

## **Groups gather to mark victims of custodial death**

A symbolic gesture of throwing flower petals into the murky Klang River today marked the demise of Teoh Beoh Hock and R Gunagesaran on July 16, 2009, and many other victims who died in custody over the years.

Death in custody NGO Edict executive director Khalid Mohd Ismath, on behalf of organisers for the Black Thursday commemoration, said the gesture was their symbol of solidarity with not only the victims but also their family members who are left behind to seek justice.

"We would like to remind the public that these cases should no longer happen," Khalid said.

For about one hour, under close watch from a larger group of uniformed and plainclothes police personnel, the group of around 20 activists and supporters reiterated their demands, which included the formation of an Independent Police Complaints and Misconduct Commission (IPCMC).

Edict chairperson M Visvanathan reminded concerned Malaysians that amid a global outcry over the murder of Black American man George Floyd at the hands of US police, similar incidents allegedly involving local authorities have been largely silenced in Malaysia.

"Don't only get angry when George Floyd died in America, but when similar deaths happened here, we don't have the same reaction.

"So long as Malaysians don't wake up and don't realise that deaths in custody are not supposed to happen, it will continue to happen," stressed the lawyer, who has been personally involved in representing families of death in custody victims, including Gunasegaran.

Gunasegaran was 31 years old when he was arrested on a drug charge. He collapsed while being fingerprinted at the facility between 6.45pm and 7pm while in police custody and was pronounced dead at 7.40pm on July 16, 2009, at Kuala Lumpur Hospital.

The police said in its official findings that Gunasegaran [died](#) due to drug abuse.

Aside from the police, Visvanathan noted that deaths in custody were also recorded in prison and in immigration detention depots, and similar attention should be given to provide justice for their family members.

Among recent immigration death in custody cases included that of an [Indian tourist](#) Zeawdeen

Kadar Masdar, who was nabbed in a May 1 raid at Masjid India, at the time under an enhanced movement control order (MCO) after an outbreak of Covid-19 among migrant workers.

Bar Council Human Rights Committee chairperson Roger Chan pointed out that the original Royal Commission of Inquiry report that recommended the formation of IPCMC as part of sweeping police reforms had set May 2006 as a targeted deadline for its implementation.

"But now, 14 years later, we are still only talking about it," he said.

Chan also said effective policing and human rights should go hand in hand, rather than as a contradictory concept.

"They are mutually reinforcing. In a civilised society, good policing and human rights go hand in hand," he added.

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