remove entries that are no longer valid such as names of dead persons, (2) all political parties and their candidates be allowed and provided with equal access to the print and broadcast media, (3) the campaign period be extended to allow all parties and their candidates more time to reach out to the people to promote and explain their views. (4) abolish postal voting in view of the high probability that it is easily abused and manipulated, and (5) using permanent ink to ensure that each voter may only vote once.

Such proposals are not unreasonable or impractical, and any government professing to practise democracy and rule of the laws should surely has no genuine ground to reject them.

And the promotion of a fair, just and transparent electoral process should not be considered a subversive plot to overthrow the government of the day.

In fact, it is a joke to suggest that Bersih is out to grab political power by illegal means, especially the use of violence.

The mobilisation of concerned citizens in a peaceful assembly to exercise their rights to seek changes for the betterment of the nation is surely not a sin, not indivisible to the pursuit of a holistic, righteous, fair, just and dignified nation-building process.

It is the inherit divine right of a citizen to express his views vocally, visibly, and vividly, the government has no moral right to deprive and curb such rights.

### **Reformation of electoral process**

The stated ultimate goal of Bersih is just the reformation of the nation's electoral process to ensure that the human, civil and constitutional rights of the legitimate citizens are protected and respected, and not any evil political agenda as insinuated by the mercenary spin writers of the mainstream media, and certain former opposition politicians who had sold their souls, betrayed their constituents, and manoeuvred themselves into favoured and profitable positions in the establishment.

Such despicable persons should be dismissed with scorn, and their views discharged with disbelief and disparagement.

Meanwhile, the police force should consider the fact that all forms of peaceful expression and assembly by the people should be respected and allowed to take place without any enforced restraint and forceful intervention by them.

Water cannon against those making police report over Kugan's death Bersih should be allowed to hold its civil rights assembly so long as no violence or chaotic disorder are intended.

The Bersih rally organisers have never attempted any incitement to riot and chaos, and the police should not take any unilateral action that may possibly cause confusion and provoke an unpredictable disorder with people scattering in various random directions.

The police should not use canes, tear gas or water cannons on the crowd, but should provide proper crowd and traffic control to ensure that no untoward and adverse situation could develop.

Any suspected trouble-maker should be stopped and detained, but no use of force should be made on the peaceful assembly.

The Bersih ban is surely a dark blot on the image of the nation, and I appeal to Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak to use his wisdom and good office to stop further damage to the country by vetoing the foolish action of the home minister, and also allow the peaceful assembly to take place as scheduled.

If he does that, I will salute him for his statesmanship.

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