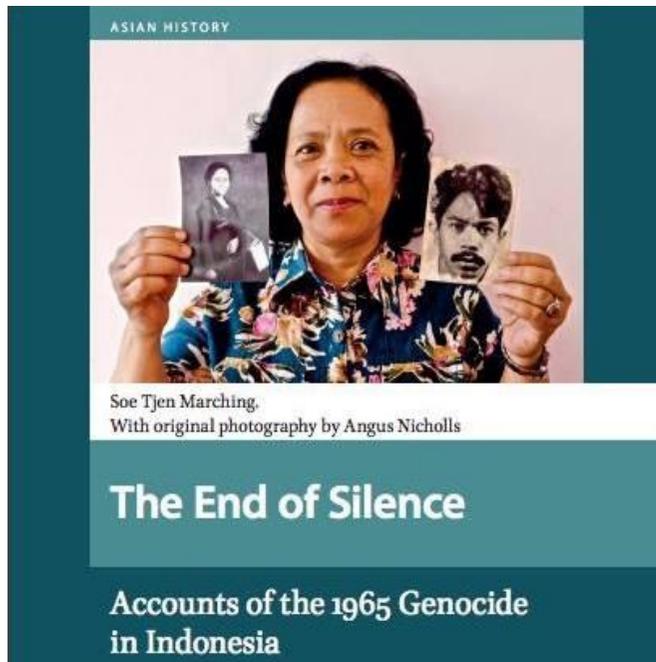


## Impunity

### Book review



### **Soe Tjen Marching: The End of Silence, Accounts of the 1965 Genocide in Indonesia. Amsterdam University Press BV, Amsterdam, 2017.**

How could one better commemorate the victims of the human rights violations of 1965/66 and the years after (up till now), than by reading their accounts that have been gathered over the last few years by Soe Tjen Marching. The book has been structured according to the distance from the factual abuses in 1965: the oral history by victims themselves, their

wives, their children and finally even their grandchildren. That makes very clear that the violations still continue in third generation taboo and discrimination.

The very informative introduction reveals the mechanism of using fear during the Orde Baru (1966-1998), that was one of the instruments Suharto used to stay in power. It still works today. In her introduction, Marching argues both with a detached scientific view and personal experiences. It makes clear why the fear still is there.

The victim's accounts and those of their relatives are thus even the more courageous. But strangely enough they also make good reading. People become individuals with their own emotions and reflections. Very moving are the grandchildren of the forced labour prisoners on Buru, who were born in that exile. They end the silence in their families by adding an acronym to their name Svj (after one of the prisoners' villages, Savanajaya). The man is proud to be born and raised in the exile of his grandfather.

It is difficult to choose one history as the most impressive. All have their own merits. The language is authentic and in no way sentimental. The photographs by Angus Nicholls do really add a dimension, to give a face to the story-teller. But also the other way round: they look into the lens and know they make themselves known to "the outside world", and thus break the taboo for their fellow-survivors who not yet had the courage. As such this book is a monument for the author, a woman who has the courage to stand up even against the fear of her own mother, to end the silence. We can only hope that an Indonesian translation will make these accounts available to a broader Indonesian public soon. (Martha Meijer)

### **Human rights defenders, 1965 survivors under serious attacks as anti-communism sentiment turned to violence**

18 September, 2017 | Amnesty International Press Release

Amnesty International Indonesia has warned the government that failure to bring to justice the perpetrators of today's mobs attack on the Indonesian Legal Aid Institute (YLBHI) would encourage more threats against human rights defenders in the country.

Such a violence act will also create climate of fear for survivors of the 1965 to reveal the truth about what happened behind the 1965 mass violations that saw the killing of an

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estimate up to one million people accused of being members, supporters or sympathizers of the now defunct Indonesia Communist Party (PKI).

Around one thousand people joining angry mobs flocked and threw stones at the YLBHI office on Sunday, one day after the police banned a seminar on the history of 1965 mass violence on Saturday following protests from anti-communist groups.

As a result, the protesters damaged some part of the YLBHI's building and injured police officers.

"What happened on early morning today was a serious attack on human rights defenders. We call on the police to investigate the attack and bring the perpetrators to justice. Failure to do so will only strengthen the culture of impunity for assailants and create climate of fear for 1965 survivors to speak out about the tragedy," said Amnesty International Indonesia Director Usman Hamid.

Amnesty International Indonesia also urges the police to provide maximum protection on human rights defenders, victims of the 65 Tragedy as well as YLBHI staff who were trapped inside the building and received intimidation from protesters during the attack.

"We appreciate the police for preventing the mobs to further attack YLBHI office. However, the police must ensure that actors behind the attacks be investigated transparently," Usman said.

Amnesty International Indonesia team was in the field when the attacks took place.

Protesters accused the seminar of disseminating information about communism to justify their violent actions. The police had informed them that Sunday's activities at YLBHI had nothing to do with communism, but they insisted to stay and carry out the attacks.

President Joko Widodo, who was aggravated by accusations linking him to communism, earlier said "If you could show me [that communism reemerged in the country] I will 'clobber' it right now."

Before the President went public with the "clobber" campaign, there was series of anti-communist propagandas from army elites that may have inspired President Jokowi to do so.

The protesters apparently were inspired by President Jokowi's war on communism as some of them claimed that they complied with the mandate of the President "to clobber" communism.

"The President must think twice before expressing an argument in the public. Today's attacks clearly show that the mobs were inspired by Jokowi's cause against communism. This is very dangerous as people could attack others by claiming that they comply with the President's order," Usman said.

### Freedom of Expression

#### **EDITORIAL: Death of free speech**

The Jakarta Post, 19-09-2017

A discussion on the 1960s upheaval was broken up on Saturday, with police telling an "anticommunist" mob that no communism-related activity had been taking place, thus the police claim to have maintained public security.

Police blame organizers for failing to inform them that a seminar titled "Conveying the truth on the history of 1965/1966" would be held, citing the 1998 law on conveying opinions in public open space — while the event planned until Sunday took place at the Jakarta Legal Aid Office (LBH Jakarta). A festival on free speech replaced Sunday's talks.

Leaders of the Foundation of the Indonesian Legal Aid Institute (YLBHI) and LBH Jakarta said even under the New Order, security personnel had never gone so far as to disperse an event inside the building. LBH Jakarta director Alghifari Aqsa said police conveyed earlier that they would not take issue with the event, as long as a few officers were present.

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We condemn the police for failing to protect our hardwon freedom of speech, with lame excuses that the situation posed a dilemma for them. If the talks had continued, they said, the protesters would have become more restless.

To cries of Allahu Akbar (God is great), even the Indonesian Military (TNI) was seen nearby, greeted by the groups who equate discussing historical events in Indonesia to attempts to “revive” communism and the now defunct Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), which was blamed for the September 1965 coup attempt and rebellion in 1948.

Thanks to reforms, the TNI can only help handle security at the request of local police. This means the Jakarta Police had anticipated that they would not be able to handle the few groups protesting the closed event, while witnesses said officers seemed to have been providing more security to those intimidating participants of the discussion.

The first national symposium on 1965, held last year by the government, was an unprecedented official gesture showing that such a sensitive topic was open for discussion by all sides who experienced directly or indirectly the results of the political struggle that led to decades of authoritarian rule and the death of thousands while in detention.

Their safety ensured that amid Indonesia’s freedom, citizens carried on efforts to engage many more sides in exchanging experiences and views on the crack down on alleged communists, which led to many families losing a member to mysterious circumstances, while survivors recall years of torture or self-exile to protect family members from prosecution.

The weekend until the wee hours of Monday, which saw the evacuation of the seminar participants, will go down in history as President Joko “Jokowi” Widodo’s failure to firmly protect our freedom of speech. This constitutional right is vital in addressing unresolved human rights violations, among his reiterated pledges.

A recent survey on Asians’ views on democracy showed Indonesians were the most optimistic about the state of democracy in their country. Over 75 percent of Indonesian respondents expressed trust in the police.

Thus, the police under Gen. Tito Karnavian should be utterly ashamed of bowing to mob pressure so often.

### Political developments

#### **VICTIM OF ACID ATTACK FACES DEFAMATION CHARGE**

URGENT ACTION Amnesty International, 25-09-2017

Novel Baswedan, a human rights defender and prominent investigator for the independent Corruption Eradication Commission, is facing criminal defamation proceedings for an email he wrote as a union representative. These charges come five months after he suffered an acid attack in Jakarta of which there has been no progress.

Novel Baswedan, a prominent investigator for the independent state anti-corruption commission (Corruption Eradication Commission, or KPK) has had charges filed against him for criminal defamation proceedings under Article 27(3) of Law No. 19/2016 on the Electronic and Information Transaction (ITE). The allegations are with regard to an email that Novel Baswedan, in his capacity as KPK’s workers’ union representative, criticised the leadership of the current KPK’s director of investigation unit and questioned the appointment of a KPK police investigator, claiming that it did not comply with the KPK’s internal procedures.

Walking home from Morning Prayer on 11 April 2017, Novel Baswedan had a vial of hydrochloric acid thrown into his face by two men on a motorcycle. At the time of the attack he was leading the ongoing investigation into a misappropriation of funds for an electronic ID cards project, in which members of parliament and high-ranking government officials are implicated. Due to severe damage to his corneas, Novel Baswedan is currently undergoing intensive treatment in Singapore, and is expected to remain there for another three to four months.

There have been no developments in the case of the acid attack since President Joko Widodo summoned the Chief of the National Police in late July for a press conference and a sketch of the suspects was made public. The lack of progress by the police in investigating the acid attack is in direct contrast to their swift response to the claims of defamation, demonstrating that the current approach taken by the police in their investigation into this case, and other attacks on other human rights defenders in the country, is insufficient.

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Anti-corruption activists and human rights defenders in Indonesia have long been the victims of threats and attacks, with many incidents being left unresolved. Decisive action from authorities is necessary to end the current culture of impunity and ensure activists are able to peacefully carry out their work without fear.

To take action: see <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa21/7131/2017/en/>

### Rise of 'New Wave Communism' a Red Herring: Ministers

Jakarta Globe, 21-09-2017

"As long as poverty exists, Marxism will attract people. A challenge for this country is to make everyone prosperous so there's no need for communism," Ilham Aidit, son of the late Indonesian Communist Party leader Dipa Nusantara Aidit, said in Jakarta on Wednesday (20/09). Ilham said communism as an ideology does not have much sway anymore in the world. "Communism no longer commands the world stage, but as long as poverty exists, people will look to Marxism for a way out," Ilham said.

Ilham dismissed accusations that "new wave communism" (Komunisme Gaya Baru, often abbreviated as KGB) is sweeping the country, or that the still-banned Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) has re-established itself and even opened party offices in a few cities. "Do they think it's cheap to establish a party? Nonsense. Legally it's impossible. And then you've got to pay rent for the offices. Impossible," Ilham said.

Instead, Ilham suggested some politicians might be benefiting from the brouhaha over the supposed rise of "new wave communism" and may use it to their advantage in the presidential election next year. "This issue can be used to attack anyone who is pro-communist, anti-Islam or a liberal. This is just a start before the 2019 presidential election," Ilham said.

Coordinating Maritime Affairs Minister Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan on Tuesday said the public should not exaggerate the so-called communist threat, including rumors that the PKI is silently making a comeback. "It's okay to watch out for any attempt to re-establish communism or the PKI, but there's no need to act as if we're facing a world war," Luhut said in Jakarta. The minister urges Indonesians to put their mind to developing new

technology rather than arguing about communism. "Developing technology will take time, we should not waste it on arguing about communism," Luhut said.

Meanwhile, Justice and Human Rights Minister Yasonna Laoly said communism and PKI are two issues that reappear almost every year and always used as "political tools." Yasonna urges the public not to react to anti-communist provocations. "The PKI issue is a red herring. What chance have you got at resurrecting a ghost? The PKI is no more," the minister said. Yasonna said the government still has regulations in place to prohibit communism in the country, so people should not be afraid of a communist or PKI revival. "Don't make it into a political game. People are tired of this. Let's just concentrate on the positives," he said.



Anti-communist demonstrators rally in front of Jakarta Legal Aid Institute's office on Sunday (17/09), accusing the lawyers of running a pro-communist event. (Antara Photo/Muhammad Adimaja)

Yasonna said the recent uproar over a communist comeback was provoked by groups that are running out of issues to exploit for their political gain. "They're running out of sensitive issues [to exploit], that's why they're doing the PKI [issue again]," Yasonna said.