

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/malaisie-two-journalists-set-upon-during-02-03-2012,41978.html>

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Asia - Malaysia

Protest turns ugly

## Two journalists set upon during environmental demonstration

2 March 2012

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Reporters Without Borders deplores the assaults on **Adam Chew** and **Lee Hong Chun**, journalists with the Chinese-language newspaper [Kwong Wah Jit Poh](#), during a demonstration against the Australian mining company Lynas Corp. on 26 February in the north-western state of Penang.

"It is the job of the police to ensure the safety of media staff who cover rallies. An investigation must be undertaken to identify those behind these attacks so that the two journalists can be compensated," the press freedom organization said. "If it emerges that the attackers are supporters of the UNMO party, their adherence to that political group should in no way give them protection."

Chew, 29, and 25-year-old Chun were injured during the demonstration which began in the centre of George Town at about 6 p.m. The protest was organized by Himpunan Hijau 2.0 and the Democratic Action Party, which is in power in the state, in protest against the construction of a rare earth treatment plant by Lynas at Kuantan, in Pahang state.

About 50 pro-Lynas counter-demonstrators and supporters of the United Malays National Organisation party of Prime Minister Najib Razak disrupted the protest and questioned the anti-Lynas demonstrators. According to the newspaper [Malaysiakini](#), the counter-demonstrators were reported to have shouted racist abuse and tried to prevent the demonstration from taking place.

Lim Guan Eng, the chief minister of Penang state and secretary-general of the DAP, who went to offer his public support to the demonstrators, was set upon by several of those who opposed the demonstration. Wielding hard hats, the latter managed to get through the human barrier formed by Lim's security staff. The two journalists were reported to have been caught between the security men and the crowd moving towards the chief minister.

Chew received an injury to his right hand, which he used to ward off the blows. He was taken to Penang General Hospital where he received eight stitches. Chun suffered minor head injuries after he was hit with a hard hat. Police do not appear to have intervened during the incident.

Three days ago, Karpal Singh, national chairman of the DAP, suggested that the government introduce new laws to protect journalists so that they are treated like public servants during the exercise of their duties, in accordance with section 353 of the criminal code. Under this measure, any attack on media staff would be punishable by a fine or up to two years' imprisonment.

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