

Arrests at student flashmob shows gov't's hypocrisy

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The harsh action taken by a large number of police officers to break up a group of 15 students' flash mob attempt to demonstrate support for academic freedom was one inconceivable act of police brutality.

Academic freedom is the fundamental core of universities and it is high time that the Barisan Nasional administration review their customary oppressive policies against institutions of higher learning and undergraduates.

Prime Minister Najib Razak, on the eve of Malaysia Day, had pledged that he would make Malaysia "the best democracy in the world" and one of the key initiative was to revise Section 27 of the Police Act 1977 in accordance with the provision of Section 10 of the Federal Constitution to provide greater freedom of assembly.

Prime Minister Najib also announced in Parliament recently that the government would revise Section 15 of the UUCA to enable undergraduates above the age of 21 to participate in politics.

However, by allowing the police to intimidate and oppress the group of undergraduates who were pushing for academic freedom, the Najib administration appears to be suffering from a severe case of split personality!

Is this inconsistency a 'tactical' move whereby the Education Ministry was just playing the good guy while the Home Ministry played the bad guy role; or did the police not heed Najib's important speech?

What is so wrong about students fighting for academic freedom? We should be proud of these undergraduates who show real concern for civil liberty, debunking the stereotype that undergraduates were apathetic and only concerned about doing well in examinations, etc.

As a matter of fact, 'The Protester' has just been chosen by Time magazine as its Person of the Year for 2011, indicating the re-emergence of people power movements around the world.

Last but not least, I would like to encourage the 15 undergraduates who were released on bail not to be deterred - when a protest by 15 people turns into civil action by 150 or even 500, the nation will sit up and listen to you.

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