

URGENT ACTION

INCREASED FEARS FOR CHURCH CONGREGATION

The congregation of the Taman Yasmin Indonesian Christian Church in Bogor, West Java has received new threats. A radical group plans to disrupt the congregation's weekly Sunday service on 9 October, prompting increased fears for their safety.

According to credible sources, large numbers of a group called the Indonesian Muslim Communication Forum (Forkami) plan to arrive at the site of Taman Yasmin Indonesian Christian Church (also known as Gereja Kristen Indonesia, GKI) this Sunday. They aim to disrupt the weekly service held by the congregation in protest against the church. The congregation has faced increased harassment and intimidation by Forkami members over the past two weeks, in an attempt to force them to leave the church site. On 2 October, several members of the congregation were attacked, despite the presence of the Municipal Administrative Police (Satpol PP). In the most recent two protests against the congregation, the Mayor of Bogor is also reported to have been present. The city administration has also cordoned off the pavement in front of the church to prevent the congregation from conducting their service. The congregation fear that they will be intimidated and attacked when they arrive for Sunday services on 9 October and that they will continue to be intimidated and attacked after this date.

The church has been closed since 2008 when, following pressure from radical Islamist groups, its building permit was revoked by the Bogor city administration and the building was sealed off. Since then the congregation have conducted weekly services on the pavement outside the church, which some local residents claim causes public disruption. This had led to protests against the congregation by the local community allegedly backed by radical Islamist groups. Despite a ruling by the Indonesian Supreme Court in December 2010 ordering the Bogor authorities to re-open the church, the Mayor of Bogor has refused to comply with it. The church has been attacked at least seven times since 2008.

Please write immediately in English, Indonesian or your own language calling on the authorities in Indonesia to:

- Take adequate measures to guarantee the safety of the Taman Yasmin Indonesian Christian Church congregation, in accordance with their right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion;
- Conduct prompt, independent and impartial investigations into all reports of intimidation, harassment and attacks against members of the Taman Yasmin Indonesian Christian Church and bring the perpetrators to justice in accordance with international fair trial standards;
- Immediately comply with the Indonesian Supreme Court ruling and re-open the Taman Yasmin Indonesian Christian Church and take steps to ensure that all religious minorities are protected and allowed to practise their faith free from fear, intimidation and attack.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 16 NOVEMBER 2011 TO:

Mayor of Bogor

Diani Budiarto

Balaikota Bogor, Jl. Ir. H. Juanda No 10

Bogor, West Java

Indonesia

E-mail: kominfo@kotabogor.go.id or

inspektorat@kotabogor.go.id

Salutation: Dear Diani Budiarto

Head of the Indonesian National Police

General Timur Pradopo

Indonesian National Police Headquarters

Jl. Trunojoyo No. 3

Jakarta Selatan

Indonesia

Fax: +62 21 722 0669

Salutation: Dear General Timur Pradopo

And copies to:

Chairperson, Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia

Danang Girindawardana

Jl. HR. Rasuna Said Kav. C-19 (Gedung

Pengadilan TIPIKOR)

Jakarta Selatan, Indonesia

Fax: +62 21 5296 0908

E-mail: ombudsman@ombudsman.go.id

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Taman Yasmin Indonesian Christian Church (Gereja Kristen Indonesia, GKI) in Bogor, West Java, was closed and sealed off by the Bogor city administration in 2008 after its building permit was revoked. The Bogor city administration claimed that the permit was obtained using falsified signatures from members of the community. However, in December 2010 the Indonesian Supreme Court overturned the decision and ordered the church to be re-opened. The Mayor of Bogor has refused to comply with the ruling, citing fears that it would spark social unrest, and has instead offered the congregation a building in another location to conduct their weekly services which the congregation has rejected.

On 18 July 2011 the Indonesian Ombudsman, tasked with overseeing state officials and public services, gave the Bogor city administration a 60-day deadline to comply with the Supreme Court ruling. On 18 September 2011, after the Bogor city administration had failed to comply with the recommendation, the Indonesian Ombudsman reportedly announced that it would refer the case to the Indonesian President, as permitted under the 2008 Ombudsman Law (Law No. 37/2008).

The church has been subject to intimidation and attacks by local community members, allegedly backed by radical Islamist groups, in the past. In early July 2011 members of the congregation received a copy of a letter from residents of the Curugmekar village in Bogor calling the local government authorities and the police to put a stop to all religious services and activities by the congregation. The letter, dated 28 June, warned that the ongoing situation “invites the community and others to react in a way that could spark a potential disturbance”, and demanded that all of the church’s activities stop by 3 July. When the congregation ignored the demand, dozens of residents gathered at the church in protest. The Bogor police deployed around 200 officers to the site in anticipation of a possible outbreak of violence.

The right to freedom of religion in Indonesia is guaranteed in the Indonesian Constitution and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Indonesia is state party. However, Amnesty International continues to receive reports of attacks and intimidation against religious minorities in Indonesia, including Christians. In 2010 at least 30 churches were attacked or forced to close down. Some churches were burned down or otherwise damaged by violent groups. Church members have also been targeted and attacked.

The Taman Yasmin Indonesian Christian Church has recently received solidarity support from GP Ansor, a youth community organization group affiliated with Nahdatul Ulama (NU), one of the largest mass Islamic organizations in Indonesia. On 2 October, the group organized an event to mobilize support for the church and invited the Head of the Constitutional Court, the Head of the Indonesian Human Rights Commission (Komnas HAM), politicians and other Islamic groups to attend.

Name: Congregation of the Taman Yasmin Indonesian Church
Gender m/f: Both

Further information on UA: 212/11 Index: ASA 21/031/2011 Issue Date: 5 October 2011

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