

'Why did police let off pro-ISA hecklers?'

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Three activists and a lawyer arrested last night for protesting against the Internal Security Act have levelled a charge of 'double standards' against the Penang police.

They want to know why the police did not act against a group of 'troublemakers' - who are allegedly linked to Umno - at the Penang Speaker's Square last night.

penang isa vigil 010810 pro isa gangPSM central committee member Choo Chon Kai, speaking to reporters outside the Jelutong police station about 12.30am today after his release, said the group - which claimed to be 'pro-ISA supporters' (right) - had been "very rough" and had tried to incite the crowd to violence.

Instead of acting against them, said Choo, the police arrested him and fellow-protestors.

"This is the real face of the people who support the ISA. They have a very fascist face; this is their real colour. It shows their mentality, that they are still trapped in the colonial past," he said.

"Unfortunately, the police have also acted in the same manner as they cracked down on activists in Kuala Lumpur and Penang."

The quartet was arrested last night after failing to comply with a police order to disperse within five minutes, issued at 8.50pm by Georgetown district police chief Gan Kong Meng. He warned the protestors that they would be arrested if they did not comply.

However, about 10 individuals, claiming to be members of a pro-ISA group, were let off. Just before the rally was due to start, they shouted the '1Malaysia' slogan - 'People First, Performance Now' - and told the activists not to disturb the public.

At one point, while the activists were negotiating with the authorities about their intention to rally, the group was seen pushing Choo towards the police, causing a commotion.

high chapparal village 060609 muammar kris khairaKris Khaira (left), an activist, said it was obvious what the ISA stands for - to arrest those with whose views the government does not agree.

"For example, during the incident at the Speaker's Square, there were more people in the group of ISA supporters but they were allowed to be provocative," he claimed.

"They were there to instigate a fight, to turn the situation into violence. Although they were louder than us and had arrived earlier, why were they not arrested? Why arrest only us?"

His father, lawyer Darshan Singh Khaira, who was also arrested last night, expressed surprise over police action.

"In the last few years, they had allowed activities like this. The police used to give us 40 minutes and then tell us to disperse. I do not know why they (have acted) like this (now)," he said.

'Police have my shirt'

Suaram coordinator Ong Jing Cheng, who had been dragged off by the police and pushed into a truck as he was speaking to reporters, complained that he had been stripped of his black shirt with the anti-ISA logo while giving his statement at the police station.

penang isa vigil 010810 ong jing cheng arrested "My shirt is now with the police for investigation," quipped Ong (in truck), when released together with Choo.

He condemned Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's 1Malaysia slogan, questioning its sincerity when people are arrested for protesting against an archaic law.

"We want to repeal the law, not just amend it, which is why we had planned to rally to express our views," he said.

Pantai Jerejak PKR assemblyperson Sim Tze Tsin, who was at the police station when the activists were released, condemned the 'high-handed' approach of the police and said it was an indication of BN's fear.

"The police may have arrested four people tonight, but there are thousands out there who condemn the ISA. We hope after tonight, there will be another wave of people's power to protest the ISA," he said.

Gan said the police had taken action after receiving information about potential trouble and agitation by certain groups.

penang isa vigil 010810 ocpd pcHe justified the arrests under the Police Act and Section 143 of the Penal Code, which allows the police to act against those deemed to be part of an 'illegal assembly'.

Asked why the police had not arrest the pro-ISA group, Gan replied that they had complied with the order to disperse.

Those arrested have been released on police bail after their statements were recorded. They will have to report to the Jelutong station on Aug 14.

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