

Impunity

The grave of Tan Malaka

By Asvi Warman Ada, Kompas, 11-03-2017

On 21 February 1949 Tan Malaka, a famous left-wing nationalist in the 30s and 40s, was killed in East Java. After dozens of years of research, historian Harry Poeze has concluded that Tan Malaka was extrajudicially executed in the village of Selopanggung, Kediri. According to Poeze (*"Verguisd en Vergeten"*, Vol. III, KITLV, Leiden, 2007) Tan Malaka was summarily executed by Republican fighters. In 2009 an exhumation showed the remains of someone who might be Tan Malaka. In 1963 Tan Malaka was declared a national hero. A discussion has developed whether he would be ritually reburied at the Heroes' Cemetery Kalibata in Jakarta. Whether the human remains that have been found really are those of Tan Malaka is difficult to prove by DNA because of the degree of acidity of the ground. There was no conclusion from the check with the DNA of his cousin, Zulfikar. (...)

Last month some 200 people from West Sumatra, where Datuk Tan Malaka originated from, paid a visit to Kediri to commemorate his 68th dying day and performed a special traditional ritual together with one of his surviving relatives, Henky Navaron Arsil.

Freedom of Religion

Blasphemy sentences are an injustice that must be reversed

Amnesty International Newsflash, 07-03-2017

The Indonesian authorities must immediately and unconditionally release three people convicted under the country's blasphemy laws for peacefully practicing their beliefs, Amnesty International said today.

Ahmad Mussadeq, Mahful Muis Tumanurung, and Andri Cahya are three members of a now disbanded religious minority group known as Gafatar who were sentenced for blasphemy by the East Jakarta District Court on Tuesday.

"The sentences show how Indonesia's vague, coercive and discriminatory blasphemy laws are being used to punish people for peacefully exercising minority beliefs," said Josef Benedict, Amnesty International's Deputy Director for Southeast Asia and the Pacific.

"These individuals must be released immediately and unconditionally, and the blasphemy law, which flies in the face of Indonesia's human rights obligations, should be repealed."

Ahmad Mussadeq and Mahful Muis Tumanurung and were sentenced to five years, while Andri Cahya was sentenced to three years. The three individuals were arrested on 25 May 2016 and were later charged with blasphemy under Article 156a of the Criminal Code, and with "rebellion" under Articles 107 and 110 of the Code.

The blasphemy provisions in Articles 156 and 156(a) of the Criminal Code criminalise "any person who in public deliberately expresses his/her feelings or engages in actions that in principle is hostile and considered as abuse or defamation of a religion embraced in Indonesia".

Indonesia's blasphemy laws violate a range of the country's international human rights commitments – including obligations to respect and protect the rights to freedom of expression, and freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

Blasphemy cases are mostly lodged at the local level, where political actors, hard-line Islamist religious groups and security forces often collude to target minorities. An accusation or rumour is sometimes enough to land a person in court on blasphemy charges. Many individuals are harassed or attacked by hard-line groups before their arrest, and tried in court in an intimidating atmosphere. The convictions are often justified on the basis of "maintaining public order".

To take action: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa21/5851/2017/en/>

Weekly Update Human Rights in Indonesia – 13-03-2017

Political developments

COMMENTARY: The elephant in the room in Saudi king's visit

By Ary Hermawan, The Jakarta Post, 12-03-2017

We should not belittle the significance of Saudi Arabian King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud's royal visit to Indonesia. Regardless of how much money the world's richest Islamic kingdom brings to Indonesia, the visit marks a new chapter in the history of Jakarta's relations with Riyadh. Indonesia is an important Muslim-majority nation the Sunni kingdom must court in the battle for hegemony in the Islamic world against Iran, its regional archenemy that has won the hearts of top local Muslim figures despite rising pogroms against Shi'ism, the strain of Islam espoused by Tehran, in the Southeast Asian country. And it is safe to say the visit has been a success — for both sides.

King Salman may not be the Pope of Sunni Islam, but more Indonesians now recognize him as the "guardian of the two holy cities [Mecca and Medina]," which is kind of a big deal for millions of Indonesians who are required to face Mecca when they pray.

As for President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo, the king's visit has certainly improved his credentials as both a nationalist and Islamic leader. That he managed to have the king talk with leaders of Indonesia's major religions in a cordial, Indonesia-esque interfaith meeting, during which he praised Indonesia's tolerance, is laudable.

Given his authority as leader of a major Sunni Islam kingdom, King Salman legitimizing Jokowi's pro-pluralism campaign at a time when his administration is struggling to contain the rise of right-wing, populist opposition is surely a win for Jokowi.

But, sadly, all this is mere politics and diplomacy. Both countries may have scored political and diplomatic points, but the reality of religious life in both countries is grimmer than what you would believe from listening to the platitudes Saudi and Indonesian diplomats regularly deliver.

Saudi Arabia calling for moderation in practicing religion will strike pro-democracy Muslims as counterintuitive, if not outright hypocritical. Human rights groups have repeatedly lashed out at Riyadh for its blatant disregard of civil liberties. The kingdom

executes Muslims for renouncing their faith, bans non-Muslims from practicing their faith openly and puts a ban on female drivers.

Two years ago, Indonesian Muslim clerics began advocating the concept of Islam Nusantara, in an apparent attempt to stem the tide of Salafization of Indonesian Islam. The argument for this campaign is that Indonesians have their own take on Islam, on how to implement it in their daily lives, which is in many ways different from Salafism, the brand of Islam espoused by the Saudi kingdom and several other Gulf countries.

A number of foreign media outlets have already run stories about the growing clout of Saudi Arabia in Indonesia, going as far as suggesting that the king's visit will redefine Indonesian Islam, which has long been known to be inclusive and diverse.

Foreign journalists may have overstated the influence of Saudi Salafism in Indonesia, but there is no denying Salafi movements are thriving in the country and this could pose a problem.

Radio stations spreading Salafi teachings are mushrooming in Indonesia, according to research by the Center for the Study of Islam and Society (PPIM). Saudi Arabia, meanwhile, has also decided to expand its Institute for Islamic and Arabic Studies (LIPIA), known as a leading Salafist educational institution in Jakarta.

To be clear, it is a mistake to equate Salafism with terrorism as many Salafists are apolitical, denouncing terrorists as takfiris who have strayed from the "true path of Islam." But Salafists, even the quietists, are generally absolutists who are ideologically incapable of managing differences, which could undermine Indonesia's pluralism and democracy. It is also a fact that for some people, Salafism could serve as a bridge, instead of deterrent, to radicalism, with local militants supporting the Islamic State (IS) claiming to be Salafists. Local IS ideologue Aman Abdurrahman, for example, is an alumni of LIPIA. Scholars call Aman and other IS or al-Qaeda supporters Salafijihadists as they blend the apolitical but extreme ideology of Salafism with the political militancy of the Muslim Brotherhood, particularly the political theology of the group's martyred ideologue, Sayid Qutb.

The Indonesian government, which supports the Islam Nusantara campaign and the rationale behind it, is aware of the elephant in the room and has understandably avoided mentioning the issue during this milestone event in Jakarta-Riyadh relations.

Weekly Update Human Rights in Indonesia – 13-03-2017

But then the event somehow turned religious, with the Saudi king meeting Islamic and interfaith leaders to talk about the importance of religious harmony. In his speech at the House of Representatives, the king called for a united front against terrorism, but on the same day government officials were telling reporters that Jakarta and Riyadh had agreed to campaign for religious moderation. It is not clear what has been agreed upon between the two countries, which have totally different political systems, approaches in managing interfaith relations and, more importantly, interpretations of what constitutes religious moderation.

At the end of the day, Jokowi only wanted to turn the royal visit into another bit of political theatre to weaken his opposition, which now has the backing of the so-called “Islamic populist movement”. It is hard to overlook the banality of the government’s pro-pluralism rhetoric during the king’s visit. Saudi Arabia, after all, is not the only country with a poor record in religious freedom. Indonesia, too, has its own iniquities, with religious minorities such as the Shia and Ahmadi communities still besieged by discriminatory regulations. It is no surprise that during the meeting between the king and local Islamic leaders, where they called for religious tolerance and moderation, Ahmadi and Shia leaders were absent.

Soeharto family gains momentum for political revival

The Jakarta Post, 13-03-2017

Amid simmering tension in the campaign for the Jakarta gubernatorial runoff election, the family of Soeharto, the longest former serving-ruler of the country, has embraced newfound popularity among Muslim groups.

Commemorating the March 11 Indonesian Presidential Executive Order (Supersemar) on Saturday, Soeharto’s children, also known as the Cendana family, gathered people and elite politicians at At-Tin Mosque in East Jakarta for a mass prayer.

Four of Soeharto’s six children — Siti Hediati Hariyadi, Siti Hardiyanti Rukmana, Siti Hutami Endang and Hutomo Mandala Putra — attended the event on Saturday evening. The chief patron of the Gerindra Party, Prabowo Subianto, who is also Hediati’s exhusband, was spotted among the hundreds of people at the mosque, which was built as a memorial to Soeharto’s wife, Tien Soeharto.

Although claiming that the event was only a mass prayer to pray for Soeharto, political figures like Anies Baswedan and Sandiaga Uno were also there. They were mentioned as honorable guests. The two are the Jakarta election candidate pair endorsed by Gerindra and the Islam-based Prosperous Justice Party (PKS).

The pair is vying for the capital’s top posts against Christian incumbent Basuki “Ahok” Tjahaja Purnama and his deputy, Djarot Saiful Hidayat.

Djarot, who is a deputy gubernatorial candidate from the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P), also attended the event.

The Cendana family also provided space in the Supersemar commemoration for the outspoken patron of the hard-line Islam Defenders Front (FPI), Rizieq Shihab, to deliver a tausiyah (sermon).

“The event can be interpreted as a political movement,” political expert Zaenal Budiyo of the AlAzhar University told The Jakarta Post on Sunday. “They’re seeking a revival as a powerful political dynasty. That’s the Cendanas’ interest.”

After Suharto passed away in 2008, the family’s influence in Indonesian politics has waned. The elder Hardiyanti, known as Tutut, failed to make anything out of her fledgling political party, while Tommy was soundly defeated in his bid to become the chairman of the Golkar Party, which for decades was Soeharto’s political vehicle.

“Since the death of Soeharto, the Cendana has been struggling to seek an entry point into politics and this [the Jakarta election] can provide momentum for them [to revive their popularity],” Zaenal said.

Despite Golkar’s endorsement of Ahok, the Cendana is more into Anies, a Muslim scholar. Hediati, known well as Titiek Soeharto, has declared her support for Anies and Sandiaga, despite her membership in Golkar.

In the 2014 presidential election, the Cendana family supported Prabowo, hoping to get back their political popularity, but then Prabowo lost to President Joko “Jokowi” Widodo.

Weekly Update Human Rights in Indonesia – 13-03-2017

Political expert Hendri Satrio of Paramadina University acknowledged it was reasonable if the Cendana family was trying to get back its political popularity because Soeharto's power had been rooted out, but whether the people would allow them to hold power again was another question. "The Cendana could emerge in Indonesian politics, but not as on-screen actors, as king-makers behind the screen," Hendri said.

In Saturday's event, Titiek gave a speech that mentioned Jokowi's statement that "democracy has gone too far."

"I agree with what Jokowi said, that our democracy has gone too far. No more Pancasila democracy echoed by Soeharto: There's only a liberal democracy where people can arbitrarily do and say what they want, ignoring our eastern culture and norms," Titiek said.

Titiek also elaborated how the Supersemar had historical momentum, marking the New Order era under his father, although the original document that changed Indonesia's political course 51 years ago is still nowhere to be found.

Small parties throw support behind Tommy Soeharto

The Jakarta Post, 13-03-2017

Tommy Soeharto, the youngest son of Soeharto, the longest running ruler of Indonesia, has gained support to run for the presidency in 2019 from the Parsindo Party and from his own Beringin Karya (Berkarya) Party.

"Three months ago we [Parsindo] met with Tommy's Beringin Karya Party. He asked us to unite as one party," Parsindo secretary-general Ahmad Hadari said on Sunday, as quoted by tempo.co.

"We rejected the merger idea, but we're open to a coalition with the Berkarya Party or any party that supports Tommy Soeharto," Ahmad added.

(Read also: Soeharto family gains momentum for political revival)

Ahmad claimed that Parsindo had welded support for Tommy from LIRA, a mass organization that he co-founded and that has offices across the country. "We are sure the

2019 election will be a war between the Soeharto dynasty and the Sukarno dynasty," Ahmad said.

Back in 2016, the birth of the new party, Berkarya, was not well accepted by the Golkar Party, the main supporter of Soeharto when he ruled the country for 32 years. The use of the beringin tree, which was the infamous symbol of Golkar, was seen as copying the party's values and vision. Akbar Tanjung, the former chairman of Golkar, in May also said that Beringin Karya was only "trying to get people's attention" by making a new party.

However, the Berkarya Party was already legalized by the Law and Human Rights Ministry in Oct. 13, 2016, as an official political party in Indonesia and is currently in the process of getting factual verification by the General Elections Commission.

Tommy was once convicted for a role in the murder of Supreme Court justice Syafiuddin Kartasasmita. He was arrested in 2001 and released in September 2006.