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INDONESIA: Government must find adequate housing for displaced Ahmadiyya community in Lombok

The Minister for Home Affairs should ensure the safe return home for a displaced Ahmadiyya community in Lombok or guarantee them adequate alternative housing elsewhere according to their wishes, Amnesty International said today. The community had been forced to flee after violent attacks four years ago.

On 4 February 2006, a local religious leader incited a mob in the hamlet of Ketapang, West Lombok sub-district, to attack houses belonging to the Ahmadiyya. This was the second attack in a five month period. The mob carried machetes, threw stones at the houses and set them alight with petrol. At least 24 houses were completely or partially burnt while most of the Ahmadiyya's personal possessions were either destroyed or stolen.

Dozens of police at the scene did not stop the attacks, but did manage to evacuate the 33 Ahmadiyya families in trucks from the hamlet. They were eventually transferred to the Wisma Transito (transit centre) building in Mataram, the capital city of Lombok.

Four years after the attacks, the displaced families - about 90 people - are still living in temporary accommodation and have been unable to return to their hamlet to rebuild their lives. An Amnesty International delegation who visited them at the Wisma Transito shelter in Mataram, Lombok in March 2010 found them living in three 20-by-8-metre dormitories, where rooms for each family are only three metres each and are divided by banners and sarongs tied up with plastic string.

Dozens of adults in the shelter do not have identity cards and have faced various obstacles in obtaining them from the local authorities. Without identity cards they are unable to access basic services, including free healthcare available for the poor. During meetings the local authorities have repeatedly told the community that it is better for them to live in the shelter as neither they nor the police can guarantee their safety if they return to their hamlet.

As a state party to a range of international human rights treaties, the Indonesian government has the duty prevent or stop violent attacks and forced evictions of vulnerable minority groups such as the Ahmadiyya community.

Moreover the Indonesian authorities must ensure that those responsible for the attacks are brought to justice and victims receive reparations.

The Indonesian government has also the primary duty and responsibility to establish conditions, and to provide the means, which allow internally displaced persons to return voluntarily, in safety and with dignity, to their homes or places of habitual residence, or to resettle voluntarily in another part of the country. Displaced people should be consulted about solutions, both temporary and permanent, and be adequately informed about entitlements, benefits and the choices available to them.

Background

The Ahmadiyya are a religious group who consider themselves a part of Islam, although many mainstream Muslim groups view their beliefs as heterodox. The Ahmadiyya claim 200,000 followers in Indonesia. They have come under attack in recent years because some groups view them as heretical.

Amnesty International has documented violent attacks against the Ahmadiyya in various parts of Indonesia. In December 2009, a group of residents, some of whom claimed to be members of the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), raided a house in Tebet, South Jakarta while members of the Ahmadiyya community held Friday prayers. Earlier, in June 2009, two men attempted to burn down an Ahmadiyya house of worship in Kebayoran Lama, South Jakarta while Ahmadiyya followers were performing their dawn prayers. The following month, another Ahmadiyya place of worship in Tangerang, Banten province, was partially burnt by two unidentified people.

There has been increasing pressure on the Indonesian government to act against the Ahmadiyya. In 2008, the government issued a joint ministerial decree warning the Ahmadiyya to 'discontinue' the promotion of their activities. The police do not sufficiently protect the Ahmadiyya, and those who commit acts of violence against them often go unpunished.

For further information on the displaced Ahmadiyya community in Mataram, Lombok, see:

Amnesty International's Open Letter to the Home Affairs Minister (ASA: 21/008/2010).

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA21/008/2010/en>

The report "Displaced and Forgotten: Ahmadiyya in Indonesia" (AI Index: ASA 21/006/2010).

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA21/006/2010/en>

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