

THE US SPONSORED “PROTEST MOVEMENT” IN MALAYSIA

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Protests rocked the streets of the Malaysian capital of Kuala Lumpur on Saturday, April 28, as an estimated 25,000 people took to the streets in support of Bersih [1], an organization fighting to reform the nation’s electoral system.

The organization refers to itself as ‘The Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections’, comprised of 84 Malaysian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that form a ‘coalition of like minded civil society organizations unaffiliated to any political party’ [2]. The recent rally follows two previous mass demonstrations in November 2007 and July 2011, as organizers renew their demands for the Malaysian Election Commission to resign before the 13th General Elections scheduled for June 2012 [3]. Although the coalition claims to be devoid of political affiliation, the movement is fully endorsed by Malaysia’s main opposition leader, Anwar Ibrahim and the Pakatan Rakyat political coalition he oversees.



Following documented cases of United States-based organizations funding pro-opposition civil society groups associated with civil unrest in Russia [4] and the Middle East [5], Chairperson Ambiga Sreenevasan acknowledged that the Bersih coalition received financial support from the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the Open Society Institute (OSI) [6]. An article published in the New York Times entitled “[U.S. Groups Helped Nurture Arab Uprisings](#)” reveals organizations such as the National Democratic Institute receive funding from the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), a recipient of funds directly from the US Congress [7]. The Bersih Coalition has also received support from the US-based Freedom

House [8], an NGO that receives direct funding from the US State Department [9]. While concern over electoral corruption and the various legitimate grievances of Bersih supporters may be entirely justified, the coalition's association with opposition Political parties and groups financed by the United States government suggests subversion.

Malaysia's former Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohammed has warned that the ruling Barisan Nasional party is targeted for regime change due to its stance on Israel and criticism of US policy, while condemning Anwar Ibrahim for his close ties to Paul Wolfowitz and other adherents of the Project for the New American Century (PNAC) [10]. Furthermore, Mahathir has accused the United States of using currency manipulation and US-funded NGOs to orchestrate the kind of destabilization needed to install a compliant proxy government [11]. Dr. William Robinson explains the subversive methods of conducting regime change through "democracy promotion" in his book, 'Promoting Polyarchy,' "In Latin America, in Eastern Europe with the Velvet Revolutions, in Africa, in the Middle East, really all over the world, the U.S. set up these different mechanisms now for penetrating these civil societies in the political systems of countries that are going to be intervened and to assure the outcome is going to be pleasing to Washington's foreign policy objectives" [12].

Eva Golinger, a researcher who has been investigating the democracy promotion efforts of the United States offers, "Millions and millions of U.S. tax payer dollars go every year into funding for political organizations and campaigns in different countries in the world that promote US agenda. Most U.S. citizens are unaware of the fact that that is how their money is being spent, to meddle, and to influence and to interfere in other nation's affairs" [13]. While the demands of the Bersih coalition appear to be coherent and apolitical, the convergence of its leadership with the opposition political establishment provides Anwar Ibrahim and Malaysia's opposition front Pakatan Rakyat with the means to mobilize demonstrators under the benign common cause of "clean and fair elections." The initial Bersih demonstration in 2007 has become widely credited for Pakatan Rakyat's record gains in the 2008 Malaysian elections, where the opposition coalition usurped power in five states and won 82 parliamentary seats [14].

Anwar Ibrahim served as Deputy Prime Minister from 1993 to 1998 under the administration of Dr. Mahathir Mohamad; the pair disagreed on the utilization of recovery methods during the 1997 Asian Economic Crisis, leading to Ibrahim's dismissal. While Mahathir introduced sovereign currency controls on the Malaysian ringgit to prevent currency speculation, Ibrahim denounced Mahathir's economic policies and portrayed himself as a freedom fighter for the free market [15]. Following his stint as Deputy Prime Minister, Ibrahim served as Chairman of the Development Committee of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 1998, while appearing on the payroll of Dick Cheney's Foundation for the Future and George Soros' International Crisis Group [16]. Furthermore, Anwar Ibrahim served as a panelist at the National Endowment for Democracy's "Democracy Award" [17].

The Bersih coalition has rejected a raft of reforms announced by Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak, including the establishment of parliamentary select committee on electoral reforms and amendments to the Peaceful Assembly Act following widespread condemnation of Putrajaya's crack down on July 2011's Bersih 2.0 rally from the international press [18]. The heavy-handed conduct of Malaysian security officials has worked to further strength

international condemnation of Malaysia's nationalist regime, as well as alienating the well-intentioned participants of Bersih rallies. Unlike the Bersih rally in July 2011, the recent demonstrations provoked armed clashes between protestors and police with cases of violence on both sides. Although police barricaded the area surrounding Dataran Merdeka (Independence Square) where the rally was scheduled to take place, violence was not used until demonstrators attempted to cross police barricades into the Square.

The security situation deteriorated as defiant protesters refused to disperse, prompting demonstrators to overturn a police vehicle [19]. Protesters and black-shirted police officials threw broken bottles, pieces of metal and concrete slabs towards each other, prompting police to fire tear gas and water cannons at demonstrators, causing hundreds to disperse into side streets [20]. While footage of the recent police crackdown circulates throughout international media, Malaysia's ruling Barisan Nasional party is again the subject of international criticism. As public discontent grows with the administration of Prime Minister Najib Razak, the unpopularity of the Malaysian ruling party has set the stage for the victory of Anwar Ibrahim's Pakatan Rakyat opposition coalition. As the United States shifts its military focus to the Pacific Region, Anwar Ibrahim's adherence to western political institutions will likely warrant the continued nurturing of unrest in Malaysia until the opposition successively usurps power.



Malaysian Riot Police near Dataran Merdeka (Independence Square) maintained the security situation without the use of force until several demonstrators attempted to take the area.



Supporters of Anwar Ibrahim’s Pakatan Rakyat opposition coalition march on side streets with banners calling on people to reject dirty elections.



Red-shirt supporters of pro-opposition security unit Jabatan Amal form human chain in a commercial district of Kuala Lumpur.



Demonstrators hold banners calling on Malaysians to reject the perceived corruption of the electoral system.



Opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim fully endorses Bersih, an organization that claims to hold no affiliation with any political party.



Crowds cheer as demonstrators invert a photograph of Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak.



Bersih supporters sit behind police barricades outside of Dataran Merdeka.



Jabatan Amal supporters stand near the barbed wire barricades setup by Police, preventing demonstrators from entering the historic Dataran Merdeka.



Riot police fire tear gas to disperse protestors attempting to take Dataran Merdeka, causing Bersih supporters to take refuge in the nearby City Hall complex.



Protesters pray in the historic Masjid Jamek Mosque as Riot Police fire tear gas and surround the complex to prevent demonstrators from exiting.



Medical teams rush to the scene to provide assistance to injured people and those who experienced adverse effects from tear gas.



Commercial areas of downtown Kuala Lumpur littered with damaged property and personal belongings following the initial dispersal of protestors into side streets toward the Sogo district.



Malaysian Police have reportedly detained at least 388 Bersih supporters.

Notes:

- [1] [Police violence marks Malaysia reform rally](#), Al Jazeera, April 28, 2012
- [2] [Bersih About](#), BERSIH 2.0 [OFFICIAL] Facebook
- [3] Ibid
- [4] [Emails expose watchdog's dollar deals](#), Russia Today, December 9, 2011
- [5] [U.S. Groups Helped Nurture Arab Uprisings](#), The New York Times, April 14, 2011
- [6] [Bersih repudiates foreign Christian funding claim](#), The Malaysian Insider, June 27, 2011
- [7] [U.S. Groups Helped Nurture Arab Uprisings](#), The New York Times, April 14, 2011
- [8] [Freedom House Calls on Malaysian Authorities to Allow Free Assembly](#), Freedom House, 2012
- [9] [Freedom House: Frequently Asked Questions](#), Freedom House, 2012
- [10] [REGIME CHANGE](#), CheDet (Official Blog of Dr. Mahathir Mohammed), February 13, 2012
- [11] [CURRENCY WARS](#), CheDet (Official Blog of Dr. Mahathir Mohammed), March 29, 2012
- [12] [Democracy promotion: America's new regime change formula](#), Russia Today, November 18, 2010
- [13] Ibid
- [14] [Bersih repudiates foreign Christian funding claim](#), The Malaysian Insider, June 27, 2011
- [15] [The Case of Malaysia](#), Executive Intelligence Review, July 4, 2008
- [16] [British Empire Tool to Recolonize Malaysia](#), Executive Intelligence Review, September 12, 2008
- [17] [2007 NED Annual Report](#), National Endowment for Democracy, 2007
- [18] [Bersih tarnishes Najib's reform credentials; say foreign press](#), The Malaysian Insider, April 29, 2012
- [19] [Larger Bersih turnout, but violence may play into Umno's hands](#), The Malaysian Insider, April 29, 2012
- [20] Ibid

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