The May 1998 Tragedy
in the Course of the Nation's Journey

in denial!



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KOMNAS
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The May 1998 Tragedy in the Course of the Nation's Journey
In Denial!

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For the victims and their families who continue to rise above;

for those who did their part in helping victims at the time of the incident;

and for the tireless advocates of the victims.

They are our heroes.

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Preface

How do we remember the May Tragedy of five years ago? It is in the interest of Komnas Perempuan to voice out its standpoint on the tragedy, to make a profound mark for women. The incident was a dreadful blow and at the same time an impetus of overwhelming force for women to move forward and fight for their dignity.

Such circumstances unfolded in the midst of denials about the tragedy that persist to this day. Refutations were made by the state, which until today has still failed to execute any follow-up measures on the outcomes of the investigation into the May 1998 riots. Accountability for the gross human rights violations that occurred in the incident has never been brought to bear. This state of denial is also manifest in the attitude of the broader society, which refuses to even acknowledge that the rapes and sexual assaults actually occurred. Furthermore, the need to allow victims the right to testify without having to appear in person before the public is still not commonly understood.

A lengthy and invigorating debate ensued when Komnas Perempuan moved to settle on the title of this book. Changes made from one planned title to another possible alternative resulted in a shift in focus. Initially, the title was designed as an expression of protest against the prevalent attitude that women and their struggles are not worthy of acknowledgement as part of Indonesian history; then emerged a realization of the need to select a title capable of communicating the distinctiveness of women's

trials and tribulations, in the hope of breaking the silence surrounding these issues; eventually, attention shifted to the external condition of society that has persistently been the root cause of unresolved issues: refutations that originate from the still prevalent culture of denial. The ultimate title chosen for this publication therefore corresponds to these societal conditions and is meant to underscore the objections and struggles of women.

Even though the book's heading focuses on denial – the source of our disappointment and rage – the book's content is actually about women's strength, tenacity and efforts that have never diminished, even in the midst of the most dire and unbearable situations.

Through this book, Komnas Perempuan intends to bring a sense of completeness and closure to our recollection of the May 1998 Tragedy. It presents narratives that demonstrate the resilience of victims in surviving against the odds, and tells the story of women's motivations and efforts to prevent future generations from experiencing such atrocities.

Publishing this book has been made possible thanks to the determination and camaraderie of a group of women who have worked tirelessly, under heavy time-constraints, to make the voices of the women victims of the May 1998 incident heard. Carla Bianpoen searched her collections of photographs and rewrote some of her materials especially for this book. Rita Kolibonso unearthed the cassette recording, filed away since 1998, of the meeting between women representatives and President Habibie. Melani Budianta assisted with the planning of the Komnas Perempuan commemorative event for the May 1998 Tragedy and contributed one of her pieces of writing for this publication. Poriaman Sitanggang generously offered professional advice on the book design. Fenny Purnawan cancelled all other work engagements to concentrate on rendering the spoken words of women into text for this book. Sonya van Wichelen contributed her thoughts and writings to ensure that the perspective represented in this book was as intended. Enrico Halim agreed to produce a design for the book in a very short space of time. Dolorosa Sinaga and Astari Rasyid gave their approval to showcase their works of art in this publication. Through the mediation of Ita Fatia Nadia, donors declared their readiness to fully finance the publishing of this book. Komnas Perempuan extends its heartfelt gratitude to all of these people.

Within Komnas Perempuan, Ms. Saparinah Sadli, Ms. Mely G. Tan, Ita Fatia Nadia and Kamala Chandrakirana were constantly engaged in deliberations, and raced against time to produce this book, also with the support of Lies Marantika, Myra Diarsi and Andy Yentriyani.

Last but not least, Komnas Perempuan wishes to express its appreciation and utmost respect to the women survivors who have been willing to share their awe-inspiring stories of survival. The fortitude and struggles of these women were an inspiration to everyone involved in this project and roused our spirits to ensure its completion.

Jakarta, 14 May 2003
Komnas Perempuan

Introduction



Photograph: Carla Bianpoen

The Apology

On July 15, 1998, at ten in the morning the protocol office from *Bina Graha* (the presidential palace), called to convey a message that we – a group of women – had been granted an audience with President B.J. Habibie the palace that day at 2 p.m. It was a long-awaited call that was made in response to our letter requesting a meeting with President Habibie to discuss the impact on women, of the May riots that had occurred that year in various major cities around Indonesia.

The letter was signed by 22 women from diverse religious, ethnic and professional backgrounds and experiences. We had in fact sent a similar letter to General Wiranto, the Commander in Chief of the Indonesian Armed Forces at the time; however, that letter did not elicit any form of response.

A few moments before leaving my office at the University of Indonesia's Postgraduate Program on Women's Studies to head for *Bina Graha*, I answered another call from the palace's protocol office. The officer said that I would be the only one allowed to meet with President Habibie that afternoon. I responded by reaffirming that 22 women signed the letter, all of whom had already left for *Bina Graha* and were expected to arrive on time.

Upon arrival at the front entrance of *Bina Graha*, the sentry on duty prevented the entire entourage from advancing into the palace, saying I was the only one permitted to enter. A discussion ensued and we were all eventually granted access.

Upon arrival at the waiting room the protocol officer announced that the President had not yet arrived and reiterated that not everyone in our delegation would be able to meet with him. The Vice Chairperson of the KOWANI – the National Council of Women's Organizations of Indonesia – the late Ms. Kuraisin Sumhadi promptly responded in a courteous yet firm manner, "It does not matter what you say Sir, we refuse to go away before we are *all* admitted. If necessary, we will spend the night here!" We had no idea of the protocol officer's impression of us upon hearing this statement!

We must admit that our efforts to meet with Mr. Habibie were not without their share of entanglements. An amusing episode transpired that afternoon: once we were inside the premises of *Bina Graha* that observes strict protocol, one of our delegation members had to trade her trouser suit – her daily attire – with a skirt. Fortunately for our delegation member, a policewoman was kind enough to lend her a skirt. For the entire afternoon this delegation member appeared to be in discomfort and felt awkward. Occasionally she was seen fixing and pulling at her skirt.

After a while, we were *all* welcomed inside. The President was already waiting. At that time, the President was only accompanied by a high-ranking military officer, General Sintong Panjaitan. Early in the meeting, a representative from our delegation read a written statement that had already been delivered to President Habibie.

Before being presented to the President, this declaration had been propagated by e-mail. In the space of two weeks,

we had managed to garner more than 4,000 supporting signatures. These signatories consisted of both men and women, including Indonesian citizens living abroad. The group of more than 4,000 signatories referred to themselves as the Community Against Violence Against Women.

On June 16, 1998, in response to the May incident, a group of women conceived the idea to formulate the declaration. They were troubled with the government's unresponsiveness and its failure to take the measures necessary to deal with the events and repercussions of the May Tragedy. The statement was posted to me via e-mail, as I was in New York at the time it was generated.

I gave my unreserved support to the declaration made by my colleagues. In it they demanded that the government condemn the riots and issue an apology to the victims. The declaration stated that the government and law enforcers were expected to show responsibility, among others means through the formation of an independent investigation team consisting of members from the National Human Rights Commission, NGOs, volunteers, and representatives for victims or witnesses at the crime scenes; by supporting a team of volunteers for victims' rehabilitation; by taking stern actions against the offenders and those that masterminded the riots; and by taking measures to prevent such incidents from ever recurring.

After the declaration was read, a humanitarian worker in our delegation then presented facts about the experiences of the victims of the riots with whom she had had direct contact with and also about her personal experiences in coping with the various forms of intimidation experienced by herself and her peers. The President listened earnestly while holding the declaration he had already highlighted with several shades of markers. He then said, "Can I now speak?"

He pointed at the section that was marked in green particularly on the demand for an apology. He read it again in front of us. In a detailed and lengthy explanation he said that the tide of events that had unfolded during the unrest in May were no different from the Tianamen uprising in the People's Republic of China and that the Chinese government had not issued any apology.

To a certain extent he ensuing dialogue with the President carried on in an uneasy atmosphere. We were reluctant to accept Mr. Habibie's explanation that in essence concluded it was unnecessary to issue a state apology. The President even said, "Don't forget, I have only been a president for 53 days. There are many other important issues that I have to attend to."

The dialogue was drawn-out over two hours. During the meeting, the President's protocol officers entered the room on several occasions as if to remind the President that the meeting should immediately be concluded because it had gone on for more than two hours. But the protocol officers were afraid to clearly say this and the President failed to notice their anxiety as he was immersed in discussion with us.



The open apology to the victims of the May 1998 Tragedy. Made in response to a demand made by 22 women from diverse backgrounds and profession, during an audience with President B.J. Habibie.

Photograph: Carla Bianpoen

In particular he enquired about the women victims of sexual violence. It was at that time he seemed to pause momentarily as if trying to recollect something. "Yes, I remember" he said, "One of my relatives (a woman doctor whose name he later mentioned) told me the same thing. She would not lie to me."

Once he recollected the story from the woman doctor, without further ado the President took a different standpoint, announcing he was now willing to issue an apology from the government. It was understandable when at this point his advisor Mr. Sintong was clearly taken aback, and stated, "Sir, shouldn't this matter be discussed at the cabinet meeting beforehand?" Replying in English, the President politely rebuked, "Can I have my own opinion? I happen to agree with these prominent women."

The President then invited us to prepare a joint-statement, "To avoid any misunderstanding," as he put it. In an amicable atmosphere, Mr. Habibie and we women carefully constructed each sentence of the statement. Upon its completion Mr. Habibie asked, "Who can use a computer? You can use the computer in my work room." Several of us immediately left the room for Mr. Habibie's office on the second floor to type out the statement. Initially the statement was printed on a plain sheet of paper. The President then requested that the statement be printed on presidential letterhead."

In front of our entire delegation, the President read aloud the official government statement on the May incident before a television crew on standby at Bina Graha. In accordance with our recommendations, the statement consisted of three main points, that:

1. The government denounces and apologizes for the riots that occurred in numerous major cities, and which resulted in the material losses and non-material suffering of the victims;
2. The government should immediately form a Consolidated Fact-Finding Team where investigation of cases of sexual abuse would be an integral part;
3. The government should immediately establish a National Commission on Violence Against Women that would function as an independent National Commission.

On July 22, 1998, the idea to establish the National Commission on Violence Against Women (now known as Komnas Perempuan) was officially introduced before members of the Reformation Cabinet at Bina Graha; however, Presidential Decree No. 181/1998 on the mandate and membership of Komnas Perempuan was only issued on October 15, 1998, after the President took matters into his own hands to bypass the bureaucratic hurdles in his office.

With the unwavering conviction that Komnas Perempuan be an independent National Commission, we were unable to fulfill several of President Habibie's recommendations, such as his suggestions to name the group the 'Commission for the Protection of Women' and to place the Commission under the authority of the Minister for Women's Empowerment. To ensure the Commission's independence

we also decided against acting on his suggestion that the Minister for Women's Empowerment and Mrs. Habibie (also a medical practitioner) be appointed as advisors to Komnas Perempuan. We presented a written explanation on the reasons for not fulfilling these requests. The President duly accepted our rationale and he has never taken issue with these decisions. We hold the former President in the highest regard, for his sincerity and forthrightness in taking heed of the voices of women.

Many individuals have worked exhaustively to bring this National Commission on Violence Against Women to life. Many have now moved on to continue their fight for women's causes outside of Komnas Perempuan, but their verve and fearlessness will never be forgotten. Wherever we may be, we should push forward and persevere to help shape a common existence free from all forms of violence.

Prof. Dr. Saparinah Sadli
Chairperson of Komnas Perempuan

Statement from the President of the Republic on Indonesia

Assalamu'alaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh
(Islamic expression of greetings meaning, "Peace be unto you and may Allah bestow on you His Mercy and Blessings")

After listening to the report from women representatives of the Community Against Violence Against Women, backed by factual and authentic evidence on various forms of violence against women in Indonesia in general, and in particular on the violence that occurred during mid-May 1998, I hereby express the deepest regret on the incidence of such aggression that is indeed discordant with the moral values of the Indonesian people.

In this respect, I hereby avow that the government shall take proactive measures to safeguard and protect all layers of society in efforts to avoid the recurrence of such inhumane acts in the history of the nation.

I anticipate cooperation from all levels of the community to enhance vigilance and to promptly report to the appropriate government apparatus upon having knowledge on the presence of violence against women in whatever form and in anyplace.

Therefore, on behalf of the government and the entire nation of Indonesia, I condemn the various acts of violence committed during the riots that took place simultaneously in numerous locations, including acts of violence against women.

Assalamu'alaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh

Jakarta, July 15, 1998

Signature

B.J. Habibie



Facts on the May Tragedy: The Fight Against Denials, Reawakening Memories

Photograph: Carla Bianpoen

The Consolidated Fact-Finding Team formed on July 23, 1998 based on the Joint Decree of the Ministers of Defense and Security, Justice, Internal Affairs and Women's Empowerment, as well as the Attorney General, arrived at the conclusion, among others, that incidents of sexual violence were irrefutably committed during the May 1998 riots. They found that at least 85 women from the ethnic Chinese community were subjected to sexual abuse. The fact-finding team also discovered that the largest number of fatalities resulted from people being burned to death. They team emphasized that the victims must not to be summarily blamed for the incidence of violence.

The bombardment of media coverage on the May 1998 tragedy ignited controversial public debate. The controversy reached its apex after the exposure of cases of rape against ethnic Chinese women. The media constructed their own visualization of the victims by stereotyping them with labels that accentuated their 'Chinese profile', commenting on their 'slanted eyes' and using the term '*amoy*' to refer to a Chinese girl. The typecasting of women as weak individuals also further reinforced the existing portrayal of the image of the victims: 'bent bodies in limp positions, slanted eyes filled with tears'. For these rape victims it was as though they were being assaulted for the second time – this time by the media and the public. The media's thirst for sensational news turned the cases of rapes of ethnic Chinese women into the central theme of public discussions on the May 1998 tragedy.

In response to this situation, the Violence Against Women Division of NGO Humanitarian Volunteers published a pocket-sized book explaining that the sexual violence inflicted on Chinese women was the result of two forms of systematic discrimination: racism and sexism. Through its policies, the state has actively formalized and perpetuated both forms of discrimination. The state even took advantage of this situation in order to secure the supremacy of its New Order political regime.

The May 1998 incident was the most extreme embodiment of both forms of discrimination, which have flourished and been infused with militarism for the past three decades. The fusion of these structures of repression mutates into an overpowering force for the destruction of human dignity. Chinese women have been victims of dual discrimination as a result of their ethnic identity as well as their femininity.

The sexual violence committed during the May Tragedy also drew the attention of the international community. In November 1998, Radhika Coomaraswamy, the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women paid a visit to Jakarta to conduct an investigation into the May riots, particularly on the issue of rape and sexual abuse. In her report to the UN, Radhika mentioned that acts of terror and intimidation were directed at non-governmental institutions investigating cases of sexual violence. She also questioned the role of the military and police in the acts of terror. The presence of the Special Rapporteur marked a turning point in the fight against all forms of violence against women in Indonesia.

Meanwhile, the discourse in society and the media on the incidence of rape and sexual violence had become

increasingly pervasive. Untruthful stories that pitted the elements of ethnicity, religion, and social status against each other spread like wildfire; some were even believed to be truthful. As a consequence, feelings of mistrust and hatred emerged among parties provoked by the issue. A horizontal conflict – a clash between social and community identities – was inevitable. The propagation of such falsehoods, however, shifted the focus of debate to more important discourse, which was the role and accountability of the state in dealing with the May 1998 riots and mass rapes. Amid ferocious debate in the mass media on rape and racism, an overlooked piece of information was the fact that the majority of victims were the urban poor. The team of from Humanitarian Volunteers recorded that at least 1,190 people were burnt to death. These victims were exploited and used as instruments to fuel an economic system fraught with injustices and inequalities that merely benefited those in positions of power. The public themselves were uninformed and ignorant about the causes and effects of the May Tragedy - particularly its political and economic repercussions.

In reality, the humanitarian tragedy that occurred on May 1998 was the outcome of a phenomenal and simultaneous combination of several types of discrimination: racial, religious, gender and class. Militarism and its doctrine, deeply entrenched in state institutions and the community helped cultivate a fertile ground for the bloodshed that occurred in Jakarta on May 1998. Similar bloody incidents also occurred in Ambon, Sambas, Poso, and other regions around Indonesia.

The fact-finding team arrived to the conclusion that the May riots indeed had elements of premeditation. Riots were carried out in inter-related locations and employed similar modes of operation. Turbulent forces triggered by existing social, economic and political situations could no longer be curbed. The fact-finding team recommended that a follow-up investigation be carried out into the root causes and the principle perpetrators of the incident. Until today the state has been ineffectual in terms of taking measures that might bring us closer to the offenders being held accountable and to the realization of justice for victims and the community in general.

Regardless of whether the May riots were engineered or not, an important lesson that can be drawn from the incident is that differences in ethnicity, religion, gender and social class are exceedingly susceptible to causing conflict. Diversities that should be treasured, as assets and distinguishing characteristics of the Indonesian people, seemed to have been manipulated to inflame hostilities amongst us during the May Tragedy. We therefore, should be prepared either as individuals or as a nation, to try to reconcile problems caused by such diversities – which are 'wolves in sheeps' clothing' – with acumen, in order to prevent us from being provoked by these politics that can easily instigate friction and dissension among us.

Should the healing process of the 'wounds' of May 1998 proceed in the absence of any legal and formal resolution, then what should we do to appease ourselves? In fact, in the midst of denials of the atrocities of May 1998 –



Radhika Coomaraswamy, UN Special Rapporteur, meeting with Komnas Perempuan to discuss cases of sexual violence from the May 1998 Tragedy.

Photograph: Carla Bianpoen

unimaginable to human decency – seeds of solidarity began to thrive within the community. Various elements of the community, moved by their sense of compassion, did not hesitate to extend a helping hand to uplift and assist the victims. Women from various regions, professions, ethnic groups and religions worked in unison, remonstrating against gender-based violence committed during the May incident.

What was clearly apparent from the solidarity built among these community members was the efficacy of upholding humanitarian values as the basis for nurturing relationships. Precious lessons can be drawn from the stories of those who have assisted and befriended the victims of sexual aggression. Survivors tell stories of their indebtedness to ordinary, yet noble people in situations where they had felt helpless. In an uncertain and frightening situation, these good samaritans – among them motorcycle-taxi men and taxicab drivers – fearlessly helped victims without expectation and without heed to differences in backgrounds and origins.

Seeds of togetherness, benevolence and mutual understanding should remain in our hearts and minds. These values can transcend any differences in religion, gender, ethnic group and social class. Without such ideals, the healing process cannot be smooth. On the other hand, by embracing such values, we can harness the strength to combat the culture of violence and denial, and resist the politics of conflict that surrounds us. This will be our prime advantage in striding forward to shape a peaceful Indonesia.

The Rebirth of Victims: Stories of Survivors



"Try Me" and "Will Find My Way"
Dolorosa Sinaga

Photograph: Carla Bianpoen

Behind the trauma that grips one with fear, there lies the courage and determination to survive.

Behind the stories of sorrow, there lie values of genuine camaraderie and humanity.

It is not easy to retell the poignant stories that can help us recollect that bitter month of May; nevertheless, the survivors are prepared to share. We thank them. Through these stories we can learn about the spirit of living, about sincerity, about resilience and about friendship.

Erasing Emotions of Hate and Distrust

One day in 2003 Zara*, a counselor for victims of the May Tragedy, arranged a get-together with Siska. Siska had been a victim of sexual abuse in the western part of Jakarta. In a friendly atmosphere they exchanged stories in a beachside cottage in North Jakarta. At this encounter, Siska exuded health and radiance. Following tremendous efforts she had managed to prevail over her traumatic experience. Today, step-by-step she continues to reconstruct her life that had been shattered into pieces.

Zara: How are you?
Siska: Fine, thank you. Come inside. Mum has prepared something delicious for you.
Z: What is it Aunty?
Mother: Nothing fancy: cupcakes with chicken filling. Go on, try some. Take some home for your children if you like them.
Z: I've never tasted anything like this, unsweetened cupcakes with chicken filling. Hmm they're really good....

S: Shall we go to cottage A so we can talk privately? So Mum cannot be in our conversation *(laughs)*.
Mother: Go on then....I won't bother you. Would you like to take along something to eat?

We then headed for cottage A in Siska's car. When we crossed the Slipi overpass, she began to recount her story. Only in the past year had she mustered the courage to pass across the Slipi bridge. Five years ago, on May 14, a gang of men forcefully dragged Siska and Erna, her friend from university, into a Kijang car, while they were waiting for the bus around the Slipi overpass area. The men groped their whole bodies. Without mercy, one of the men then hacked off the young women's breasts. They were then hurled out of the car somewhere in the Kebun Jeruk area of Jakarta. A motorcycle- taxi man rescued them, giving them a ride.

S: In the past, whenever I was reminded of that incident, my entire body would shudder and break out in cold sweat; I would suddenly have this utter revulsion towards my breasts. At first I would often scream out, crying hysterically whenever I passed this area. My parents were unable to do

* All the names used in the accounts described in this section of the book are pseudonyms.

family had to find an alternative route to avoid the Slipi bridge.

We continued our conversation in cottage A. The tape recorder was switched on during the entire conversation, except when occasionally it was turned off at Siska's request.

S: Please tell me how I looked like when you first saw me in the throes of death. I was in disbelief that I was still alive. Everyone said that I was bleeding profusely.
Z: I could tell you but do you really want to know?
S: Don't tell me then. I feel agitated all of a sudden... It was strange, because when they did that to me I did not feel any pain: the world just went dark. There were four men in the *Kijang* car. Until today I can still remember their faces, one by one, even though I don't know their names. Once, when I was walking with my mother at a shopping mall, all of a sudden I recognized one of them. He was walking with his wife and child. Instantaneously I went limp, broke out in cold sweat and even urinated involuntarily. I almost fainted. Fortunately, my mother had the strength to guide me to a seat. For a whole year I was terrified to go to that particular mall again. It is true, they are still around. Ema also came across one of the men. They are still roaming free. Why haven't they been arrested? I'm so terrified. What if they recognize me and come after me once again? I will surely be killed. Or should I undergo plastic surgery?
Z: They have forgotten about you. What you looked like in the past and now are totally different. Now you look prettier.
S: Do you think so? I have gained weight now. Many have remarked that I have become more attractive. What do you think?
Z: *Of course. You are more attractive, radiant and not as* thin as before. You even have your hair styled differently. You do look different.
S: I've also changed my name.
Z: Whatever makes you feel happy and comfortable....just do as you wish.
S: Now I only wish to make myself happy. I admit that often I feel lonely. After the incident, my boyfriend immediately left me because I was deformed and tarnished. I was miserable. I was afraid to date anyone. Who would want to go out with a disfigured woman like me? My parents cautioned me to not depend on any man. They said, "You are an intelligent woman. Go back to college and show your abilities." *My parents, my elder brother and aunty have* showered me with love and affection and took good care of me. My elder brother is still upset about the incident to this day; I am still not allowed to go out by myself; he constantly watches over me to the point where he cannot have a girlfriend; he does have a steady job though.
Z: You are fortunate to have a family that understands and protects you.
S: Yes, it is true. It's only that it's sometimes uncomfortable: they protect me as if I am an infant just learning to walk... and am not allowed to tumble over *(laughs).*

After the assault, Siska was immediately flown to Singapore with her mother and aunt. An airline company was willing to transport Siska even though she was without a passport or ticket. Siska's father and elder brother were unable to escort her; they were in a depressed state; they would often pass out when reminded of Siska's ordeal.

Upon arrival in Singapore, Siska was hospitalized and underwent two operations. Siska recalled the excruciating pain during the plastic surgery to reshape her breasts. For two years she remained in Singapore to engage in a process of both physical and psychological recovery.

Z: How are you holding up now? Do you still often have panic attacks?

S: The hysteria has subsided considerably. At the beginning I had panic attacks five to six times a day… I would claw at my hair, face and stomach like a lunatic. Each day I would stare at my breasts for hours in front of the bathroom mirror. While pointing at my breasts, I would curse loudly, "Because of you I have been reduced to this. You were the ones severed but I am the one to suffer the pain; I am the one in pain…not you, do you understand!"

Z: How did you calm yourself down?

S: After the operations, I was moved to a rehabilitation hospital near the seaside. It was lovely; it had a kitchen, dining room, living room and a computer; I could cook my own meals, play games on the computer, and do gardening and sports, just like being in my own house. I was accompanied by two women who took turns staying the night at the house. In the morning, a woman doctor and psychologist would examine me and engage me in conversation for a couple of hours. A pastor held mass in the house every morning. Some volunteers would also come to make conversation or play cards with me. When I become hysterical and screamed, they never attempted to inhibit me. Each morning I was invited to stroll along the beach and I learned to meditate. Apart from meditation, at the beach, I was also encouraged to shout and scream out as loud and as long as I wished. In the evenings, I made it a habit to chat with the Buddhist priest who visited regularly. Those were my daily rituals at the hospital.

Siska's mental state was still unstable at this stage. One day, due to her feelings of intense despair, Siska attempted suicide with a razor blade. Luckily, Aunty Wah came at the right time.

S: She grasped my hand and asked me to take a walk with her to the beach while speaking in a soft tone, "You must defeat the negative powers inside you; you must believe you can." Unexpectedly, Aunty Wah shoved me towards the sea. I went on walking…further…deeper…until I felt as though I would drown. I tried frantically to swim back to shore. When I reached the shore, Aunty Wah wrapped her arms around me. "I'm confident, you will never drown. You have the power in you to survive. Guard the power," she told me. Since then I gradually started feeling calmer. At first I had recurrent panic attacks five to six times daily, over time these decreased to only twice a day, then once a week, once a month and eventually none at all. I also broke my habit of staring at the mirror and shouting insults at my breasts.

After Siska showed signs of calming she became involved in various social activities such as volunteer work at a retirement home and a home for mentally disabled people. Aunty Wah was constantly at her side. Each time she returned to the rehabilitation center, Siska was asked to recount her experiences from the day. Each night, Siska would reflect on the sufferings of the people she encountered; among

them, some were incapable of leading normal lives. Siska felt that she was blessed to still have hope and a future. Such revelations surfaced through the guidance of Aunty Wah, who coaxed Siska to contemplate on the meaning of suffering and of living.

S: Since then I began to lead a normal live. I bathed regularly, powdered myself and put on make-up and dared myself to take a walk along Orchard Road. At first it was only once a week, then it increased to once every two days and eventually it became…an addiction *(laughs)*…I turned into a mall enthusiast! The activity gave me the courage to interact with the outside world. I was even brave enough to work at a well-known cosmetics counter at a shopping mall. I felt safe in Singapore. Strangely though, whenever I ran into a dark-skinned man I would automatically tremble. One day an Indonesian woman was shopping at the place where I was working. Her husband was tall and hefty, with dark brown-skin and short hair. All of a sudden I was shaking and broke out in cold sweat. The cosmetics I clutched in my hands fell all over the floor. The customer was furious. I was fired and had to replace the damaged goods. I then had an opportunity to work in a hospital. I could easily adapt to the environment there because I was once a medical student. Nevertheless, a similar episode was unavoidable. Whenever I meet with dark-skinned Indonesian patients, I would tremble. Fortunately, at the hospital I met a woman psychologist who knew about my background. Now every time I began to tremble she was next to me. If Indonesian patients were registered at the hospital for treatment, I was asked to shake hands with them. The psychologist often arranged meetings between me and other Indonesian patients. We would talk at the canteen while having a drink. After each meeting, the psychologist would say, "See, not every Indonesian man with tan skin is brutal and frightening; there are those who are bad, and others who are good and decent people."

Siska was then assigned to the client service division in the hospital for foreign patients. Each day she met with people from various ethnic groups and nationalities. Gradually, she no longer trembled when she encountered dark-skinned men, including Indonesians.

During her stay in Singapore, Siska made sure that she avoided listening to news about the May incident; however, Aunty Wah and the psychologist treating Siska slowly began to provide her with articles in magazines and newspaper about the May riots. At first she only skimmed through them and then discarded them. As time progressed, Siska drew the courage to read the articles thoroughly. She even made attempts to speak to people who could explain more to her about the incident.

Z: Once you felt well enough, you finally decided to return to Indonesia?

S: Yes. I came back in 1999; I missed my boyfriend and my dog. My family at Cengkareng airport picked me up, but my boyfriend was nowhere in sight. When I enquired about him, no one responded. When we passed the Slipi bridge I suddenly felt the anxiety creeping back. My mother tried to calm me down by embracing me. "The danger is gone now," she said.

Almost one month after her return, Siska shut herself up in her house. Occasionally her friends would drop by. They would encourage Siska to return to her studies. But because she was petrified of leaving the house, she refused. Being idle for too long, Siska again experienced anxieties and would often break out in cold sweats. She would call Aunty Wah virtually every night to try to reduce her misery.

With words of encouragement from Aunty Wah, Siska finally returned to college. "You must complete your studies to become an worthy individual," advised Aunty Wah. Siska's friends took care of all Siska's enrollment details on campus. Either her brother or father would deliver and collect Sisca to and from campus. With great effort, Sisca succeeded in graduating as a doctor.

Z : What are your plans now ?
S : I am now waiting for confirmation of my enrollment in an American university. I plan to further my studies in plastic surgery, so that I can be of assistance to other women victims like me. After that I will return to Singapore and work in the hospital that previously employed me. I feel safer in Singapore because not many people know about my background.
Z: Do you think people here know about you?
S: I don't know. Because I am Chinese, wherever I go I feel as though I am being followed. I feel like I can easily be attacked at any time. I envisage all of them as predators preying on me.
Z : So, do you consider me a predator?
S : *(Laughs)* Of course not. I realize that my way of looking at things is somewhat distorted. Aunty Wah always advised me that having such thoughts are damaging. Look at this paper inscribed with Chinese characters – Aunty Wah wrote it for me – it means, 'You should not harbor suspicion and accusation toward others.' This has a profound meaning for me.
Z : What are your activities while waiting for confirmation from America?
S : I do volunteer work in a clinic for the poor.
Z : How do you feel now?
S : As long as nobody recognizes me I feel secure. I am just happy to be able to serve and contribute to those in need.

Siska and her family have now forged a friendship with the motorcycle–taxi man who helped Siska. As a symbol of appreciation, Siska's parents awarded scholarships to the man's children for their education. The man's eldest child is now studying at university

For the Sake of Igun, I will Persevere

There had been signs of I impending danger that afternoon. From the edge of the railway tracks, myself and other community members witnessed a procession of men shouting slogans such as, "Attack Yogya. Attack!" Most of them were wearing high school uniforms; some were bare-chested with tattooed arms; some sported crew-cuts and many had long hair. It was strange though: they looked older than their school uniforms would suggest. Nobody knew where they were from. I did not recognize their faces. I was convinced that they were not from the Klender Market area.

"What kind of students are they? Why do they look older? They must be imbeciles," some onlookers commented. The 'students' brandished stones, pieces of wood, and clubs. At first, I thought that it was a student riot. But then, why were they pelting passing trains with stones? They also halted motorcycles and cars, and set fire to them. Sensing something ominous, I instantly closed the salon and raced across the road towards the alley that led to my house, so I could check on my five children. I was a little anxious. My husband – like any other adult male in the alley – was still at work.

Once I reached home I warned my children to refrain from going to see the crowd marching toward Yogya Plaza. Being a typical child, the minute I diverted my attention from them, my fourth child Nunik (11 years old) disappeared. I went in search of her. It turned out that she was watching the procession from a nearby bus stop. After I managed to drag her back home, at around 4 p.m., it was Gunawan (12 year old) who was then missing. He had just come home from his *Qur'an* recitation lessons. He said he wanted to buy a bar of soap. But why was it taking him such a long time?

Bambang, my husband who a few moments ago had just returned from work, was unable to look for Igun (shortened name-form of Gunawan) because his feet hurt. Once again, I had to leave the house in search of my son. According to a neighbor, Igun left with seven of his friends. When I arrived at the main entrance of Yogya Plaza the time was 5 p.m. While holding a 'walkie-talkie', a man clad in a cap, jacket and jeans said to me, "You can just enter. The others have been inside since this afternoon." I did not pay any attention to him: the only thing on my mind at the time was the whereabouts of Igun. I paused for several moments in front of the entrance waiting for people leaving the mall. The plaza was almost deserted.

Suddenly a red truck arrived carrying a group of people. They came down from the truck lugging with them five-litre jerry cans. I was baffled by the situation. When they entered the mall, I tailed behind them. I wondered why Igun had not left the mall. The first floor was deserted, the escalator was damaged, and in several corners I noticed heaps of plastics, boxes and curtains.

I climbed the flight of stairs to reach the second floor. Silence. From a distance I heard a faint voice calling out, "Help...help me! *Allahu Akbar* (God is Great)!" I shuddered with fear. I had no idea where the moaning was coming from. Where was Igun? Curiosity overcame me and I continued to climb the stairs to the third floor. I could not

see anything. It was pitch dark. I could only smell smoke. All of sudden.... my left cheek was struck by somebody with burly hands. It was with such a force that my left ear went deaf. I was furious, but I was unable to see the person who had hit me.

My head was reeling from the slap and I staggered to climb down the stairs to the first floor. In a flash, I noticed the rolling door to the second floor that was previously left open was now bolted. It was tense and frightening. The situation in the first floor was even more terrifying: the entire floor was in flames. It then dawned on me that the jerry-cans carried by the group of people seen earlier were filled with kerosene to set ablaze the stacks of plastics, boxes, and curtains. At McDonald's, the entire establishment was consumed by fire.

The flames were raging. It was foreboding. Igun... where are you, son, I asked myself. When I looked up at the third floor, I witnessed several people trying to smash the windows. The faces of children scurrying all over the place flashed before me. Their expressions were full of fear. Some attempted to save themselves by holding on to a cord attached to a movie billboard and climbing out the window. It was tragic when the rope broke midway. At least ten people dived to their deaths. Bodies were strewn all over the ground. To escape from the fire, many plunged from the third floor.

From the third floor, I heard a boy scream, "Help me.... help!" With all my might I tried to heave a spring mattress lying on the ground. Pointing to the mattress, I shouted to the boy, "Come on son! Jump!" The boy hesitated. After a while, he inched away from the window.

Strange: I was fearless that night. Despite the horrifying scene around me I braced myself and refused to flee. I was determined to find Igun, whether alive or dead. I scanned the faces of those who fell to their deaths one by one. I do not remember how many corpses I slowly dragged to the grass. I then recognized Untung, a friend of Igun sprawled helplessly nearby. "Untung, where's my son?" He did not respond. Blood was oozing from his ears and nose.

At around 7 p.m. distraught parents searching for their lost children gradually filled the area. It was agonizing to hear the hysterical cries of parents who discovered the lifeless bodies of their children. The parents brought home the dead bodies of their children in whatever contraption available to them - motorbikes, pedicabs and even pushcarts. It was upsetting and heartbreaking. Not even one law enforcer was in sight to take charge of the situation; it was beyond belief that amid such chaos they seemed to have been swallowed by the earth. The fire brigade that was suppose to arrive was also nowhere in sight. What had become of this country?

All my hopes to find Igun waned, and I finally made the decision to report my missing child to the Pulo Gadung police station. Midway to the station, a *Kijang* car began following me. The passengers were shouting, "It's a woman....It's a woman...." Aware of the imminent danger, I immediately hid behind some nearby bushes. The car suddenly stopped. The passengers – all of them men – searched in futility for me. "Damn it!" they cursed when efforts to find me failed.

At the Pulo Gadung police station, there were only two officers on duty. My arrival was in vain; they were unable to attend to my predicament; they did not even contact the fire station. I went home dejected.

The scene around my house was a state of panic. I was not the only one looking for a missing child; several neighbors were also experiencing a similar fate. My mouth (where it had been hit) was in severe pain (I found it difficult to open my mouth for three days) when on that same night Igun's elder sibling and I filed a missing person report to the Kalimalang District Military Command, along with several of our neighbors. After that, we traced our children to several hospitals including the Persahabatan Hospital. It was there that I met Dedi, Igun's friend.

Dedi was one of the survivors who were fortunate enough to escape from the blaze after plunging from the third floor; however, his back was injured. Dedi's parents were forced to sell their house to cover his medical expenses. Although one of his legs was crippled, he is still able to walk now. After the incident, the once cheerful Dedi became distant and inattentive; he no longer interacts with people, preferring to sit alone everyday, lost in his own thoughts or watching television.

Early next morning, when we returned home, Igun was still missing. Neighbors arrived at our house offering their condolences. It was surreal. As a mother who had given birth to and raised Igun, it was difficult for me to accept the fact that I had lost my son without an explanation, and with no knowledge of his whereabouts.

Accompanied by the head of the neighborhood association, who brought along a large flashlight at five in the morning, Igun's elder sibling and I went again to Yogya Plaza. The fire has died out after residents doused the flames with sewage water. Due to the heat that still lingered in the building, we dared not enter. We waited for daylight before we made our way into the mall. At the same time, several policemen arrived at the location. I was infuriated. Why had they only managed to arrive now, when nothing remained except dead bodies?

My anger flared up when I caught sight of the gruesome condition of charred bodies twisted in varied positions. Some were in sitting positions, others were found laid on their backs. I saw the corpse of a pregnant woman. There was also a pile of dead bodies near the escalator. The most horrifying thing was when I discovered Nur's body, a friend of Igun, tied up in steel wires. I could not refrain from cursing, "Barbarians!" Most of the bodies were unrecognizable, as Igun's elder sibling and I attempted to carefully examine each of them.

Finally, after searching at the Cipto Mangunkusumo Hospital, we "found" Igun. I myself was honestly uncertain as to whether it was really Igun. The body was in a bad state. I said to myself that even if the remains we had brought home were not Igun's, our intentions were honorable. I sorely wanted to have a grave built in memory of Igun, so that whenever I longed for my son, I could always go and visit him. The only prayer that I hope will be answered is that my son, in turn, will also be well-taken care of by somebody else.

Twelve days after Igun was buried, I received several phone calls from strangers in the middle of the night. At the end of the line, the caller would warn me to not mention to anybody about the misfortune that had befallen me. "This is a political issue," the caller had said. Even without such intimidation, I would still have been incapable of talking about Igun's death to anyone. The fortitude that had previously given me the strength to find Igun had crumbled away to bare a weak individual. Each time I recalled the circumstances that surrounded Igun, I would weep inconsolably. My thoughts were in shambles. At times I would run out of the house as if in search for Igun. On other occasions, I would sit near the front door, hoping that Igun would walk through it.

Forty days following the loss of Igun, my condition deteriorated. My loss of appetite reduced me to rake thinness and I would lie awake all night. Often, I would look enviously at my family as they slept soundly. Voices pleading for help repeatedly haunted me. I was also tortured by overwhelming feelings of fear when I was indoors or in tall buildings, petrified that fires would break out. For some time, whenever I used the bathrooms in tall buildings I dared not lock the door.

My salon deteriorated to a state of neglect due to my condition. With utmost regret, I handed over the salon – a business that I pioneered in 1987 – to one of my relatives. My dream of owning a large salon was gone. Igun, whom I had hoped one day would take over the salon was no longer there. Although still a boy, I had observed that Igun had a flair and interest in the business, and had already acquired the skills to blow-dry and curl hair. His friends would often taunt him by calling him 'sister Igun', to which he would smile. Sometimes he would jokingly reply, "Whatever, I don't care!"

After three months taking the medicine prescribed by a psychiatrist, my physical condition was gradually improving. My mental health was a different matter, erasing the trauma would take years. During my recovery process several volunteers spent time with me and through information they provided me I became aware of my rights. I decided that I would not allow Igun's death to go by unnoticed and that I had to demand clarification and justice from the government.

I stopped shedding tears and became determined to spare no effort in my search for justice. Igun was not a looter. The majority of victims burnt to death in Yogya Plaza were innocent children and teenagers who knew nothing. There are still mothers and families looking for their missing relatives. It is I who feel that my son was the one "stolen" from my hands by irresponsible people. My son's life was priceless compared to any wealth.

Our lives took a different turn in the aftermath of the May Tragedy, me along with other families of the Yogya Plaza victims, who lead modest lives – some of who are illiterate. We never would have imagined that we'd be organizing widespread demonstrations or meeting with government officials. Before (the May Riots) I would shiver whenever I was near 'important people'; but now I am not afraid. Why should I be afraid? Am I not fighting for the truth?

We usually charter a minibus to take us from our homes. We carry placards inscribed with our aspirations that we have prepared beforehand. We have met with many people, from representatives of the National Human Rights Commission, Parliament members, military generals, Amien Rais to President Gus Dur. In the process have often been passed over from one person to the other, without any significant progress.

But we will never concede defeat. In order to increase the focus on our struggles, in early 2003 we established the Forum for the Communication of Families of the May '98 Victims (FKKM – abbreviation of Indonesian title). At the Jatinegara Kaum area, the place where I live, at least 100 children were declared missing. There are still scores of parents in other areas whose children were victims of the fire that gutted Yogya Plaza.

Without depending on other groups, FKKM has on several occasions taken initiatives to meet with people in authority; these efforts have included pursuing members of the National Human Rights Commission. I can still recall an episode not long ago, when mothers involved in FKKM, with great caution and perseverance, once attempted to waylay members of this National Commission, who were trying to avoid us.

FKKM has also initiated constructive activities: three times a week FKKM holds a get together at my house for those interested in learning to read and write. As a group, we learn to share with each other; literate members teach members who are unable to read. We have nurtured a solid bond and we work to inspire and encourage each other. We are acutely mindful that our struggle feeds on the energy of the FKKM members, while at the same time our own economic circumstances have slowly deteriorated. Some mothers are the backbones of their families, as their husbands have lost their jobs. Such women typically earn livings as washerwomen and market vendors. I myself decided to set up a modest salon at home. These mothers are willing to forego a day's worth of earnings when FKKM duties beckon. Everything is sacrificed for our children.

Five years have elapsed and our struggle has still not seen the light at the end of the tunnel, but we – particularly the mothers – will not surrender, will persistently demand accountability from those who wield the authority to disclose the actual masterminds behind the May Tragedy. In order to ensure that this issue will not be simply forgotten, we will not remain idle. Someone is held to account even when a person is hit by a bicycle. Why then, when hundreds of children perished in horrific circumstances, is the responsibility to hold the perpetrators to account summarily ignored?

As narrated by Ruminah (45 years old), mother of Gunawan (12 years old) who went missing during the riots in Yogya Plaza, Klender on May 14, 1998.

Thank You, *Pak Haji* !

(Pak Haji is a term of address for a man who has made the Haj pilgrimage to Mecca)

May 13, 1998. At approximately 5 p.m., my husband and I were on our way to deliver a cake ordered from us by a customer in West Jakarta. Upon reaching a shopping center near the police station, we noticed a crowd of people at a distance in front of us. They were yelling, "Those who are not Chinese move away and the Chinese must remain in their places. Do not move." Realizing the danger of the situation, my husband stopped the motorcycle. "This looks dangerous. It's best if we return home," he said.

We had only moved 100 meters in the opposite direction when our motorcycle fell to the ground. My husband must have panicked. There was a loud impact and my husband lost consciousness. A crowd came rushing and surrounded both of us. "They are Chinese...they are Chinese...," was what I heard. I was carried away and passed around from one person to the other. I could hear many voices... the voices of men... what happened next... my memory has failed me. Where I was taken and how I was treated? I do not know for certain. I felt as though I was already dead.

When I woke up, my entire body was in pain, including the area around my genitals. I was lying on a bamboo platform lined with a mat. I tried to open my eyes and saw two women and a man sitting around me. The elder and younger women wore headscarves. They applied a warm compress to my body and then rubbed herbal liniment all over me. I desperately wanted to communicate with them, but I could not utter any words. I felt as though I was in a deep slumber, in a time tunnel, on an infinite journey.

When I awoke for the second time I could faintly hear the echo of people reciting the *Qur'an* around me. Upon noticing that I had opened my eyes they offered me something to eat and drink. I was then given some medicine and a traditional herbal tonic. I was unaware of how long I had been in that house. When my mind began to clear, the first question that came to mind was what had happened to my husband and my three children. I yearned to return home, but *Haji* Ramli's kind-hearted family did not permit me to leave the house. "The situation is still unsafe," they explained. For three days I laid helplessly on the bamboo platform. Each time I forced myself to walk blood would flow from my vagina. It was excruciating.

According to *Pak Haji*, I was discovered near the embankment in West Jakarta. *Pak Haji's* son (who had also performed his Haj pilgrimage) who earned a living as a motorcycle-taxi man was on his rounds when he noticed me lying face downward, without a single item of clothing. He stopped, tied me to his back and took me to his parents' house. The third day after I regained consciousness, I was taken to a clinic and received treatment there. But *Haji* Ramli's family never left me unattended. Night and day they would wait on me. Every morning I would be given a bath and I was spoon-fed during meal times. If I needed

to go to the bathroom, someone was always there to assist me.

Each time the faces of my young children flashed before me, tears would come streaming down my cheeks. At the time I was convinced that my husband was dead and I was very worried about my children at home. We did not come from a wealthy family and earned just enough to live on. Our daily income depended on selling cakes. After the cakes had been baked, my husband would deliver them to shops on his motorcycle. Apart from selling our cakes from shop to shop, I also accepted orders from some customers.

After being treated at the clinic for an entire week, I was allowed to return home. I asked *Pak Haji* Ramli to take me home. Strangely enough I could not remember the address of my own house. In *Pak Haji*'s car, his family and I spent the whole day circling in search of my house, but to no avail. It was incomprehensible because I was born and raised in that area. Finally we returned to *Pak Haji*'s house. *Pak Haji* then requested the help of a paranormal to locate my house. After some prayers and *Qur'an* recitation, peculiarly enough I could remember my home address.

Two weeks after that ill-fated evening, I finally found my way home. My unexpected arrival was greeted with tears of relief and elation. My children and mother were pessimistic that I would return home alive. They wept inconsolably and my mother collapsed and fainted. They thought that I had died. A photograph of me had been placed at the table of ashes dedicated to deceased family members and an offering to appease my spirits had been placed on the table. My entire family then held a prayer ceremony as we were still fearful of those who had assaulted me.

The May Tragedy was a heavy blow to the family: not only had I endured violence, but a crowd of unknown people had also looted my house and my kitchen equipment for baking cakes was plundered. My father died of a heart attack a week after the incident and my mother fled with my children to stay to a relative's house. At that time my husband was still hospitalized for his injuries. After he recovered, my husband no longer acknowledged me as his wife, refusing even to talk to me. My heart went to pieces. After knowing that I had been raped, he considered me as a bearer of misfortune who would bring difficulties to his life. He changed dramatically, gambling almost every day. He even hit me on one occasion after he accused me of stealing his money. Then one day, he threw me out of the house, along with my mother and the children. It was agonizing for me. I had no one to turn to for protection and everybody seemed to be recoiling from me.

In overwhelming despair, I finally returned to *Pak Haji*'s house. The family warmly welcomed me into their home and even loaned me some money to start a business. *Pak Haji* then rented a house for the children and I, a simple house in a semi-rural area on the outskirts of the city. He also assisted in financing the children's education.

To earn a living, my mother and I made Chinese buns (*bakpao*). Every evening we would park our food cart near a shopping complex. In the first week, the steamed buns

were not selling well. Mother then added two other varieties of steamed snacks (*siomai* and *otak-otak*) to our list of food to sell. In the mornings, I would hawk the *siomai* and *otak-otak* around a shopping area. At sundown I would sell *bakpao*. Gradually, customers began to show a preference for our steamed snacks. Business at our *bakpao* cart slowly increased; we expanded from one cart to a total of five carts. A supermarket then offered me the opportunity to set up a *bakpao* and *siomai* food-stand in their premises. After six months I was able to make installments on the loan from *Pak Haji*. One year later, I managed to settle my loan with *Pak Haji*. From the money earned, I also managed to lease a better and larger house. What gladdens me most was the academic prestige earned by my children: they were awarded scholarships.

In 2001, I was the proud owner of ten *bakpao* carts and I employed ten people. One year later, I was able to rent an even larger house. I was also able to pay installments for a car to deliver orders for *siomai* and *bakpao* and employ more people. Meanwhile, the business initiated by my former husband had collapsed. A year ago he unexpectedly paid me a visit and mentioned his intention to reconcile. I refused his offer. The children also forbade me, as was the sentiment of my mother; however, he would sometimes secretly visit me, imploring me for money.

I may have fully recovered physically, but the trauma of the May incident continues to haunt me. Following the tragedy it is difficult for me to sleep soundly; I often wake up in the middle of the night; and each time I see a crowd of people I get overwhelmingly upset.

One thing that I am grateful for is that I can still lead a normal life. My first child is now at university, my second child is in senior high school and my youngest is still in junior high school. My accomplishments have been made possible due to the unconditional compassion shown to me by *Pak Haji* and his family. Even though we embrace different religions – I am a Confucius believer – *Pak Haji* considers me as his own daughter.

Pak Haji's family is now my family. He is the one who constantly encourages me to look forward and to put the past behind me. If it had not been for my children and mother, I would have committed suicide. *Pak Haji*'s family repeatedly reminded me that suicide was not the answer. My children depended on me. I slowly tried to rebuild the bits and pieces of my shattered life. Without the help of *Pak Haji* and his family I would not have had the will to live..

Until this day I still fail to comprehend it. Why was it that because of the issue of a change in president, a number of people could bring themselves to rape Chinese women and set fire to the houses of Chinese residents? How could anyone have no second thoughts in stripping naked and gang raping a Chinese woman like an animal? Even though I am of Chinese descent, I am an Indonesian: my grandmother and great-grandparents were all born in

Indonesia. I am fair-skinned, my eyes are indeed slanted. Should I be treated differently only because of this? At the moment I am still fighting to forget the May Tragedy. I do not wish to harbor hatred towards anyone. *Pak Haji's* family has taught me the most precious lesson: about genuine love and compassion.

As recounted by Lani, 42 years old, to a counselor.

Never Have Fear nor Lose Hope

"God is unjust. They say that God created everyone equal; why then are the Chinese constantly targets? Why?" I had grumbled these words to my elder sister while smoking a cigarette on Sunday, May 16, as I was paying a visit to her house in the eastern part of Jakarta. On my way to her house, the faces of my husband and two daughters had flashed before me and I had noticed traces of wreckage from the previous riots on every corner.

Two days earlier, after I had completed my tasks, several friends and I were 'evacuated' to the office of an acquaintance. That night we slept there. The situation outside was still unsafe. The following day, I had to walk home to my rented house. The distance that I had to cover was considerably far. My feet felt as though they had been crushed.

Lili's house was not located in the city center; therefore I thought it would be safer. I felt that the situation on Sunday was relatively calm (compared to the previous days). Accompanied by Lili, I even went to central Jakarta to take out some cash from the ATM, bought some chicken noodles and went shopping at a supermarket. Not long after returning to Lili's house, we left the house again. This time I wanted to buy Lili's prescription drugs at the pharmacy. We began to walk towards the pharmacy. From the opposite direction,

a blue car swerved into the narrow road leading to Lili's house. I had reached the end of the road whilst Lili was about to cross the street. All of a sudden, somebody attacked me with a knife. On reflex, I attempted to deflect the knife with my two hands. It happened swiftly. The expression on Lili's face across the road was the last thing etched in my mind. She had a startled look and her eyes were wide-open in disbelief. After that I cannot recollect anything else.

One afternoon, a man noticed me sitting dazed by a deserted road near the former Kemayoran airport. My clothes were crumpled and worn-out and I was still wearing the same outfit I had been wearing at the time of the incident: pink t-shirt and checked culottes. What was I doing there? I was even more stupefied when I saw that my injured hand and fingers – from trying to avoid the knife – had already been stitched. The man gave me a ride on his motorcycle to the police station and then I was taken to the Carolus Hospital.

My handbag, cell-phone, credit card, everything was missing. Praise to God my identity card was left intact, thus the doctor knew my name. "What happened?" asked one of the doctors when he noticed the stitches on my hand. I could only weep and was shrouded with fear. My thoughts and my soul felt void and worthless; I was oblivious to my own identity. The doctor removed the sutures that were still attached to my wound.

Within two or three days of treatment, I praised glory to God once again: involuntarily, I had uttered the name Lili. "Who is Lili?" asked the doctor. That was the turning point, and the dark shadows of the unknown that had been clouding me slowly began to lift. The hospital then contacted Lili. One of my nephews then came and picked me up and took me to Lili's house.

Lili fainted upon seeing me. Only then did I realize that I been missing for almost one week. My husband and both my children, Helen and Santi had been extremely fearful about my safety. Lili burned the items of clothing that I had been wearing at the time of the incident, "To throw away bad luck!" she said. What really happened to me? I did not know. At that time Lili was still incapable of explaining to me what had actually happened on that ill-fated day. I would shed tears each time I attempted to remember what had taken place.

Three months later, Lili found the courage to tell me everything. A man with a cold-blooded face and robotic actions had attacked me. He then took me in the blue car that had been moving along the road in front of Lili's house. She had no idea where it was heading.

Apart from the lacerations on my wrist and several fingers, in the moments after I was discovered, the area around my pelvis felt sore and it was bruised. I also felt stinging pain around my anus. My husband was understanding, "It must be your hemorrhoids that flared up when you gave birth to our youngest, a relapse," he said. I wasn't sure, as that happened many years ago. Was I sexually molested? Did I fall? I did not know and did not wish to find out.

Together with Lili, we prayed to God that we never again be reminded of the bitter incident; we only wished to look to the future. Let the ordeal be a lesson for us all. Silently I felt ashamed to God as during that unfortunate Sunday I had decided to miss church and the Holy Communion, instead I had felt enraged and had condemned God. Ironically, it was God who saved me from my torment.

There was actually a particular reason why I had felt overwhelmingly incensed: my husband Tan is of Chinese origin. When we first met in Jakarta, my husband and I worked in interrelated areas. We fell in love with each other and decided to tie the knot. Our union was a mixed marriage because I am not Chinese: my father is from Manado while my mother is a native of Toraja. Even though I am not Chinese, my face and skin tone is oriental, like other Manadonese. After we got married, we moved to a town in Central Java, and Tan secured employment in the region. In this town, I tolerated the different kind treatment that was directed at Tan because he was Chinese. In arranging for official documents, my husband often experienced inconveniences. In the 1980s my husband was unable to purchase land because he still had three names, even though he was a naturalized Indonesian citizen. The land certificate was finally issued under my name.

As a woman married to a Chinese, and coincidentally being fair skinned, I felt isolated living in Central Java. It was not because I did not make any attempts to socialize; on several occasions I tried to take part in the monthly social gathering of local women, but others in the circle looked on me as peculiar so finally I withdrew. Sometimes I felt guilty as I made attempts to conceal the fact that I was married to a Chinese. I only did this as I feared being ostracized.

My eldest daughter Helen inherited the shape of her father's face and eyes. Since childhood she often faced setbacks in school and was taunted. Because of this, I sometimes asked her grandfather to help by making an appearance at Helen's school, to show others that Helen was of mixed parentage – he is a Manadonese with dark skin.. Unlike her sister, Santi rarely experienced such trials as her features are more inclined towards my side of the family. Sometimes Helen would wonder why Santi was more special than her.

Recently, when Helen had to arrange for a passport, the immigration officer yet again requested for proof of citizenship. Incidents such as these are extremely hurtful. She is in fact born in this country and even Helen's great-grandfather was born in Indonesia. No mother would easily bear seeing her child become the target of prejudiced treatment; I certainly could not bear to see her suffering. I once even suggested that Helen undergo reconstructive eye surgery. She firmly refused, saying "I am like this already. Why should I be ashamed?"

I am certain that I became a victim because I looked Chinese and Tan and Helen also tolerated injustices. I think of my personal experiences during my stay in Central Java and my anger – that I had kept buried for so long – swells up. I do not know who is right or wrong: I observed that the Chinese in Central Java do indeed form a social circle of

their own. Is it because when they attempted to assimilate they were unaccepted? Or is it the other way round? This is similar to the chicken and egg metaphor: which came first?

The May Tragedy left a deep wound. For two months after the incident, I could no longer bring myself to work. I saw a psychotherapist twice a week - she was sympathetic to my anxieties. At my first meeting with her I just sat and cried; she let me cry it out, without saying a word; occasionally she stroked my back. At subsequent meetings, I began to open up: I divulged everything, and she listened attentively. The psychotherapist suggested that I should try to communicate often with those I trusted. My therapy sessions went on well; I was not compelled to speak out at every visit; sometimes I would just sit around listening to good music. Knowing that I liked massages, the psychotherapist would sometimes summon a masseuse for me. To this day I remain a loyal customer to the masseuse!

The psychotherapist made many efforts to help me to relax and remain calm. She built my confidence at a time I felt like an outcast: asserting that I was a worthy human being and should never be treated otherwise. To remove the fear that would sometimes unexpectedly overcome me, she suggested that I sing church hymns to myself. I still maintain the habit to this day, particularly during moments when my hands turn cold.

Even now, I have not yet gained the courage to walk alone. Sometimes I am overwhelmed with intense headaches. At times I have nightmares and wake up sobbing; other times I appear dazed – in these times my children promptly rouse me by putting their arms around me, and saying things like, "What's on your mind? Come on, let's just sing...." Healing a wounded soul is not easy. But I am thankful, as I am gradually overcoming the trauma and I have become stronger. When I reconstruct the incident, I must agree that women should have self-defense skills; we should never have fear; we must cast aside all feelings of anxiety.

There is now a quiet resistance growing inside me, and also in my daughters: they have no fear of coming home at night and will remonstrate when treated unfairly. In the past, I was drowned in my own feelings of inferiority as I was marginalized by the community around me; I had no inner strength to resist; I felt afraid; psychologically, I felt second-class. Now, I have the strength to say, "So what if I am married to a Chinese man?" I have the courage to challenge anything that is contrary to the truth.

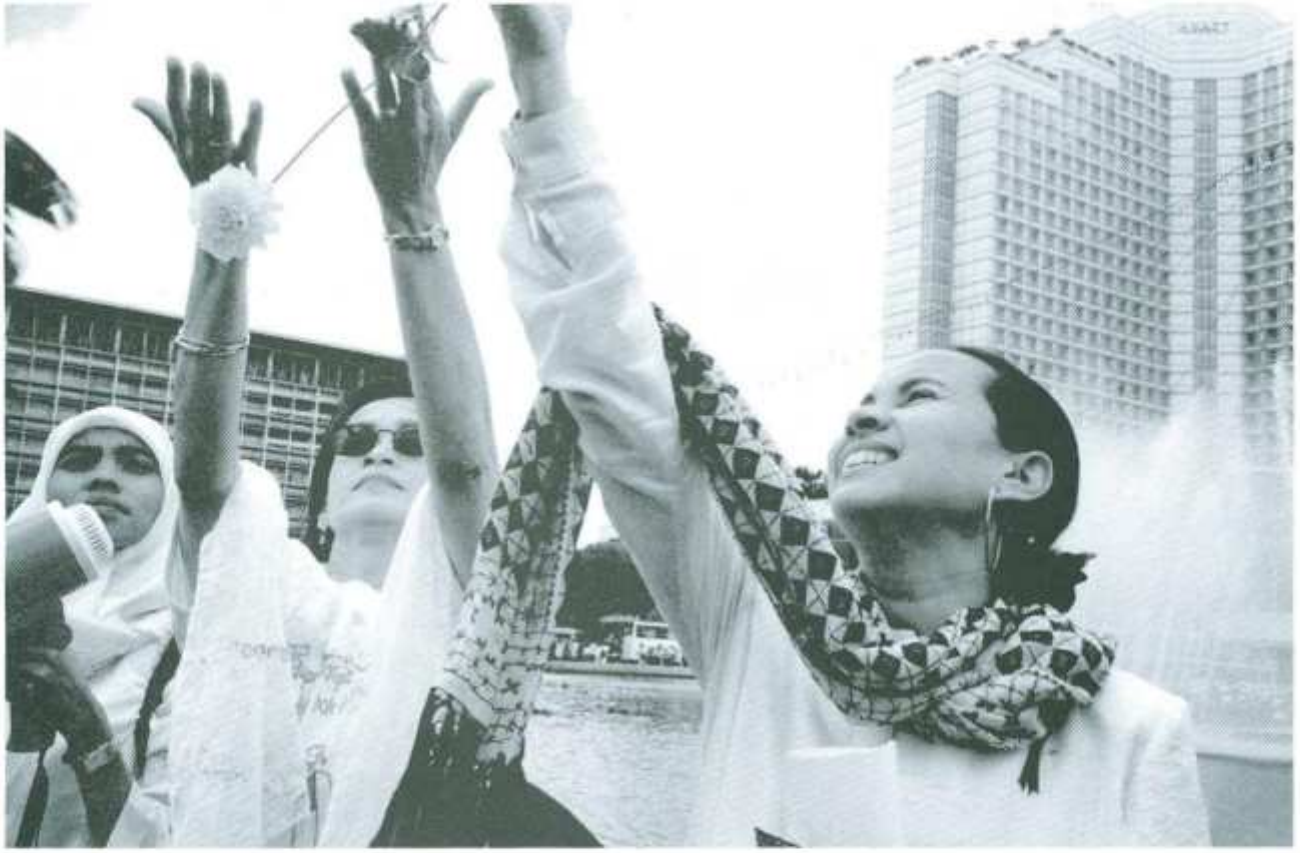
Praise to God I am now involved in work into which I can channel my 'revenge'. I now realize that in the past I had vented my anger aimlessly. I felt I would never be able to fight alone against a system so deeply entrenched. I felt I could only count my blessings to God. Now, I am waging my own battle through the work I am engaged in: I have immersed myself with programs that aim to promote pluralism. When did the people of Indonesia become afraid of diversity? I do not recall having such sentiments during my childhood days. By promoting pluralism I hope that we can all learn to appreciate the multiplicity of this nation.

Who should rightly be called indigenous or an Indonesian native? The Acehnese? As we all know, the ethnic origin of the people of Acehnese is a blend of Arab, Chinese and Indian. And what of the people of Flores? They have Portuguese blood in them. Irian? ..... etc

Apart from encouraging pluralism, my work is also highly related to human rights education. My knowledge on human rights is derived from my personal experience. I followed my conscience, about how things should be: each individual should at least have the right to speak out and to be heard. The issue of violence against women is also of interest to me – more so, after I became one of the victims. Decades ago, my grandmother was also a victim of violence; my grandfather would tie her to a tree whenever she failed to properly manage the household's finances. No one in the community protested against his behavior and many other village women also endured various forms of violence. I wonder if anyone was there to show concern if they were afflicted with depression due to their husbands' acts of aggression?

I have observed that as time progresses, violence against women has become increasingly advanced and complex in nature. During the May incident, violence against women was colored with racism. Women will not cease to defend themselves against such injustices, do not despair, because we are blessed with the spirit of femininity, which includes the mettle to continue existing, and the spirit to protect and to love. Such qualities have helped me reemerge from my ordeal. If all human beings – both men and women – possessed such qualities then the world would surely be more peaceful.

As narrated by Maria 54 years old



Women are the owners of their own future

Photograph: Carla Bianpoen

From Tragedy to a Worthy Cause: Komnas Perempuan Takes Action



Photograph: Poriaman Sitanggang

Komnas Perempuan emerged five months after the May 1998 tragedy; however, the decision to establish the commission was made toward the end of the meeting between 22 women representatives and President B.J. Habibie on July 15, 1998. The Commission was the outcome of demonstrations of formidable willpower to break the silence, and to demand accountability for the sufferings and injustices inflicted on women.

Human Rights and Gender Inequality.

Until this day, five years after the tragedy, the truth and authenticity of reports of rape against Chinese ethnic women in May 1998 is still questioned. Such negation and skepticism are at times uttered in whispers (to avoid public attention); at times they take the form of outright denials – public denouncements in attempts to sway public opinion. Many questions arise over the issue of statistics, on the exact number of women who became victims. As though the atrocities committed will only be taken seriously when the number of victims reaches into the hundreds or thousands.

At Komnas Perempuan we constantly remind ourselves that the debate on the exact number of victims should not distract us from our uncompromising stance that *any* acts of violence inflicted on women are acts of savagery, and are unacceptable.

During the span of Komnas Perempuan's involvement in dealing with various forms of violence against women – that is often committed repeatedly and following certain patterns – from Aceh to East Nusa Tenggara and Papua, initial community and government reactions are often characterized by a denial that such violence is occurring, or by denial that acts of violence against women are indeed human right violations. The skepticism and denial evident in the responses to the May 1998 rape cases, reflects an attitude prevalent in other layers of society. Such attitudes emerge as a pattern in itself. For us, the words, "It can't possibly have happened!" are an indication of selective blindness and deeply rooted ignorance that stems from a perspective that a woman's quality of life is not an issue that merits serious attention.

Meanwhile, various incidents in conflict areas have clearly demonstrated how women are specifically targeted in acts of aggression or in efforts to force certain communities into submission. Wives and female members of families of those regarded as "enemies" are hunted down, harassed, and tortured as part of a strategy to dismantle or break the strength of rivals. It is not uncommon that during such attacks, the bodies of women are intentionally damaged to end their reproductive capacity, so they cannot bear new generations for their communities. Women detained by any warring factions are treated like inanimate objects – as the spoils of war – who can be 'utilized' to obtain physical and sexual satisfaction devoid of any sense of humanity by the perpetrator, much less answerability. The May 1998 rapes became a focal point for women's rage and represented part of a pattern of abuse that had become a conspicuous feature in a variety of conflict situations.

The widespread rape and sexual assaults of May 1998 – those that occurred in areas under military rule or areas that experienced communal conflict – indicate that the vulnerability of women is also strongly attached to their identity as members of a certain races, ethnic groups or religions. Women often experience racial, ethnic and religious discrimination long prior to outbreaks of a conflict, thus exacerbating the gender discrimination endured by many women. Furthermore, after becoming victims, many women are subjected to further discrimination in the process of accessing help, with many women victims of violence simply not having access to recovery services, or to legal recourse or justice because they are poor.

Five years of accumulated experiences have taught us that human rights – fundamental global principles held in the highest regard to protect mankind from suffering and arbitrary mistreatment – are not resistant to gender-based blindness that prolongs the unbalanced scales of power between men and women; a disagreeable lesson indeed. For instance, rapes are often viewed merely as episodes with sexual nuances, rather than the forced acts of crushing woman's dignity that they, in reality, are.

The first standpoint on sexual violence is frequently uttered with derisive smiles and often accompanied with laughter at the sexual jokes. The second point of view stressed is that rape is a human rights violation that demands accountability and that sexual violence is not to be taken lightly, and is a serious problem. In response to this, Komnas Perempuan has organized various gender-perspective human rights training programs for NGOs, the government, and academia.

In Favor of The Victims

The most disconcerting factor when the May 1998 rape cases were brought to light was the absence of any form of protection for the victims; both the media and government apparatus responsible for upholding the law in-fact fiercely pursued victims for testimony as if they were hunting down prey. Women victims were in a state of confusion and extreme fear. With whom does the responsibility lie to guarantee that the victims could bear witness under peaceful and safe circumstances? No one: not one institution is charged with the responsibility to protect the victims who were willing to testify; there is not even a particular law that guarantees the rights of victims of human rights violations.

The mass media came down hard on victims and this disheartened them. Journalists were adamant they must personally meet with rape victims so as to obtain "authentic evidence" that the rapes occurred to women from a particular community. Counselors' attempts to convince these unyielding reporters that the victims were in no condition to speak publicly were ignored; refusals to do so were even considered as a type of treason against the rights of the community to be informed; and disclosures made through

the mediation of counselors was still considered unacceptable. Such friction between the media and counselors is not an uncommon occurrence.

These harsh realities reinforced Komnas Perempuan's determination to commence work to defend victims' rights; to establish a protection and support system for victims and witnesses; and to advocate for the ratification of the Witness Protection Bill. Dealing with the May 1998 incident provided invaluable experiences for Komnas Perempuan; we now exercise extreme caution and vigilance whenever an investigation is carried out or a court trial held on cases of violence against women.

The implementation of a protection mechanism for witnesses and victims of sexual violence is an absolute prerequisite that should not be compromised; while information on how this should be carried out is almost non-existent in Indonesia. Komnas Perempuan worked to develop knowledge and to learn from the experiences of international experts – including those in Yugoslavia, Rwanda, and South Africa – to discover the best methods to ensure that women victims of violence can testify and secure justice without having to compromise their safety or sense of self-worth.

When Komnas Perempuan immersed itself in the stories and testimonials of women victims of violence, it was discovered that victims' often suffer even further pain and humiliation when their communities find out about their experiences: community members often choose to avoid or dissociate themselves from the victims; and victims are considered tarnished women – an impression that is imprinted on the minds of a portion of the community. In times when victims of violence most need support and compassion, family and community members will sometimes abandon them.

The pain worsens and becomes even more excruciating when communities accuse victims of bringing attacks on themselves due to irresponsible behavior. Where is the responsibility borne by the offenders? How often do we hear of offenders who easily vanish from public scrutiny? Why? Probably because the offenders are too powerful and influential: they are often the victims' own husbands; men bearing armed weapons and members of ruling authorities; high-ranking officials or the wealthy; sometimes even those respected as 'moral leaders' of communities. Without a doubt it is easier to focus attention on the alleged 'fault' of the victims.

Such observations have further convinced Komnas Perempuan that understanding and promoting victims' rights are of the utmost urgency. The government and state legal institutions are not the only ones that need to understand and uphold the rights of victims: the community also has to assume equal responsibility. Komnas Perempuan advocacy efforts, public campaigns and education programs always look to promote the perspective of the victims of violence.

Komnas Perempuan's State of Independence

Since the inception of Komnas Perempuan, the issue of its independence as a National Commission has been challenged. Pressure exists to align the Commission with a particular Government Ministry; there have been special requests to assign as Commissioners certain prominent figures close to the ruling authority; there was also a suggestion of a different name for the institution, one that carried with it paternalistic connotations. Such frames of thought regard women as weak individuals; in response to them women activists assert in a polite yet firm manner, "Thank you, but it is unacceptable." This assertion was the first manifestation of Komnas Perempuan's state of independence.

The principle of independence is also exemplified by Komnas Perempuan's laborious efforts to develop a mission that is appropriate to the role of a National Commission – this has never been a straightforward undertaking. First of all, many NGOs view Komnas Perempuan as an NGO as well, given that Komnas Perempuan defends women's rights and that a large number of women activists are members of the Commission. As a result some view this Commission as 'invading' NGO ground. The government too also has difficulties in separating Komnas Perempuan from NGOs. This mindset has historical foundations, as only NGOs and government deals with social/political issues during the New Order. When established in 1998 as an independent National Commission, Komnas Perempuan occupied institutional ground without precedent in Indonesia.

As the first National Commission founded after the collapse of the New Order regime, all involved with Komnas Perempuan have worked intensely to improve the Commission through an ongoing process of self-reflection; we seek, listen to and analyze criticism and inputs from NGOs and the government, as generated through annual public accountability events as well as through more informal means. We also solicit assistance and opinions from colleagues who have long been engaged in efforts to uphold women's rights in the Asia Pacific region, in terms of their thoughts on the appropriate role for Komnas Perempuan in Indonesia. Slowly but surely, Komnas Perempuan has begun to emerge as an institutional bridge linking civil society with the government. and as a resource center for information, educational curriculum and service delivery principles as they relate to women's human rights.

The independent nature of Komnas Perempuan is also manifest in its commitment to constantly work and assume positions based on empirical analysis of the experiences of women. Information obtained from the government and the community is rigorously scrutinized. Komnas Perempuan has the capacity to analyze complex information and make subsequent and balanced interpretations given the diversity of staff and Commissioners: from NGO activists; researchers and academicians; religious figures; lawyers and retired

police officers; as well as women activists from outside of Jakarta, including in conflict areas. Such diversity in experiences, backgrounds and expertise serves as a force of its own in contributing toward the independence of the Commission.

Despite intensive efforts to demonstrate independence and work commitment, some members of the community still view Komnas Perempuan as part of the National Human Rights Commission (Komnas HAM). On one occasion, a senior human rights figure expressed surprise after explained about the independent natures of Komnas Perempuan, exclaiming, "So Komnas Perempuan is not a 'spare part' of Komnas HAM?!"

It is also frustrating when even the media does not correctly perceive the work carried out by Komnas Perempuan: in public events or advocacy actions that Komnas Perempuan initiates and invites Komnas HAM to participate in, the name Komnas Perempuan is often overlooked in news coverage; even though Komnas Perempuan receives exposure, it is only as a passive supporter. It has reached a point that we are grateful when society refers to Komnas Perempuan as 'Komnas HAM Perempuan'! We regard all this as inseparable from the general lack of importance with which women's human rights are generally viewed.

Fortunately, on the international level there is no such confusion about Komnas Perempuan, where our efforts to address human rights violations experienced by Indonesian women are extensively acknowledged. Komnas Perempuan conducts advocacy work and builds relationships with international organizations and experts, within UN circles, with international government agencies and with civil society organizations. The ability to build support within the international community is an invaluable strength for Komnas Perempuan. This support is of equal significance to our work as the networks we have fostered with working partners at various levels (community, provincial, regional and national) throughout Indonesia.

Independence, diversity, transparency and public accountability are principles held unremittingly by Komnas Perempuan in executing its mandate. Challenges will of course never recede, much less come to an end. The problems of violence against women have not even begun to fade away from our lives, but instead have become more complex and widespread. Komnas Perempuan's ability to work effectively, independently and with full accountability will continue to be put to the test – the struggles are far from over.

The Transformation of the Women's Movement in Indonesia



Photograph: Carla Bianpoen

How do we imagine
the Indonesian women's movement of the past?

History has failed to chronicle the role that women have assumed in society. In fact, during the country's revolution, the women's movement was fully deployed to support the nationalist agenda. Women were assigned to the communal kitchens that played a crucial role in sustaining the endurance of guerilla fighters; they infiltrated systems of power, working as undercover agents to smuggle strategic information; and also nursed wounded freedom fighters.

Women armed with weapons were not uncommon. It might be easier for us to imagine the role and position of women during the New Order period, when the Family Welfare Movement (PKK) organizations educated women on family welfare for instance, specifically steering the direction of women's role for supporting development goals. These included targets on family planning that statistically gauged woman's willingness to be fitted with contraceptive devices as a measurement of success. The KOWANI organization, initially a pioneer in defending women's issues, was distorted by the government to become an advocate of what Julia Suryakusuma named 'the ideology of motherhood.'

In the New Order era, an ideal woman was one that supported her husband's career, was a doting mother and a dutiful caretaker of the household who gave birth to future generations. Her status as a citizen did not merit priority. The image of an ideal woman in the New Order era equated to the visual rendering of Kartini (a respected Javanese emancipist who was responsible for giving voice to women in Indonesia) as portrayed by Dede Erie Suparia that depicted Kartini trapped under a hairdryer and wearing lipstick, or celebrations commemorating Kartini that were mere rituals accentuated with cooking contests.

During the Reformation era, we need not imagine any further, as the images evoked from the May 1998 tragedy and a series of violent incidents in Aceh, East Timor, Kalimantan, Ambon and Irian Jaya are indelibly imprinted in our minds. Indonesian women could not have imagined how the past 30 years of development, driven by militarism, and the motherhood ideology could have lead to the fall of countless victims, particularly women victims. In the endemic conflict and violence across Indonesia towards the end of the 20th century, women became 'fair game': victims of attacks aimed at brewing terror and overpowering or subjugating factions labeled as 'enemies'.

However, at the same time there began to emerge a strong women's movement that resisted and combated preconceptions that tended to victimize women. In the early years of the Reformation Era, on the day when the country was put on alert, a group of women from the middle-income bracket in Jakarta who named themselves *Suara Ibu Peduli* (The Voice of Concerned Mothers), caused an uproar in the mass media and the government with their pronouncement of 'Milk Politics'. These women challenged the government and society over their lack of concern for victims of state policies that led to an economic crisis, mostly among children and women. Mothers' words successfully moved and mobilized the community; thus, when university students took to the streets, residents from all strata of society were galvanized to distribute packets of rice meals to the demonstrators, and contributed money, medicine as well as

in Indonesia is presently entering the 'third chapter' in the history of its development. During the eras of Nationalism and the New Order, women fought for the interests of the nation or the state, and even in the latter era were exploited for the interests of the ruling authorities. According to Saparinah Sadli, it has only been in the past two or three years that the Indonesian women's movement has begun to redirect its focus towards defending and promoting the interests and aspirations of women.

Nunuk Murniati talks of a distinctive vision of women that she calls 'women's politics'. These politics are derived from the daily life experiences of women and is based on the reality that women have plotted political and advocacy strategies that offer an alternative to the dominance of the existing order and ideology. In confronting the politics of violence, women offer a peaceful movement; in facing the politics of identity and primordialism, women propose a diverse and collaborative movement; and before the politics of power, women demonstrate that the empowerment of the people from the bottom-up is a crucial political move. In dealing with the chaotic politics of political parties, women place emphasis on public education that stimulates changes that might go unnoticed, but are fundamental.

Empowerment that begins from the bottom-up, through the participation of every citizen including women and other marginalized groups, according to **Ita F. Nadia,** serves as women's amendment of the narrowly defined concept of democratization and civil society that merely highlights formal institutional processes.

Exercising the option to not be involved in political parties, according to **Kamala Chandrakirana,** is a choice made with full consciousness because women's groups are aware of the weaknesses of political parties in terms of upholding moral values and political ethics. As a consequence of making this choice, women are underrepresented in parliament and lack media coverage, which tends to focus on formal politics.

Furthermore, as Nunuk acknowledges, the concept of 'women's politics' is still in the process of redefinition by women, is sometimes difficult to understand and tends to be misinterpreted. At the same time, parties that covet power (as is the status quo), are predisposed to regarding the women's movement and other pro-democracy movements as a threat. Marginalization and the absence of 'women's politics' in the formal political domain can give the impression that after the upheaval of the reform years, the wave of the women's movement in Indonesia is showing signs of receding. When various political elites compete in the political arena at the national level and various issues emerge, the voices of women are almost unheard. Such opinions come from women activists themselves who believe that the women's movement now lacks a clear focus. The difficulty in focusing, according to Saparinah Sadli, is due to the plurality and substantial size of our society; however on the other hand, pluralism itself is an inherent characteristic in the third chapter of the women's movement in Indonesia, which is considered to be the period of the increase of the movement's plurality.

Myra Diarsi emphasizes the significance of placing the current constraints faced by the women's movement within historical and structural contexts. Living among a pluralistic population of around 210 million people, is often reason enough for an individual to hesitate to commit to a stance or position, as it is extremely easy for groups to become politically divisive due to differences in principles such as religion. Such differences result in the vulnerability of the women's movement in the wake of a discordant political situation. In addition the presence of donor institutions, according to Myra, is a long-standing context that can provide support and yet simultaneously has the potential to obstruct: funding agencies can be a disabling factor if they create inclinations towards dependency; the state of dependency can weaken community movements that have previously been independent; and the presence of donor institutions can also create a sense of competition.

Furthermore, Myra believes that the women's movement is confronted with various problems that have carried over from New Order policies. Some individual and group capacities have been entirely exhausted from supporting the reform process, hence there is sometimes an absence of capacity or energy to cope with victims of violence. Victims continue to emerge among university students and refugees, and there has been an upsurge in rape victims and victims of other forms of violence in conflict areas throughout Indonesia. Large-scale social political issues that prevail across Indonesia can overshadow the advancements made by the women's movement. The economic crisis of such immense proportions has depleted women's strength to maintain their own existences and that of their families and the communities. We have exhausted our energy to look into our economic ailments on a macro level, while economists lack the conscience to realize that Indonesia's economy is heavily dependent on the earnings of women. In support of Myra's opinion, Kamala Chandrakirana notes that a small portion of the pro-democracy community – that also encompasses the women's movement – is encumbered with a multitude of problems that extend throughout the country and that such multifarious conditions do not allow for the possibility of opting for one specific focus within the movement.

However, Kamala also points out the importance of the alliances established by the women's movement with other pro-democracy movements such as those focusing on labor issues and environmental concerns, inter-religious bodies and others. These are temporary strategic alliances made to jointly cope with crosscutting, major issues. After these macro-issues are dealt with then the respective movements will once again narrow their foci. Such temporary alliances are strategic political tools; by using strategic alliances as a political tool, women from opposing or different groups are able to sit together to accomplish a unified goal. One example of such an alliance is the Commission on Women for Democracy in Surabaya that unites women activists from various movements including labor and humanitarian groups.

In addition to the emergence of such strategic alliances, Kamala also talks about a number of other signs that indicate how the women's movement is taking root in Indonesia. First, is the presence of new institutions that have not existed before, for example Fatayat NU has established a total of 27 women's crisis centers at the district level. Komnas

Perempuan, or the National Commission on Violence Against Women, is in itself a new type of institution that is neither an NGO nor a government body; the Commission is independent and has a nation-wide mechanism comprising community elements at the grass-roots level, as well as partners from the NGO and government sectors – this unique arrangement is an example of how women seek organizational forms that correspond with their specific needs.

Another indicator of progress is the rise in social institutions outside of Jakarta, such as the East Indonesia Women's Health Network that works from Kalimantan to Papua; and the collaboration amongst women's movement organizations in Aceh, as formalized through the *Deuk Pakat Inong* Aceh agreement, and the Aceh Consultative Center. Another example pointed out by Ita F Nadia is the North Sumatera Independent Women's Movement, which covers the agricultural and informal sectors in both urban and rural areas.

These local institutions function as the "axis of the movement" because they determine their own agendas that are different (and at times estranged) from those in Jakarta. Even if a cross-country network for cooperation existed, women's groups in Jakarta would only hold a position as one partner. Groups in the regions face tremendous constraints but have demonstrated their resilience by making steady strides forward. Unfortunately these local movements are 'invisible' to the mass media as well as national and international observers. According to Kamala, these local movements are in fact evidence that the women's movement is indeed rooted in society. Another symptom of this is the expansion of social movements to cover a variety of religious and professional communities, middle and lower societal strata and women workers from multiple sectors, including agriculture and mining. For example, the Women's Mining Network emerged from awareness and motivation among women that hold a different perspective and intention on mining activities, compared to the prevalent interests among the broader society. One other indicator is the politicization of organizations that were previously apolitical, such as JASPPUK, which was initially involved in the economic empowerment of small-scale entrepreneurs and has now begun to address the issue of the interrelatedness of economic improvements with the empowerment of women's political rights.

At the national level, the women's movement has assumed a decisive role in responding to issues of violence and human rights issues related to the existing structures. To overcome such structural constraints, activists are aware that they must be open to enacting multi-pronged strategies. For example, in addition to opening up alternative spaces, it is also necessary for the women's movement to be involved in the existing political structures right down to the grass-roots level. Advocacy in the structural domain, is spearheaded by the Indonesian Women's Coalition for Justice and Democracy, as led by Nursyahbani Katja Sungkana, who is also a member of the National Parliament. Since November 1999, numerous NGOs have worked together with the Minister for Women's Empowerment to produce the *National Action Plan on the Elimination of Violence Against Women*. Another example of the success of women's advocacy is



A call for peace

Photograph: Carla Bianpoen

the issuance of a circular from the Supreme Court on June 2000 that imposes the heaviest of punishments for rape offenders. Aware of the importance of legal processes, Komnas Perempuan has collaborated with LBH APIK and Derap Warapsari (an NGO established by retired police women) to formulate a mechanism aimed at providing support to law enforcement and the judiciary system professionals willing to make breakthroughs in their respective fields, concerning women victims of violence. One example of such a breakthrough was when a judge in Cibinong permitted psychological counselors to accompany women victims of violence during the judiciary process.

In spite of myriad uplifting achievements, the Indonesian women's movement is still troubled by a number of major challenges at the beginning of the 21st century. The first relates to regional autonomy with social, legal and cultural structures often adopting perspectives and making rulings that go against a sense of gender equity; even the highest levels of bureaucracy have only a faint understanding of the gender dimensions of the democratization process. The second challenge as noted by various NGOs is the escalation of violence against women – from state violence to domestic violence. If we allow such structural deficiencies to be fused with a tendency for aggression fueled by conservatism and primordialism, the 21st century will become an era that is hostile towards Indonesian women and one that endangers the survival of the entire nation.

Melani Budianta, lecturer at the Faculty of Literature of the University of Indonesia

Note : *This essay is the outcome of a discussion between a restricted number of women activists held at Komnas Perempuan. At this discussion Saparinah Sadli, Kamala Chandrakirana, Myra Diarsi, Ita F Nadia, Lies Marantika and Nunuk Murniati reflected on the Indonesian women's movement post-reform. The discussion was moderated and summarized by Melani Budianta. A summary of the discussion also appeared in Kompas newspaper on December 20, 2000.*



Women Artists reveal a new kind of Spirituality

False Target
Astari Rasyid

While the May 1998 riots and mass rapes was a national tragedy, the lowest point in Indonesia's cultural development, it was exactly at that point in time that Indonesian women realized they were women; a liberating reality, at least for the women artists who took part in the exhibition entitled 'Women in the Realm of Spirituality'.

In 1998, a project initiated by Toeti Heraty in collaboration with Jim Supangkat and the Indonesian Ambassador to the Vatican, Irawan Abidin, saw 16 women artists prepare to participate in the '*Women in the Realm of Spirituality*' exhibition at the *Pontificia Universita Gregoriana*, in Rome. As each prepared their work and struggled to grasp the meaning of spirituality, the shocking mass rapes, known as the May Tragedy, suddenly made clear the real meaning of spirituality

On that fateful day of May 13 – the date of the riots – the 16 women artists were getting ready for the launching of an exhibition at the Regent Hotel in Jakarta, in which their earlier works of art were being put up for sale to raise funds for the Rome trip. On that ill-fated night, a sense of anxiety and apprehension was palpable, and everything seemed uncertain. Some could not make their way to the Opening as taxis were unwilling to head towards the Regent Hotel located in the troubled Jalan Kuningan area. Even so, the exhibition was launched on schedule that night drawing ample attention from the guests who had found a safe haven in the hotel with its tight security facility.

In the ensuing days, the artists took turns attending to the exhibition. And while they sat there, huddled together, they began to share stories, speculating about the horrifying rape incidents talking about their own life experiences and giving strength to each other in a shared sense of solidarity. The feeling that they were women emerged with an intensity that they had probably not felt before.

During the initial preparations for the exhibition in Rome, the women artists had wrestled with their beliefs about the meaning of spirituality and its role in their respective lives. The May Tragedy conclusively ended any uncertainties and indecisiveness that may have remained in them. The experience evoked deep in their souls a distinct energy and strength, a genuine spirituality that heightened their awareness about being a significant part of the human race; it also left them with much rage, both openly expressed and that which remained concealed within.

It should be noted that not all 16 women artists were activists. As a group they had even refused to have the word 'women' listed beside their professions as 'artists.' But the May 1998 Tragedy instilled in them a new awareness of themselves as women: they were *women* painters and *women* sculptors, in short, *women artists*. And as women they felt harassed and abused, just as their sisters had been as victims of the May violence.

Thus, the works of art created for the Rome exhibition displayed nuances of an overwhelmingly passionate spirit. The sweeping changes in the techniques and themes used by these artists were particularly visible in the works of the most senior women artists involved – those aged 70 and older. A revolution? Perhaps that is too strong a word, but the meaning of it is the same.

For instance, the orientation of **Ratmini Soedjatmoko** (born in 1925) changed 180 degrees. Normally Ratmini painted landscapes and batik cloths; but for the Rome exhibition, her works took a political direction. 'Srikandi Accuses' is the title that she gave to a painting that depicts the government being equated with the intelligent but depraved *Wayang* character *Dasamuka*. In this piece, victims of violence were portrayed as broken flower buds while the women warriors in the painting represented volunteers assisting the victims. A similar meaning can be seen in her work 'Like a Brief Stop for a Sip of Water', that was painted with bright colors and distinct brush strokes, reminiscent of the work she had produced in her prime years.

Paula Isman (born 1927), typically faithful to church values, radically brushed away the negative image of Eve as a as a seductress and a sinner. She merged in one sculpture Eve together with Mother Mary, not caring whether this was proper or not. In her view, the two figures illustrate God's high esteem for women.

Totally different was also **Sriyani Hudinoto** (1930- 2007). Usually painting static birds and landscapes, she now painted herself in a pose of *pencak silat* of traditional self defense, flying with the birds in the sky.

Wiranti Tedjasukmana's (born 1933) who used to paint pretty dancers and folklore images in static mode, now became expressive. Her painting titled 'Justice Attacked' showed the image of the Goddess of Justice in an oriental-style traditional *kebaya* blouse and sarong, with hair hanging over her shoulders. Green snakes encircle the Goddess's body. One of her hands grasps a saw and the other holds a pair of scales. Since then Wiranti's style became more dynamic. In her works 'Aspiration' and 'I Want to be Free' she appears to be longing for self-liberation.

Representing the 50's age group of women artists, **Reni Hoegeng** (born 1947) –typically an extreme introvert – drew herself as a semi-nude using contemporary shades. Meanwhile, the 40's age group was represented by **Astari Rasjid**'s (born 1953) and her work entitled 'False Target'. For this piercing piece she illustrated a woman attired in oriental-style *kebaya* in front of a traditional Javanese house backdrop, denoting the woman as a victim of two combating forces.

The exhibition also provided important momentum for Astari to diversify creatively. For the first time, she conceived an installation that displayed a new side of her creativity, which was to become another artistic *forte* in later years. Her installation 'Prettified Cage' consisted of a fashionable sarong and *kebaya* styled from smooth fabric; however everything, including the underwear, was made from stainless steel – hard and unbearable – a parallel to woman's position in traditional Javanese culture who at all times must maintain an appealing outward appearance . The inclusion of a chastity belt with a padlock in the piece must also be mentioned. The artists is conveying here that others view this symbol as a means to protect women, but that guarding women's chastity in fact punishes them; meanwhile, any man that invades a women's sexual integrity, whether invited or not, is left to roam freely .

Earning a degree in archeology, **Inda C. Utoyo's** (born 1958) paintings have been mainly inspired by the *Karmawibhanga* relief at the ancient *Borobodur* temple. The relief depicts the atmosphere that surrounds the *Kammadhatu* realm – the lowest plane in the levels of human existence – that is awash with lust and desire.. In a world that allows one's passion free rein, women are persistently in subordination to power structures. It is foreseeable then that women often become targets of violence. Through her works, 'The Realm', 'The Myth' and 'The Legend' she availed herself to dark colors, and represented a common theme about women's fates from ancient times until the present day: that women's fates in fact have not changed.

Iriantine Karnaya (born 1950) is an artist who usually depicts woman's torsos. In this exhibition she addressed the issue of women workers and women migrant workers within her works of art entitled, 'I am Leaving' and 'Lady in Waiting'.

The exhibition was also enriched by the works of sculptor **Alce Ully,** who concentrated on the strength of women with reference to the holy book; **Marida Nasution** communicated about the issue of poverty; **Hilda Soemantri** contributed the emotionally moving work of art entitled 'Cosmic Mountain'; and **Tris Neddy Santo** strikingly applied sophisticated technology to reinterpret community values in traditional settings. **Reni Anggraini, Rini Chairani, Yanuar Ernawati** and **Maartri Djhorghi** also contributed works that reflect their respective characters.

Toeti Heraty led the delegation, and before the Vatican's high-ranking officials and the Indonesian Ambassador she announced in a forceful and distinct voice that the exhibition was held in honor of the victims of the May Tragedy. The entire entourage was moved by the gesture, and felt a sense of pride. In Gregoriana, a learning institution for pastors – a masculine domain – Indonesian women filled the spaces with a heightened state of spirituality that honored human rights. *Ave Arte-Loppiano-Incisiva* (the International Art Center in Florence) said the exhibition "communicated in a new language." Newspapers in Rome such as *La Repubblica* and *Avvenire* welcomed the artists as "*Le donne guerriere d Indonesia"* (Indonesian heroines) and *Radio Vaticana* praised the event as "having sensitivity and inner power."

Various events – including Komnas Perempuan's public dialogue in Jakarta – were coincidentally held at the same time as the Rome exhibition, adding luster to the exhibition by Indonesian women artists. Another objective of the exhibition was to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the release of the Pope's official Statement on Women's Dignity and Vocation. The exhibition held additional meaning given the then recent canonization of **Edith Stein** – nun, scientist, and feminist – as a saint. During the exhibition, the Indonesian delegation presented the translation of 'Women's Prayer', written by **Lies Marcoes,** to the Pope through Cardinal Paul Poupard.

Following the exhibition in Rome, various exhibitions aimed at addressing the May Tragedy were held in Indonesia, including a mural exhibition held at the Jakarta Fine Arts

Institute (IKJ) on June 1998, and an exhibition titled "Dealing with Violence Against Women" that also involved male artists, at the Cemara Gallery on December 1998. Two years later, artist Arahmaiani held a solo exhibition titled "Rape n Rob". Ratna Sarumpaet also organized a drama presentation titled "Alia, the Wound of Aceh."

Even though each of these events was organized in response to the condemned Tragedy, 'Women in the Realm of Spirituality' managed to bring about the most direct impact and inspired far-reaching changes.

Carla Bianpoen



Faces of the future

Photograph: Poriaman Sitanggang

Approaching the celebrations of Indonesia's 54th Independence Day on August 17, 1999, Komnas Perempuan decided to organize a commemorative event that re-examined the meaning of national independence. This was the first Independence Day celebration since the inception of Komnas Perempuan. Komnas Perempuan requested the presence of a number of prominent intellectuals to contemplate the nation's journey in terms of it being tainted with injustices and violence. With the assistance of Melani Budianta, these reflections were then encapsulated in a piece of writing that was read during a commemorative event held on August 17 at Gedung Proklamasi in Jakarta before community figures, residents of Jakarta, and the May Riots victim community. This writing, as included below, is an illustration of the people's vision that we covet and will fight for.

Preserving the Freedom of the Nation

Today, the red and white flag once again waves proudly. Fifty four times we have stood here affirming a call that was paid dearly for by the nation: freedom! But ask the children in Aceh who witnessed their fathers hauled into military trucks about what freedom means. Ask innocent girls whose futures are shattered because of the color of their skin and the shape of their eyes about what freedom means. Ask the families in Ambon, Sambas, Irian, Batam, and Banyuwangi who are fearful of their own neighbors about what such a celebration means. Ask, and question again the teachers who are terrified of teaching; ask the grandmother struggling to comfort her grandchildren in refugee camps; ask the innocent children on the streets who prostitute themselves to survive.

But for the infants lying limp, wilting from malnutrition; the doctors and nurses shot to death when assisting refugees; the women workers found lifeless after exercising their rights to voice their opinions; and thousands of charred bodies of riot victims – you can not question them about what freedom means as they have been denied the opportunity to answer.

We now congregate here today not to mourn and weep. Precious time is being wasted while foreign loans and hoards of money is stashed into banks and continues to flow: not to quench the thirst of the impoverished, but to fill the pockets of the ruling authorities. At the same time, in the name of defense and security, laws and regulations, and the judiciary are manipulated to destroy freedom. At the same time, the seats of parliament members are traded. At the same time, corruptors are set free and protected, and discerning citizens are accused of being subversive. At the same time, facilities are bestowed as bribery, while the common people are left to wait in line. At the same time, wrongdoers are supplied with arms to terrorize and intimidate. At the same time, civilians are pitted against each other to kill and hate. There is indeed no time to weep, not even to set aside your conscience and quietly stash it away. It is time to wake up and once again seize our freedom as human beings. Because all this while, the freedoms waving splendidly represent the independence of the state and not the independence of its citizens – armed supremacy and not human dignity!

We have taken in enough doctrines: 'National Resilience' – 'National Stability.' Pretentious expressions and embellishments to heal the nation's wounds – 'Unity and Integrity', the 'Sanctity of Pancasila' – are no longer effective. We are fed up with witnessing the political elite lobbying, debating and compromising. It is time to stop fencing our houses with truncheons and machetes; with bamboo spikes that we patiently sharpened fifty four years ago to drive away colonizers, and that we now have to hone and file once again to safeguard our kith and kin...from whom? Who are the ones behind the burning and looting, the rapes and killings, the after-school stabbings of each other, the ambushing and hacking of one another? Are you Indonesian? Are we Indonesian?

At the end of this century, after 54 years of walking this passage together, can we dare pose the question: this nation, who are we exactly? This country, who does it belong to exactly? From Sabang to Merauke victims of civil strife speckle the country. Is this nation built on a hypocrisy that drives people to bury all feelings of hatred and mistrust of each other in the name of unity bonded with arms and weapons? As time progresses, we witness contesting groups elbowing and shoving each other, vying for inheritance or supremacy. Is there still an Indonesia?

We, common citizens, ordinary people with hearts pounding and filled with anxieties, carry on with our daily lives, watching news broadcasts, reading one news report after the other, scraping for hope in the future. We are the rightful proprietors of this blood-soaked land. We are the flesh and blood of this nation. We have the right and responsibility to erase all established mistakes and set a different course of direction! We have earned our independence to say: no, this nation is not as it is, this country is not like this!

The nation that we understand and hold dearly in our hearts is a nation with open arms and forbearance; it embraces everyone without discrimination towards gender, age, skin color, hair, appearance or language. The children of the nation count their blessings for the multiplicity of their God-given physical attributes and for each drop of blood that flows in their body. No one should question his or her ethnic origin; because what runs in their blood is the spirit and passion of Indonesia. Children of the nation long to breath their last breath in their homeland. Not because they are devoid of options, but because it is here, in this country, that they feel cherished and appreciated, that they can love and be loved. The country that we will build over the ruins of riots is one of peace and tranquility. Churches, mosques and Buddhist temples will no longer be symbols of distinction and distrust but a source of serenity and hope. The country that we will build is a righteous country: where laws and regulations protect the weak, and the government serves; where citizens have the courage to censure officials, the media discloses the truth, and the people defend their sovereignty.

The country that we will rebuild is an independent country, free to think, free to speak out, free to express creativity, and to take on any undertaking except those with malicious intents or those that infringe upon the law; a country where

women feel safe and humanitarian workers can move freely without facing intimidation or accusation; a place where we are all free as human beings.

Do not allow anyone to think that it is impossible. Do not allow them to think that the people are powerless, because we ourselves bear witness to the people's courage. Food stall owners distributing packets of rice meals to university students; grandfathers who travel from afar to contribute Rp 1000 for the reformation agenda; nuns, women Buddhist monks, and Muslim women working hand in hand and engaging in mutual prayers; office workers involved in protests; couples of Malay and Madurese origin pronouncing their marriage vows. The courage has been proven by ordinary people: housewives and youths who no longer can contain their consciences and become volunteers, aiding victims, and organizing street protests. Every morning they depart at the risk of not returning. We witness how victims of violence with shattered hearts and souls revive themselves and stand with dignity to give words of encouragement to other victims. We hear the reverberations of prayers recited by the people of Aceh for their fellow countrymen in Ambon, Kupang for Sambas, Banyuwangi for Irian. Each verse of prayer, each drop of perspiration and every part of a sincere heart will help restore the 'red and white spirit' of this nation frayed by distrust, revenge, hatred, greed and oppression. We can hear the throbbing of Indonesia's heart in the souls of millions of citizens, volunteers without a name.

Together we will march forward until Indonesia regains its vim and vigor, with all its grandeur and prominence. Not because of diplomatic flair, technological advancements, rapid development growth or armed supremacy, but due to the highest respect for fellow human beings. Only through this can we convey to victims of the Trisakti, Ketapang, Sambas and Ambon incidents and other tragedies that they did not perish in vain. From taking in history at its most bitter interval, let us now learn to restore the freedom of the nation!



Epilogue

Candle

Photograph: Horizon

The May Tragedy that so offended our sense of humanity has made us stronger and given us stories of struggles. From the narratives of survivors we discover that even in the most dismal of situations, we – women – are the owners of our own destinies and futures. We are confronted with the alternative of either yielding as losers, or of becoming fighters who will never concede defeat, however insignificant the outcome of our struggles might be.

Options remain open as to whose voices will we listen to from day to day? The voices of rulers without a conscience? Or the voices of survivors that resonate with resilience, who have managed to recover from their ordeals? This book reveals stories of survival that are unique to the women victims who have succeeded in regaining their self-dignity. It also includes more general narratives of women's struggles to resist all forms of violence. Hopefully these stories will be a source of invaluable inspiration to all women.

The situation still lingers, and shows signs of escalating and becoming more far-reaching. Admissions of, and accountability for crimes committed against humanity are still not within reach: the law is still subservient to the powers in play; truth is still silenced by fear. Our journey is far from over, but we will not forget the meaning and source of our own strength.

In learning from the struggles of victims of injustices, the people of Indonesia can indeed find new hope and begin afresh.

Annex

Below is a list of data sources and analysis on the May 1998 Tragedy available to those who are inspired to seek the truth and to acquire a more discerning understanding of the incident.

Investigation Reports

Final Report of the Consolidated Fact-Finding Team on the 13-15 May 1998 Incident; 23 October 1998

a) Part 1: Executive Summary
b) Part 2: Data on Riots
c) Part 3: Photo Documentation
d) Part 4: Report on the Victims
e) Part 5: Testimonials
f) Part 6: Verification

Report by the Team of Humanitarian Volunteers (1998):

a) Initial Documentation No.1: Pattern of Riots in Jakarta and Surrounding Areas; 9 June 1998

b) Initial Documentation No.2: The Incidence of Looting During Riots; 9 June 1998

c) Initial Documentation No.3: Mass Rapes in a Series of Riots: Apex of Atrocities in the Life of the Nation; 13 July 1998

UN Report

UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women: Radhika Coomaraswamy, August 1998.

Conclusions from Investigation Reports

Komnas Perempuan (1999) *Report of UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women. Mission to Indonesia and East Timor, 20 November – 4 December 1998*, Jakarta: Komnas Perempuan Publication.

Komnas Perempuan (1999) *Findings of the Consolidated Fact-Finding Team on the May 1998 Riots. Attachment. Report of the Team of Humanitarian Volunteers*, Jakarta: Komnas Perempuan Publication.

Komnas Perempuan (2002) *Map of Violence Experienced by Indonesian Women*, Jakarta: Komnas Perempuan Publication.

Mitra Perempuan (1998) *Women Demanding Justice*, Jakarta: Mitra Perempuan.

Solidaritas Nusa Bangsa (2000) *Two Years of Solidaritas, Nusa Bangsa's Fight Against Racism*, Jakarta: Solidaritas Nusa Bangsa.

Books/Essays/Papers

Galuh Wandita (2000) *Tears Have Been Shed But the Violence Remains*, in *Nur Iman Subono (Ed.) State and Violence Against Women*, Jakarta: Women's Journal Foundation.

Heryanto, Ariel (2000) *May 1998 Rape: Several Conceptual Questions,* in *Nur Iman Subono (Ed.) State and Violence Against Women*, Jakarta: Women's Journal Foundation.

Prasetyo, Eko and Suparman Marzuki (eds.) (1997) *Women in the Discourse of Rape*, Yogyakarta: PKBI.

Tan, Mely G. (2002) *Rebuilding a United but Diverse Indonesia: Towards a Multicultural Society.* Working paper presented at the 3rd International Symposium of the Indonesian Anthropology Journal, Denpasar, Bali: 16-19 July 2002.

Exhibition Catalogue

In Response to Violence Against Women, Jakarta: Cemara Gallery, 2 -12 December 1998.

Internet

Team of Volunteers in Germany Assist Victims of Sexual Harassment in Indonesia
http://www.geocities.com/HotSprings/Villa/4780/perkosa.html/

News on Indonesia
http://members.tripod.com/-LuciferOne/

The May 1998 Tragedy
in the Course of the Nation's Journey

in denial!

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