



# People with disabilities still face maltreatment, discrimination

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Teuku Zefrial, 45, a lawyer in Jakarta, recalled a difficult period in his life during which he fought a hard battle against schizophrenia.

Zefrial's most difficult experience was in 2009 when he could not sleep for four days because he was hearing voices in his head.

Zefrial's cousin, who was worried about his condition, suggested he get some food at a fast food restaurant. Zefrial took up his suggestion and left his house for a local eatery, before an incident suddenly change his life.

Zefrial said he could barely remember anything when he found himself locked in a cell inside a

residential care home in Cihideung, Tasikmalaya, West Java. From the explanations he was given from his cousin after he recovered, he learned that he had suddenly passed out on his way to the restaurant, forcing his family to seek treatment for him.

"They [residential care personnel] chained my right wrist and ankle tightly, which caused swelling. I had to eat, urinate and defecate in the same place for three days," Zefrial said.

The caretakers later moved him to a room where he spent his days not knowing when his internment would end.

"Every time I woke up, I wondered what would happen tomorrow, when all this suffering would

end," Zefrial said in deep grief.

"They only released me two times a day, for praying and exercising, which was for an hour in the morning and an hour in the afternoon. They treated me like a prisoner, but they did not tell me what I was imprisoned for," he went on.

With a high number of people with disabilities in Indonesia, there may be many disabled people suffering from maltreatment as they are unable to stand up to abuse and neglect.

The 2013 Basic Health Study found that the prevalence of disability in Indonesia stands at 11 percent, with the highest level found in Central Java at 23.8 percent, and West Papua with the

lowest level at 4.6 percent.

"Based on our investigation in 2016, 238 disabled people died from maltreatment in four residential care homes in West Jakarta that year," Mental Health Association chairman Yeni Rosa Damayanti said at an ASEAN Disability Forum last Thursday.

Suffering from a physical disability caused by polio and glaucoma, Association of People with Disabilities deputy chairman Aulia Amin said he himself had witnessed maltreatment when he was living in a residential care home managed by the Jakarta administration for 10 years.

"When a resident had a tantrum, caretakers isolated him or her for a whole day without food

or water. They bathed them by spraying water on their bodies with a hose. Some residents were even sexually abused by caretakers but no one believed their complaints," Amin said.

Santi Utami from the Social Affairs Ministry's directorate of social rehabilitation for people with disabilities said cases of maltreatment mostly happened in privately owned residential care homes because caretakers were untrained.

"Caretakers employed at the ministry owned residential care homes are all certified social workers, psychologists or professionals," said Santi

There are 20 residential care homes run by the ministry across Indonesia.

Article 21 of the 2016 People with Disabilities Law on habilitation and rehabilitation stipulates that disabled people have the right to access inclusive and harassment-free treatment and choose their own rehabilitation program.

Disability rights activists are now pushing for the issuance of government regulations related to education, legal assistance, employment opportunities and other rights for people with disabilities, as mandated by the 2016 law.

"Amid the ongoing process for the issuance of the law, we are striving to tighten disability care evaluation and supervision and improve training programs for caregivers at privately owned residential care homes," said Santi. (sha)