

PM must curb violence or be seen as complicit, say groups

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Over 70 civil society organisations today called upon Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak to take action against political hooliganism mushrooming in the country, or stand accused of condoning such violence and being in bed with its thuggish perpetrators.

“If the political violence continues due to the alleged impunity granted by the police, the PM will be perceived as being complicit in these acts of violence and intimidation,” said the groups in a joint statement read out at a press conference in Kuala Lumpur today.

The groups came forward to express their alarm that the worrisome trend of “contrived violence”, which they believe is being engineered to suppress free democratic discourse and political choice in the run-up to the 13th general election.

Such political intimidation and violence, the groups claim, will undermine the very fabric of society and its freedoms if left unchecked.

They pointed to the attacks on ceramah held by NGO Asalkan Bukan Umno and during the political speeches by PKR leaders Nurul Izzah Anwar and her father Anwar Ibrahim, as signs of the worrying trend.

They called upon Najib to ensure that the home ministry and police take proper action against those who have committed such violence against civil activists and legitimate political organisations, including suspending, investigating and punishing errant police officers whose alleged inaction during some of the disturbances have painted an ugly picture of the police, the guardians of public order.

Zaid Kamaruddin of Jemaah Islah Malaysia, a NGO which was formed in the 70s, said in a statement today that the group will send a memorandum to the PM, the home minister and the police, during the week as they await to record from more NGOs who have expressed their support.

Meanwhile, A Jayanath of civil society group Saya Anak Bangsa Malaysia appealed to Malaysians to remember the preamble to the Rukunegara, which most importantly calls for upholding the constitution, rule of law and practicing good conduct and proper manners.

All the three seem to have been forgotten as the constitutionally guaranteed freedom to assemble is being restricted and some are acting beyond the law and abandoning manners and good conduct.

Mas Elati Samani from the Centre for Independent Journalism chimed in that police should also ensure the people’s safety during rallies and demonstrations as this may impact journalists on the ground who will have to face the rowdy atmosphere at political ceramah and rallies.

Making it safe for society also means keeping things safe for journalists as they have to carry out their job to bring news of what is happening to the general public.

The groups also repeated their call for the IPCMC to be instituted to ensure that the police can be properly monitored and reprimanded if they are found neglecting their duty of maintaining public order.

They, however, praised police for their excellent job in facilitating the Himpunan Hijau 2.0 gatherings across the country, though they believe that the force could have done better, especially during the fracas in the Penang leg of the green rally which was disrupted by a group alleged to include Umno and Perkasa members.

Other civil society groups represented at the press conference included the Kuala Lumpur Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall, the Negri Sembilan Chinese Assembly Hall, All Women's Action Movement, the Tamil Foundation, Anak Muda Sarawak and Tenaganita.

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