

Cops quiz ex-Bersih treasurer over OSF funding

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The police have recorded a statement from former Bersih treasurer Masjaliza Hamzah over funds which the electoral reform group received from Open Society Foundations (OSF), linked to American billionaire George Soros.

Her statement was recorded at the Bukit Aman police headquarters in Kuala Lumpur at 3pm today.

Called in as a witness, Masjaliza later told reporters that the questions were related to Bersih, its accounts and its purported links to Soros and the OSF.

Masjaliza, however, said she did not answer any of the questions posed to her.

"I feel that it is almost a waste of resources in terms of their priorities, certainly for Bukit Aman.

"It is a form of harassment for NGOs, especially Bersih - an NGO clearly there to fight for free and fair elections. This is something that shouldn't happen," she added.

Apart from Masjaliza, a string of NGO leaders had been previously called up for questioning over the OSF funds.

Bersih is being investigated under Section 124C of the Penal Code which concerns attempts to carry out activities detrimental to parliamentary democracy.

The movement's chairperson Maria Chin Abdullah was detained in November last year under the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act (Sosma) for 10 days.

Police had also raided Bersih's office and seized several documents.

Meanwhile, Maria, who was also present, urged the authorities to stop harassing NGOs.

"There's nothing wrong with taking foreign funding. It is for human rights and democracy building, there's no reason for them to harass NGOs.

"The role of NGOs is for check and balance; are they saying there is no need to check and balance? Harassing us means there's no need for us to be your check and balance."

On another matter, Maria also gave her take on students from Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM), Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia (UIA) and Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) who were facing disciplinary action from their respective universities for participating in the Bersih 5 rally.

This, said Maria, was a form of harassment by the police as well as the Education Ministry for penalising students who had demonstrated in a “democratic and peaceful assembly”.

“Bersih condemns their action, we strongly disagree with penalising the students,” she said, adding that they should not be penalised for pursuing democratic ideas.

“We want to call upon universities involved to stop the disciplinary actions and future harassments.”

Two student activists from UMS were the latest to be **summoned** to attend a disciplinary hearing on Jan 25 over their participation in the Bersih 5 rally.

Suara Mahasiswa UMS chairperson Mukmin Nantang and former "Tangkap MO1" coalition member Nurul Aqilah Muhammad Zainuzi joined a growing list of students being threatened with disciplinary actions under the University and University Colleges Act 1971.

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