

Cops fired tear gas directly at demonstrators, witness tells Bersih inquiry
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KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 11 — Riot police fired tear gas directly at a crowd of peaceful and “non-hostile” Bersih supporters, a witness told a public inquiry into the July 9 protests today.

Lawyer Nor Syazwani Muharam, a Bar Council representative who had monitored the rally, said that the incident occurred along Jalan Masjid Jamek where the police had told Bersih supporters to disperse and rang a warning bell three times.

“I did not see any violence by the Bersih supporters. There was no hostility from the public, I did not see any provocation from them,” she told the Human Rights Commission (Suhakam) inquiry here.

Nor Syazwani (picture) said the crowd was about “one block” away from the riot police before tear gas was fired directly at them.

“Police fired directly towards the crowd,” she said.

The inquiry has set itself three terms of references — to identify human rights violations on or before July 9, to determine how the violations occurred, the process and agency involved and to make recommendations to prevent any recurrence.

The inquiry is led by Suhakam vice-chairman Professor Datuk Dr Khaw Lake Tee, commissioners Datuk Dr Mahmood Zuhdi Abdul Majid and Detta Samen.

The Bar Council is represented by Roger Chan and Richard Wee, while the police are represented by ASP N. Rajagopal and ASP Lim Chee Wah.

Asked by Chan whether there were any human rights violations on that day, Nor Syazwani said “yes.”

“The one that I saw myself, the shooting of tear gas straight into the crowd.”

She also said that there were no other human rights violations, and admitted that she was not familiar with police procedures during a rally as this was the first time she had monitored such an event.

The inquiry resumes on November 15.

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