

**Bersih activist dismisses Utusan's Jewish claim**  
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Claims in a government-linked newspaper today that a protest for electoral reform could open the country up to interference from Jewish groups has been rubbished by polls activists.

The Malay-language Utusan Malaysia said in an editorial: "When the drums in the name of basic human rights become louder, it gives an opportunity to pro-Jewish groups to interfere in any Muslim country."

"Muslims and Malaysians should not allow any party, especially Jews, from interfering in the affairs of this country," said the newspaper, which is owned by Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's party.

Any claim of Jewish involvement is a highly sensitive issue in Muslim-majority Malaysia.

The editorial was condemned by Bersih 2.0, the electoral reform group which earlier this month defied a government clampdown to draw tens of thousands of people to the capital Kuala Lumpur.

Police moved in and arrested more than 1,700 people and used tear gas and water cannon to put down the opposition-backed rally that was calling for free and fair elections.

"It's sheer and utter rubbish," said Andrew Khoo (left), a Bersih representative.

"What this points to is a repeated attempt by some quarters of society... to divide the country along racial and religious lines.

"And we would just simply point out that at the end of the day, on July 9 Malaysians of all races and religions came out to support the call for electoral reforms."

Before the rally, Utusan had reported claims that the protest was backed by Christian groups.

The newspaper "should seriously stop wasting its time, demonising the rally", added Khoo.

Bersih has called for a number of changes to polling, such as introducing indelible ink to prevent people from casting ballots more than once and cracking down on vote buying.

The Election Commission says elections are run in a fair and transparent manner.

-AFP