

Indonesia: Murderer of prominent human rights activist Munir released on parole

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Jakarta. Eight years into his 14-year sentence, the murderer of the prominent human rights activist Munir Said Thalib has been released on parole, Indonesian media reported on Friday.

Polycarpus Budihari Priyanto, an off-duty Garuda Indonesia pilot who spiked the activist's drink with arsenic during a trip to the Netherlands in 2004, was sentenced to 14 years in jail for the killing.

Polycarpus had been held at the Sukamiskin Penitentiary in Bandung, but was released on Friday morning, news portal Kompas.com reported. He will have to report to parole officers monthly and will not be allowed to leave the country, the report added.

In 2004, Polycarpus was seated next to Munir on the flight from Jakarta to Singapore, where it picked up more passengers. The passenger manifest indicated that Polycarpus got off in Singapore and didn't continue on to Amsterdam. But before he left Singapore's Changi International Airport, he was seen offering Munir a cup of coffee, which was spiked with arsenic.

Munir, a vocal critic of the Indonesian government and the military, eventually died on board, hours before the plane landed in Amsterdam.

A fact-finding team formed by President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono to monitor the police investigation into the case and conduct its own inquiry found that immediately prior to and after Munir's death, Polycarpus had communicated extensively with Muchdi Purwoprandjono, who at the time was a deputy chief of the State Intelligence Agency (BIN).

In their court testimonies, several intelligence officials also said that Polycarpus often visited the BIN headquarters and met behind closed doors with Muchdi. In at least one of those meetings, Abdullah Mahmud Hendropriyono, the BIN chief at the time, was also present. Hendropriyono is now an adviser of President Joko Widodo, who on the campaign trail promised to solve past human rights abuses.

As Polycarpus did not have a clear motive for the murder, activists have long suggested that he was acting on the orders of his alleged BIN handlers. Muchdi, however, has been acquitted in court, while Hendropriyono has never been prosecuted for his alleged involvement in Munir's murder.

P.S.

* "Murderer of Munir Released on Parole". Jakarta Globe on 10:26 pm Nov 28, 2014:

<http://thejakartaglobe.beritasatu.com/news/murderer-munir-released-parole/>