



Promoting human rights, peace and democracy in Indonesia

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President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono
President of Indonesia
Jakarta

Dear Mr President,

Indonesia and the 1965 tragedy

We have just had the privilege of hosting one of Indonesia's foremost writers and producers of documentary films.

Putu Oka Sukanta is one of hundreds of thousands of Indonesians who spent many years as political prisoners, held without charge or trial in prisons and camps across the country, for no other reason than that they were suspected of being members or alleged sympathizers of the Indonesian Communist Party, the PKI, or of organizations allegedly affiliated to the PKI.

Putu Oka Sukanta was himself a political detainee for ten years, from 1966 until 1976, and was never charged or tried. We had the honour of welcoming him to this country during his tour in Europe to present his short stories, poems and documentary films to audiences in many countries. His works vividly portray the experiences of Indonesian men, women and children who suffered untold indignities, maltreatment and the deprivation of basic health facilities under the authoritarian regime of President Soeharto. They show how many of the survivors have tried to preserve their dignity and humanity and make a living for themselves and their families even though they continue to face discrimination for being former prisoners or the offspring or associates of former prisoners.

Since the downfall of President Soeharto in May 1998, no Indonesian president has taken any action to lift the burden of this discrimination that has continued to blight the lives of hundreds of thousands of Indonesians.

Neglect by the Indonesian State of the crimes against humanity perpetrated against these people more than forty years ago casts doubt upon the Indonesian Government's commitment to uphold human rights and ensure implementation of Law No 39/1999 on Human Rights, Article 2 of which reads:

'The State of the Republic of Indonesia recognizes and upholds the basic human rights and basic freedoms of all individuals as an integral and inseparable part of the rights of all persons which must be protected, respected and upheld in the interests of safeguarding their dignity as human beings, their humanity, welfare, happiness, skills and justice.'

Since the downfall of President Soeharto, Indonesia has gained recognition worldwide as a democratic country and as a respected member of the international community. However, the failure of every Indonesian government since that time to acknowledge the State's responsibility for the appalling treatment of hundreds of thousands of its citizens will continue to cast doubt on its legitimacy as a country that upholds the principles of democracy, human rights and justice.

My organization respectfully requests your Government to:

- Acknowledge and resolve the grave human rights violations that took place during the 1965 tragedy;
- Finalize the draft law on a national Truth and Reconciliation Commission with terms of reference wide enough to allow the Commission to establish the truth about the 1965 case and provide redress for the victims; and
- Repeal all the remaining discriminatory policies against the victims, including Decree XXV/1966 of the MPRS, the Provisional People's Consultative Assembly.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Carmel Budiardjo