

Bersih urges Suhakam to probe police violence
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By Koh Jun Lin

Bersih has submitted a memorandum to the Malaysian Human Rights Committee (Suhakam) to hold a public inquiry on allegations of human rights violations by the police during their crackdown on Bersih 3.0.

“The brutality committed by the police force on April 28 against individuals exercising their right to peaceful assembly is the worst in recent times.

“Human rights violations of this magnitude must not be allowed to pass without uncovering the truth and ensuring justice for all victims,” read the memo submitted by Bersih’s steering committee today.

In addition to the memorandum’s demands, the six-member delegation also asked Suhakam commissioner James Nayagam to urge inspector-general of police (IGP) Ismail Omar to give an assurance that persons wanted by the police in relation to the rally would not be harmed.

The request was made in wake of Mohd Safuan Mamat’s allegations that he had been tortured while in police custody to extract a confession after he had surrendered himself on Monday.

“We are really concerned about those pictures (of wanted persons) that they (the police) have put up; of the people they were hunting and of the people who are surrendering.

“There are reasons why people are afraid to surrender to the police,” said Bersih co-chairperson Ambiga Sreenevasan when asking Suhakam to intervene.

She also expressed concern that not all those wanted by the police may be aware that they are being sought after, and suggested that allowing the suspects to be accompanied by their lawyers may be the best solution.

Other members of the delegation at Suhakam’s headquarters in Kuala Lumpur are Bersih co-chairperson A Samad Said, steering committee member Maria Chin Abdullah, Tindak Malaysia founder Wong Piang Yow and Ikram central committee member Nahar Md Nor.

Lawyers for Liberty coordinator Fadiah Nadwa Fikri was also present to explain Mohd Safuan’s allegations.

In response, Nayagam (left) said Suhakam will contact the IGP for the reassurance sought by Bersih, and will consider their request in a meeting next week.

He said that Suhakam had already decided to receive evidence and reports related to Bersih before deciding the next course of action, and that this was the 14th report received.

Speaking at a press conference after submitting the memorandum, Ambiga said she intends to challenge the court order that temporarily closed Dataran Merdeka during the Bersih rally.

“A lot of people are being charged because of that order, so we want to challenge the validity of that order and because I’m named in that order, I have the locus standi to do that,” she said.

She also denied that a Suhakam inquiry would be in conflict with the government’s independent panel to investigate the violence at the Bersih 3.0, because Suhakam has the power to compel witnesses to testify at its inquiry, and has experience in human rights issues.

When pointed out by reporters that Suhakam’s findings and recommendations on previous instances of police brutality were largely ignored, Ambiga said the findings would ideally be adopted, but the inquiry

itself is also important.

“The process of the inquiry is very important because even if the government is not going to pay attention, the inquiry is going to be public and the public have a right to know what happened that day. For me, that is the value of the Suhakam inquiry,” she said.

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