

**Peaceful Assembly Bill An Affront To Democracy**

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Persatuan Kesedaran Komuniti Selangor (EMPOWER) opposes strongly the proposed Peaceful Assembly Bill as it is an affront to the Federal Constitution, where Article 10 fully guarantees every citizens the right to speech, assembly and association.

EMPOWER demands the total and immediate withdrawal of the proposed Peaceful Assembly Bill.

EMPOWER is deeply disappointed that the ruling government has viewed citizens' voices and their assertion of rights as a threat rather than a resource to build democracy and human rights.

As it stands, police are already empowered to break up demonstrations, arrest participants, and use brute force if orders to disperse are not promptly obeyed. Most public rallies are routinely denied permits. The introduction of the proposed Peaceful Assembly Bill only serves to increase the powers of the police, where abuses will be even more unfettered and unconstrained.

Such a ludicrous proposal is completely out of sync with the demands of democracy, and freedom will be a watershed issue if the government continues to repress and oppress critical expressions. The government again seeks to further curtail and stifle constructive and critical expressions of political and social issues.

There are many ways to deal with the issue of public assemblies and rallies. To begin with, amend section 27 of the Police Act which requires a police permit. A notification of seven days from the organisers will suffice for the police to conduct traffic control and security.

Steps can also be taken to conduct more effective human rights education and practical training of law enforcement officers, with the view of changing mindsets and attitudes in relation to the right of peaceful assembly. A spirit of negotiation and upholding of human rights should be instilled in law enforcers in order for peaceful assemblies to happen.

Once again there is a need to reiterate the call to set up the Independent Police Complaints and Misconduct Commission (IPCMC) to ensure enforcement and implementation are monitored to eliminate abuse of powers.

EMPOWER demands for the withdrawal of the proposed Peaceful Assembly Bill. Malaysians are matured and any attempts to suppress their democratic rights will be met with the wrath of the rakyat. 9 July will be a reminder of the power of the freedom and justice loving Malaysians.

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