

**Guan Eng: Foreign panel should probe violence against press**  
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**By Clara Chooi**

KUALA LUMPUR, May 1 — Lim Guan Eng today suggested that a panel of international experts investigate the violent attacks against pressmen during last Saturday's rally, claiming the public would not trust any probe conducted by the police on their own colleagues.

"Malaysians have great doubts as to whether a full and proper investigation will be fruitful and action taken against the perpetrators.

"Only an independent inquiry comprising international experts can be trusted with providing a credible report on how to apportion blame to the police so that we can find out the truth of what happened," he said in a statement here.

The DAP secretary-general pointed out that during several other recent protests, the police had allegedly stood by and watched as journalists were roughed up by demonstrators but did not carry out any arrests.

This, he claimed, had occurred during a protest on the Penang Bridge on July last year and at the anti-Lynas rally at the Speaker's Corner in Penang on February 26 this year, when Umno and Perkasa members had allegedly injured pressmen. In both incidents, two reporters were roughed up and sent to hospital.

"If Umno and Perkasa ordinary thugs can get away with assaulting reporters in Penang, with no action taken to date despite plenty of photo and video evidence, can we really expect any justice when it is the police themselves perpetrating the act this time?" Lim said.

Over six local pressmen and about 12 photographers and journalists from the foreign media were reportedly assaulted during the fracas on Saturday, after the police sprayed water cannons and tear gas to disperse Bersih 3.0 protesters.

Both local and foreign media groups have condemned the hard-handed tactics used on the media, whom they pointed out were merely doing their jobs.

The National Union of Journalists (NUJ) today called on Putrajaya to form an independent panel to investigate the violent attacks, suggesting that it should comprise a retired judge, a former Bar Council President as well as journalism experts.

...Can we really expect any justice when it is the police themselves perpetrating the act this time? — Lim Guan Eng

Lim pointed out today that the attacks on reporters could not and should not be denied as Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak himself had reportedly whispered an apology to The Sun journalist Radzi Razak when he visited the latter in hospital yesterday.

"We strongly condemn the ugly scenes last Saturday at the Bersih 3.0 rally where many protesters, including media workers and reporters, were indiscriminately attacked and injured by police officers," said the Penang chief minister.

Apart from Radzi, he added, a Malay Mail photographer was also allegedly punched by the police and had his camera destroyed; a Malaysiakini reporter was arrested and his camera equipment confiscated; while reporters from international agency Al-Jazeera were also reportedly roughed up while trying to film a protester being beaten up.

"What has our country turned into when even the sacred rule of freedom of the press can be openly, publicly and blatantly violated. In the past, freedom of the press was curtailed secretly and not publicly with the BN imposing self-censorship by the editors," he said.

Even worse, Lim pointed out, was the fact that Home Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein had come out immediately to claim that the seizure of camera equipment by the police was part of their "standard operating procedure" (SOP).

But on the contrary, he said, Inspector-General of Police (IGP) Tan Sri Ismail Omar had denied this.

"If the IGP is correct, then Hishammuddin must apologise to every reporter who was assaulted.

"He must also order an investigation into the misconduct of the police and bring those guilty to justice. There must be no cover up, or he will risk ruining what little reputation is left of the police," he said.

Lim also called on all Malaysians to dress in black and pin a yellow ribbon on their lapel this Thursday to commemorate "World Press Freedom Day" and stand in solidarity with members of the media who were assaulted during Bersih 3.0.

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