

**PAS alleges cops 'violated' fatwa in Bersih crackdown**  
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**By Mohd Farhan Darwis and Clara Chooi**

KUALA LUMPUR, May 7 — PAS insisted today that it was the police who had infringed the National Fatwa Council's latest edict banning Muslims from participating in violent assemblies, pointing out that its officers were the ones who had instigated the Bersih 3.0 chaos.

But rally participants, said PAS vice-president Datuk Mahfuz Omar, had acted in accordance with the edict (fatwa) issued just yesterday, as they were merely gathering for a "peaceful sit-in" to demand free and fair elections.

This, he added, was neither "haram" nor unIslamic according to Islamic principles.

"I respect the council's views and right to issue edicts but they have to look at things from a wider perspective... why did so many come out that day to express their feelings and demonstrate? Because the election process is unclean... and that was their purpose there," he told a press conference.

The party's ulama wing also urged the same, saying that rallies such as Bersih 3.0, which seeks clean and fair polls for the good of the country, should not be considered as against Islam.

"The violence during Bersih 3.0 would not have occurred without provocations," pointed out the wing's chief Datuk Harun Taib.

This, he said, ultimately meant that Muslims, who were sincere in their intentions to participate in Bersih 3.0, would not have been acting in violation of the edict if it had been issued before the event.

"When we went, it was peaceful. We did not know it would turn chaotic. So how would we ever know?"

"We did not bring weapons, just water and salt... if we had any intention to cause chaos, we would have brought weapons," he pointed out.

But the police, he pointed out, were the ones who have admitted to even roughing up pressmen during the event.

"They were the ones who violated the fatwa... only thing is that the fatwa was issued after the event," said the Pokok Sena MP.

According to Bernama Online yesterday, the council had declared it "haram" for Muslims to participate in "unproductive" and unlawful assemblies that would lead to chaos, in an edict issued over a week after the Bersih 3.0 rally on April 28.

"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 the national news agency.

"No one is exempted, and cannot support any efforts that can cause harm, anxiety or unrest among Muslims to the point of the community becoming split, what more if there is bloodshed," Abdul Shukor said.

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

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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