

Let UN special rapporteurs in, Bersih tells gov't
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Bersih has once again called on the government to allow requests made by three United Nations human rights special rapporteurs to visit Malaysia.

"Bersih believes that their visit would contribute to the realisation of the fundamental human rights of opinion, expression and peaceful assembly in Malaysia, in accordance with international norms.

"Malaysia, as a member of the UN Human Rights Council should not fear the consequences of such visits," said Bersih in a statement yesterday.

It noted that UN special rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and opinion Maina Kiai and special rapporteur on human rights defenders Margaret Sekaggya (left) have called on the Malaysian government to respect the fundamental rights to freedom of opinion, expression and peaceful assembly.

Both have also reiterated their request to officially visit Malaysia.

On June 7, it was reported that Kiai, Sekaggaya and UN special rapporteur for promotion and protection of the freedom of opinion and expression, Frank La Rue, had condemned the intimidation and harassment faced by Bersih co-chairperson Ambiga Sreenevasan.

This follows the suit filed by the government against Ambiga and several Bersih steering committee members, as well as a number of protests in front of Ambiga's residence.

Welcome them with open arms

Bersih added that the Malay adage "Berani kerana benar, takut kerana salah" (Brave to be true, afraid to be wrong) is apt.

"If the Malaysian government is confident of its human rights record, it should welcome the special rapporteurs with open arms," the statement said.

Indonesia and Pakistan, it noted, are two other Muslim-majority countries in the region, that have already received La Rue and Malaysia should follow suit and allow the special rapporteurs to come.

On May 8, Bersih had also pressured the government to invite the special rapporteurs following La Rue's offer (photo above) to come and investigate the April 28 rally.

