

Suhakam Can Probe Human-Rights Abuse
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By Tony Pua

Najib Razak has announced the cabinet decision to set up a special "independent" panel to investigate the various reported abuses and violent conduct by the Police force during the Bersih assembly last week.

Bernama also reported that he is looking for the "right people" to become members of this investigation panel.

The decision to set up a brand new panel to investigate the various claims of abuses is curious, to say the least. The Government has already set up SUHAKAM under the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia Act 1999 which includes among its roles and responsibilities, inquiries into complaints regarding infringements of human rights.

The Commission under section 4(2) also has the power to "advise the Government and/or relevant authorities of complaints against them and to recommend appropriate measures to be taken".

The Commission is headed today by Hasmy Agam. Other commissioners include Professor Dr Khaw Lake Tee, Mohd Sha'ani Abdullah, Professor Dr Mahmud Zuhdi Majid and James Nagayam. These Commissioners have been appointed by Yang Di-Pertuan Agong on the recommendation of the Prime Minister to uphold human rights in the country.

Therefore why is it that SUHAKAM has been marginalised when it comes to the investigation of outright human rights abuses by the police force? Why is there a need for the Prime Minister to set up a new "independent" committee which will require a fresh set up and selection of new panel members? Are the existing Commissioners not good enough? Is it because the Cabinet is worried that SUHAKAM findings will be detrimental to both the police force and the Government, and hence Najib is attempting to set up a new panel which will be more "sympathetic" towards the Government's cause?

We call upon the Prime Minister to stop dragging his feet over the outrageous abuses and violence by police officers against journalists and ordinary Malaysians during the Bersih assembly.

Scores of Malaysians have been beaten up by these officers for no apparent reason, causing many serious injuries. The Sun reporter Radzi Razak for example, fractured his cheekbone and has had his jaw "wired shut" as a result of police brutality.

The Cabinet should immediately appoint SUHAKAM as the independent investigation panel so that Malaysians can get to the bottom of this controversy as soon as possible.

The root cause of all the problems is the rejection by DBKL on the use of Dataran Merdeka and not Bersih's rejection on the use of Stadium Merdeka as claimed by Najib Razak

The Prime Minister, Najib Razak has once again tried to shift the blame over the chaos created by the Police during the Bersih rally to the decision by the Bersih committee to reject the use of Stadium Merdeka as the alternative venue.

Aside from the fact that the venue was only offered to Bersih at the very last minute, there is absolutely not good reason provided by the Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) for the rejection to use Dataran Merdeka.

As a result of the unreasonable rejection, the assembly participants were forced onto the streets and the police force had to be deployed to barricade and "secure" Dataran Merdeka perimeters. It became a most ridiculous and ironical situation where the Bersih rally was tacitly allowed on the streets, but they were not allowed to gather on the field!

The Prime Minister had made the mistake of denying Bersih the right to assemble in Stadium Merdeka during the Bersih 2.0 rally in July last year which resulted in chaos in the streets where the Police force had trapped the protestors and even attacked the Tung Shin hospital with tear gas and water cannons. He has once again made the same mistake of denying Bersih's request to sit-in Dataran Merdeka which resulted in the unnecessary violence arising from the face-off between the Police, media and Bersih participants.

Najib Razak should look at himself in the mirror when he claimed that Bersih has breached the "principles and spirit of the Peaceful Assembly Act". It was the Prime Minister himself which failed to understand and embrace the principles and spirit of the Act to allow greater democratic space for expression and assembly by Malaysians.

His actions and denials have proven that that the "political transformation programme" has been a complete failure and was only a cosmetic public relations exercise aimed to lift the Prime Minister's image and credentials.

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