

**BBC flays local censors for slashing Bersih coverage**  
**The Malaysian Insider**  
**May 01, 2012**  
**By Clara Chooi**

KUALA LUMPUR, May 1 — The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) has "strongly condemned" Malaysian censors, claiming their coverage of Saturday's Bersih 3.0 protest had been clipped on local operator Astro.

"During the week of World Press Freedom Day, it would be deplorable if access to independent and impartial news was being prevented in any way.

"We would strongly condemn any blocking of the trusted news that we broadcast around the world including via distribution partners," a BBC spokesman in a statement emailed to The Malaysian Insider.

The British public service broadcaster added that it was making "urgent enquiries" to Astro to seek its reasons for censoring its two-minute coverage of the violent protest.

"The BBC is making urgent enquiries to the Malaysian operator, Astro, to establish the facts.

"The broadcast of anti-Government protests in Malaysia was apparently edited before it was re-broadcast on Malaysian satellite television, with sequences removed from the original BBC version," it said.

According to the YouTube link available in the statement, BBC's coverage of Bersih 3.0 had been shortened by several seconds to exclude clips of short interviews with two protesters.

The video showing the difference between BBC's original report and the one aired on Malaysian channels can be viewed here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yTGogMq9NZ0>

In the first censored interview, a man, believed to be Chinese, had told the BBC that the police were firing tear gas arbitrarily at protesters despite efforts to negotiate.

"They fired a shot at us and instead of saying sorry, we know it was an accidental shot, they shot some more we were about to talk and make peace and negotiate but they shot at us," he said.

In the next interview, an Indian man had explained his reason for joining the rally for free and fair elections, which had turned violent at nearly 3pm on Saturday.

"I'm here to see that we have free and fair elections. That's all.

"We want the Election Commission (EC) to be independent and clean. At the moment, it is not clean. Okay? So I have to stand here because this is a day of destiny for Malaysians," he said, amid a backdrop of hundreds standing before the barricades surrounding Dataran

Merdeka.

Local TV operators had also slashed another portion of BBC's report, which showed scenes taken from above of the riot police's fire-red water cannon trucks firing chemical-laced water at protesters.

A part of the BBC correspondent Emily Buchanan's words were also clipped along with the scene.

"It's not entirely clear how the violence started," she had said in the portion of the clip that was aired.

"... but after the rally was declared a success and people began to go home, the barriers were breached..." she said in the censored portion.

"... and the authorities fired tear gas at the crowds," she continued, as the scene continued.

Saturday's opposition-backed rally has already received negative coverage in the foreign media, which have predicted a likely backlash for the Najib administration.

According to BBC, "despite the massive turnout, the government appears to be in no mood for change and there could be an election in June, too soon for major reforms to take effect.

"That means many more political battles ahead."

In the days following the event that had become more violent than last year's, Bersih 3.0 supporters and government leaders have been engaged in a blame game over who was to blame for the numerous altercations that took place between protesters and the police.

The Malaysian Insider

Copyright © 2012 The Malaysian Insider

Source: <http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/bbc-flays-local-censors-for-slashing-bersih-coverage/>