

Malaysiakini protests violence against journalists
MalaysiaKini.com
May 03, 2012
By Koh Jun Lin

Malaysiakini today held a 30-minute protest against violence against journalists, in conjunction with the World Press Freedom Day.

The protest took place at noon outside the online portal's office in Bangsar Utama, Kuala Lumpur.

Joining about 50 members of Malaysiakini staff were reporters from other media organisations and members of the public.

Almost all present, including reporters covering the protest, were wearing black to express outrage at the assaults on their colleagues during the Bersih 3.0 rally on April 28.

NONEThey also sported yellow ribbons symbolising press freedom.

Between shouts of "Stop violence", and, "Free the press," Malaysiakini editor-in-chief Steven Gan and chief editor Fathi Aris Omar read out their demands:

- * All culprits of the attacks are to be brought to trial in open court after an independent panel investigates the violence during the Bersih 3.0.

- * All parties are to return - in its original condition - any press material seized to their respective owners, and compensate for any injuries or damages suffered by the reporters and to their equipment.

- * All parties including the government, the authorities, civil society groups are to stop physical attacks against journalists on duty.

NONEHolding his press tag, Gan (right) said, "This is our badge of honour. In some countries, this badge is a death warrant.

"In Malaysia, increasingly it is an invitation to beat up the journalists. This must stop."

The reporters covering the protests, including those from Free Malaysia Today, Suara Keadilan and Oriental Daily, uncharacteristically chanted along with the slogans, and joined in for the photo session later to pose with Malaysiakini staff holding up placards.

Among the placards were those that read, 'Stop Violence Against Journalists', 'We are Armed with a Mighty Pen' and 'Honk for Press Freedom', which drew enthusiastic response from many motorists. .

NONEAlso present to show support were Annie Ooi Siew Lan, better known as 'Aunty Bersih', Kampung Tunku assemblyperson Lau Weng San, Bersih steering committee member Hishamuddin Rais, Centre for Independent Journalism executive officer Masjaliza Hamzah and Malay Mail photojournalist Muhammad Arif Kartono, who had previously alleged that he was assaulted by police officers at the rally.

Around 10 police officers kept watch until the peaceful protest ended at about 12.30pm but did not interfere.

'At least 10 journalists assaulted'

At least 10 journalists have alleged that they were harassed, beaten, arrested, or hit by tear gas canisters during Saturday's rally for electoral reform, all but one at the hands of the police.

They include The Sun reporter Mohd Radzi Razak, Malaysiakini photographer and reporter Koh Jun Lin, Makkal Osai photographer P Malayandy, Al Jazeera's camera crew led by correspondent Harry Fawcett, Guang Ming Daily photographer Huang An Jian, Channel News Asia videographer Kenny Lew, Merdeka Review assistant editor Chen Shaua Fui, and The Malaysian Insider reporter Lisa J Ariffin.

Many of them also claimed that police had either confiscated or destroyed their equipment, such as cameras, memory cards and tripods.

Meanwhile, TV Al-Hijrah videographer Mohd Azri Mohd Salleh alleged that he was beaten by protesters when he tried to save a police officer under mob attack.

Two of the reporters, Mohd Azri and Mohd Radzi, were admitted to hospital for their injuries.

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Source: <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/196803>