

Jokowi reasserts RI religious freedom

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President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo responded to an attack on a Catholic church in Yogyakarta on Sunday by reasserting religious liberty in Indonesia.

He said Indonesia guaranteed the freedom of each of its citizens to have a religion and to perform their religious duties in line with their beliefs.

With his statement the President confirmed that the government would not allow space for any intolerant groups in the country.

"Our Constitution guarantees religious freedom. That's why we will not allow even a tiny place to people who want to perpetuate, develop and spread intolerance in this country," Jokowi said in his remarks at Gedung Pancasila at the Foreign Ministry in Jakarta on Monday.

He added that the Indonesian people, who came from culturally diverse backgrounds, had long lived together. However, it must be admitted that because of freedom of expression, in line with many other countries in the world, bigotry and intolerance, as seen in recent attacks against religious minorities, could continue to occur.

"I need to convey again that there is no place for people who are unable to accept tolerance, here, in our country, Indonesia. No one is allowed to convey their refusal to tolerate persons from different social groups through words, let alone by violent acts," said Jokowi.

The attack on St. Lidwina church has added to the long list of sectarian violence that has occurred in the country.

National Police chief Gen. Tito Karnavian said on Monday that the police were still investigating the case thoroughly, especially to reveal the background of Sulyono, the suspect in the case.



JP/Bambang Muryanto

Clean up: Police and military personnel, along with residents, jointly clean blood stains from Santa Lidwina Church in Sleman, Yogyakarta, on Monday. A man attacked the church congregation on Sunday, injuring several people, including the priest.

Based on the preliminary results of the police's investigation, Tito said, it was known that Sulyono had been living in several cities across Indonesia. They include Magelang in Central Java and Poso in Central Sulawesi, which was once the base of the East Indonesia Mujahidin (MIT) terrorist group.

"There is a strong indication that he has been influenced by radical beliefs, which support violence," Tito said. "He made an unsuccessful application for a passport to travel to Syria."

Tito further explained that among the key issues the police were trying to ascertain was whether Sulyono prepared and launched the attack alone or with assistance.

Separately, Riyono, the head of Kandangan village in Banyuwangi, East Java, confirmed that

Sulyono was born in and was still registered as a resident of his village. However, he said, Sulyono no longer lived in Kandangan.

Citing the civil registry database, Riyono said Sulyono was the third of four children and his parents were farm laborers.

After graduating from junior high school, Sulyono continued his education at the Ibnu Sina Islamic boarding school in 2010. Sulyono studied in Ibnu Sina for only six months before deciding to move to South Sulawesi, following his older brother who had previously moved to the province.

"He rarely came home to Kandangan. The last time he returned home was last year. At that time, Sulyono was seen to have begun actively carrying out religious preaching activities. He always wore a black robe and often reminded people in our village not

to carry out *selamatan* [thanksgiving prayers] or *kenduri* [a Javanese ritual of blessing or remembrance] activities," said Riyono.

Still, the village head said, Sulyono was widely known as a good person and had often been invited to perform Quran recitals because of his sweet voice.

Ibnu Sina Islamic boarding school head Kyai Masykur Ali said he was shocked upon hearing news reports of the terror attack on the church. He hoped the police could uncover the full facts behind the incident.

"This is very dangerous because it could disturb the harmonious life of religious followers in Indonesia," said Masykur.

"I felt miserable and distressed by the incident. It was an inhumane act to attack people at prayer," said Yogyakarta Governor Hamengkubuwono X. (srs)