

Malaysia: Violent crackdown against peaceful protest

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International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)

Paris, 12th November 2007 - The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) expresses its deep concern regarding the repression of a peaceful rally that took place in Kuala Lumpur on November 10th, 2007.

The rally was organised by BERISH, a coalition of over 70 civil society groups and political parties, including SUARAM, FIDH member organisation in Malaysia, and aimed at asking free and fair elections in Malaysia.

On November 3rd, the police attempted to prevent the event from taking place by denying permission to the organisers. The day of the rally, roadblocks were set up to check busses and cars coming into Kuala Lumpur and many participants were refused entry into the vicinity of the venue. Several roads leading there were blocked. Police also warned the public that anyone who attended the rally risked to be arrested.

During the rally, which nevertheless took place, the police used excessive violence including over a dozen rounds of chemical-laced water and teargas against peaceful demonstrators. Several individuals were reportedly injured and at least one of them was sent to hospital. 34 persons were arbitrarily arrested. All of them were subsequently released.

FIDH condemns these acts of violence and the arbitrary arrest of peaceful demonstrators and considers that they violate the right to peaceful assembly, enshrined both in the Malaysian Constitution (art. 10) and in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR, Art. 20). The right to « periodic and genuine elections » is enshrined in the UDHR (art. 21), and citizens are fully entitled to ask for the full respect of that provision.

FIDH calls upon the Malaysian authorities to carry out an independent investigation into these acts of police violence, and to bring those responsible to justice.

Press contact : Gaël Grilhot : +33-1 43 55 90 19