

Bersih 3.0 protester 'hit by tear gas canister'
MalaysiaKini.com
July 11, 2012
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A participant at the Bersih 3.0 rally has claimed that she was hit by a tear gas canister, presumably aimed directly at those gathered along Jalan Tun Perak in Kuala Lumpur on April 28.

Software training consultant Chong Min Shih, 37, told the Human Rights Commission (Suhakam) that she lost "consciousness" when the canister struck the right side of her neck.

"Something hit me and I could feel myself falling but I couldn't control my movements. I fell to the ground and lost consciousness for a few seconds," she said today.

"Someone in the crowd pulled me to the side of Jalan Tun Perak and told me that I was hit by a tear gas canister.

"People in the crowd helped me clean my wound, and a friend brought me a pack of ice to cover the injury which was beginning to swell."

Chong was testifying on the second day of Suhakam's public inquiry into alleged human rights violations during the rally for clean and fair elections. She is the fourth witness to be called.

She said she had made her way to Jalan Tun Perak from Kuala Lumpur City Centre (KLCC) towards Dataran, together with her friends.

"The atmosphere was carnival-like. There were people singing, chatting and walking towards Dataran. People were buying drinks and food.

"We were trying to make our way to Dataran but we couldn't. We were still near the CIMB Bank on Jalan Tun Perak when we saw tear gas canisters flying in the air.

"Everyone was trying to get away. That's when I felt something hit me," said Chong, noting it was about 3pm then.

She added that she made her way back to KLCC with her friends and consulted a doctor in a clinic in the shopping centre. Scars of the circle-shaped injury was also shown to the panel.

According to the medical report, the doctor treated Chong's neck injury with anti-inflammatory medication and dressed the wound which was noted as possibly caused by a "blunt object".

However, Chong told the panel that she neglected lodging a police report as she was afraid of the police and not confident that they would act on her complaint.

Upon being questioned by ACP Jamaluddin Abdul Rahman, who is holding a watching brief for the police, Chong said that she disagreed that the rally was an illegal assembly.

'Assaulted, taunted and robbed'

Fifth witness Arshad Abbas, 32, claimed that on top of being assaulted and taunted, his belongings were taken from him.

He told the panel that a police officer had reached for his Samsung Galaxy tablet, mobile phone, USB flash drive, Bluetooth headphones which were in his backpack, without his permission.

Arshad, who was working with Astro as a customer service officer at that time, added that his watch was also taken when he was captured near Masjid India.

He related that he had arrived in the national capital at about 10am in Puduraya on his motorcycle and hung around Jalan Tun Perak and Masjid Jamek, he then joined the "thousands" that gathered after 2pm.

"When we were informed to disperse I was preparing to leave the place and ran into several police officers but I manage to get away. I was meeting my brother at Masjid India, that was when I was caught," he said.

"I was surrounded by eight cops and they ordered me to change my yellow Bersih T-shirt. When I was reaching for my spare clothing in my backpack they suddenly started beating me up, they kicked and hit me in the face.

"That's when I noticed a hand reaching into my bag. I lost my Samsung Tab 7.0, a watch and clothes that I intended to change into," said Arshad insisting that it was a police personnel who took his things.

'Barua Anwar'

He said he was taunted and called 'Barua Anwar' (Anwar's coolie), and claimed that he was being beaten up because the police believed that their colleague was "harmed by the protesters" and wanted "to take revenge".

He also sustained five stitches above his right eyelid, and lodged a police report detailing his experience.

The public inquiry is probing into human rights violation during the clashes that occurred after police fired tear gas and water cannons to disperse nearly 100,000 demonstrators, following a breach of the barricades in front of Dataran Merdeka.

Police reasoned that the use of force was necessary to prevent "a riot" following the breach of a court order barring Bersih 3.0 and the public from entering the historic square through the April 28 weekend.

More than a dozen tear gas canisters were launched at the crowd forcing them to retreat north of Jalan Raja Laut while some ran towards Jalan Tun Perak as police and the riot squads moved in.

The panel is headed by Suhakam vice-chairperson Khaw Lake Tee and assisted by commissioners Detta Samen and Mahmood Zuhdi A Majid, who had also sat through the Bersih 2.0 inquiry.

Roger Chan held the watching brief for the Bar Council and Bersih committee was

represented by Daniel Albert and Andrew Khoo. The inquiry resumes at 2pm on July 16.

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