

Indonesia: Legal Aid Foundation reports 305 human rights violations in 2021

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Jakarta — The Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation (YLBHI) has released its 2021 End of Year Report. Over the last year, the foundation has received 2,598 complaints, both from the public as well as organisations.

The YLBHI recorded 305 cases of human rights violations. This data represents the results of a recapitulation of reports which came in from the various Legal Aid Foundation (LBH) offices spread throughout Indonesia.

“The number of complaints which came in 2021, which stood at 2,598, was a decline on the previous year. There were 305 cases of human rights violations”, said YLBHI Information Knowledge Division Head Siti Rahma Mary during a virtual press conference on the report on Friday December 31.

In her break down of the cases, Mary explained that out of the 305 cases, 37 or 12 percent were human rights violations related to women’s rights, 11 cases or 4 percent were agrarian conflicts and nine cases or 3 percent were related to the environment.

Then, 104 cases or 34 percent were related civil rights, 2 cases or 1 percent to political rights, 73 cases or 24 percent labour rights and 50 cases or 16 percent were related to fair trial.

Several incidents were highlighted by the YLBHI including cases related to arbitrary actions by the authority against the public. One example of this was the student demonstrations opposing the Draft Omnibus Law on Job Creation.

“Then, coming into the middle of the year, for the umpteenth time. there were blatant efforts to destroy the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) though the nationalist or civil knowledge test (TWK)”, she said, referring to the use of the TWK to remove employees who opposed the weakening of the KPK.

Mary went on to say that the YLBHI also continued to deal with and receive complaints related to infrastructure projects which violated social rights. One of the reasons for these violations was national strategic projects carried out by the government.

“Including those packaged under the name national strategic projects. We know that violence for the sake of violence continued to be demonstrated including in the case of the Wadas Dam in Purworejo, Central Java, where many legal aid [advocates] were arrested and also intimidated”, she explained.

Police dominate civil rights violations

The YLBHI recorded 104 cases of violations against civil rights throughout 2021 in which the perpetrators were dominated by state actors. In first place in the list perpetrators of violations against civil rights was the police, followed by the military and finally regional governments.

“State actors are still involved with the police being the principle perpetrator of violations”, said Febri [sic].

The non-state actors who committed the majority of violations against civil rights were educational institutions and particular ormas (social or mass organisations).

Febri [sic] said that violations against civil rights were largely committed by the police, including violations against the right to express and declare an opinion in public.

In addition to this, these violations took the form of torture, forced arrests and loss of life.

“These were also the cases most experienced by the public which were often committed by the authorities against civil society”, they said.

Ferbi [sic] said that civil rights violations largely occurred during protest actions and mostly occurred in the form of physical violence by the authorities along with arbitrary arrests.

“Even legal advocates from the LBH under the YLBHI intending to conduct defenses by providing legal assistance during mass actions suffered illegal arrest and were obstructed in providing legal aid”, they explained.

The YLBHI recorded that there were at least eight cases of legal advocates from the LBH who suffered criminalisation in the form of non-procedural arrest and repressive acts.

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