

Headline	Homeless rounded up and dumped on highway		
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Homeless rounded up and dumped on highway

By Audrey Edwards

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KUALA LUMPUR — A group of homeless people were rudely awakened from their slumber on flattened cardboard boxes and put into trucks in a raid that saw them dumped near the Karak Highway and Rawang, MM Afternoon learned.

Left without water or food, the group walked several hours from the Karak Highway and Rawang to return to Kuala Lumpur city centre.

Renny (not his real name) said the swoop that took place at midnight on May 22 saw him and others rounded up by City Hall from their “home” near Segi College Kuala Lumpur.

“They told us to walk to City Hall. When we reached, we were told to line up and write down our names,” he said.

“Then, they divided us because there were some who were made to take a urine test. After that, we were told to get into lorries.

“They took us to a forested area at the Karak Highway and just dumped us there. Nothing was said.

“It was so dark. It wasn’t a matter of getting run over by a car. We were scared of animals.”

He added the group was divided into teams of four.

After getting out of the forest, they walked along the highway until they reached the city centre at sunrise.

“Why did they do this to us? We are not animals. We are humans. Even animals are treated better if they are abandoned. They are left at places like supermarkets or restaurants where people will give them food,” he said.

“The authorities just left us there with nothing.”

The 50-year-old, who has lived on the streets for almost 15 years, added this was not the first time he had been rounded up.

“It was in 2008 or 2009 when they rounded us up and dumped us at a Chinese cemetery near Sungai Besi,” he added. “This time was the furthest.”

Renny said he started living on the

streets after the hotel he worked at ceased operations. He has been working odd jobs since then.

Another homeless person who was involved in the incident, Adi, said he was picked up from the Masjid Negara area and was dropped off near Rawang.

“It was a forested area and we had to walk out to make our way to Rawang town,” he said.

“From there, we just followed the signboards until we reached KL at about 8am. We stopped three times to rest.”

He said the first time he experienced such an incident was last year when he was picked up and dropped off at the Pekeliling flats.

“I am really hurt. Why did they treat us like animals and think they can do what they want with us?” he said.

Adi, an odd job worker, said he had been homeless since his contract with a company ended.

“I just don’t earn enough to rent a place to stay. I don’t even have enough money to buy food.”

Earlier that night, some of those rounded up had been treated to a charity concert where veteran artistes performed to raise funds for a non-governmental organisation.

They headed back to their makeshift homes on the streets of KL after enjoying the show, only for their “wonderful” night to be ruined.

Pertubuhan Pembangunan Kebajikan dan Persekitaran Positif Malaysia (SEED) executive director Mitch Yusof said he found out about the incident when Renny and Adi told him about it.

Both men were at the fundraising concert by SEED during the night of the raid.

“Why did they do this? These people don’t have any money. They are homeless.”

He said he had written to the Malaysian AIDS Council (MAC) to ask for assistance.

MAC policy consultant Fifa Rahman said she would contact City Hall for clarification.

SEED is a partner organisation of MAC,

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which manages issues of marginalised communities including the homeless, transgender and people living and affected with HIV.

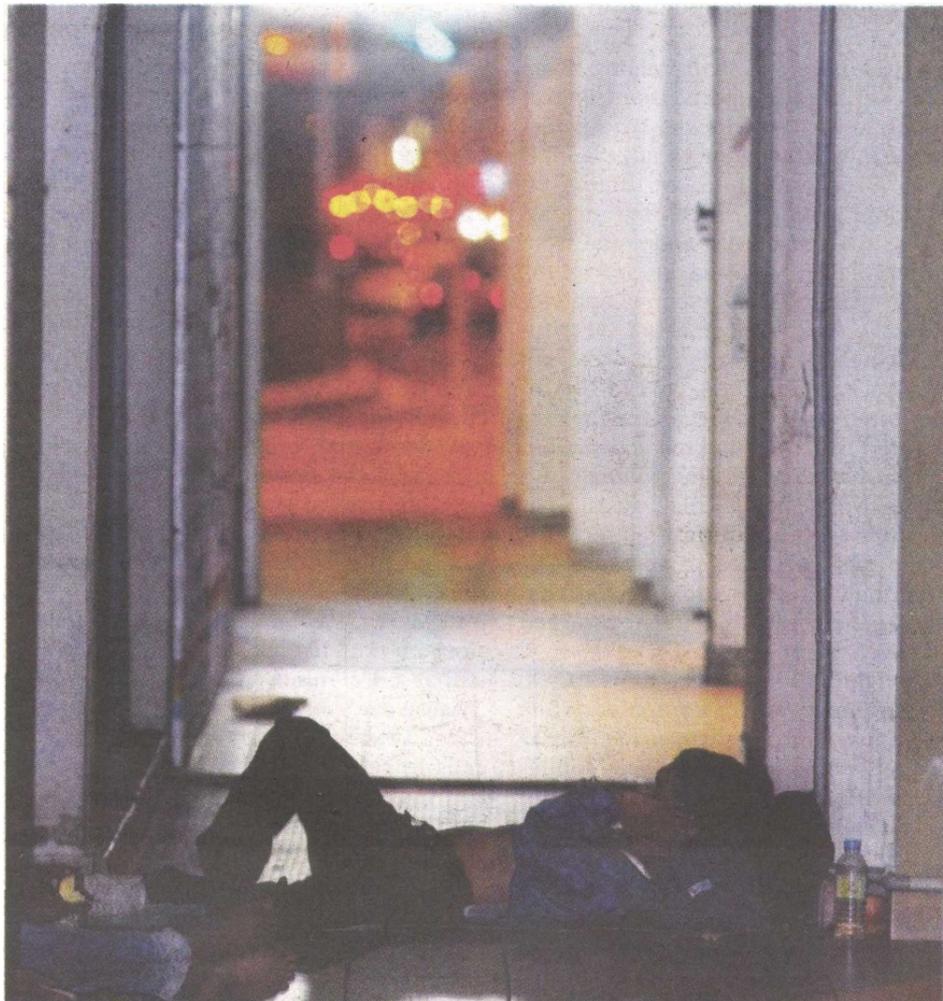
Jaafar Daud, who has been homeless for more than two decades, said he once had a similar ordeal when he was picked up and sent to an area near Damansara.

“It wasn’t very far to walk back. They were conducting an operation at the time.

“It was just one time. After that, you learn to disappear whenever you see a City Hall van,” said Jaafar, a former parking attendant.

Jaafar, now a programme manager at Teduhan Kasih shelter, said word on the street back then was that a clean up by various authorities would be conducted every time a major conference was held in the city.

“They didn’t want people to see the dirt,” he said, adding that one way to keep drug users off the streets was by sending them to rehabilitation.



Homeless people sleeping on the fivefoot way in Kuala Lumpur. An NGO has called for a probe over allegations of mistreatment of helpless individuals by City Hall.