

**Najib - Liar Or Reformist?**  
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**By Charles Santiago**

On the one hand prime minister Najib Tun Razak parrots his reform agenda. But in sharp contrast the movements of Malaysians are regulated - they are told where they can and cannot be.

The court order, obtained by the police, banning the organizers of Bersih 3.0 and the public, is shocking. After 55 years of independence, the government manipulates the arms of the judiciary to block the people's access to a public space. This is shameless and shocking.

Over the last weeks, we have heard ruling politicians nonchalantly dismiss the planned rally, calling for free and fair elections. Home minister, Hishammuddin Hussein, said it was not a security threat. Others retorted the rally has no traction with the people.

But it seems that now everyone has a cold feet - from UMNO politicians to the KL mayor, Ahmad Fuad Ismail, who has started seeing red over the protest.

Najib, meanwhile, is silent while his goons scramble around trying to frantically cordon off Dataran Merdeka. This is a clear indication that Najib simply cannot put forward a coherent political message. One moment he is a reformist, self-styled if I may add. Then he shows his true colors.

I do understand the prime minister's position - if Najib is serious about implementing reforms, his government will collapse at the next general election. Unwilling to do too much and lose his grip on power, the Parliament was used to bulldoze the amendments to the Election Offences Act, giving the government a free ride to continue rigging the polls.

The government has done everything in its power to clip the wings of legitimate dissent in the country- including resorting to thuggery to create an element of fear. We saw gangsters trying to break up talks by Anything but UMNO (ABU), beating up students who were occupying Dataran Merdeka, death threats against S. Ambiga and some opposition politicians, not to mention smear campaigns and dirty politicking.

Despite these harassment, the Bersih 3.0 rally will proceed. We did not buy into the gimmicks fashioned out to look like electoral reforms. The Election Commission is even dismissive about cleaning up the electoral roll and had the audacity to say it has one of the cleanest electoral list in the world.

The manner in which the government will handle the protest tomorrow will indicate whether Najib is serious about reforms and opening up the democratic space in the country.

Or it will show how Najib lied about his reform agenda.

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