

Suhakam: Police violated human rights in Bersih 2.0
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The police had violated human rights when they fired tear gas in the vicinity of public amenities during the Bersih 2.0 rally last July, the Human Rights Commission (Suhakam) says.

tear gas fire at tung shin hospital 090711 1" There was infringement of human rights by the police in some instances, especially when tear gas was fired at the vicinity of public (amenities) like Tung Shin Hospital, Chinese Maternity Hospital and KL Sentral, where public safety was at risk.

"In the case of Tung Shin Hospital, even if the tear gas had not been fired directly into the compound, firing it along Jalan Pudu was in itself hazardous to the people in the hospital, as it is in the vicinity of the hospital," Suhakam vice-chairperson Khaw Lake Tee said at a press conference today at Suhakam headquarters.

The report also states that water cannons were indeed fired into the vicinity of the Tung Shin Hospital, based on eyewitness statements and video clips.

However, they could not determine if the water entered or hit the main building, which houses the patients.

"Assistant superintendent of police (ASP) Halimi Hamidi, who was the operations officer in charge of the water cannons, admitted that he knew that the Tung Shin Hospital and the Chinese Maternity Hospital were in the area, but kept using the water cannons to disperse the protesters," the report says.

bersih rally 090711 police shooting into tung shin hospital front image According to Halimi's testimony, he had not been notified beforehand that the hospitals were in the area, and it was only after he had opened fire with the water cannons at 3.13pm that day.

"In addition, the water cannon trucks used by the police were old and this heightens the safety risk and risk of carelessness of the officers handling the vehicles," says the report, noting that this may have influenced the judgments of the officers handling the vehicles.

Specifically, the old layers of plastic on the windscreens of the vehicle made it difficult for the officers to assess the situation outside.

Therefore, when the protesters ran into the hospital, Halimi did not know not to fire as he could not see it was a hospital that the protesters ran into.

The panel's report also noted that there were doubts as to whether notice was given to the police units around the area about the locations of places of public importance such as hospitals, schools and places of worship, stressing that such information must be disseminated to the officers on duty.

NONE Khaw (right) was reading out the commission's 40-page report after a public inquiry on human rights infringements before and after last year's July 9 rally.

She pointed out that accessibility to the areas were restricted, when the tear gas was fired, adding "although there is evidence that several demonstrators charged towards the police, the panel finds that the methods used by police to disperse the crowd at KL Sentral were not suitable due to its location".

"The police's method to disperse the crowd should be in accordance with public safety. The usage of tear gas to disperse a crowd in a half-enclosed area can increase risks of people getting injured. Thus it should not be allowed," she said.

The lack of on-field coordination among the personnel on duty at KL Sentral was also criticised.

NONEKhaw highlighted that the police personnel should constantly keep in communication and be aware of measures taken by fellow officers.

“The tear gas was fired from two opposite directions, which could have caused serious injuries or fatalities of the people in the vicinity.

“The panel also found that tear gas canisters were not shot aimed at the ground but had hit people in several instances,” Khaw said.

The report also noted that the participants did not display aggressive behaviour towards the police, even giving way to a police vehicle without incident.

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