Indonesia: Investigate systemic discrimination and violence against human rights defenders speaking on Papua

(Geneva, 18 June 2020) – Systematic attacks targeting activists and groups vocal on human rights violations against Papuans smacks of growing authoritarianism in Indonesia, rights groups said today.

In a joint statement, the Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) and eight of its members in Indonesia condemn the recent series of cyberattacks, smear campaigns and intimidation against human rights defenders involved in various public discussions on racism and human rights violations against Papuans.

The rights groups are calling on the Government of Indonesia to investigate these incidents and bring the perpetrators to justice.

The groups are: The Alliance of Independent Journalists Indonesia (AJI), the Commission for the Disappeared and Victims of Violence (KontraS), FORUM-ASIA, the Human Rights Working Group (HRWG), the Indonesian Human Rights Monitor (Imparsial), the Indonesian Legal Aid and Human Rights Association (PBHI), the Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation (YLBHI), the Institute for Policy Research and Advocacy (ELSAM), and Sekretariat Anak Merdeka (SAMIN).

Over the past two weeks, at least eight incidents of anonymous cyberattacks\(^1\) were reported by organisers and speakers of various anti-racism discussions on Papua. The discussions were held ahead of a verdict yesterday involving seven Papuan activists and students. The seven were convicted of treason for their involvement in anti-racism protests in August 2019.\(^2\)

The Government and its law enforcement apparatuses have remained silent regarding these attacks, implying its involvement on perpetuating a culture of discrimination and vilification against Papuans and those speaking up on their plight.

The attacks, including doxing, hacking of social media accounts and disruption of online discussion, send a chilling effect on the right to freedom of expression of indigenous Papuans and the human rights defenders who echo the concerns of the ethnic minority.

‘These incidents will further legitimise discrimination and violation against Papuans, whose rights and fundamental freedoms are already being continuously violated by the State and their supporters for decades,’ said Yati Andriyani, Coordinator of KontraS.


\(^2\) [https://www.forum-asia.org/?p=29596](https://www.forum-asia.org/?p=29596)
The human rights defenders targeted in the attacks are also accused of being a part of separatist groups through threats, intimidation and smear campaigns. Mass surveillance on them persists even after the public discussions. During the same period, the National Intelligence Agency summoned two university rectors for allegedly organising dissent discussions on Papua in their respective campus areas.

'Despite calls to protect the Papuans and defenders who speak up for them, the Government and law enforcement apparatuses continuously implement authoritative measures under the pretext of safeguarding national security. Repressive and disproportionate security approaches and measures on matters related to Papua shows a clear sign of authoritarianism in the Country,' said Asfinawati, Chairperson of YLBHI.

'The recent chain of events clearly illustrate a systematic effort to silence critics and divert attention from the truth on the human rights violations against Papuans. The failure of the Government to bring the perpetrators to justice further undermines civic space, compromising the already eroding democratic norms in the country,' said Shamini Darshni Kaliemuthu, FORUM-ASIA Executive Director.

The rights groups urge the Government of Indonesia to launch a thorough investigation on the recent attacks on the human rights defenders who speak up on Papuan rights and to bring the perpetrators to justice. The Government should endeavour to halt the negative narratives crafted against Papuans and ensure the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all.

About FORUM-ASIA:

The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) is a regional network of 81 member organisations across 21 Asian countries, with consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council, and consultative relationship with the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights. Founded in 1991, FORUM-ASIA works to strengthen movements for human rights and sustainable development through research, advocacy, capacity-development and solidarity actions in Asia and beyond. www.forum-asia.org

For further information, please contact:
- East Asia and ASEAN Programme, FORUM-ASIA, ea-asean@forum-asia.org

For media inquiries, please contact:
- Yi-Lan, Communication and Media Programme, FORUM-ASIA, communication@forum-asia.org

4 https://ylbhi.or.id/bibliografi/tanda-tanda-otoritarianisme-pemerintah-jokowi/