

Batang Kali massacre kin ask British PM to hold public inquiry
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SEMENYIH, April 12 - Some 30 relatives of the 24 unarmed civilians who died in the 1948 Batang Kali tragedy held a demonstration during David Cameron's visit here and called for the British prime minister to hold a public inquiry into the controversy.

Although Cameron did not meet the group, an official from the British High Commission received a memorandum from them outside the gates of the Nottingham University campus here just before the visiting prime minister left in his entourage.

"We want him to call for a public inquiry of his own accord instead of going through the judicial review," said Quek Ngee Meng, lawyer for the families of the 24 dead.

"I'll make sure it is seen by the prime minister's office," Nikesh Mehta, foreign policy counsellor for the high commission in Kuala Lumpur, said to the group who held banners calling for "justice for my parents."

Four relatives of the 24 unarmed rubber plantation workers shot dead in December 1948 by British troops in Batang Kali, Selangor, will have their request for a review of Britain's refusal to hold an enquiry into the killings heard by a High Court in London on May 8.

It will examine whether the British Secretaries of State for Defence and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office acted lawfully when they refused last November to hold a public inquiry into both the killings and their cover-up, and to make any form of reparation to the victims' families.

The victims' families have long been seeking a proper explanation, apology and reparation for the killings.

The Batang Kali massacre took place on December 12, 1948 during British military operations against the communists in the post- World War II Malayan Emergency.

British troops surrounded a rubber estate in Sungai Rimoh, Batang Kali, and shot dead 24 villagers before setting fire to the village.

Former British Defence Secretary Denis Healey had instructed Scotland Yard to set up a special task team to investigate the matter. However, the incoming Conservative government chose to drop the investigation in 1970 due to an ostensible lack of evidence.

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