

PM: Police action mild during Bersih rally
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Najib: There was no undue use of force and the demonstrators were dispersed using minimum force.

KUALA LUMPUR, July 14 — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said police used the appropriate level of force to disperse Bersih protesters during last Saturday's rally in the capital.

"It was quite mild because although they were taken in, they were released after eight hours and they were treated really well," he told CNN's John Deferios in an interview today.

"There was no undue use of force and the demonstrators were dispersed using minimum force."

Najib also dismissed the rally for free and fair elections as a partisan movement, and stressed that his administration was "committed to making (electoral reform) better".

The prime minister gave the interview in Britain, where he is on a four-day visit to cement economic ties.

Malaysia has been savaged by the international press for last weekend's Bersih crackdown, which influential British daily Guardian described as "characteristic heavy-handedness" by Najib.

The Bar Council noted in its monitoring report that the way police had fired tear gas canisters - at close range and at eye-level — suggested they wished to inflict injury on and not disperse protesters.

The government has promised to investigate allegations of police brutality, including alleged beatings and the reported firing of tear gas and water cannon into the compound of a maternity hospital.

The Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (Suhakam) today also said it will be holding a separate public inquiry into police conduct during the Bersih rally.

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