

**Zahid: Why Sosma for Maria? Ask IGP and AG**  
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Asked about the use of the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act 2012 (Sosma) against Bersih chief Maria Chin Abdullah, Home Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi passed the buck to the attorney-general and the inspector-general of police.

“On that, we ask that the attorney-general and the inspector-general of police answer. I don’t want to touch on their operational matters,” he told reporters during a press conference in Kuala Lumpur today.

Maria was arrested on Friday during a raid on Bersih’s office. The pro-electoral reform group was being investigated under Section 124C of the Penal Code over allegations that it had received funding from the Open Society Foundations, linked to American billionaire George Soros.

The provision criminalises attempts to ‘commit activities detrimental to parliamentary democracy’, and carries a penalty of up to 15 years’ imprisonment.

Maria is being held under Sosma, which among others allows for an extended detention period of up to 28 days upon approval from the courts, for security offences, including Section 124C.

Her arrest came just a day before she was to lead the Bersih 5 rally yesterday, which saw the turnout of some 40,000 Bersih supporters as well as 4,000 red-shirt counter-demonstrators.

Several groups had questioned the move, in particular the use of what is meant to be an anti-terrorism law against a pro-democracy activist.

“Maria is a human rights defender and not a terrorist. She and Bersih are merely seeking reform of the current electoral system in Malaysia to ensure free, clean and fair elections.

“This cannot be detrimental to, or undermine parliamentary democracy. On the contrary, it **strengthens** parliamentary democracy,” said the Society for the Promotion of Human Rights (Proham) in a statement yesterday.

Also arrested in what has been labeled as a crackdown against Bersih's leadership were Mandeep Singh, Safwan Anang and Hishamuddin Rais.

Bersih deputy chairperson Shahrol Aman Mohd Saari, who was appointed as acting chairperson today, **vowed** to continue the group’s struggle.

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