

Indonesia - State of nation address overlooks religious intolerance, social justice: Critics

Monday 19 August 2019, by [FACHRIANSYAH Rizki](#), [MAKUR Markus](#) (Date first published: 19 August 2019).

President Joko “Jokowi” Widodo’s annual state of the nation speech, which he delivered on Friday ahead of Indonesia’s 74th Independence Day, covered wide-ranging topics including the development of human capital and the imminent relocation of the country’s capital city to Kalimantan.

However, several activists affiliated with local nongovernmental organizations have criticized the president for overlooking persistent issues that have long plagued the country, such as the rights of religious minorities and the re-evaluation of laws deemed prone to exploitation.

“True independence [is achieved] when President Jokowi guarantees religious freedom for every citizen without exception, including members of the Filadelfia Congregation of Batak Protestant Churches [HKBP Filadelfia] and the Indonesian Christian Church [GKI] Yasmin,” religious freedom activist Judioanto Simanjuntak wrote in a Facebook post on Sunday.

Judioanto, who served as a legal representative of HKBP Filadelfia amid mob attacks in 2012, published a Facebook post on Thursday in which he expressed his skepticism about whether Jokowi would bring up the issue of religious freedom in his annual speech.

“Members of GKI Yasmin and HKBP Filadelfia have held services 199 times across from the Presidential Palace since 2012, but President Jokowi, as well as the Bogor mayor and the Bekasi regent, has yet to immediately resolve the issue,” he wrote in the post.

Back in 2008, the Bogor city administration issued a decree freezing the GKI church’s building permit in response to residents’ opposition.

HKBP Filadelfia faced a similar problem with the Bekasi administration sealing off the location on which their church was to be built in 2010.

In response to Jokowi’s call for immediate legal reform, Institute for Criminal Justice Reform executive director Anggara urged the president to prevent the draft revision of the Criminal Code from being passed into law.

“There are many articles in the Criminal Code bill that explicitly oppose groups the government has vowed to protect. It could potentially cause gross violations of human rights,” Anggara said in a statement.

He called on Jokowi to re-evaluate points in the bill that could clamp down on free speech in the country, such as those concerning insults against the President.

Furthermore, Anggara also urged the President to revise laws that were prone to exploitation, such as the Electronic Information and Transactions (ITE) Law and the Narcotics Law.

“The government has ignored those convicted of drug use, leaving them to suffer in prison without providing them with accessible health services,” he said.

Agrarian Reform Consortium secretary-general Dewi Kartika bemoaned Jokowi's state of the nation address, calling it "bland and oblivious to the nation's fundamental problems".

"Structural issues such as agrarian conflicts and poverty among local farmers, fishermen and indigenous people were ignored. Innovation is indeed necessary to tackle global competition, but it will never resolve social justice issues in the country," she said in a statement.

Amid the stream of criticism, East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) Governor Viktor Laiskodat said he appreciated Jokowi's claim in his speech about Labuan Bajo in West Manggarai, NTT being one of the country's four cross-sector destinations in 2020.

"We expect Jokowi's speech to accelerate the improvement of tourist infrastructure and facilities as part of an effort to bolster local tourism in Labuan Bajo and NTT," NTT administration spokesperson Marius Jelamu told The Jakarta Post.

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