

Bersih chief: It's an invasion of my privacy

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By Nicholas Wong

Bersih co-chairperson Ambiga Sreenevasan today criticised Ikhlas for setting up a burger stall outside her home in protest of traders' loss of income during the April 28 Bersih rally.

Speaking to reporters, she described the incident as an invasion of her privacy and her home, calling it a "terrible precedent" for the country.

"If the authorities accept this then ministers had better be careful, because people will be standing outside their houses next," said Ambiga (*left*), adding that she would let the public judge the situation for themselves.

While expressing concern for her family, Ambiga stressed that she was not afraid.

"Look who I have behind me," she said, referring to the leaders of the various Bersih-affiliated NGOs standing behind her.

The leaders, which included Parti Sosialis Malaysia secretary-general S Arutchelvan, Ivy Josiah of the Women's Aid Organisation and Bersih steering committee member Maria Chin Abdullah, were called at the last minute and rushed over in a show of support for Ambiga.

"This is intimidation. I will take the necessary steps.

"This has never happened in Malaysia, except to Lim Guan Eng. Now (he) and I have had our homes violated," she added, referring to a "funeral rite" held by Malay rights pressure group Perkasa outside the Penang chief minister's home earlier today

Ambiga agreed that the traders had a right to make their claims, but questioned how she was to respond to their demands as she had not been given any information on those claims. "Not even a sheet of paper has been handed to me. So what do I respond to?"

She added the traders were perfectly entitled to file their claims in court, and even sue her if they wished to. "Let the judge decide whether they have a claim."

However, they do not have the right to come to my home and behave in such a manner, she stressed.

She said she would file a police report immediately: "I have a duty to lodge a police report... this is about the whole neighbourhood, and my family."

The police were present in a patrol car during the incident, but did not act against any of the Ikhlas members.

Stunned at ex-IGP leading probe panel

Meanwhile, she repeated her opposition to the appointment of former inspector-general of police Hanif Omar as the head of the independent panel to probe incidents of violence during the Bersih 3.0.

She stressed his remarks alleging pro-communist elements in the rally recently made him unsuitable for the position.

“(Hanif) has learnt law, so he should know that (his remarks) immediately disqualify him.”

She also lamented the lack of human rights experts or assemblies on the panel, adding that they would have to reconsider Bersih’s involvement in the panel’s investigation given their lack of confidence in it.

Maria Chin Abdullah added that it was not too late to set up a different panel, if the government was sincere in resolving the issue of police violence during the rally.

However, Bersih insists the government accept UN rapporteur Frank William La Rue’s invitation to assist the panel as well as appoint Suhakam to head the panel.

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