



IPPFoRB

International Panel of Parliamentarians
for Freedom of Religion or Belief

9 October 2017

His Excellency Joko Widodo
President
Republic of Indonesia
Istana Merdeka
Jalan Medan Merdeka Utara
Jakarta, Indonesia 10110

Dear President Joko Widodo:

We write to you as a global network of parliamentarians from diverse political, religious, and geographical backgrounds, committed to the promotion and protection of the freedom of thought, conscience, religion, and belief for all. In June 2015, we wrote to urge you and your administration to protect the right to freedom of religion or belief for all Indonesians. We appeal to you again to reaffirm this message.

Since taking office in 2014, you and your Administration have on several occasions promoted tolerance and condemned religious- and ethnic-based violence. We applaud these interventions. Nevertheless, we continue to receive reports that violations of freedom of religion or belief and related incidents of violence are rising. Houses of worship are vandalized, burned, or closed. Some religious communities, such as Shi'a Muslims, Ahmadis, and Baha'is, face societal and government-directed discrimination and intimidation, such as difficulty obtaining identity cards and marriage or death certificates.

Recent events have galvanized some individuals and groups who seek to exploit or manipulate religion for political or other gain. For example, Indonesia's ill-defined blasphemy law violates international human rights standards and, as noted in your country's most recent Universal Periodic Review, restricts the freedom of expression of religious minorities. That the blasphemy law was employed in a high-profile, high stakes manner to politically discredit and ultimately imprison former Governor Basuki "Ahok" Tjahaja Purnama demonstrates the very real danger presented by the criminalization of defamation of religion. We urge you to repeal the blasphemy law and release persons sentenced or awaiting trial for "denigrating religion" or "blasphemy."

As we noted in our letter two years ago, we are following with interest the proposed plans for a religious rights protection bill. In particular, we are concerned that, as currently proposed, several of the draft bill's provisions may be easily used against small, unpopular, or fringe religious communities, as well as the non-religious. Such emphasis on the six recognized faiths—Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Confucianism—excludes and disadvantages individuals practicing other faiths or no faith at all and creates an inherent division between the “correct” or “proper” faiths and everyone else, a paradoxical approach given that the bill is intended to protect the rights of religious minorities. Critics have argued that the draft merely repackages existing harmful policies, regulations, and practice.

Indonesia plays an important role in Southeast Asia and around the world, which means it is critical that your country set the right tone in rhetoric and policy when it comes to freedom of religion or belief. We respectfully urge you to demonstrate leadership to the region and the world by protecting and promoting freedom of religion or belief and related human rights for all Indonesia's believers and non-believers.

Sincerely,

The following parliamentarians support this letter in their personal capacity and not as a representative of their government, political party or any other body.

Hqabagonzi Kwankwa South Africa

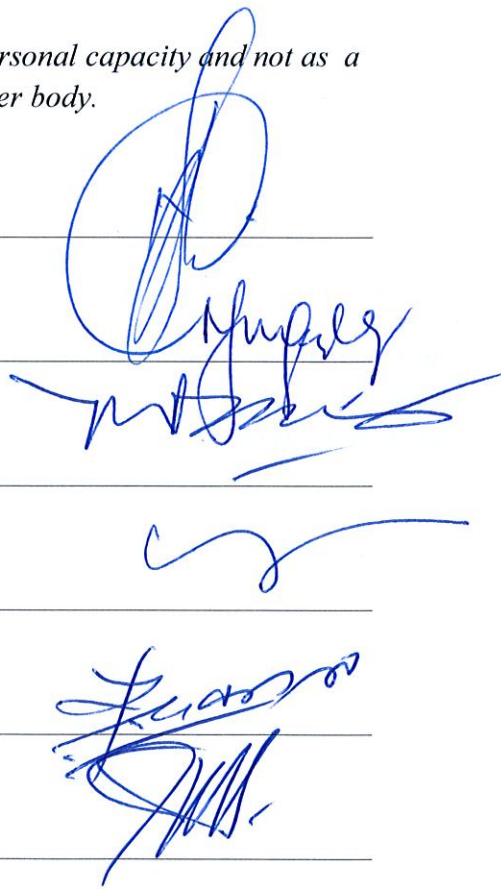
Mercy Christy Barends Indonesia

Eva Sndari Indonesia

CHARLES SANTIAGO Malaysia

Lok Mani Dhakal Nepal

TOM VILLARIN PHILS



Asiya Nasir Pakistan

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DR. MUHAMMAD ABDUR RAZZAQI Bangladesh

~~Signature~~

MUSAHTID BIN YUSOF MALAYSIA

Signature

KASIT PIRONYA (Raj.)

Signature

DAVID ANDERSON

CANADA

Signature
