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Malaysia: Hundreds of Peaceful Protesters Arrested

Malaysian authorities responded to a peaceful rally for electoral reform in Kuala Lumpur today with mass arrests and excessive use of force, Amnesty International said today.

At least 924 people have been arrested today, according to the Royal Malaysian Police. Those arrested include Ambiga Sreenevasan, chair of the Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections (Bersih 2.0) which organized the rally.

“The Malaysian government must immediately release these demonstrators and respect their right to peaceful protest,” said Donna Guest, deputy Asia/Pacific director at Amnesty International.

“As a current member of the UN Human Rights Council, the Malaysian government should be setting an example to other nations and promoting human rights. Instead they appear to be suppressing them, in the worst campaign of repression we’ve seen in the country for years”, she added.

Police attacked marchers with baton charges and tear gas. Opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim was injured after police fired tear gas canisters into a group of marchers in a tunnel.

Another MP, Khalid Samad of the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS), was also injured when police fired a tear gas canister at his neck.

After a group of protesters retreated into Tung Shing Hospital, police fired tear gas into the hospital, putting the health of patients at risk.

According to credible local sources, police have denied the detainees access to lawyers, which flouts international human rights standards.

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