

Witnessing the death of democracy
The Malaysian Insider
April 30, 2012
By Shazuan Ali

KUALA LUMPUR, April 30 — Unlike Bersih 2.0, I would call myself a coward back then. I am very supportive and committed towards free and fair election but watched live streams at home, like a coward in front of my laptop.

Only after I read the #bersihstories, did I tell myself I should've been there! I should be there with my fellow Malaysian friends. It is not fair for them to fight to better my future while I sit at home in comfort.

So I made a promise to myself, if Bersih 3.0 is necessary, I will be there!

Bersih 3.0 spread fast. I started to cancel my plans for vacation and find anyone who was going to join the sit-in protest.

I was lucky as one of my colleagues was going. On the eve of the fateful day, I browse for updates of the protest and found out thousands of people already in the city. I was pumped up by the news.

The next morning, I woke up as early as 5am. I didn't want to be stuck in any situation that could stop me from being at Bersih 3.0. After performing my morning prayer, I get ready. At around 8am, I drove to Kelana Jaya as we planned to enter the city via public transport.

After breakfast, we board the train and disembark at Pasar Seni. There are plenty of people in yellow.

"This gonna be big. Let the world know we're hungry for free and fair elections, and we're done with all these corruption!" I told myself

While on the train, I text my family members,

"Please pray for my safety as I'm in KL offering my support for #Bersih", I texted.

"Jaga diri, jalan dalam kelompok", my dad replied.

"That's the spirit! We're praying for all of you. Keep us posted", one of my relatives replied.

As we got there, I saw people are taking pictures of someone. I went closer and found out it was Pak Samad. Pak Samad is my idol in writing. I shook his hand and took a photo with him and then I say, "Terima kasih, Pak Samad, terima kasih!".

I didn't thank him for the photo but for being here, fighting for a better Malaysia.

We joined the crowd in Central Market. It was only 10am but there were already so many people and the city looks like a big festival. Everyone was in good spirits and chants of

"Bersih" could be heard everywhere.

While we were standing there, an old lady approached us.

"Are you guys here to support as well?" she asked.

"Of course, aunty! If not, why would we be standing here?" I replied.

"Then good! You should! The rich are getting richer while the poor are getting poorer! These people on top are very jahat one. We need to change this! Good luck to you guys! Take care!"

She left us to join her group.

After afternoon prayers, around 1.45pm, we started for Dataran Merdeka.

The crowd was totally peaceful and calm. I look up to the sky and smiled. I am actually here with my fellow Malaysians. This is the real 1 Malaysia.

Around 2.35pm, we stop as we had reached the limit. Dataran Merdeka was barricaded.

The crowd was very big. From Brickfields, Central Market and Petaling Street alone, I estimated around 80,000 to 100,000 people.

My friend and I slip through the corridor of HSBC to reach Masjid Jamek. There are sea of people there.

While we were standing there, one guy rushed beside me and threw up. I understood his condition so I offered him a pack of tissue paper I had.

"Thank you very much!" he said and I just react with a smile.

Around 2.50pm, the people chanted, "Duduk! Duduk! Duduk!"

There was no sign of the authorities giving us permission to enter Dataran Merdeka.

Around 3pm, my friends and I decided to walk away from the crowd as it was too hot there.

After few steps, we heard the crowd shouting. They fired tear gas canisters into the crowd. People are running and we run, too.

We board the train and left. At home, I watched all the videos from the day. I cried.

How could they do this to us? We came in solidarity. We came in peace with flowers, balloons and sung Negaraku. We just wanted to sit in protest. We want a better future. Why?

I saw a montage at PWTC saying, "A leader who listens to the people". In reality, they don't actually listen. Instead, they fired tear gas canisters to shut us up.

In the future, when my children ask, I would say, "Son, I was there fighting for your future and on that fateful day I witness the death of democracy in our country."

* This is the personal opinion of the writer and does not necessarily represent the views of The Malaysian Insider

The Malaysian Insider

Copyright © 2012 The Malaysian Insider

Source: <http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/witnessing-the-death-of-democracy/>