

Indonesia: Evidence of 'systematic killings' in 1965

Friday 11 May 2012, by [ARITONANG Margareth S.](#) (Date first published: 9 May 2012).

The National Commission on Human Rights (Komnas HAM) says it has evidence that government officials were involved in the systematic prosecution of members of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) following the abortive 1965 coup.

Komnas HAM is expected to announce the formal findings of its investigation on June 3, when it is also expected to propose the establishment a Commission for Truth and Reconciliation (KKR).

"Our three-year investigation has confirmed that mass rapes, torture, and killings, in violation of the Law on Human Rights Courts, occurred nationwide between 1965 and 1966 and ended only in the early 1970s," Nur Kholis, the head of Komnas HAM's investigative team, said.

The team also had evidence of gruesome crimes in its 850-page report, he added.

"We also found that forced labor and detention without legal process took place throughout the 1970s. All these findings meet the criteria of gross human rights violations as defined by the law. However, we have yet to have a final conclusion which will only be decided in a plenary session," Nur Kholis said.

Indonesian law defines a crime against humanity as a systematic and widespread attack on civilians, including murder, annihilation, slavery, forced disappearances, limitations on physical freedom, torture, rape, forced prostitution, widespread abuse based on ideology, race, ethnicity, tradition, religion and gender and apartheid.

To compile the report, Komnas HAM dispatched teams to investigate alleged mass killings in the Gandi area of Medan, North Sumatra; Kemarau Island in Palembang, South Sumatra; Gianyar, Bali; Moncong Loe, South Sulawesi; Maumere, East Nusa Tenggara; and Buru Island in Maluku.

"We have found a similar pattern in these places. We have interviewed 3,500 witnesses and based on their testimonies we found that they were forced to join labor camps on Kemarau Island, Moncong Loe and Buru Island. They were put in solitary confinement, where they were also tortured. We further found that victims in Medan, Bali, and Maumere were forcibly required to register themselves in different places before they were gradually put into detention, tortured, and murdered," Nur Kholis said on the sidelines of a meeting with former political prisoners at Komnas HAM headquarters in Central Jakarta.

Komnas HAM previously announced interim findings of its investigation indicating that state officials under the Operational Command for the Restoration of Security and Order (Kopkamtib) led by former president Soeharto were directly involved in a systematic campaign to eliminate communist groups in the country.

"This is not yet final, though, and we still need to have a plenary meeting before we can announce our final decision," Komnas HAM chairman Ildhal Kasim said in text message sent from Malaysia, where he joined an investigation team to probe the death of three Indonesian migrant workers.

Disappointed over the delay in the announcement, some of survivors from the 1965 purge suspected that Komnas HAM was not serious in fighting for their cause.

“What else do you need to prove? There have been many witnesses, including me, who have suffered from injustice. I was kept on Buru Island for years for no apparent reason. My parents were sent away to Nusa Kambangan Island without explanation. And my uncle was murdered,” said Untung Bejo, one of the purge survivors.

Treatment of PKI members

* In the months after the Sept. 30, 1965, movement, security forces and militias hunted down and killed thousands of people suspected of being communists. An estimated 500,000 to 1,000,000 people became the victims of extra judicial killings, with thousands being imprisoned and forced into exile.

* Those linked to the PKI were not allowed to become civil servants, military or police officers, teachers or preachers.

* Those linked to the PKI were subject to scrutiny and had their IDs labeled with “ET” (ex-political prisoner).

* Ex-PKI members were banned from becoming legislators.

* Those linked to the PKI found it hard to find work because they had to produce a letter stating they had no affiliation with communism.

* In 2006, the government has deleted the “ET” label on IDs.

* In 2004, ex-PKI members were allowed to contest elections thanks to a Constitutional Court ruling.

Margareth S. Aritonang, *The Jakarta Post*, Jakarta | Wed, 05/09/2012 8:33 AM
