Amnesty calls for concrete action to address sexual violence during 1998 riots

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Rioters set fire to looted goods at Pasar Baru in Central Jakarta – May 1998 (Kompas)

Singgih Wiryono, Jakarta – In commemorating the tragedy of the May 1998 riots (/term/May 1998 riots) in Jakarta, or the *reformasi* (/term/reformasi) 1998 incident, Amnesty International (/term/Amnesty International) is reminding the government that there were other dark events that occurred at that time, namely the sexual violence experienced by ethnic Chinese women.

Amnesty International Indonesia Executive Director Usman Hamid (/term/Usman Hamid) said that with regard to the sexual violence that occurred during the riots the state has yet to make a concrete effort to fully resolve these cases.

"The riots, the looting, and the sexual violence are a historical memory that is associated with the May 1998 tragedy. Unfortunately to this day, there has been no concrete effort by the state to resolve this", said Hamid in a written statement on Monday May 15.

Yet, said Hamid, the findings of the joint fact finding team at that time showed that sexual violence that occurred was systematic and planned. The state has also acknowledged that it was a gross human rights violation.

"However that's not enough. There must be a concrete effort to fully resolve this tragedy", he said.

Hamid said that the cases of sexual violence that occurred in the 1998 riots had a serious impact on victims and community members more broadly by taking more than a thousand lives.

Added to this was sexual violence during the riots which was mostly directed against Chinese women.

"It not only violated their right to freedom and physical integrity, but also damaged their dignity emotionally and psychologically", he added.

The Joint Fact Finding Team (TGPF (/term/TGPF)) report noted that at least 52 women were victims of rape during the riots. Then there were 14 victims of rape and abuse, 10 victims of assault and sexual abuse and nine victims of sexual harassment.

Most of the sexual violence was suffered by ethnic Chinese women so it was cross social class in character.

The United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on truth, justice and reparation has stated it is the duty of state to investigate and punish the perpetrators.

The UN Human Rights Committee also stated that this obligation is a derivative of the right to effective compensation under the articles of the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

[Translated by James Balowski. The original title of the article was "Amnesty Internasional: Jangan Lupakan Kekerasan Seksual dalam Tragedi Kerusuhan 1998".]

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