

Impunity

Jokowi commits to settling past rights cases this year

The Jakarta Post, 09-01-2016



Human rights activists hold a candle vigil at the Hotel Indonesia traffic circle, Jakarta in December, 2014 to remember the fatal shooting of four children who prepared a Christmas event in Paniai, Papua, 10 days before. They demanded that the Jokowi administration bring the perpetrators to justice. (JP/Wendra Ajistyatama)

President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo has expressed a commitment to resolve a number of past human rights violations by the end of this year. In a dinner with journalists on Friday night, the President said he had ordered the coordinating politics, legal and security affairs minister, the attorney general, the National

Police chief and the head of the National Intelligence Agency (BIN) to seek comprehensive resolutions to unresolved cases of human rights violations.

The President himself did not mention which human rights violations in particular would be addressed. In a move to show that he is different from his predecessors, Jokowi has repeatedly reiterated his commitment to settling past rights abuses. Nevertheless, he has been criticized for his poor performance on human rights, which is far from his election campaign promise to improve their protection in Indonesia. Several human rights violations occurred in 2015: Christian-Muslim strife in Tolikara, the burning and demolition of Christian churches in Aceh Singkil, the fatal beating of an anti-mining activist in Lumajang, the creation of internal Shia and Ahmadiyah refugees because of intra-Muslim religious intolerance and the criminalization of freedom of speech and expression are among the cases.

Meanwhile, older unresolved rights cases include a 1989 massacre in Talangsari, Lampung, the forced disappearance of anti-Soeharto activists in 1997 and 1998, the 1998 Trisakti University shootings, the Semanggi I and Semanggi II student shootings in 1998 and 1999, the mysterious killings of alleged criminals in the 1980s, the communist purges of 1965 and various abuses that took place in Wasior and Wamena in Papua in 2001 and 2003, respectively.

Read also the monologue by Suciwati, wife of the murdered human rights activist Munir, of December 2015:

<http://www.insideindonesia.org/i-am-suciwati>

The detention and deportation of human rights activist and Indonesian national Mugiyanto Sipin from Malaysia on 7 January 2016 highlights an ongoing pattern of government repression against human rights defenders and other government critics over the last two years. See

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa28/3147/2016/en/>

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Social and Economic Rights

In sickness and in wealth

Inside Indonesia, 09-01-2016, by Carol Chan¹

Local and national newspapers report almost daily on Indonesia's transnational migrant workers. The news stories typically involve tales of returned migrants who started up small businesses with their savings, or tragic stories of migrants who are victims of abuse or death sentences abroad. Such accounts might lead us to assume that the risk of abuse is a trade-off for the promise of higher wages abroad. But is that how migrants, their relatives, and their neighbours think about success and tragedy whilst working overseas? For thirteen months between 2012 and August 2015, I travelled to two migrant-origin villages in Cilacap, Central Java, to explore these perceptions.

Almost every household in these two villages had a member who was a migrant, a returned migrant, or prospective migrant. But unlike the news coverage, there seemed to be clear contradictions in what these residents told me. On the one hand, people declared that almost every migrant was successful. They spoke of migrants who built modern concrete houses, started businesses, or sent their children to universities. Yet it was also widely said that 'nobody is successful yet'. On the other hand, villagers claimed there were 'no cases' or migrant abuse, yet they also told many stories of migrants who had died mysteriously abroad, or returned home ill, scarred, or paralysed. Why was this so?

Labour migration from Indonesia

An estimated six million documented and undocumented Indonesian migrants work overseas, typically in Singapore, Malaysia, and countries in the Middle East

and East Asia. They remitted US\$8.55 billion in 2014. Taking undocumented workers into account, the vast majority of migrant workers are women, who tend to do informal work that is low paid, and where hours are not regulated. Men tend to work in agricultural or manufacturing jobs in groups.

According to BNP2TKI (the National Agency for Placement and Protection of Migrant Workers), only 15 per cent of migrants who returned in 2014 did so due to 'problems'. These problems included unpaid wages or other contractual conflicts, abuse, sickness, and even death. Such data may suggest that the majority of returned migrants did not experience problems abroad and are able to contribute financially to the economic welfare of their families and country. But this was not quite how villagers in Cilacap thought about migrant 'success' and 'failure'.

Wealth and suspicion

In Cilacap, accounts of migrant success were fairly standardised. They typically described migrants who regularly sent money home, bought land, or started businesses. However, I began to notice that stories of success often came with a 'but'. One morning in Cilacap, Bu Rina, Bu Siti and I were discussing migrants who were successful. Bu Rina mentioned a female migrant who was working in Hong Kong, and who had managed to fund a big house for her parents. The migrant's mother told neighbours they she received about six million rupiah a month from her daughter.

Bu Siti, who has never worked abroad, was shocked, and asked how this was possible. In response, Bu Rina said that the money was 'uang panas', or literally, hot money. She suggested that such money was probably from sex work and that it was not halal, but forbidden and dirty.

Money, morality, and success are closely related for villagers. They often spoke about money in terms of 'rejeki' or gifts from God, implicitly as rewards for good

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and moral behaviour. Whether or not migrants are perceived as successful depends only partially on the material and financial gifts they send to their families. Their standing as ‘successful migrants’ also hinges on their gendered and moral reputations. This contrasts with how the Indonesian government and media refers to migrants as ‘foreign exchange heroes’, which emphasises their financial contributions.

If women do not send money home regularly, villagers are quick to accuse them of immoral behaviour overseas, such as loose sexual behaviour, adultery, and abandoning familial duties. For example, one male local leader said harshly, ‘My analysis is this. In cases where (female) migrants return without bringing any money, it is definitely because they had affairs there, having fun with Pakistani people or whatever.’

In contrast, if men do not regularly send money home, they are typically excused for having to pay their own debts, or needing the money for expenses such as cigarettes, food, or lodging. While not all villagers approved of men spending their earnings on such things as alcohol or commercial sex, many villagers tacitly accepted that these were ‘biological necessities’, or needed for the men to adapt to foreign cultural norms and cope with the pressures of living and working overseas. Women, however, were generally expected to be frugal, non-social, and save almost all their earnings for their family at home. Even migrant women who had returned to Cilacap were criticised if they spent money on clothes, make-up, and leisure. Moral evaluations and suspicion of migrant women’s wealth thus contrast starkly with villagers’ attitudes to successful migrant men. I never heard anyone doubt the source of men’s income overseas. Instead, it was considered ‘common knowledge’ that men’s wages in Korea, Japan, or Taiwan, were typically higher than that the average wage for women, though this is not always true.

Sickness and piety

Villagers generally consider migrants to be ‘unsuccessful’ or ‘failures’ if they died, did not send money home, returned without savings or before their contracts were up, or came back divorced, pregnant, or with health problems. Besides accounts of migrants’ wealth and opulent houses, I collected many stories of migrants who returned very tired or sick.

These stories of migration-related sickness often identified ‘social’ and ‘moral’ reasons underpinning the deterioration of a migrant’s health. There were countless accusations of adultery by both male and female migrants whilst overseas, or by the spouses that they left behind in the village. To my surprise, many of these stories often ended with the sickness or death of a family member.

‘There was a woman here who went to Saudi Arabia,’ one such story began. ‘Her husband was a very decent man, a tailor. He worked for himself and took care of their child since the child was young. The woman who came back from Saudi, once she came back, she wasn’t like a wife, didn’t do what wives were supposed to do... You cannot hide it. So they found out she had a boyfriend overseas in Saudi. Her father was so ashamed, you know, imagine how terrible it was for the parents, so extremely shameful. His health got weaker and weaker and finally he passed away.’

The idea that shame could lead to sickness and death was widespread – though many shameful stories are so secret and taboo that few villagers will talk about them in detail. This is especially true when they involve women experiencing sexual abuse, pregnancy out of wedlock, suicide, and mental illness, matters which are euphemistically referred to as ‘accidents’, ‘sickness’, or sometimes ‘violence’. A few local leaders said that the ‘Javanese mindset’ considered such issues to be sources of familial dishonour. One described sexual abuse as ‘something to just keep inside, don’t publicise it, don’t talk about it.’ Tragically, migrants in these cases are often blamed for their own plight, and suspected of immoral behaviour. And this can occur even in the rare cases where migrants make the brave decision to speak out about their ordeals overseas. As one

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villager dismissively remarked, 'Some women who return pregnant may say they have been raped... But we can never know the truth. Maybe it was a mutual relationship. Who knows?'

In almost all cases of death, migrants' kin and neighbours said that death was due to God's will, or destiny. Bu Isti explained how her niece had died mysteriously in Saudi Arabia while she was working as a domestic worker. The employer had hidden the body and the death, and forbidden other employees to tell anyone about it. Her family only found out a year later. When I suggested to Bu Isti that this could be a case of abuse and violence, she disagreed. She said, 'If it is abuse or torture, that is usually done by the employer... But with death, that is God's doing. This is destiny.' These attributions to God's will or destiny often imply a link between migrants' circumstances abroad and their moral character or religious piety. Indeed, prospective migrants often told me they believed that they will find good employers abroad and have good fates, as long as they were good and moral persons.

Conclusion

Indonesian migrants are typically represented in the media straightforwardly: as heroes or victims. In contrast, when migrants return to their villages, matters are less clear-cut. Financial wealth may gain migrants admiration but it does not guarantee respect. To be considered successful, money is not enough – the migrant must also be seen as a moral person. Equally sickness or failure will not earn migrants sympathy or social support, unless they prove to be worthy and moral victims. And as the examples above clearly show, the moral perceptions of migrants that underpin some villagers' reluctance to see rape or death in terms of violence, or migrant's wealth as success, are heavily gendered.

The moral judgements made of returning migrants have consequences for the entire practice of migration. Since people rarely talk openly about the difficulties migrants face overseas or labour abuse, villagers come to view migrant success as

the norm. To make matters worse, migrants' accounts of their own negative experiences are often individualised or dismissed as reflecting their own compromised morality. Migrants' stories are believed to different degrees based on their moral reputation in the village, and so powerful expectations of success are influenced by positive representations delivered by migrants who fulfil gendered and moral expectations. This leads migrants who 'fail' to experience this as a personal failure, rather than as due to weak laws regarding labour conditions and migration processes. As a result, many villagers expect that piety and diligence will guarantee them success if they migrate, and the fear of shame deters many struggling migrants from returning home.

Police Accountability

As Search for Terror Fugitive Winds Down, Police Claim Success – to a Degree

The Jakarta Globe, 08-01-2016

The Indonesian police chief has played down the force's failure to capture the country's most-wanted terror fugitive, despite dedicating more than a thousand personnel to a year-long hunt that officially ends on Saturday.

Gen. Badrodin Haiti, the National Police chief, said that Operation Camar Maleo, aimed at rooting out Santoso and members of his East Indonesia Mujahidin (MIT) organization from the jungles around Poso, Central Sulawesi, had been successful in whittling down the militants' ranks.

"Twenty-eight individuals [linked to the group] have been caught, including some of its leaders," he told reporters in Jakarta on Friday.

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Police have arrested 21 people with suspected links to Santoso or his organization, and shot dead another seven in a series of standoffs – including Daeng Koro, Santoso's second-in-command and a police deserter, who was killed in a shootout in April 2015 with operatives from Densus 88, the police's counterterrorism squad.

Badrodin said police were considering various options once Operation Camar Maleo ends on Saturday, including whether to extend it; delegate the job to the provincial police; or change tactics in the hunt for the country's highest-profile terror suspect and one who has publicly pledged allegiance to the Sunni militant group Islamic State.

"Whatever course of action we take next, whether led by national or regional security forces, all that matters is that it is effective," he said. Badrodin also emphasized that while Santoso was the main target, the police's aim was ultimately to disable the entire MIT organization. "Even if we capture him, that doesn't mean our job has ended. Because once Santoso's [gone], someone else will appear in his place. That's how these terrorist groups operate," he said.

More than a thousand police and military personnel have been deployed to Poso and surrounding areas since January last year in a constant series of raids to root out Santoso and his group, which today is believed to number around 30 individuals.

The operation has left two police officers and one soldier dead. Thirteen of the 21 suspected militants captured alive have been indicted on various charges; several have been convicted.

Three Arrested Over Bandung New Year's Eve Blast

The Jakarta Globe, 11-01-2016

Indonesia's counter-terrorism officials have separately arrested three suspects believed to be linked to the New Year's Eve explosion in Bandung, the country's top cop confirmed on Monday. National Police chief Gen. Badrodin Haiti said police made a series of arrests and raids over the weekend in North Jakarta and in the outskirts of the West Java capital. Badrodin identified the suspects by their initials M.S., A.A. and A.S.

M.S., a worker at a shoe factory, was the first to be arrested on Saturday in the South Rawa Badak area of North Jakarta. Based on information acquired from M.S., police's counter-terrorism unit Densus 88 arrested A.A. and M.S. on Sunday in Ciwidy just outside Bandung.

Densus officers raided a house belonging to M.S. on Jalan Mengger Girang in the Pasirluyu area of Bandung at around 2 p.m. on Sunday. "We suspected they are involved in the New Year's Eve explosion in Bandung. We are still investigating their connection to other terror groups," Badrodin said on Monday.

Bandung was the scene of a terror attack on New Year's Eve when a low-powered explosive went off in the city's main square, known as Alun-Alun.

The bomb was planted underneath a car belonging to television station tvOne, which was covering the celebration, parked near the private residence of Bandung Mayor Ridwan Kamil.

Although no one was injured in the Bandung blast, the case became a top priority after it turned into a major source of embarrassment for the National Police, which had deployed some 80,200 personnel to maintain security on New Year's Eve. The explosion came after a fortnight of high-profile raids on suspected terrorists across Indonesia.