

**Suhakam: Police methods 'unsuitable' at Bersih 2.0 KL Sentral fracas**  
**The Malaysian Insider**  
**May 04, 2012**  
**By Clara Chooi**

KUALA LUMPUR, May 4 — The police used “unsuitable” methods at KL Sentral last year to disperse a group of Bersih 2.0 protesters led by prominent leaders Datuk Ambiga Sreenevasan and Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, trapping them in a cloud of tear gas with barely any escape route, the Malaysian Human Rights Commission (Suhakam) concluded today.

The commission found in its public inquiry released today that a “communication breakdown” between enforcement authorities had likely caused the group to be “hemmed in” at the KL Sentral underpass exit in their journey to Stadium Merdeka, as riot police had fired at them from both ends.

“We have gone to look at the site — it was not fully opened, it was half enclosed. The access is a staircase that goes down and an escalator that goes up,” said Datuk Dr Khaw Lake Tee (picture), who headed a three-man panel set up by the commission to look into last year’s July 9 Bersih rally.

She said when tear gas canisters were fired at the group from the front of the tunnel, they had no choice but to retreat to the back, towards the escalator.

But at that end, Khaw said, a team of police LSF (Light Strike Force) personnel were waiting with their canister launchers.

“When they (LSF) saw protesters running towards them, they fired... not knowing that there was tear gas being fired on the other side.

“So in a way, the participants were hemmed in, boxed in between two firing lines,” she said.

Khaw added that this “should not have happened” and was likely caused by a communication breakdown between the teams tasked to disperse protesters at the crowded transit hub.

As such, the commission recommended that the firing of tear gas or other similar action to break up assemblies be banned from such enclosed areas if it would heighten the risk of injury to civilians.

Khaw also said that a policeman had wrongfully “aimed at participants” when firing a tear gas canister, injuring the cheekbone of Fayyadh Afiq Albakry, Anwar’s bodyguard.

“From medical evidence, W27 (Fayyadh) sustained injury to his cheekbone as a result of the tear gas canister hitting it... and the impact was such that I think there was a broken bone,” she said.

Khaw said that based on the injury, it was evident that the canister was not fired at the

ground as it should have if orders had been followed, but aimed directly at the protester.

"Although ACP Wan Abdul Bari Wan Abdul Khalid did say, and heard him on the video, he said, 'ke bawah, ke bawah' (aim downwards), we actually saw one of the policeman aiming straight ahead and not downwards," she said.

In Suhakam's report, the panel observed that the group of protesters at KL Sentral had not behaved aggressively, noting that according to a video provided to it by Ambiga, they had not jeered and had even made way for a police vehicle that passed them in the area.

"The participants were not seen to be carrying any weapons," it added.

Bersih's July 9 rally for free and fair elections had drawn thousands to the streets of the capital but participants were met with a bombardment of tear gas and chemical-laced water from riot police under orders to disperse the crowd.

The election watchdog held another such rally last Saturday and the event ended in much the same way as last year's, despite starting out peacefully.

The Malaysian Insider

Copyright © 2012 The Malaysian Insider

Source: <http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/suhakam-police-methods-unsuitable-at-bersih-2.0-kl-sentral-fracas/>