

Government lambasted for slow progress

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The government has been urged to accelerate the resolution of past human rights abuses that have lain dormant for decades.

The Commission for Missing Persons and Victims of Violence (Kontras) coordinator, Haris Azhar, said the commission had just been updated by the Attorney General's Office (AGO) that no significant progress had been made.

Replying to the query by Kontras, the AGO said there had been five meetings conducted among the AGO, the National Commission on Human Rights (Komnas HAM), the military, the police, the National Intelligence Agency (BIN) and various ministries between April 20, 2015, and Jan. 8 this year.

"The point [of the meetings] is that the AGO will solve this problem with reconciliation but there is no

standard on what the process will be like," he told a press conference on Wednesday.

"In the first meeting there was a judicial process mentioned. But in the last meeting, there was no word of it. They suggested a reconciliation process as it is hard for them to gather evidence [for a judicial process]," he added.

Kontras suggested that a presidential regulation (Perpres) should be used to form a special team that directly reports to the presidential office, which could accelerate the process.

It argued that a Perpres would be better than a law as its issuance would not involve the House of Representatives.

"The team could comprise only five people who are competent, willing to solve the cases and have previous experience with such circumstances. The military and AGO need not be involved so as to make

sure the process is independent and efficient," Haris said.

The cases, all decades old, include the 1989 Talangsari incident in Central Lampung, various kidnappings and unresolved shootings in the 1980s, the 1965 communist purge and the May 1998 riots, have seen snail-paced resolution as dossiers compiled by Komnas HAM in 2002 have always been rejected by the AGO for various reasons.

AGO spokesman Amir Yanto said that the process was ongoing and refused to call it "not a significant update".

Komnas HAM chairman Nur Kholis acknowledged that the process had been slow due to the AGO's repeated objections. Nevertheless, there had recently been some important progress.

"On Feb. 15 to 19, for the first time, investigators from Komnas HAM and the AGO, 18 of us, sat together to check the dossiers and discuss

which mechanism should be taken to address the issue," he said over the phone on Thursday.

Komnas HAM appreciated Kontras' suggestion for a special presidential team. Last year, it also suggested the same idea but with different personnel, including itself, the AGO and victims.

When asked whether the commission had investigated former generals and high-ranking officials alleged by many to be involved in the cases, Nur refused to disclose anything but said, "We're working on it."

Maria Katalina Sumarsih, mother of BR Norma "Wawan" Irmawan, who was shot dead in the Semanggi II tragedy in 1998, emphasized that the cases should be brought to criminal court to reveal the truth and suspects behind it.

"Compensation is not our objective but the revelation of truth and state confession is."