

UN special rapporteur willing to probe Bersih 3.0
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The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression, Frank La Rue, has offered to conduct an independent investigation, research and assessment on the Bersih 3.0 rally on April 28.

La Rue told *Malaysiakini* that he had also offered to investigate the Bersih 2.0 rally last July as he happened to be in the country the day after.

"I was there exactly the day after everything had happened and it was very impressive for me because that gave me a chance to see what can happen when people just get together. They told me it was shocking, there were people with families and children.

"I understood that the rally participants were not defiant or aggressive, but still they (the police) acted brutally. It just did not make sense and it showed their intention was to close the space (for freedom of expression) which I think was unnecessary at that point," he said.

La Rue, who is a lawyer who hails from Guatemala but now based in Geneva, said following reports of Bersih 3.0, he was more than willing to come to Malaysia.

"I would be more than happy to investigate. (However) I would need a government invitation to do the research and report," he said.

La Rue, was met on the sidelines of the World Press Freedom Conference in Tunis, which ended yesterday where he delivered a talk on the decriminalising of speech.

On May 3rd, Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak had announced that a panel would be set up to provide an independent investigation into incidents that occurred during the Bersih 3.0 rally.

He said he supported the formation of the panel, as did the cabinet, adding that they were in the process of identifying who would sit on it, and an announcement might be made this week.

The Malaysian Bar Council has also announced in an official circular that it will hold an extraordinary general meeting on Friday to discuss issues pertinent to Bersih 3.0 rally.

The Bar Council in its interim report found that police brutality had worsened.

Inquiry mission

On July 11 last year, it was reported that La Rue had said the Malaysian government risked undermining democratic progress and he thought the time was right to have a mission to inquire into these issues.

He wanted the government to officially invite him as rapporteur to research the subject and make recommendations on how to avoid future conflict but did not receive an invitation from the Malaysian government.

The Human Rights Council has mechanisms called special procedures to address either specific country situations or thematic issues in all parts of the world.

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights provides these mechanisms with personnel, policy, research and logistical support for the discharge of their mandates.

Special procedures' mandates usually call on mandate holders to examine, monitor, advise and publicly report on human rights situations in specific countries or territories, or on major phenomena of human rights violations worldwide, known as thematic mandates.

Special procedures are performed either by an individual called "special rapporteur" or "independent expert", or a working group usually composed of five members (one from each region) .

The Malaysia Human Rights Commission had on May 4th in its report on the Bersih 2.0 rally found that police had violated human rights.

Malaysia is also a member of the United Nations Human Rights Council until next year.

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