

Arrests, violence towards journalists condemned
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Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak should conduct a thorough and swift investigation on violent acts in Bersih 3.0, including those on journalists, and charge the perpetrators.

A group of six journalism associations issued a joint statement requesting this yesterday.

They are the Centre for Independent Journalism, Charter 2000 Aliran, Journalists Union of North Malaya, Penang Chinese Media Journalists and Photographers Association (Pewaju), Penang Press Club and Penang Press Employees Cooperative Society Limited.

The group condemned the arrest of two journalists and alleged police violence towards others who were covering the sit-down protest for free and fair elections.

"The prime minister must also adopt firm measures to ensure all uniformed personnel understand and respect the role of journalists, and give compensation to those whose equipment were deliberately damaged," it said.

NONEMedia reports, video feeds, Facebook postings and tweets by the journalists involved, or their colleagues, indicate at least six such cases.

"We view the incidents as a concerted attack on media freedom since they appear to be aimed at preventing professional journalistic documentation of police violence against some Bersih protesters," it added.

The joint statement also noted that the police's attitude towards reporters might have caused by their embarrassment over photographs and videos the reporters have recorded in the past few months regarding police brutality.

Last week, it said, a mob attacked the Occupy Dataran encampment and targeted activists who were wielding cameras or smartphones, in a bid to thwart any attempt to document the violence and identify the perpetrators.

"Journalists, including press photographers, are professionals tasked with bearing witness to matters of public interest and reporting them ethically.

"Like the police, journalists have a public duty to perform and they should be afforded protection towards this end.

"Unless journalists are obstructing police work, they should be left alone to do their job. And certainly, no journalist in a nation that prides itself as a democracy, should ever be arrested for doing their job."

