

New left activist alliance formed in Indonesia

Wednesday 14 May 2008, by [LANE Max](#) (Date first published: 14 May 2008).

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Over the last few days good news has come in on the formation of a new Left united front formation, called the **National Liberation Front (FPN)**. The FPN will be organizing its first street action on the 10th Anniversary of the downfall of Suharto, May 21 around the issue of the current government's increases to fuel prices. This will be followed by another action on June 1. Small actions and leafleting have already begun.

The formation of the FPN flowed from an initiative of the Aliansi Buruh Mengugat (**Workers Demands Alliance - ABM**) an alliance of left and progressive trade unions that have come together over the last 5 or so years. Some of the unions were formed by left activist groups, but most have sprung up from the workplace and/or broken away from old structures that had been controlled by the state before the fall of the dictator Suharto. It is therefore a rather diverse mixture of initially enterprise based unions, which have then formed various more-or-less ad hoc federations which have then stabilized. They include manufacturing and service sector workers, in both state and privately owned firms.

While engaging in lobbying (of MPs for example), their primary emphasis is on mass struggle in the extraparliamentary sphere. At the moment also no left party has been able to be registered to participate in elections. They take up immediate workplace issues, issues to with trade union rights and legislation impacting on those rights as well as general socio-economic issues. They are firmly against to neo-liberal capitalism. The majority have been won to one kind or another of left orientations.

ABM called the meeting, which led to the formation of FPN, initially to organize an action for May 21. This followed high levels of collaboration among most left and progressive groups in organizing mobilizations for May Day in Jakarta and other cities.*

The initial members of FPN includes, of course, the ABM - mainly militant and progressive unions, based in Jakarta and several other major cities around the country. It includes **KASBI (Congress of Indonesian Trade Union Alliances)**. KASBI leaders played an important role in this initiative. It also includes the **Indonesian Front for Labour Struggle - Politics of the Poor - FNPBI-PRM** (the left wing of the old PRD led union), which has also been an important actor in this process, - initially the two sides of the FNPBI were active, but only the FNPBI-PRM is active at the moment.

The three main socialist left national political formations now operating in Indonesia are also members. These are:

Persatuan Politik Rakyat Miskin/**PPRM - (Poor Peoples Political Union)**, an initiative of the Political Committee of the Poor - PRD (KPRM-PRD), comprising KPRM-PRD members plus others.

Perhimpunan Rakyat Pekerja/**PRP - Working Peoples Association**, also a national formation, with a student and worker base

Serikat Mahasiswa Indonesia/**SMI - Indonesian Students League/Sarekat**, which collaborates closely with the **Jakarta Federation of Worker Unions (FPBJ)**

Other groups include:

- **WAHLI** - the Indonesian Friends of the Earth organization
- Aliansi Rakyat Miskin (**Poor Peoples Alliance**) - an organization that grew out of campaigns against new regulations in Jakarta banning "begging".
- **KORBAN (Coalition of the People Arising to Resist)**- an alliance of victims of human rights abuses
- The **Jakarta Legal Aid Institute**
- The **Institute for Global Justice**, the main anti-neoliberal globalisation, activist oriented think tank in Indonesia.

It also includes the Serikat Pengamen Indonesia (**Indonesian Street Buskers Union**), quite a militant union of the poor, and Perempuan Mahardika (**Freedom Women**), a women's liberation (where KPRM-PRD women activists are already very active).

(To date those specific peasant struggle oriented groups, influenced ideologically from other peasant oriented political tendencies, such as the Indonesian Students Front (FMN), are also not participating.)

While there no doubt is a lot of consolidation work to do, this is undoubtedly a major and very positive step forward in left and progressive regroupment in Indonesia. If it consolidates, it will lay the basis for breaking out of the encirclement by bourgeois and elite political forces that has been the legacy of 33 years of almost totalitarian dictatorship under Suharto (1965-98).

We will try to provide English language updates and analysis when there are more developments.