

'Gov't a fearmonger in aftermath of Bersih'

MalaysiaKini.com

May 27, 2012

By Leven Woon

Activists taking part in a candlelight vigil last night to commemorate the one-month anniversary of the mammoth Bersih 3.0 rally have all concurred that the government has been a fearmonger in the past month.

Bersih vigil Maria Chin Abdullah Speaking to reporters at a bus stand outside KL Lake Garden, where the vigil was held, Bersih steering committee member Maria Chin Abdullah (left) said the government “has gone all out to hunt” for members of the Bersih committee and their supporters after the April 28 rally.

She said the coalition is appalled that the police have yet again committed another round of brutality by beating up those who were named in the wanted list and surrendered themselves, such as in the case of student leader Mohd Safuan Mamat.

“When you surrender, you do not expect them to beat you up again, but this was not the case.

“Now (out of the 141 mugshots in the wanted list), they only released 36 over names. The remaining 100, who are they?

“Their intention is to strike fear among the public,” she said.

Suaram executive director E Nalini, while echoing Maria’s points, opined that the intensive scaremongering has however helped to breed a new courageous generation.

“While they were creating fears, people also began knowing their rights. We have people calling us every day for legal advice.

“Perhaps five years ago we wouldn’t have had so many people who are brave enough to come forward and give testimony. But now Bersih has made them so brave,” she said.

PSM secretary-general S Arutchelvan compared the aftermaths of Bersih 2.0 and 3.0 and pointed out that the government was only creating fears this time.

“Previously the rally had prompted them to form a parliamentary select committee, but this time around, I do not see them carrying out reforms.

“They only tried to go on the offensive, publish wanted list pictures, spread fears, in the hope that by fear people will draw back,” he said.

Fresh campaign to demand police reforms

The three were part of a group of 30 people who attended the hour-long vigil to condemn police brutality in light of the one-month Bersih anniversary.

Bersih vigil Displaying placards that read, 'Police should be neutral, free from political influence' and 'Police ensure public security, not the other way round', the protesters chanted: "Good police, we like, bad police, we condemn."

When asked about their immediate plans, Maria said Bersih will restart the 'Jom 100 For 100 percent Voter Turnout' campaign next month to states such as Kedah and Terengganu.

She said apart from bringing back attention to Bersih's core agenda, the coalition will be racing against time to engage more rural voters on the importance of voting.

Nalini and Arutchelvan, on the other hand, will launch a fresh campaign to press for reforms in the police force, which include the long-abandoned idea of setting up an Independent Police Complaints and Misconduct Commission (IPCMC).

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