

**Anwar: Hanif must step down as panel chief in Bersih 3.0 probe**  
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**By Shazwan Mustafa Kamal**

PETALING JAYA, May 11 — Tun Mohammad Hanif Omar must step down as head of Putrajaya's independent panel probe on the Bersih 3.0 violence, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said last night.

The PKR de facto leader said this was necessary to ensure the panel was completely fair and neutral in its investigations into incidents surrounding the April 28 rally.

"Tun Hanif still thinks he is the Inspector-General of Police fighting the communists, need to fight Chin Peng to the end... eh it (the communist threat) is already over," Anwar said at a Pakatan Rakyat (PR) ceramah attended by over 1,000 supporters.

"I am asking that Tun Hanif withdraw as chairman. Do not fool the people. You know you are not neutral, insulting Bersih... the other panel members should also step down," Anwar demanded.

DAP parliamentary leader Lim Kit Siang echoed Anwar's remarks, saying that Hanif's appointment was the "worst" decision the Najib administration had made in three years.

"Tun Hanif should be a star witness in the enquiry, not the chairman... save the enquiry from embarrassment," the Ipoh Timor MP said to loud cheers from people at the ceramah.

"Tun Hanif says Bersih 3.0 was a plot to overthrow the present government... where is the proof?"

"Rational Malaysians won't accept this explanation... that there were pro-communist elements during the rally," said Lim.

The DAP has maintained Putrajaya's independent panel probe on the Bersih 3.0 violence would return biased findings following Hanif's appointment as its head.

DAP secretary-general Lim Guan Eng had said that Hanif had already made clear his opposition to Bersih and his former position as IGP would serve as a conflict of interest when the panel probes allegations of police brutality.

As such, he said, it was a "forgone conclusion" that the panel would absolve all police personnel from blame over the violent incidents during Bersih 3.0 last month.

Home Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein announced the names of the six-man panel tasked to investigate allegations of police violence against Bersih 3.0 protesters on April 28.

Apart from Hanif, the other panel members include former Chief Judge of Borneo Tan Sri Steve Shim, Sinar Harian managing director Datuk Hussamuddin Yaacob, Media Chinese International legal adviser Liew Peng Chuan, Petronas corporate affairs senior general manager Datuk Medan Abdullah and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia psychology Professor Dr Ruzmi Ismail.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak had pledged last week that "credible, experienced and respectable" individuals would form the independent panel to probe the violence during Bersih 3.0.

Najib said that he along with the entire government and members of the public are keeping a close eye on investigations into the allegations that journalists, both local and foreign, had been roughed up during the rally for free and fair elections.

But Najib has come under fire for his administration's selection of Hanif to head the panel, even after the latter had agreed with the prime minister's claim that Bersih 3.0 was an attempt to overthrow the government and even claimed that communist sympathisers were involved in the event.

Chaos reigned on the streets of Kuala Lumpur for over four hours after 3pm on April 28 when police fired tear gas and water cannons and chased protesters down the streets to disperse what had initially begun as a peaceful protest calling for free and fair elections.

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

Six local pressmen and 12 photographers and journalists from the foreign media were reportedly assaulted during the fracas on April 28.

Both local and foreign media groups have condemned the hard-handed tactics used on the media, whom they pointed out were merely doing their job.

Police had begun firing the tear gas and water cannons after some demonstrators breached the barricade in front of Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) and rushed into Dataran Merdeka, which the court had barred the public from entering that particular weekend.

They 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.

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