

Journalists send protest memo to PM's Office

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A group of journalists concerned about violence and interference in the work of newsmen by the authorities during last month's Bersih 3.0 pro-electoral reform rally this morning submitted a memorandum of protest to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

The memorandum, containing nearly 4,000 signatures, was received by a special officer to the PM, Umi Hani Sharani.

"There are 2,775 signatures on our online petition, about 300 signatures sent in via physical forms and another 1,472 journalists from the National Union of Journalists, which has also expressed its support," group spokesperson Gobind Rudra said.

The memorandum and petition demand that Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak, Home Minister Hishammuddin Hussein and police chief Ismail Omar issue a public apology to journalists, conduct an impartial inquiry into the allegations of violence, return or replace seized or damaged equipment and provide reasonable restitution to those affected.

Gobind said the group would give Najib and the other authorities named until the end of the month to respond to their memo.

He noted that no action has been taken so far to address their grievances since the April 28 incidents, adding that the group is also mulling legal action and a possible class action against the relevant authorities.

Gobind led the deputation of six journalists and photographers, clad in sombre black, to mark their protest. They also wore yellow ribbons to symbolise press freedom.

They represent more than 14 newsmen who were victims of the violence.

Among the victims are *TheSun* journalist Radzi Razak (*left*) and *Guanming Daily* photographer Wong Onn Kin, who said they were beaten up by police officers while carrying out their duties during the Bersih rally.

Wong was also detained by the police and released several hours later.

Photographs of the duo apparently being beaten up by policemen spread like wildfire over the Internet and became posters for the public outcry by media practitioners against such brutality.

"They have kept quiet about this for long enough. It is time for the government to answer and respond to this," Radzi said.

He clarified that while newsmen do not hate the police, they seek justice and want journalists on duty to be given due respect and protection.

Wong wants the government to “take action” against the errant law enforcement officers responsible for the assaults.

Protests by journalists against police violence took an unprecedented turn as mainstream and alternative media donned black on World Press Freedom Day recently and some Chinese print media put out their front pages black.

Demonstrations were also held at several media offices, including at *Malaysiakini*, to protest the attacks on journalists.

About 14 journalist were harassed, beaten up and had their equipment seized or destroyed by law enforcement officers while covering Bersih 3.0.

This is seen as a new mark on the escalating violence the authorities are taking, not only against protesters but also on journalists who were documenting the entire episode.

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