

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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Indonesia: Stop inflammatory and discriminatory statements that put the LGBTI community at risk

Amnesty International is extremely concerned about the increasing hostility by the Indonesian authorities towards lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people in the country. The organisation calls on the authorities to respect its international human rights obligations and to end discrimination, threats and other harassment of individuals because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. It must also publicly condemn attacks against LGBTI people, making clear that such violence is a criminal offence and will not be tolerated.

Since January 2016, there has been a growing climate of discrimination after public officials made inflammatory, discriminatory, grossly inaccurate or misleading homophobic statements on the grounds of “defending the country’s public morality and public security”.

In January, the Minister of Research, Technology and Higher Education issued a statement that LGBTI people “corrupt” Indonesian social norms and values, and that he would ban any LGBTI activities in Indonesian universities. The Minister also criticised the Support Group and Resource Center on Gender and Sexuality Studies (SGRC) at the University of Indonesia for conducting research, training and public outreach about LGBTI and sexuality issues.

In a separate incident, on 3 February, the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission (KPI) issued a letter recommending that all television and radio stations ban any programs that promoted LGBTI activities in order to “prevent children from learning indecent behaviour”.

On 24 February, the *Al Fatah Pesantren Waria*, a transgender Islamic boarding house in Yogyakarta was closed down for ‘security’ reasons by the local authorities after a complaint was lodged by Front Jihad Islam, a hard-line Islamist organization.

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Indonesia is a state party, prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression. The government must ensure that no one in authority makes any public statement or order which could reasonably be interpreted as a licence to discriminate against or otherwise target any individual because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Amnesty International is also concerned about restrictions by the police on the rights to freedom of assembly and expression for LGBTI people.

On 3 February, the Menteng Jakarta police disbanded a workshop organized by Arus Pelangi, an LGBTI NGO, in a hotel in Central Jakarta after they received complaints from the FPI (Islamic Defender Front), another hardline Islamist organization. The police argued that Arus Pelangi did not have a permit to organize such workshop. On 23 February the police prevented a peaceful pro-LGBTI rally in Yogyakarta citing that the group had not given the authorities adequate notice of the event and disbanded the group to prevent a clash with a coinciding anti-LGBTI demonstration. A transgender protester, who had joined the rally, was hit on the head by seven anti-LGBTI demonstrators after being followed from the rally.

International human rights law places a positive obligation on states to ensure that individuals and groups are able to exercise their rights to freedom of expression and assembly, free from the threat of violence or disruption.

Amnesty International calls on the authorities to ensure that thorough and impartial investigations are carried out into attacks and threats against individuals because of their sexual orientation or gender identity and that anyone reasonably suspected of a crime in this regard be prosecuted in line with international human rights law and standards. The authorities must also act to provide effective protection to LGBTI people who face threats to their lives and safety.

The organisation also calls on President Joko Widodo to speak up for the rights of LGBTI people. If not his ongoing silence will send an alarming message that such attacks and harassment will be tolerated under his leadership paving the way for further discrimination against LGBTI individuals, activists and organizations.