

2000 lawyers marched beating police blockade and heavy rain

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If lawyers are coming to the street, then something is very wrong, said Ms. Ambiga, the Bar Council's President when she addressed the Malaysian Bar members who gathered today since 10am at the Palace of Justice in Putra Jaya.

The recent video-clip, a conversation between corporate lawyer, V.K. Linggam and the current Chief Justice, Ahmad Fairuz on fixing the appointment of senior judges exposed by the de-facto Party Keadilan leader, Anwar Ibrahim on 19/09/2007 has raised outcry from many groups including the Bar Council Members and Party Socialist Malaysia (PSM).

PSM was one of the first to demand (Press Statement, 21/9/07) for the immediate suspension of the Chief Judge, Ahmad Fairuz Sheikh Abdul Halim and a tribunal be set up to investigate him and all other judges associated and appointed by him. At Palace of Justice today, Party Secretary General, S. Arutchelvan said , " This is one of the historical event in Malaysia's history, boosted by the uprising of the monks in Burma as well as the lawyers in Pakistan.

The lawyers march from Palace of Justice to the Prime Minister's Department about 3 kilometers away wedged from 11am till 1.00pm because the police set up about 4 blocks on the road leading to the Palace. In fact 7 buses organized by the Bar were blocked. But the brave lawyers led by Edmond, Amer and Rajan and hundreds others defied the block and walked 5 kilometers to join the rest.

Putrajaya Police Chief, Supt Abdul Razak Abdul Majid during negotiation with Ragu Kesavan, the Vice-President of the Bar Council and PSM Secretary General S. Arutchelvan said that there is an order not to allow the march and said that he would only allow five representatives to go to the PM office. The Police Chief was told off and the march would go on and if they police wanted, they can arrest the people. The Police and the orders behind them clearly wanted to stop this march at all cost.

And true to that, about 4 trucks of FRU were also on standby at one corner of the Palace. When everyone was getting anxious of waiting for almost 3 hours under the hot sun, suddenly we heard chanting coming from one corner, "Who are we—Malaysian Bar; What do we want-Justice, then we saw a group of lawyers led by Amer Hamzah & Edmund Bon- the Protest Organizers marching with banners calling for a Clean Judiciary. They were welcomed with thunderous applause from the others.

Immediately after that, the Great Walk for Justice led by Council Members of the Bar started. Members of NGO groups, trade unionists, opposition political party members as well as concerned individuals took part in the Walk. Among leaders seen were PSM's Chairperson Dr. Nasir Hashim, DAP Secretary General Lim Guan Eng and MTUC President Syed Shairil. The walk was accompanied by chanting. About 3 attempts by police to stop the crowd from walking obviously failed. The walk just moved on with the momentum.

Many who present today were definitely thrilled with the number of lawyers turned up and one activist and lawyer, Comrade K. Arumugam said that this clearly shows that awareness is creeping among the lawyers and they believe in creating a better judiciary. Dr. Hatta, the PAS treasurer said that he is impressed with the lawyers' crowd. He added, "This is a serious issue, interference in the promotion of judges, today we are sending a clear message to the government. Mere 3 people committee set up by the government is not sufficient we need an independent Royal Commission to investigate the entire Judiciary which is tainted since 1988"

Compared to many other demonstrations or rallies organized by People Base Organizations like JERIT and political parties like PSM and PAS, today we did not witness much speeches from the lawyers and there were only 3 banners visible though 2,000 lawyers were present. There were even some among the legal profession who were cynical of this march and put forward many demands to derail and undermine the march. Yet, all credit and applause have to go to the leadership of the Bar Council and the brave lawyers who came to the street today which must be seen as a giant step in redeeming the Judiciary as well as the Bar. The move by the lawyers today can best be summed by the words of Comrade Kattayah, an ex-unionist who said, "it is good to see lawyers, the upper class taking the path of ordinary people!"

Upon arriving at the main entrance of the Prime Minister's 'Palace', about 3 trucks of FRU and police officers were guarding the PM's Palace as though the crowd is going to march right through them! The orderly and organized crowd then gathered at least 300meters away while a delegation of about 5 Council Members went in to submit the memorandum.

Few minutes after their departure, light rainfall stirred the moment but the crowd welcomed it and stood the ground. The chanting continued even when the downpour became heavier. After about an hour soaking in the rain, finally the delegation came out. Despite the rain, Ambiga addressed the crowd saying that the 2000 lawyers rallied today has made an important impact towards cleaning the judiciary as a matter of public interest! It seems, the Prime Minister was out of the country and on his behalf, his political secretary took the memorandum from the delegates. Though the Bar Council is appreciative of the government's effort to set up a committee of 3-member to investigate the authenticity of the video-clip, they demand the government to set up a Royal Commission to investigate the independence of Judiciary and appointment of judges. The event today ended with the Bar members releasing white balloons as symbol of peace & justice.

PSM has previously raised the issues on the Independence of the Judiciary and the role of the Judiciary in protecting the rights and livelihood of the ordinary working class. Today, these views became more meaningful as only a very few, exclusive, powerful people with business interest have determined the selection of the top judges in this country. It is time for the masses to arise and question the integrity and credibility of our judiciary, which is obviously under the control of their political masters and Business partners.

Today's action by the Malaysian Bar members is timely, sensible and correct....correct....correct!

Released by,

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