

Bersih slams police manhunt and 'beating' of protester

MalaysiaKini.com

May 16, 2012

By Hazlan Zakaria

Electoral reforms pressure group Bersih today hit out at the police manhunt targeting those who attended its rally last month and the alleged brutal treatment of a protester who voluntarily turned himself in.

"There shouldn't be a hunt. If they know who those people are, send letters asking them to go to the police station.

"And Mohd Safuan Mamat (right), who went voluntarily to the police, was arrested and then beaten.

"What message are they sending to the public, when you come to cooperate and you get beaten?" Bersih coordinator Maria Chin Abdullah asked at a press conference in Kuala Lumpur today.

Bersih co-chairperson and national laureate A Samad Said, or Pak Samad as he is affectionately known, said the actions of the police were linked to earlier statements by former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamed and three former inspector-generals of police who tried to "paint Bersih as a subversive element".

The police manhunt and beating of the protester, Samad claimed, was a police trick to force confessions from the protesters so that these could be used to say that the electoral reform movement intended to topple the government.

Mohd Safuan lodged a police report yesterday saying he was detained and beaten up by police after he surrendered himself on Monday, and was forced to confess to various offences.

He lambasted the action of the police as vilifying the electoral reform movement and said they had to fight the government propaganda campaign that was trying to pollute their cause.

Samad lamented the fact that the mass media was largely owned by or influenced by the government and this allowed authorities to run riot with their lopsided portrayal of Bersih and no space for the coalition to defend itself, except through the narrow spectrum of the alternative media.

He reiterated that Bersih's intentions were just to "ensure clean and fair elections and nothing more".

Asked if the movement planned to meet up with the government to explain its intentions, he said that would not be necessary.

"Why should we meet them? They are the ones spewing slander about us. We have already made our intentions clear."

Fellow Bersih co-chairperson Hishamuddin Rais said Bersih would be gathering more than 100 of those who claimed that they were victims of police brutality during the April 28 rally at a press conference on Saturday.

"These are those who have been the target of police aggression, though we do not know if they are among those being hunted by police," Hishamuddin said.

Maria added that Bersih, together with legal teams from civil rights NGOs Lawyers For Liberty and Suaram, as well as volunteers from the Bar Council, would look into filing a class action suit on behalf of the victims of police aggression.

Source: <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/198063>