

**Proham: Don't lose sight of reasons for Bersih 3.0**  
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A human rights watchdog is urging the government not to lose sight of the underlying reasons for the Bersih 3.0 rally, and wants electoral reforms to be done before the 13th general election.

In a statement today, Persatuan Promosi Hak Asasi Manusia (Proham) said that many people were unhappy with the findings of the parliamentary select committee (PSC) on electoral reform, and how Parliament handled its report.

"There is also a great deal of mistrust on the part of the public that the many sound recommendations of the PSC will be addressed in time before the impending elections," read the joint statement by its exco members, led by chairperson Simon Sipaut.

NONEThey also cited public concerns over revelations that the Election Commission (EC) chairperson Abdul Aziz Mohd Yusof (right in photo) and deputy chairperson Wan Ahmad Wan Omar (left in photo) are Umno members.

The NGO urged that future EC members should not be political party members or retired civil servants, and that election laws should be reviewed and reformed according to the world's "best practices" to make the commission more relevant to the public.

"These concerns must be urgently addressed before the 13th general election.

"Proham therefore calls upon the government to immediately undertake to introduce electoral reforms that could be adopted and implemented well before the election day," they said.

The group condemned the use of violence both by the police and protesters at the rally, but observed that, on the whole, the protesters were peaceful while the police had exercised restraint.

Police crackdown unnecessary, says HRW

Meanwhile in a separate statement, international NGO Human Rights Watch (HRW) condemned the police crackdown as unnecessary.

NONE"The use of water cannons and teargas against peaceful protesters shows the Malaysian police were out of control, not the demonstrators.

"The government should stop patting itself on the back and promptly investigate why unnecessary force was used and punish those responsible," said HRW deputy Asia director Philip Robertson.

He said the NGO observed police officers using teargas and water cannons against protesters who were already running or were far away from Dataran Merdeka, where there was a court order barring the demonstrators from entering.

In addition, it noted that roadblocks were set up and train services were shut down nearby, making it difficult for people to leave.

Quoting the United Nations Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials, HRW said the police should have used violence only when other means are ineffective, and even then it should be restricted to the minimum necessary.

Both HRW and Proham called for an investigation on the use of excessive violence by the police,

and action against protesters who behaved violently against the police.

In addition, Robertson questioned the government's seriousness in its political reform efforts, in view of how the Peaceful Assembly Act (PAA) was used.

"The authorities' use of the new PAA to try to prevent, rather than facilitate, the Bersih rally raises serious concerns about the government's reform efforts more generally," he said of the law that came into force on April 23, just five days before the rally.

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