

French reporter submits memo condemning attack
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French photojournalist Halim Berbar, assaulted on Aug 16 while covering nomination day for the Permatang Pauh by-election, said that he is not interested in blaming anyone for the incident but condemns violence against all press members.
MCPX

"I don't want to know who did it or which party or whatever.

"As journalists we have every right to carry out our duties without fear of harassment and physical assaults," said Berbar.

french journalist attacked in permatang pauh parliament pc 210808 04

In a memorandum submitted to parliamentarians today, Berbar appealed to both ruling and opposition representatives to recognise and respect the role of the media in the country.

"We are kicked, hit, slapped around and ridiculed for doing our job or for telling the truth," said Berbar (right) who is also the Asia Pacific Managing Director of the HBL Press News Agency.

Berbar and New Straits Times photographer Mohamad Sairien Nafis were assaulted last weekend while covering the Permatang Pauh by-election nomination day.

Two people, including Batu PKR division deputy chief Mohd Noor Kamil Abd Samad, have been held in connection with the attack on the two.

The arrested duo have maintained that they were protecting the journalists from a mob.

Berbar has also confirmed that one of the arrested men was, in fact, trying to help him and the other newsman.

Professionalism lacking

The police did not escape Berbar's ire as he pointed out that it was irresponsible for the police to have disregarded their duty in managing the crowd and were instead preoccupied with escorting BN leaders at the nomination centre.

"Early this month a Chinese newspaper photographer was kicked, choked and hit on the head while working.

"A foreign photojournalist's camera was damaged while covering the fuel price hike rally last month and at least three press representatives were hurt when a scuffle broke out after a live telecast of the fuel price hike debate recently," Berbar pointed out.

permatang pauh by election nomination day 160808 32 "We call on the police and security forces to put in place effective crowd management measures to ensure such untoward incidences do not happen in the future.

"The incident on Aug 16 reeks of un-professionalism especially since it was blatantly clear that there was alarming tension between the ruling and opposition political party members and supporters," added Berbar.

After formally submitting the memorandum, Berbar continued to gather signatures from media members covering parliament's proceedings.

He said he had already collected over a hundred signatures which will be submitted to PKR de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim.

He revealed that the French Embassy in Kuala Lumpur had also written a letter of complaint to Anwar concerning the conduct of some of his party supporters.

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