

Indonesia: 'Morals police' and anti-gay policies

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Contents

- [New police taskforce to \(...\)](#)
- [Raid on alleged gay sex \(...\)](#)
- [Gay rights in Indonesia \(...\)](#)

New police taskforce to target Indonesian gays

Reuters - May 24, 2017

Tom Allard and Stefano Reinard, Jakarta — Police in Indonesia's most populous province plan to deploy a taskforce to investigate lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) activity, a move likely to fuel concerns of a widening crackdown on the community in the Muslim-majority country.

West Java police chief Anton Charliyan disclosed the plan on Tuesday as two gay men in the province of Aceh were publicly flogged, and days after police raided a gay club in Jakarta and distributed photos of suspects to the media.

With the exception of Aceh, homosexuality is legal in Indonesia. Activists say, however, that police targeting of consensual gay sex has shone a light on discrimination and harassment in the world's third-largest democracy.

Indonesia's reputation for tolerance is already under scrutiny after Jakarta Governor Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, a Christian, was sentenced this month to two years in prison for blasphemy.

Responding to Sunday's Jakarta raid, Charliyan told reporters in Bandung, the capital of West Java, a province with a population of about 47 million, that LGBT people suffered a "disease of the body and soul".

He called on the public to report their activities. "I hope there are no followers in West Java, no gay or LGBT lifestyle or tradition, Charliyan said. "If there's anyone following it, they will face the law and heavy social sanctions. They will not be accepted in society."

'Morals police'

A leading LGBT activist slammed his remarks, which were confirmed in a recording provided to Reuters by journalists present when Charliyan spoke on Tuesday.

"Police have a mandate to follow the law. They are not the morals police," said Yuli Rustinawati, chairperson of Arus Pelangi, an Indonesian LGBT activist organization.

In remarks on Wednesday, Charliyan said the police “taskforce” would include intelligence specialists and was particularly concerned with disrupting “secret parties”, the Detik news portal reported.

A national spokesman for the police, Setyo Wasisto, said the approach in West Java did not reflect a national strategy. “It is enough for us to handle it as we do regularly,” he said.

Charliyan’s comments follow a spate of high-profile police actions against gay clubs and parties just as the country’s Constitutional Court is due to rule on a petition to outlaw homosexuality and adultery.

On Sunday, police detained 141 men and released photos of some of them in varying states of undress to the media, revealing many of their identities. Only 10 of the men have been declared suspects, five remain under investigation and 126 were released.

The police said the photos were released due to “procedural errors”, the Jakarta Post reported. Rustinawati at Arus Pelangi said, however, the release of the images was part of a police pattern of publicly shaming of gay people.

Named and shamed

The two Acehese men, caned 82 times each on Tuesday, were punished in front of a crowd of more than 1,000. Semi-autonomous Aceh province is governed by sharia Islamic law.

Earlier, a video of the men, naked and distressed as they were apprehended by sharia police, was released and viewed widely on social media.

In Indonesia’s second-largest city of Surabaya in East Java, 14 gay men were arrested, tested for HIV and the results made public, Indonesian media reported. “The police also release data — names and addresses,” said Rustinawati. “It’s humiliating and it puts LGBT people in danger.”

On Tuesday, North Jakarta police chief Dwiyono, who like many Indonesians has only one name, took journalists through the gay club raided on Sunday. As they climbed three floors, he pointed out a gym, a communal jacuzzi used for “striptease” and a cluster of cubicles for sex.

“This door can only be opened if you pay 185,000 rupiah (\$14) to the receptionist,” he said. “In here, there’s no change room, you just tear off your clothes and use a towel.”

Public disapproval

Indonesian President Joko Widodo last year gave qualified support for the gay community, telling the BBC that “there should be no discrimination against anyone”, before noting that homosexuality is not popular in his country.

However, his defense minister, Ryamizard Ryacudu, suggested that homosexuality was a national security threat and part of a “proxy war” waged against Indonesia by foreign states.

A Pew Research Center poll in 2013 found 93 percent of respondents in Indonesia disagreed that “society should accept homosexuality”.

Indonesia’s Islamist groups have long called for the criminalization of gay sex. The Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), the vigilante group that led huge rallies against the now-convicted Jakarta governor, has cooperated with police in curbing alleged vice for more than a decade.

(Additional reporting by Agustinus Beo Da Costa, Gayatri Suroyo and Fransiska Nangoy; Editing by John Chalmers and Bill Tarrant)

Source:

<http://ca.reuters.com/article/topNews/idCAKBN18K10A-OCATP?rpc=401&feedType=RSS&feedName=topNews&rpc=401&sp=true>

Raid on alleged gay sex party not related to LGBT issues: Police

Jakarta Post - May 23, 2017

Jakarta — The National Police have said a raid conducted by the North Jakarta Police on an alleged gay sex party at a gym in Kelapa Gading, North Jakarta, on Sunday, during which they arrested 141 men, has nothing to do with lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) related issues. The raid was conducted primarily on concerns about indecency, they said.

“Anyone exhibiting ‘pornography actions’ will be arrested,” National Police spokesperson Brig. Gen. Rikwanto told journalists on Tuesday. “The fact that those arrested are gay males is a coincidence,” he went on.

The arrests came in the spotlight after photographs of the arrested men, who were all naked, were leaked and went viral on social media on Monday.

Rikwanto further said the police were the investigating organizers of the event to see whether they had organized similar events in the past.

“Four organizers arranged the party. People came and paid money to participate in the event, during which the ‘pornographic actions’ happened,” Rikwanto said.

The police earlier stated that the 141 men were arrested and charged under the 2008 Pornography Law, articles 4 (2) and 30, which stipulate punishment for parties guilty of providing “pornographic” services. (hol/ebf)

Source:

<http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2017/05/23/raid-on-alleged-gay-sex-party-not-related-to-lgbt-issues-police.html>

Gay rights in Indonesia ‘ongoing and real concern’: Foreign Minister Gerry Brownlee

NZ Herald - May 24, 2017

Nicholas Jones — Foreign Minister Gerry Brownlee says gay rights in Indonesia are an “ongoing and real concern” after the public caning of two young men allegedly caught having sex.

His comments come as Australia raises “serious concerns” with Indonesia about the caning in Aceh province, and a cross-party group of New Zealand MPs seek a meeting with the Indonesian Ambassador.

Gay sex is not illegal in most of Indonesia but is in the Aceh province, which exercises Islamic law.

A group of vigilantes entered private accommodation in March and allegedly found the two men, aged 20 and 23, together. The men have now been caned 83 times each in front of a mosque, as a large crowd cheered and filmed on mobile phones.

Brownlee said the situation facing gay and lesbian people in Indonesia was an ongoing and real concern, particularly in provinces such as Aceh.

“The New Zealand Embassy in Jakarta is in regular contact with Indonesian human rights advocacy groups, which seek to raise the profile of human rights abuses and to support gay and lesbian communities affected by abuse,” Brownlee said.

“This includes a recent visit to Aceh where diplomatic staff spoke to several civil society groups on the ground. The New Zealand Embassy will endeavour to undertake regular visits to Aceh in the future to monitor the situation as well as having discussions with leading lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and Intersex groups based in Jakarta.” I assure you that the New Zealand Government will continue to advocate universal access to human rights, in New Zealand and overseas, and we will continue to emphasise that message in our interactions with the Indonesian national and provincial governments. “Green MP Jan Logie, a member of the Rainbow NZ Parliamentary Network, a cross-party group of MPs, said the case in Aceh province was disturbing and a direct condemnation was needed. The network will seek a meeting with the Indonesian Ambassador.” It feels particularly frightening at the moment on the back of the death camps being set up in Chechnya. And I think there really needs to be a strong response in the international community to protect the lives and rights of our LGBTI people in every country in the world,” Logie said.

Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop has raised “serious concerns” with Indonesia about the Aceh caning, her office told media yesterday.

Amnesty International has condemned the caning, saying it may amount to torture and was a “cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment”. Aceh has become increasingly conservative and passed strict laws against homosexuality in 2014.

In April the Rainbow NZ Parliamentary Network wrote to then Foreign Minister Murray McCully urging him to condemn violence against gay men in Chechnya, and to ask Russia to investigate the detention and alleged murders of men perceived to be gay.

The group includes National MP Paul Foster-Bell, Act Party leader David Seymour, Labour MP Louisa Wall and Logie.

[Nicholas Jones is a New Zealand Herald political reporter.]

Source: http://www.nzherald.co.nz/politics/news/article.cfm?c_id=280&objectid=11862170

P.S.

* Indonesia & East Timor News Updates - May 24, 2017:

<http://www.asia-pacific-solidarity.net>