

Proham derides Hanif panel as 'weakest' option
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Human rights watchdog Proham said the Home Ministry had chosen the “weakest” of options available to investigate the violence which occurred during the Bersih 3.0 rally.

In a press release today, Proham said the first choice should have been a royal commission of inquiry, under the Commissions of Enquiry Act 1950, which would ensure that the investigative body would be perceived as truly neutral, effective and independent.

“It would have the powers to compel witnesses to appear before the hearing which will be deemed to be judicial proceedings.

“In addition the commission would have the legal protection from any liable suits and the witnesses who give evidence will be protected from any liable suits or other civil proceedings in respect of such evidence,” said Proham.

The group said other options includes exploring the powers of the Human Rights Commission (Suhakam) and the newly established Enforcement Agency Integrity Commission (EAIC).

“Both these commissions have commissioners appointed by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong and have the legal powers to undertake an independent inquiry,” said the group.

Best options not used

The group said that this was a better option than the independent panel established by the home ministry yesterday and led by former inspector-general of police Hanif Omar.

They claim that the panel did not have the necessary legal powers to conduct a proper investigation and also lacked balance in ethnic and gender representation.

“With the government not taking the above options, but instead appointing a panel without independent legal powers to properly investigate abuses, the home minister’s action can be perceived as opting to the weakest option available.

“It will difficult to regain public confidence when the best available options are not utilised especially during a time when our society is divided on what really transpired during the Bersih Rally on April 28,” said the group.

Proham, or Association for the Promotion of Human Rights, is a relatively new human rights watchdog led by a group of former Human Rights Commission (Suhakam) members.

The press release today was signed by Proham chairperson Simon Sipaun, members Hamdan Adnan, Denison Jayasooria and Ramon Navaratnam.

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