

Cops release photos of 49 civilian suspects but no cops over Bersih violence
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By Shannon Teoh

KUALA LUMPUR, May 3 — City police displayed today 49 mugshots of those suspected of crimes during Saturday's chaotic Bersih rally but said no policemen have been identified yet despite loud and growing accusations of police brutality.

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.

Kuala Lumpur police chief Datuk Mohamad Salleh told a press conference today the 49 persons were being investigated for various crimes under the Penal Code related to unlawful assembly and disobeying police orders.

When asked if any policemen have been listed as suspects he said there were no numbers yet but said it was not an issue as there are "no problems tracing" members of the force.

"Where is the proof? Show us. These are only allegations which must have proof," he said when asked repeatedly about various allegations of police brutality.

The Bar Council has said that its observers found that police brutality at last week's rally was "magnified" as compared to already chaotic scenes in a similar gathering for free and fair elections last July 9.

Police fired tear gas and water cannon after some demonstrators breached the barricade in front of DBKL and rushed into Dataran Merdeka, which the court had barred the public from entering across the weekend.

Police fired as far as the DBKL premises, which are across Jalan Parlimen, and the move broke up the crowd who fled helter-skelter but police chased them down at Jalan Tun Perak and Jalan Raja Laut.

Angry protestors later attacked a police car, (picture) which then crashed into at least two people while trying to flee.

After an ambulance took away the injured policemen, the protestors flipped the car over on its side but then fled after tear gas was fired.

A pocket of 1,000 demonstrators had engaged in open battle with riot police near Masjid Jamek after 6pm, despite most of the crowd dispersing earlier.

A police officer was seen dragging a man across the road, which resulted in Bersih supporters attacking the police with broken bottles, mineral water bottles and broken concrete slabs.

A convoy of police vehicles ferrying Mayor Tan Sri Ahmad Fuad Ismail in one of its cars was forced to make a U-turn near Masjid Jamek when met with a hostile reception from protestors who threw shoes and broken concrete slabs at them, smashing the windows of two cars.

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

Police have promised to investigate into all claims of police violence "openly and be fair to all" although Inspector General of Police Tan Sri Ismail Omar has said that if police had not acted to disperse the crowd, an "open battle could have happened and created a more dangerous situation."

Police have already arrested Rasah PKR deputy chief R. Thangam at his home in Seremban and have obtained a three-day remand order to investigate him under Section 440 of the Penal Code for causing mischief during a protest.

Mohmad also said more suspects would be identified as police continued their probe into 258 police reports filed so far which he promised would be investigated fairly.

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