

Activists urge West Java to revoke policy against Ahmadiyah

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Demand for the West Java administration to revoke a "discriminatory" regulation against the Ahmadiyah community is rife after a group of people forcibly dispersed a book launch organized by the minority group in Bandung last weekend.

Interfaith network Jakatarub and the Bandung Legal Aid Institute (LBH Bandung) both said the discriminatory action was motivated by Gubernurial Regulation No. 12/2011, which sets restrictions on Ahmadiyah activi-

ties and prohibits Ahmadis from propagating their beliefs.

"West Java's new governor, Ridwan Kamil, should have revised or even revoked the very regulation as its presence could legitimize all types of discriminatory acts against the Ahmadiyah," LBH Bandung's Harold Aron said.

Jakatarub coordinator Risdo Simangunsong said the regulation was concerning because it could be used to justify persecution against Ahmadis.

"The regulation must be annulled," he said.

Dozens of unidentified people reportedly dispersed a book launch organized by an Ahmadi-

yah group at Mubarak Mosque in Bandung, the capital of West Java, last Saturday.

A participant of the event, Dhiat Sukmana, said the event ran smoothly for half an hour before it was disrupted by those who arrived at the mosque without warning and repeatedly accused the Ahmadis of being a heretical cult.

"They made a loud noise, asking the event organizer to stop the activities. They also called the Ahmadiyah faith heretical," said Dhiat, who said she was not an Ahmadi.

Throughout the event, which started at around 8 a.m., Dhiat said she saw no attempts from

Ahmadis to propagate their beliefs to adherents of other religions.

Speakers at the event, she said, merely discussed the content of a book entitled *Haqiqatul Wuhyi*, which comprises the works of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad — the founder of Ahmadiyah.

"For me, the event was about a scientific discussion. It does not deserve to be stopped," said the 55-year-old woman.

She also deplored the police's decision to bow to pressure by doing nothing to drive away the protesters.

As a consequence of the protest, the book launch ended at 11 a.m., an hour earlier than

intended.

Indonesian Ahmadiyah Congregation (JAI) Central Bandung leader Mansyur Ahmad said separately that the event was attended by around 100 people and that not all of them were Ahmadis.

LBH Bandung recorded seven violations of religious freedom in the city in 2018, with Ahmadiyah being the most-targeted religious minority group.

The National Commission on Violence Against Woman said separately there were 33 discriminatory regulations against Ahmadiyah across 10 cities, 17 agencies and six provinces.

The beliefs of Ahmadiyah

groups are considered heresy by mainstream Muslim groups, including the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), and persecution against them is not uncommon.

Activists have long blamed such persecution on a 2008 joint ministerial decree that banned Ahmadis from disseminating their beliefs and teachings, saying that the joint decree was often used as a basis for violence, even though the decree itself did not prohibit them from practicing their faith.

The decree, issued in 2008 by the Home Ministry, was formulated based on the controversial Blasphemy Law.