

Bersih 3.0 probe panel yet to get green light

MalaysiaKini.com

May 18, 2012

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Former inspector general of police Mohd Hanif Omar, head of the newly-formed independent panel to probe Bersih 3.0 violence, told *Malaysiakini* that he has yet to receive the terms reference, hence the panel is yet to hold its first meeting.

“We have yet to obtain the terms of reference for the panel. Probably, we will get it next week after the (home) minister receives a briefing,” said Hanif (*left*) in a brief SMS message.

“Until we get the terms of reference the panel cannot make any substantive comment,” he said, when asked to comment on the positions taken by the Bar Council and Bersih that they would not participate in the panel’s hearing.

The terms of reference are a set of guidelines on the matters to be investigated by the six-member panel and how they should go about it.

The six-member panel was announced by Home Minister Hishammuddin Hussein on May 9, after Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak had agreed to its formation.

The panel is not a Royal Commission of Inquiry or an inquiry panel like the Malaysian Human Rights Commission (Suhakam).

Hence, Bar Council president Lim Chee Wee (*right in photo*) argued that the panel lacks the legal clout or immunity like a RCI or a Suhakam inquiry to handle proceedings and call witnesses to testify.

The Bar Council, like Bersih, wants the United Nations special rapporteur for Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression, Frank La Rue, to be part of an independent panel.

The council also prefers retired Chief Judge of Sabah and Sarawak Steve Shim to head the panel.

Bersih 2.0 co-chairperson Ambiga Sreenevasan has commented that she was horrified with Hanif’s appointment.

The former IGP came under fire for remarking that he saw pro-communist individuals who were involved in a protest in 1970s also participating in Bersih’s April 28 rally.