

Protest at Ambiga's house 'not criminal offence'

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By Nigel Aw

Deputy police chief Khalid Abu Bakar said that the police will not act against petty traders for having mounted a protest outside the house of Bersih co-chairperson Ambiga Sreenevasan because it was not an offence.

"Well, there is no offence. What offence? If you want to sit in front of her house without disrupting other people, there is no offence," he told a press conference in Kuala Lumpur this afternoon.

When it was pointed out that Ambiga had complained that the protest invaded her privacy, he replied: "Which privacy? They didn't enter her house, they were in public space."

He added that "under the spirit of the Peaceful Assembly Act", everyone should be allowed to conduct a gathering.

Asked if police will act on Ambiga's police report against the protest where petty traders set up burger stalls outside her house, he said: "No, unless there is an offence being committed then we will move in.

"As long as they don't commit any offence such as trespassing on private property, we will not take action."

In clarifying the matter further later, Khalid said it is not a criminal offence but it could be an offence under the local council laws.

"Personally, I do not agree with intrusions of personal privacy," said Khalid.

The petty traders had protested outside Ambiga's house on May 10 over claims that the Bersih 3.0 rally on April 28 in Kuala Lumpur had affected their income.

However, Ambiga had condemned the protest as a violation of her privacy and said the protesters should instead file a claim in court.

Petty traders' group Ikhlas which organised the protest, has promised a bigger demonstration outside Ambiga's house on May 24.