

1,000 at Maria Chin vigil told to get off Dataran Merdeka
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Some 1,000 Bersih supporters standing vigil last night in protest against the arrest of the movement's leader Maria Chin Abdullah were ordered to vacate their Dataran Merdeka venue.

However, the event continued without any further incident until its conclusion at 10.30pm, after organisers agreed to comply with Kuala Lumpur City Hall's (DBKL) instructions and shifted the crowd to the adjacent Jalan Raja.

A notice posted on an electronic screen at Dataran Merdeka said the historic venue was closed by the order of the mayor, from 5pm until 7am on the following day, from Nov 22 until Nov 29.

"Any person who remains on Dataran Merdeka or refuses to follow the order can be expelled from Dataran Merdeka," the notice states.

No reason was given for Dataran Merdeka's closure.

The vigil was held to protest Maria's [arrest on Nov 18](#), which was on the eve of the Bersih 5 rally.

She is being investigated under Section 124C of the Penal Code for attempting "activities detrimental to parliamentary democracy", and is also being held under the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act 2012 (Sosma).

A [habeas corpus application](#) was filed yesterday to secure her release, and the hearing is slated for case management tomorrow.

The vigil is to be held at Dataran Merdeka daily until Maria's release, and the crowd had swelled from about 650 on its [first day](#) on Monday, to some 1,000 last night.

"Free Maria! Abolish Sosma!" the crowd last night chanted.

Most of the participants were dressed in Bersih's signature yellow colour, while some of them held up "Free Maria" placards.

The event started at Dataran Merdeka about 8pm, and the crowd shifted to Jalan Raja at 8.45pm, after the organisers were told to vacate the venue by a group of DBKL enforcement officers. A group of police officers also kept watch nearby.

One of the speakers last night was activist [Isaiah Jacob](#), who had been [fasting and praying](#) at Dataran Merdeka for a week in the run-up to the Bersih 5 rally.

Isaiah vowed to continue to fast and pray until Maria's release.

"Until they release Maria Chin, I will remain here," he told the cheering crowd while balancing on his crutches.

Among the other speakers at the event last night were former Bersih co-chairpersons Ambiga Sreenevasan and A Samad Said, Tangkap MO1 spokesperson Anis Syafiqah Md Yusof, Himpunan Hijau chairperson Wong Tack and activist Fahmi Reza.

Also addressing the crowd were Gelang Patah MP Lim Kit Siang and Petaling Jaya Utara MP Tony Pua, who said they had left the budget debates in Parliament briefly to join the vigil, before heading back to vote on the 2017 budget.

Bersih secretariat member Mandeep Singh told the crowd that Maria would be the happiest person to learn that Bersih supporters had gathered at Jalan Raja.

"We had negotiated with the police together with Ambiga on the Nov 19 rally, and they said we may not enter Jalan Raja. We said, 'It's okay. We will be nearby from Dataran Merdeka.'

"But today, friends, we have entered Jalan Raja and it is Maria who will be the happiest person, because we are here. Maria, today we are here," Mandeep said.

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