



PRESS RELEASE

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Indonesia: NGOs call for EU action on Munir case

Three years on, still no justice for murdered human rights defender

The European Union must take action in line with its Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders to help advance judicial proceedings in the Munir Said Thalib case, an international group of NGOs said on Tuesday.

The human rights activist, best known as the founder of the Commission for “Disappeared” Persons and Victims of Violence (KontraS) and the Jakarta-based human rights group Imparsial was poisoned on a flight to the Netherlands from Jakarta on 7 September 2004. Since then, judicial procedures have begun but to date there has only been one conviction in relation to the case and this has since been overturned.

On the third anniversary of Munir’s murder, his widow and civil society representatives from Jakarta have travelled to Brussels with the aim of increasing the EU’s commitment to bring justice to this case.

KontraS Director, Usman Hamid said: “The Munir case is essential for the future of Indonesian democracy and human rights. A resolution to the Munir case would be a big step towards ending impunity in Indonesia. Failure would be disastrous. We therefore ask the EU to be a partner helping Indonesia to solve this case.”

Munir’s widow, Suciwati, added: “The EU has to strengthen its role in the judicial process of my husband’s murder.”

A group of NGOs, which included ICCO, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, ICTJ, CMI and which was assisted by EEPA, met with the Jakarta delegation consisting of Munir’s wife, Suciwati, KontraS Director, Usman Hamid, and the Vice-chair of the Presidential Fact-Finding Team into the death of Munir, Asmara Nababan, to discuss concerns about the lack of EU engagement in the Munir case.

The delegation asked that in line with the EU’s Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders, the European Commission should monitor the ongoing judicial process in Jakarta, including the current case review of the main suspect. They also requested that the EC’s delegation in Jakarta regularly publishes its trial monitoring reports.

The participants at the Brussels meeting jointly called on the European Commission to give the case prominence by raising it in its political dialogue with the Government of Indonesia.

They also asked the European Commission and the Portuguese Presidency of the Council to develop a European policy on the Munir case and to ensure coordination and long-term consistency in their EU response. In addition, they asked the European Parliament to continue reminding the Commission and the Council of their commitment to promoting human rights and to ensure that the Munir case remains high on the EU's external relations agenda.

Background

Munir Said Thalib (1965 – 2004) was founder and director of the human rights organisation KontraS (Commission for “Disappeared” Persons and Victims of Violence) and later director of the Jakarta-based human rights group Imparsial. His work encompassed the full range of human rights concerns in Indonesia, including abuses by the Indonesian military and police; attacks on labour activists, impunity for human rights crimes in Aceh, East Timor and Papua; and the rights of Indonesia's ethnic Chinese minority.

On 7 September 2004, Munir was found dead on a Garuda flight from Jakarta to the Netherlands. Autopsy results conducted by the Dutch Forensic Institute and released in November 2004 showed that Munir had died as a result of a fatal dose of arsenic.

In December 2005, a criminal court in Jakarta convicted Garuda pilot Pollycarpus Budihari Priyanto of premeditated conspiracy to murder, and sentenced him to 14 years in prison. This verdict was upheld on appeal in April 2005. However, in October 2006, the Supreme Court overturned the conspiracy to murder conviction but upheld Pollycarpus' conviction and sentence of two years for falsifying documents.

Latest Developments

In April 2007, Indonesian police arrested two new suspects, Indra Setiawan (former president-director of Garuda Indonesia) and Rohainil Aini (former secretary to the Airbus chief pilot), for the murder of Munir.

In August 2007, the Attorney General's office filed new evidence to the Supreme Court and requested a case review of the acquittal. New evidence was presented to the court, including the appearance of five previously unseen witnesses in the case.

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