

Rights To Assembly And Free Speech Must Be Respected!

MalaysianMirror.com

28 April 2012

By SUARAM

SUARAM strongly condemns any attempt by the police or the ruling party to stop the BERSIH 3.0 Sit and Protest which will be held on the 28 April 2012 at Dataran Merdeka (Merdeka Square).

SUARAM as a member of the Bersih 2.0 coalition condemns the police and the government under the Najib administration for disallowing people of Malaysia to practice their fundamental human rights.

SUARAM condemns all the harassment and tactics by the Government, Police, Kuala Lumpur City Hall and the Court to stop the people from practicing their fundamental liberties and to intimidate supporters of Bersih 2.0 coalition which is calling for free and fair elections in the country as the 13th General Election is around the corner.

The Election Commission (EC) has lost its credibility of its independence and ability to command public confidence after it failed to act on recommendations towards strengthening and improving electoral processes. The failure of the EC has led to the peaceful assembly known as Duduk Bantah 3.0 (Sit in protest 3.0).

Ongoing intimidation

The court order which issued today (27 April 2012) by the Magistrate Zaki Asyraf Zubir, KL Magistrate's Court, banned any gathering at Dataran Merdeka, which is the land bordering Jalan Sultan Hishamuddin, Jalan Raja and Jalan Kelab except the area occupied by the Selangor Royal Club. The order also warns the public against attending, being present or participating in any gathering from 28 April 2012 to 1 May 2012. We urge the court to immediately lift the aforementioned order which clearly restricts freedom of peaceful assembly and expression as enshrined in Article 10 of the Federal Constitution.

On 20 April, Mr. Tan Hong Kai, an intern of SUARAM, was arrested on allegation of trespassing while putting up BERSIH 3.0 posters in University Science Malaysia; Tan was released later that day under police bail.

On 22 April, the Kuala Lumpur City Council (DBKL) and police officers raided a protest campsite at the Merdeka Square and arrested two activists (Fahmi Reza and Umar Mohd Azmi) under Section 186 of the Penal Code (obstructing public servants from performing their duties); they were released later that day under police bail. On 23 April, Umar Abdul Aziz was charged at the Kuala Lumpur Magistrate Court under section 186 and he was fined RM1000.

On 24 April, the authorities again arrested three student activists and one supporter at the same campsite and took them to the Dang Wangi district police station at Kuala Lumpur. On 25 April, the four were charged at Kuala Lumpur Magistrate Court under section 186 and two was fined RM1000 and another two were fined RM 900.

Adopt the core Principles of Human Rights in all Laws and Policies

SUARAM wants the police and the government to stop all the harassment to stop the people from practicing their fundamental liberties. SUARAM urges the government to look into the demands of the Bersih 2.0 instead of clamping down on their freedom of expression and assembly. If the Prime Minister Najib is sincere in listening to the people and practicing the slogan "People First", then he should not curb people's rights and freedoms.

We call on the government, as a member of the United Nations Human Rights Council, to end the

intimidation and threats immediately and to adopt the core principles of human rights in all laws and policies.

We also call on the government to stop placing its influence on the EC and employing dirty tactics during elections. Instead, the government should be pressuring the EC to ensure clean, free and fair elections. This is a national challenge that the country will have to confront if it wishes to move forward in creating genuine harmony and open democracy.

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