

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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Indonesia: Stop intimidating participants in events concerning 1965 human rights violations

Amnesty International is deeply concerned about attempts by the Indonesian security forces to disband internal closed-door discussions and public events relating to serious human rights violations that occurred 50 years ago, most recently a workshop organised by the 1965 survivors and human rights defenders in Jakarta on 1 August 2017. These actions are a clear violation of the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. President Joko Widodo must immediately end all forms of restrictions against public discussions in relation to the events of 1965 and ensure that the government starts listening to victims and others, instead of suppressing their voices.

On 1 August 2017 members of the local police and military from East Jakarta disbanded a workshop in Jakarta intended to share the findings of the International Peoples Tribunal (IPT) 1965, a civil society initiative to raise international awareness on the 1965 mass human rights violations. According to local human rights organizations, there have been at least 39 cases since 2015 where authorities had disbanded events and intimidated those involved in events related to 1965.

In Ambon (Maluku), the organizers were forced to move the discussion to a church after being subjected to intimidation by the police on 18 March 2017. Intimidation by the security forces also occurred in Bandung and Cirebon (West Java), Semarang (Central Java), Surabaya (East Java) and Yogyakarta. All events were related to the IPT and occurred between March and July 2017. In many cases vigilante groups taking the law into their own hands were also involved in disbanding events, with police doing nothing to intervene and prevent their actions.

These restrictions to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly in relation to the events of 1965 is at odds with initiatives by President Widodo who has pledged to address all past human rights violations and abuses in the country, including those of 1965. In April 2016 the government organized a symposium '*Examining the 1965 Tragedy: A Historical Approach*' (*Membedah Tragedi 1965: Pendekatan Kesejarahan*), which brought together survivors, scholars, human-rights activists, artists, former members of the Indonesian military and government officials to discuss the events of 1965. One of the key recommendations from the symposium was for the authorities to end all forms of restrictions to freedom of expression and assembly in relation to any public discussions related to the 1965 mass human rights violations.

Amnesty International believes that the victims of the 1965 violations and the families have the right to peacefully assemble to discuss and exchange information and ideas about the past. Instead of blocking this event, the authorities should seek ways to support these initiatives to ensure truth, justice and adequate and effective reparations, in accordance with Indonesia's international obligations.

Background

An estimated 500,000 to one million people were unlawfully killed and hundreds of thousands were held without trial for periods ranging from a few days to more than 14 years when the Indonesian military launched a systematic attack against members of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) and suspected sympathizers. Investigations by the Indonesian National Human Rights Commission (Komnas HAM) and other human rights organizations have documented a range of human rights violations during this period including unlawful killings, torture, enforced disappearances, rape, sexual slavery and other crimes of sexual violence, slavery, arbitrary arrest and detention, forced displacement and forced labour. Many victims and their families also faced violations of their social, economic and cultural rights, and continue to this day to experience discrimination both in law and in practice.

A three-year investigation into the human rights violations committed in 1965 was carried out by Komnas HAM and was completed in July 2012, concluded that the findings meet the criteria of gross human rights violations, and include crimes against humanity, as defined by the Indonesian Law No. 26/2000 on Human Rights Courts. To date, however, there has been no indication that the government will even launch a criminal investigation. Meanwhile, attempts to establish a truth commission on the national level have stalled due to a lack of political will.

Although Indonesia has seen a marked increase in the space for freedom of expression following the fall of Suharto in 1998, a culture of silence has prevailed in regard to discussing the 1965 mass human rights violations.