

Jakarta: Indonesians rally for unity after blasphemy protests

Sunday 4 December 2016, by [Press Agencies](#) (Date first published: 4 December 2016).

Crowds gather in Jakarta in response to protests against city's Christian governor who is accused of blasphemy.

Tens of thousands of Indonesians have rallied in Jakarta, the Indonesian capital, calling for tolerance and unity after massive protests were held against the city's Christian governor.

The crowds on Sunday filled a major traffic circle in Jakarta and sprawled into its main thoroughfares, waving "We Are Indonesia" signs and a giant red-and-white national flag was held aloft.

The rally was held in response to protests against Governor Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, who is being prosecuted for alleged blasphemy.

Jakarta has been rocked in the past months by major protests against Purnama, who is accused of insulting Islam by criticising opponents who used Quranic references to attack him ahead of an election in February.

Protesters took to the streets on Friday in the latest rally targeting him, demanding Purnama be jailed on blasphemy charges. A similar rally was held on November 4, both attracting tens of thousands of people.

Purnama is a long-term ally of President Joko Widodo. He denies wrongdoing, but has apologised for the remarks.

'Detention not necessary'

Conservative Muslim groups are demanding his immediate arrest. Police say his detention is not necessary and have called for the respect of the legal process.

Sunday's counter-rally for tolerance and unity coincided with a weekly car-free morning in Jakarta when a central artery of the city is handed over to pedestrians for a few hours.

Organisers called it the "Parade of Indonesian Culture" and it featured traditional dances from Sabang in westernmost Aceh to Merauke in easternmost Papua.

The Jakarta government has also put up signboards on major roads calling for national unity and displaying pictures of independence heroes who fought against colonial rule.

Purnama is popular with many for pushing through tough reforms to modernise the traffic-plagued capital.

However, opinion polls have shown him slipping into second place in the race for re-election as

governor.

Indonesia is home to the world's largest Muslim population, and less than nine percent of Indonesians are Christians.

Source: News Agencies

P.S.

* <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/12/indonesians-rally-unity-blasphemy-161204042203314.html>