

## **Police cannot wait, must investigate racially-charged incident now, say lawyers**

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Police must act quickly to arrest those behind the public slaughtering of chickens and a threat on DAP's Seputeh MP Teresa Kok, in which a RM1,200 reward has been offered to anyone who slaps her for allegedly insulting the Malay leadership and Islam, say lawyers.

Datuk Baljit Sidhu said the police should not wait for someone to lodge a police report before investigating the racially-charged incident.

"They must be proactive under this circumstances. They must nip the escalating racial and religious problems before it got out of control," he told The Malaysian Insider.

Describing yesterday's act at Jalan Pudu in Kuala Lumpur as "very disturbing and uncalled for", Baljit said the police officer in charge of the area should act without delay as the incident took place in public.

Yesterday, some 50 members of a Muslim NGO caused a stir when they slaughtered two chickens and offered a RM1,200 reward to anyone who dared to slap Kok to show anger towards opposition leaders for allegedly insulting the Malay leadership and Islam.

They then smeared the blood of the slaughtered chickens on a banner featuring photographs of Kok, Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng, DAP adviser Lim Kit Siang and Machang Bubuk PKR assemblyman Lee Khai Loon.

Group leader Zulkifli Sharif had said that the reward of RM1,200 was for anyone who slaps Kok, adding that a photograph of the act must be given in order to claim the money.

The group then stomped on "faces" of the opposition leaders on the banner, which also contained reference to the May 13, 1969 racial riots. They said the protest was a sign of anger against the opposition who were alleged to have insulted the "Malay leadership, the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, Islam and Malay dignity".

Lawyer Salim Bashir said leaders in Putrajaya must take the lead to condemn the act, irrespective which group or individual was involved.

"This will help calm the public from unfounded fear, if any. Civil society must also express their outrage to drive home the point that peace-loving Malaysians do not tolerate such nonsense," he said.

Salim said the police should also see whether the group had violated the Peaceful Assembly Act.

He said yesterday's incident revealed that the NGO was taking the laws into its own hands when police was already investigating reports made against Kok and Lee.

Kok had produced a Chinese New Year greeting video, entitled "Onederful" Malaysia CNY 2014, but several groups deemed the clip as defamatory and seditious.

Lee had stuffed kankung (water spinach) into the mouth of an effigy of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak, following the latter's remark that the price of the vegetable was lower, sparking a series of attacks poking fun at Najib.

Lawyers for Liberty adviser Eric Paulsen yesterday's act was intimidating and threatened to cause harm.

"This act is criminal in nature and was not routine peaceful way of expressing one's dissatisfaction," he added.

Paulsen said police could classify the act as criminal intimidation under the Penal Code, which provides punishment of up to seven years' jail or fine, or both.

He said another possible offence committed was for causing disharmony, disunity or feelings of enmity on grounds of religion. - February 7, 2014.

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