

PKR Youth questions assembly 'fatwa', extols Bersih's aims
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PETALING JAYA, May 6 — PKR Youth wants the National Fatwa Council to explain an edict forbidding Muslims from taking part in unlawful assemblies, its chief Shamsul Iskandar Md Akin said today.

"We will send a letter to the Fatwa Council to request an explanation.

"Bersih has good intentions, it is based on true principles, to demand for clean elections," the PKR Youth chief told reporters here.

The National Fatwa Council today announced a "fatwa" (edict) barring Muslims nationwide from taking part in "unproductive" and unlawful assemblies.

"Rioting, causing disturbances and damaging public property are all forbidden by Islam. This also applies to any intention to topple a duly elected government by organising such demonstrations," council chairman Tan Sri Dr Abdul Shukor Husin was quoted as saying by Bernama Online today.

Disagreeing with the announcement, Shamsul said the move impinges on an individual's rights to assembly and expression.

"The truth is the truth, even though it hurts. There must be freedom to express one's views and stand," Shamsul added.

The edict comes after last month's tumultuous Bersih 3.0 rally, which turned chaotic when riot police fired tear gas and water cannons after demonstrators breached police barricades at the then off-limits Dataran Merdeka in Kuala Lumpur.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak on Friday asserted that the rally for free and fair elections was an attempt to oust the country's duly-elected government, a claim that has been echoed by former premier Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The election watchdog today denied the claim, and insisted that Bersih 3.0's objectives were purely to demand a clean and fair polls process.

Police are now investigating the rally for being a possible attempt at violent revolution.

Bersih 3.0 was initially planned for the historic Dataran Merdeka but authorities had secured a court order on April 27 barring its use for public assemblies until May 1, forcing Bersih supporters to splinter into groups.

Despite an initially peaceful start to the rally, Bersih's third since 2007, police would later take measures that are now being condemned as more brutal than those employed during

last year's tumultuous July 11 Bersih 2.0 rally.

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