

**Possible civil suits against police, says Bar Council**  
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**By Shazwan Mustafa Kamal**

KUALA LUMPUR, May 1 — Civil suits might be filed against the police on behalf of Bersih supporters who were physically injured during last Saturday's rally, the Bar Council has said.

Bar Council president Lim Chee Wee told reporters today that he was in the process of gathering volunteer lawyers to file the suits on behalf of those who had allegedly been roughed up by authorities.

"We will talk to our members, to see whether or not we can gather enough members of the Bar to volunteer to interview all the victims of human rights violations and probably pursue civil suits," said Lim.

He said this will be done "as soon as possible" but did not specify a timeframe.

The lawyer, however, said that the Bar's first option would be to discuss its concerns with Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Ismail Omar.

"We would like to engage the police. It is good that the IGP does not shut the door to engagement.

An arrest in progress on Saturday. — Reuters pic

"The time has come for police to have proper guidelines... this cannot continue," Lim added.

The Bar Council will also push for the Malaysian Human Rights Commission (Suhakam) to conduct a "comprehensive" inquiry into alleged human rights' violations which took place during the Bersih rally, said Lim.

Chaos reigned on the streets of Kuala Lumpur for over four hours after 3pm last Saturday when police fired tear gas and water cannons and chased protesters down the streets of the capital to disperse what had initially started out as a peaceful protest calling for free and fair elections.

The melee was believed to have begun after overzealous protesters either mistakenly or deliberately breached the three layers of barricades — razor-wire fences, plastic blockades and metal gates — that were placed around Dataran Merdeka.

According to Bersih 3.0 and opposition party leaders, the barriers were breached after the rally was called to a close and declared a success but it is believed that the message was lost among the sheer thousands who turned up for the event, the third to be held since 2007.

The ensuing violence has pitted both Bersih supporters and the government in a blame game.

Scores of civilians, policemen and even journalists were hurt when the protest took an ugly twist with demonstrators refusing to back down and even raining missiles upon their armed pursuers.

The cat-and-mouse game went on for hours and many protesters were seen allegedly roughed up by the police but in his immediate response, Home Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein insisted that the police had acted with restraint.

International media organisations have already predicted that the force used by the police may have a negative backlash on the Najib administration, adding that polls may have to be delayed past their expected June date if the government is keen on recapturing lost votes.

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