

# RI: Nothing to hide about human rights record in bid for seat

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Now that Indonesia has secured a place on the United Nations Security Council, the government is being urged to stop painting a rosy picture about its own record on human rights and, instead, improve protections.

The Masyarakat Sipil human rights coalition said that Indonesia was projecting an image of itself that did not correspond to the actual conditions in the country. It pointed out that while the government had executed 18 convicts during President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo's first two years in office, Attorney General M. Prasetyo admitted in March that it put the implementation of the death sentence on temporary hold while it was campaigning for a non-permanent Security Council seat, which it won earlier this month.

"It would be better if promoting this image was carried out with a full commitment for peacekeeping within the country," said Fatia Maulidiyanti from the Commission for Missing Persons and Victims of Violence (Kontras), a Masyarakat Sipil member.

She said Jokowi's government had declared a commitment to human rights, particularly through its key Nawacita platform, but it failed to ensure they were enforced. Hence, many serious violations, past and current — like when in 1965 at least 500,000 people accused of being communists were killed, or the brutal military approach in Papua — had yet to be resolved.

Indonesia's image in the global community, which was built upon excellent diplomacy, would be perceived of as fake if such human rights abuses were not taken care of, she said.

"The government should follow recommendations [from human rights organizations], which had been made with international requirements and standards," she said, adding that Komnas HAM had submitted nine investigation reports on abuses to the government, but no perpetrators have ever been held to account.

Rafendi Djamin of the Human Rights Working Group (HRWG) — another Masyarakat Sipil member — echoed Fatia, saying that with the upcoming position on the council, Indonesia had to prove it would make a significant improvement on its own human rights enforcement.

He cited a recent published report of FORUM-ASIA, a re-

gional human rights group with 58 member organizations in 19 countries across Asia, saying that despite some improvements on human rights, there had been an increase in discrimination and violence against minority groups in Indonesia. Such discrimination, the report said, occurs because numerous national and local laws perpetuate violence and the negligence of fundamental rights, like the 1965 Blasphemy Law, which has been used to persecute religious minorities, and an Aceh administration bylaw that criminalizes being lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender.

However, Ifdhal Kasim, an official with the Office of the Presidential Staff, denied that Indonesia hid anything to win the Security Council seat.

"Indonesia could win the non-permanent [council seat] because of Indonesia's international role, especially in the UN," he said. "Diplomacy can no longer be done by [presenting false images] because the world is very open currently."

He added that Indonesia did not cover up its human rights problems and the government was taking serious steps to resolve any that remain.

Ifdhal said Indonesia's invitation of UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Commissioner Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein to visit the country earlier this year to inspect the situation was proof. Hasan Kleib, Indonesian Ambassador to the UN in Geneva, said at the time that Al Hussein had discussions with the government during his three-day visit, including with Jokowi and various human rights organizations. Hassan said Al Hussein was impressed that NGOs could express concerns and the press was also free.

Meanwhile, Ifdhal admitted there were still problems related to historic human rights violations, but he said Jokowi, for example, in May met survivors and families of the victims of the past human rights abuses who have held a silent protest, called Kamisan, on every Thursday since 2007. Afterwards, Ifdhal said, Jokowi asked the attorney general and Komnas HAM to work together to resolve the cases.

Similarly, Foreign Ministry spokesman Arrmanatha Nasir said that there was no country with a perfect human rights record. Nonetheless, he said Nawacita and the establishment of Komnas HAM demonstrated the country's commitment.