

Why The U-turn On Bersih 3.0?

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I regret to read the decision of the Home Minister, Hishammuddin Hussein, to 'legitimise' a police crackdown on tomorrow's Bersih 3.0 rally. Given Hishammuddin had claimed only last week that Bersih 3.0 was not a threat to national security, why the sudden change of heart and policy on the public gathering? What has changed?

The Home Minister's U-turn decision regarding the peaceful assembly planned this Saturday (28 April 2012), is symptomatic of the Malaysian government's lack of respect towards its electorate and its high-handedness in dealing with dissenting views. This change of approach by the Home Minister is yet another case of flip-flop decision making, at the very last minute, by the Barisan Nasional government.

The government's issue is apparently with the venue of the gathering. One would think that Dataran Merdeka is a fine location for Bersih 3.0 given its historic implications. Additionally, it is a public space meant for the rakyat. The Home Minister's warning that the police will take necessary action against the participants of Bersih 3.0, if it is held in Dataran Merdeka, is a clear sign that Malaysia is a police state controlled menacingly by the BN. Malaysians would appear to have no freedom of speech and assembly.

With the government and KL Mayor's decision to cordon off Dataran Merdeka beginning 6am this morning (27 April 2012), the rakyat is left with no other impression but to believe that the Mayor is a tool of the BN government and that Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak is insincere with his ideologies of transformation in Malaysia.

As the 13th General Election is around the corner, the Prime Minister can exemplify our great founding father of democracy, Tunku Abdul Rahman, by allowing the Bersih 3.0 participants to merely gather and voice their calls for free and fair elections, at Dataran Merdeka. This gathering does not breach the recent Peaceful Assembly Act 2012, neither does it cause concern to justify violent threats by the authorities.

The Prime Minister's decisions and directives supersede all others. Therefore, Najib still has time to rectify the situation to allow Bersih 3.0 at Dataran Merdeka and direct the police to refrain from violence and instead assist in this peaceful gathering of Malaysians.

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