

Anticommunist paranoia in Indonesia: 13-year-old girl dragged to police for wearing hammer-and-sickle T-shirt

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Anticommunist paranoia: Youth organization Pemuda Pancasila (PP) members are on guard in front of the Indonesian Islamic University's Center for Human Rights Studies (Pusham UII) in Banguntapan, Yogyakarta, on May 8, 2017. They demanded that painter Andreas Iswinarno cancel his painting exhibition at the center over suspicion that his works promote communism. (JP/Bambang Muryanto)

A 13-year-old girl in Riau's Rokan Hilir regency was taken to the police by a youth organization for wearing a T-shirt displaying a communist symbol.

The junior-high-school student, identified only as SIN, was approached by members of youth organization Pemuda Pancasila (PP) in Ujung Batu after footage featuring the girl wearing a grey T-shirt bearing the hammer-and-sickle logo went viral on social media.

The incident started when a road user posted a video on Facebook recording SIN riding a motorcycle from her house in Pematang Tebih Village to Ujung Batu. The back of her T-shirt featured the symbol, which is closely associated with the defunct Indonesian Communist Party (PKI).

After seeing the footage, members of PP tracked down the girl's whereabouts. Three PP members later went to SIN's house and took her to Ujung Batu Police.

"[The girl] claimed she did not know that wearing a T-shirt bearing the hammer-and-sickle logo is prohibited," said Ujung Batu Police chief Comr. Arvin Hariyadi after a questioning on Wednesday.

SIN said to the police that her parents had bought the T-shirt for her during a sale at Ujung Batu Market, Arvin said, adding that the girl had been immediately released, since she was still underage and did not understand the meaning of the T-shirt.

"There was no intentional motive, and the T-shirt bearing the hammer-and-sickle logo that she wore in the viral video has been confiscated," Arvin added.

Indonesian law still bans communism, and authorities often criminalize people for discussing the ideology or wearing paraphernalia related to communism. (afr/ahw)

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P.S.

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