

Indonesia: Military Raids over PKI-themed books condemned

Tuesday 15 January 2019, by [ARBI Ivany Atina](#) (Date first published: 10 January 2019).

Scholars and rights activists have condemned the Indonesian Military's (TNI) recent move to confiscate books about the now-defunct Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) in different parts of the country, calling the raids repressive and illegal.

On Tuesday afternoon, the Padang Military Command (Kodim) allegedly seized copies of PKI-themed books, including Kronik 65 (The Chronicle of 65), Gestapu 65 PKI (The September 30 Movement), Jas Merah (The Red Coat) and Mengincar Bung Besar (Hunting Down Sukarno), from a bookstore on Jl. Hos Cokroaminoto after receiving reports from residents.

"We will keep the books for further investigation," Kodim commander Lt. Col. Rielman Yudha said after the raid.

On Dec. 26, personnel from the Kediri Military Command in East Java reportedly confiscated books they considered communist propaganda, including Komunisme ala Aidit (Communism à la Aidit), Siapa Dalang G30S?(Who's Behind G30S?) and Kabut G30S (The Mist of G30S). G30S refers to an abortive coup on Sept. 30, 1965, that was blamed on the PKI.

Scholars argued that most of the books seized by the local military commands were academic ones and were thus important for many reasons.

On the night of Sept. 30, 1965, six military generals were assassinated by a procommunist group in what turned out to be an abortive coup. The event was a prelude to the 1965 to 1966 purge of PKI members and supporters across the nation. The event also gave birth to the rise of Soeharto, who declared communism the nation's ideological pariah. Provisional People's Consultative Assembly Decree No. 25/1996 bans communism in Indonesia, which was later reaffirmed by People's Consultative Assembly Decree No. 1/2003. Scholars have spent years conducting research that hopes to reveal findings about the mystery that shrouds the fateful night.

A historian with the Indonesian Institute of Sciences who contributed to Chronicle 65, Asvi Warman Adam, said the books seized by the military had nothing to do with any sort of revival of the PKI.

Asvi said Chronicle 65, for example, contained various news reports about the development of the PKI in Indonesia between 1963 and 1971 and explained the failed coup attempt.

"The book tells us about what happened prior, during and after the failed coup attempt on Sept. 30, 1965. It can be very useful for research," he said.

Rights activists have called the raids illegal.

The Institute for Criminal Justice Reform (ICJR) pointed out that prevailing regulations barred military personnel from confiscating anything, including books regardless of the content, from the

public.

“Book raids can only be carried out by prosecutors with court approval,” ICJR program director Erasmus Napitupulu said, referring to Article 38 of the Criminal Code.

Institute for Policy Research and Advocacy researcher Wahyudi Djafar also said the book raids violated the law.

“The Constitutional Court has declared banning or confiscating books without a legal proceeding a violation of the rule of law. The book raids also violated Article 28, paragraph 4 of the Constitution, which guarantees personal possession,” he said.

“Raids without a legal proceeding constitute an abuse of power.”

During the 2014 presidential campaign, President Joko “Jokowi” Widodo was accused by his detractors of having been a PKI sympathizer and that his father used to be a member of the PKI. Jokowi was visibly upset by such accusations.

“The PKI was disbanded in 1965, while I was born in 1961. So it means I was a [member] of the PKI as a toddler. That’s ridiculous and false,” he said.

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P.S.

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