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# Violence against women still rampant: Activist

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Tears streamed down Ratnasari's face as she delivered a testimony that revealed several cases of violence against women she had assisted in Aceh.

The women's rights activist held her anger when she told the story of a mentally ill woman who had been raped.

"Now, not only is she expecting a baby, but she is also waiting to be sentenced for adultery," Ratnasari said during a discussion held by Solidaritas Perempuan (Women's Solidarity) on Monday.

"Soon after she gives birth to her baby, the sharia police will give her 100 lashes."

Ratnasari said under *Qanun Jinayat* (Aceh's Islamic Criminal Code Bylaw), the woman was accused of *zina* (intentionally committing adultery).

The activist added that she also knew of a couple who had been lashed 100 times for undergoing *nikah siri* (unregistered marriage).

They were also accused of committing *zina*.

Not only did the couple endure the pain of being lashed, they were also shunned by their community, Ratnasari said.

They were forced to move out of their neighborhood, fired from their jobs and their children have been unable to attend school because people mock them, saying

they come from a *zina* family.

"They [provincial administration officials] claim they are religious people. How could they let such terrible things happen to women in the name of religion?" said Ratnasari with a trembling voice.

The bylaw would erode the rights of more women in the future, she warned.

*Qanun Jinayat*, which has been enforced in the province since 2009, is an example of the absence of the state in protecting women's rights.

Solidaritas Perempuan chairwoman Puspa Dewi blamed President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo for failing to ensure that all regulations he had made to speed up the

growth of Indonesia's economy walked in line with the protection of women's rights.

"The Jokowi administration has paid close attention to some matters they consider much more important, such as foreign investment and infrastructure development. Some matters, such as women's rights protection, have been left out and forgotten as they are considered less important," Puspa said.

"Such protection has in fact been stated in Nawa Cita and he still has one-and-a-half years to realize it," said the activist, referring to the nine development agendas of the Jokowi-Jusuf Kalla administration.

National Commission of Violence against Women (Komnas

Perempuan) chairwoman Azriana said the government had issued several regulations aimed at eradicating violence against women.

One of the regulations is Law No.18/2017 on the protection of Indonesian migrant workers, which aims to protect the rights of the country's citizens who work abroad, of which 87 percent are women.

"The problem is that the 2017 law does not include workers in informal sectors as their main concern, while the majority of Indonesian migrant workers are domestic helpers," said Azriana.

Komnas Perempuan has recorded 259,150 cases of violence against women in 2016, down from 321,752 in 2015. It has not

yet announced data for 2017.

Despite the improvement, more effort should be made to provide better protection for women, the Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Ministry said.

The ministry's women rights protection assistant deputy, Usman Basuni, added that his institution was focused on building more Integrated Women and Children's Centers (P2TP2A) across the nation.

"One major challenge that we face is that not all provinces in Indonesia are ready to work with us to eradicate abuse against women. Some are still prioritizing their local culture and patriarchal beliefs that contradict our mission," Usman said. (vla)