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After the Days of Hell in Jakarta: The Death of Ita Martadinata as Recalled by Ita Fatia Nadia

The mass rape of ethnic Chinese women in Indonesia is still denied to this day. One of the survivors, Ita Martadinata Haryono, was murdered shortly after she planned to travel to New York to testify at the UN General Assembly.

Luthfi Maulana Adhari(https://www.konde.co/author/luthfi-maulana-adhari/)

TRIGGER WARNING: *This article contains explicit descriptions of sexual violence—specifically, the mass rapes of May 1998. The decision to include these details is based on the principle that systematic violence can only be understood—and held accountable—if it is not glossed over.*

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The clock on the wall of the Kalyanamitra Office, located on Jalan Kaca Jendela in Kalibata, South Jakarta, had just passed four in the afternoon when the ringing of the phone interrupted the hustle and bustle. The sunlight cast a soft glow over the desks piled high with files. Ita Fatia Nadia reached out and lifted the receiver to her ear. On the other end of the line, the voice of Lily Zakiyah Munir, Ita Fatia's colleague, sounded hoarse, broken by ragged breathing and stifled sobs.

"Mbak, Ita Martadinata has passed away...!"

It was Friday, October 8, 1998. The phone receiver in Ita's fingers suddenly felt cold. The air seemed to be sucked out of the room around her.

Hurriedly hanging up the phone, Ita Fatia rushed toward the Sumur Batu area in Central Jakarta. "That was one of the longest journeys of my life," Ita Fatia's voice trembled as she recounted the events of 28 years ago at a café in the Cikini neighborhood on Thursday, May 21, 2026.

Sitting facing the window with her gaze fixed on the distance, Ita Fatia looked exhausted. Her hair had turned completely white. Wrinkles were visible in the deep lines on her face.

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During the events of May 1998, Ita Fatia, who at the time led Kalyanamitra, a community organization focused on defending women's rights helped and advocated for victims, particularly rape victims, the majority of whom were of Chinese descent. She joined the 1998 Humanitarian Volunteer Team alongside Sandyawan Sumardi, better known as Father Sandy.

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Ita Mardinata Haryono was one of the rape victims during those barbaric events. Her mother, Wiwin Suryadinata, and her sister, Happy Suryadinata, both active in the Buddhist community joined the Humanitarian Volunteer Team alongside Ita Fatia.

These two Itas first met about a week after the May riots. At that time, Wiwin who sensed that something strange was happening to her daughter told Ita Fatia about it. "Ma'am, my little girl *is bleeding*. Why is she in pain, and why does she smell?" Wiwin asked.

The next day, Wiwin took Ita Martadinata to the Kalyanamitra office. Upon seeing Ita Fatia, the teenager immediately hugged her and rested her head on her shoulder for a moment. But something was off, when walking, Ita Martadinata walked with her legs spread wide and could never bring them together.

"What's wrong with you? What's going on?" Ita Fatia asked carefully.

The teenager looked down. "It hurts… right there…" she replied, pointing to her vaginal area.

A sense of unease immediately gripped Ita Fatia's chest. The next day, she took little Ita to see Dr. Sarsanto, a gynecologist at Dr. Cipto Mangunkusumo Hospital (RSCM).

"Yes, there's an infection. This is rape," Dr. Sarsanto said after examining her very thoroughly, whispering to Ita Fatia.

"The two of us then sat at a chicken noodle stall near RSCM. Amid the noisy streets of Jakarta, we sat in silence," recalled Ita Fatia.

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Mass rapes occurred simultaneously in various parts of Jakarta over a period of just three days following the May 12, 1998, demonstration, which claimed the lives of four Tri Sakti University students: Elang Mulia Lesmana, Heri Hertanto, Hafidin Royan, and Hendriawan Sie. Security forces who stormed the campus fired live rounds at the protesting students. The victims were shot in the head, throat, and chest, among other places.

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The next day, riots and the burning of shopping centers broke out in Jakarta and several other major cities. The Joint Fact-Finding Team (TGPF) for the May 1998 Tragedy estimated that the death toll from the riots was close to 500 people. The highest number of deaths occurred in a fire at the Yogya Plaza mall in Klender, East Jakarta, on May 13.

For Ita Fatia Nadia, the mass rapes that took place on May 13–15, 1998 which culminated in the murder of Ita Martadinata on October 8 were not merely random outbreaks of mob violence.

Almost all of the victims were ethnic Chinese women. They were not only raped but also tortured. Their bodies were slashed with the broken ends of broom handles, camera film canisters, shards of glass bottles, triangular ruler blades, and even rough wooden planks. Most of the attacks targeted their vaginas and breasts.

The pattern of the incidents was very organized. The attacks were concentrated in Chinese residential areas in North Jakarta and West Jakarta. The looting of electronics stores was carried out simultaneously by mobs whose members kept changing. There were groups that specifically targeted women to rape and torture them.

"It's impossible for ordinary men to have done this," she said. "It was systematic, planned, and the perpetrators were definitely trained."

Hanna Thomson, a researcher from the Berkeley School of Public Health who has dedicated her studies to sexual violence in armed conflicts, once sat down with Ita Fatia to dissect the anatomy of the May 1998 events. In

Thomson's view, the events of May 1998 share a similar structure yet differ radically from the 1937 Nanking Massacre.

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In Nanking, Japanese soldiers tore apart and tortured their victims using their genitals. Meanwhile, in Indonesia, the goal was the total destruction of women's sexual function. This method, according to Thomson as recounted by Ita Fatia, bears similarities to the trail left by Turkish soldiers in Armenia, or the specific tactics of Israeli soldiers' crimes in Palestine.

"This isn't about lust," Ita Fatia stated firmly. "When ordinary people rape, there's lust involved. This is without lust. This is an organized, systematic institution that knows exactly what it's doing. They torture women's sexuality to instill mass fear."

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Night was falling. But the area in front of RSCM was still bustling. Dr. Sarsanto's diagnosis was what she had expected, but it still stung. As she watched Ita Martadinata play with the noodles in her bowl, her eyes vacant, Ita Fatia asked softly, "What's wrong with you... what's going on?"

Ita Martadinata understood what she meant and gave a slight nod.

"When?"

"A week ago. I was coming home from school, and then I was pulled aside. I was with my friend."

"Where's your friend?"

"Over there."

"Can *I* go over there, Ms. Ita?"

Little Ita nodded.

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days-of-work-from-the-perspective-of-women-and-social-justice/)

That night, according to Ita Fatia, they went straight from RSCM to a house behind the Sumur Batu neighborhood. Upon arriving there, she got out of the car and knocked on the door, but got no answer.

Everything changed when Ita Martadinata got out of the car as well. Her friend immediately came out of the house and screamed hysterically, “I’m coming with you! I’m coming with you! Mom, I want to sleep at Ita’s place!”

In the car, she cried her heart out. Ita Fatia didn’t dare ask many questions; she simply held the girl’s shoulders to comfort her. “Mom, I just want to come with you. I *don’t* want to go to school,” the girl said.

Ita Fatia then entrusted Ita Martadinata’s friend to the Santa Ursula Convent, which at that time served as a safe haven for many victims of mass rape. “This girl is Catholic, right? So I told her, ‘You’ll stay with the sisters, okay?’ So I handed her over to Sister Francesco,” said Ita Fatia.

As for Ita Martadinata, following the May 1998 riots, she joined the Humanitarian Volunteer Team, following in the footsteps of her mother, Wiwin Suryadinata, and her older sister, Happy Suryadinata. As part of the Volunteer Team, she helped support female victims who were unable to speak out. Wiwin herself, along with other activists in the Buddhist community, had been assisting the victims before eventually handing over direct care to the Volunteer Team.

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Four months after that examination, Ita Martadinata had become very close to Ita Fatia. Around the end of September, Ita Martadinata visited Ita Fatia at the Kalyanamitra Office. They sat together eating rujak.

“*Does it* still hurt?” asked Ita Fatia.

“Mom, I’*m not* sick anymore. I’ve taken my medicine,” a small smile spread across her face.

Seeing that Ita Martadinata's mental state was improving, Ita Fatia proposed a major plan currently being developed by the Volunteer Team. *"Would* you *like* to go to the U.S. to testify about that (mass rape)?"

"Yes, I want to sing!" she replied.

The Volunteer Team planned to bring several witnesses to speak directly before the UN General Assembly in New York. Ita Martadinata agreed to go. To her mother, Ita simply said she was going to sing.

Wiwin Suryadinata, the mother, still remembers this story well. "I thought she wanted to be a singer," she recalled in her later testimony. "She asked for a ticket to the U.S., saying she wanted *to sing*. As it turned out, she wanted to share what she knew about the rape," Wiwin said during a hearing at the East Jakarta Administrative Court on Thursday, February 5, 2026.

But three days after the Volunteer Team officially announced the plan for the victim-witnesses to travel to New York; one day before boarding the flight to New York, Ita Martadinata was brutally murdered in her home.

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The fence around Ita Martadinata's house was crowded with people when Ita Fatia arrived. As soon as she got out of the car, Lily Munir immediately hugged her tightly. "She was murdered, Mbak!" Lily's voice was hoarse.

In the living room, which opened onto the dining area, sat Ita's parents, Wiwin Suryadinata and Leo Haryono, Sandyawan Sumardi, and a *Kompas* reporter. Ita's younger sister, Happy (Evi), was also there, sitting listlessly on the sofa.

Ita Fatia then went upstairs to a small room painted pink. She saw the walls covered with posters typical of a teenage girl's room. There was a desk, a chair, a mirror, and some partially used cosmetics.

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On the floor, between the chair and the door, Ita saw the body of Ita Martadinata lying face down, her head behind the desk and her feet pointing toward the door. Fresh blood was still pooling on the floor.

Her condition was horrific: her neck had been slashed so deeply that it was nearly severed, and her body bore ten significant stab wounds on her chest, arms, and abdomen. A piece of wood was lodged in her back, right near her anus. Dr. Munim Idris of RSCM, as reported in the October 19, 1998, edition *of Tempo*, found semen inside her vagina.



PERINGATAN PEMICU

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Ita Fatia was shaken. What she had just witnessed surpassed even her worst nightmares. She returned to the Kalyanamitra office, staggering as she walked. “By the time I got to the office, I felt like I was about to faint,” she recalled.

The devastating blow struck Wiwin Suryadinata’s family less than twelve hours after Ita’s body was found. At a press conference, as reported by *Tempo*, the then Head of the Metro Jaya Police Criminal Investigation Directorate, Colonel Gories Mere, issued an official statement declaring that Ita Martadinata’s death was a routine criminal case. The police refused to link the brutal murder to Ita’s planned trip to the United States to testify about the May 1998 Tragedy.

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The police arrested the sole suspect, Suryadi, also known as Otong or Bram a neighbor of the victim. Confirming Gories Mere’s statement, the police determined that the motive for the murder was a straightforward robbery. According to the police’s official account, Otong sneaked into Ita’s house with the intention of stealing valuables, but he panicked when the victim caught him in her bedroom. From the outset, this “pure robbery” account sparked immense doubt and skepticism from the public and human rights activists.

The reconstruction staged by the police at the crime scene, including a photo of Otong demonstrating how he tied the victim’s hands inside the bedroom on Monday, 19 October 1998, photographed *by ANTARA* focused solely on the assault scene inside the bedroom. The police never explained in detail and clearly to the public how Otong entered the house in broad daylight, nor how he was able to leave without being noticed.

The Volunteer Team for Humanity (TRuK) believes that the extreme brutality and sexual violence suffered by Ita Martadinata are entirely out of the ordinary for a case of theft or spontaneous robbery. The murder appears to have been too premeditated, brutal, and targeted. The fact that the network of volunteers and advocates for victims of the May 1998 rapes had received various acts of intimidation and threats several days before Ita Martadinata’s

death intended to force them to stop their efforts to bring this case to an international forum reinforces the suspicion that there were other motives behind this murder.

“We held a press conference right away, led by Father Sandy, to state our opposition to the case being classified as a purely criminal matter,” said Ita Fatia.

Read more: Stop Tech Misogyny: Misinformation on Social Media Used to Trap Victims of Human Trafficking (https://www.konde.co/2026/01/stop-tech-misogyny-misinformation-on-social-media-used-to-trap-victims-of-human-trafficking/)

Just as feared, the murder of Ita Martadinata sparked widespread panic. Survivors of the May 1998 riots, who had previously been willing to testify, chose to remain silent for the sake of their own safety and that of their families.

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The demands for justice championed by the women’s movement finally forced the palace gates to open slightly. In mid-1998, before Ita Martadinata was murdered, the government officially established the Joint Fact-Finding Team. This step was taken in response to a wave of public distrust and mounting international pressure.

Designed as a hybrid body, the team chaired by Marzuki Darusman brought together members of the bureaucracy, the military, and civil society representatives. Their primary task was to thoroughly investigate the causes of the riots, including uncovering the facts surrounding the mass rapes.

However, behind the scenes of the joint team’s hearings, Ita Fatia found herself up against a solid wall. General Da’i Bachtiar, the police representative on the 1998 TGPF, continued to pressure them to disclose classified information: where the victims were hidden, their real names, and in which alley their families lived. Ita refused. The Volunteer Team for Humanity had promised to keep their identities confidential, and they would not break that promise.

The then-Minister of Women's Affairs, Tuty Alawiyah, also insisted on the same thing. "I got a call; Tuty Alawiyah said this: without any victims coming forward, there was no rape. That was almost the same as what Da'i Bachtiar said," said Ita.

They then moved all records regarding the victims from the Kalyanamitra office to the Volunteer Team's documentation center on Jalan Arus, Cawang. This transfer of documents was a key strategy to anticipate raids, while also protecting the victims' identities.

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Sandyawan Sumardi then asked Ita Fatia to withdraw from her formal membership in the TGPF and focus on assisting the victims in the field. In her interview with reporters at the time, Ita stated that the reason for her resignation was that the TGPF already included representatives from the Volunteer Team namely, Sandyawan and Sri Palupi.

For Ita Fatia, being a humanitarian volunteer is not without risk. One night, as she was heading back to her home in Bumi Serpong Damai, Tangerang, she was terrified to realize that the taxi she was riding in was actually heading north toward the city.

The taxi drove along Gunung Sahari, passing by the Pluit apartment complex. By 2:30 a.m., the green taxi was still speeding along aimlessly. She asked the driver repeatedly, but he only stared at her intently through the reflection in the center rearview mirror. She recited Surah Al-Fatihah over and over in her heart.

The new driver pulled over when he said he needed to use the restroom. As soon as the door unlocked, Ita Fatia jumped out and ran as fast as she could, clutching tightly to the strap of her handbag, which contained her old Acer laptop. She fled to a mosque in the Harmoni area.

Some time later, she took her children to Yogyakarta. On her father's advice, she left her children in the care of her parents, while she had to continue her work in Jakarta. "Go back to work. This is work for humanity; you'll definitely be safe," her father said encouragingly.

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Even after the Joint Fact-Finding Team completed its work, the government still refused to acknowledge the mass rapes. Efforts to bring the issue to the government's attention reached a climax when Professor Saparinah Sadli led a small delegation of eleven women to meet directly with President B.J. Habibie. At that time, dissenting voices were beginning to claim that the stories of mass rape against Chinese women were nothing but a figment of the imagination.



President B.J. Habibie (left) meets with 11 women leaders led by Prof. Saparinah Sadli (far right). (Photo: National Commission on Human Rights Collection)

Ita Fatia was part of that team. She brought a stack of handwritten documents by Sekar, Yustina, Melani, and Nana that detailed the names, addresses, and chronology of the rapes they had endured.

"Those were the original documents, which were later preserved and used by the Joint Fact-Finding Team chaired by Mr. Marzuki Darusman. They were originals, I brought them with me. I carried them and held them close," said Ita Fatia.

Inside the room, the seating arrangement was formal. Habibie sat in the center, while Saparinah Sadli and Melly G. Tan occupied the far left row. Ita Fatia Nadia took a seat in the far right row, directly across from Saparinah.

In addition to Saparinah Sadli, the group's leader, also present were Melly G. Tan (deceased), Sumhadi (deceased), Kamala Chandrakirana, Rita Kolibonso, and Smita Notosusanto.

Saparinah began the conversation by emphasizing that the documents they had brought would not simply be handed over to the Palace, but were intended only to be presented as valid preliminary evidence. Habibie responded in a calm tone, stating that he personally believed the events had indeed taken place.

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"I believe it. I believe that a rape took place, because my niece's friend was the victim," Habibie said, as recalled by Ita Fatia.

Ita then handed the documents to Habibie, who proceeded to open them one by one. "I pointed out: here's the name, here's the address, here's the case. The President replied, 'I believe you, I believe you.'"



A statement by President B.J. Habibie regarding the May 1998 mass rapes, delivered at the National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan) office. (Photo: Luthfi Maulana A/Konde.co)

Habibie described the sexual violence as an incident that pierced the conscience. At Bina Graha, the women's delegation also urged the establishment of an independent institution to protect women from violence.

Habibie immediately approved the proposal. He then asked Kamala Chandrakirana and Smita Notosusanto to draft a decision establishing the National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan) right then and there.

In the middle of the meeting, General Sintong Panjaitan, who served as the president's military advisor, rose from his seat. He walked around the table and approached Ita Fatia's seat.

"Ma'am, step outside for a moment," whispered Sintong.

Before standing up to leave her seat, Ita Fatia slipped a stack of documents handwritten by Sekar into the lap of a fellow volunteer sitting right next to her. She then followed Sintong toward an exit at the far end of the room.

As soon as his foot crossed the threshold, Sintong immediately pulled the wooden door shut with a loud click.

Read more: From MBG Watch to Protests, Civil Society Demands an End to MBG (https://www.konde.co/2025/10/from-mbg-watch-to-protests-civil-society-demands-an-end-to-mbg/)

Ita Fatia found herself standing in a narrow, deep hallway. Before her stood a line of high-ranking military officers in uniform. To her left, General Wiranto stood with a tense expression, flanked by National Police Chief General Roesmanhadi. Without any preamble, Wiranto immediately raised his index finger, waving it just a few centimeters in front of Ita's face.

"You're lying! You're lying, you're tarnishing Indonesia's reputation abroad!" Wiranto shouted, as recounted by Ita Fatia.



Ita Fatia Nadia leading a protest demanding that Wiranto—who was serving as Commander of the Indonesian Armed Forces (ABRI) at the time—be held accountable. (Photo: National Commission on Human Rights Collection)

He remembers it vividly: instead of being afraid, he raised his right hand and returned the general's raised index finger. "I was like I was possessed by a demon; I said I wasn't lying. I pointed at him again; I was right, I had proof, I wasn't lying! Just as I shouted that, the door opened, Mrs. Saparinah Sadli came out, and she hugged me. She pulled me back inside. Then she closed the door. I sat back down."

"When we finished our meeting with the president, we went out through that door. In front of it, there were tables and chairs like that, all the generals were there; the whole group, basically. They were standing. President Habibie walked us to the door I'd just come out of. Then they shook hands. I *didn't* shake hands; I just stayed quiet and walked out, that's all. I *didn't* shake hands."

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Nearly three decades have passed, yet the debate over the term "mass" in relation to the sexual violence against ethnic Chinese women in mid-May 1998 remains unresolved. "Even though there's a mountain of data, and the TGPF documents are clear," said Ita Fatia.

The Joint Fact-Finding Team, established by a decree signed by President B.J. Habibie a joint commission bringing together academics, human rights activists, and government officials stated its findings unequivocally.

According to the commission, there were at least 85 victims of sexual violence during those dark days. The details were clearly and systematically presented through verification: 52 victims were raped, 14 victims were raped and subjected to severe physical abuse, 10 victims were targeted in sexual assaults, and there were 9 cases of public sexual harassment.



Jenis Kekerasan Seksual Terverifikasi dalam Tragedi Mei '98

(Data TGPF 1998)

Dominasi kasus perkosaan menegaskan bahwa tubuh perempuan menjadi target utama kekerasan terstruktur dan massal, bukan sekadar efek samping kerusuhan. Mereka bahkan tidak pantas untuk hanya dibaca sebagai angka.

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In terms of verification, of the 52 verified rape victims, 3 spoke directly to the Team. The rest were verified through doctors (9 people), the victims' parents (3 people), psychologists and psychiatrists (10 people), as well as clergy and counselors (27 people).

Sumber Verifikasi 52 Kasus Perkosaan Massal Mei 1998

(Data TGPF 1998)

Minimnya korban yang melapor langsung (hanya 3 dari 52 perkosaan terverifikasi) mencerminkan realitas trauma, stigma, ancaman kekerasan berlapis, dan ketidakpercayaan pada institusi yang menjadi penghalang struktural pelaporan, dan bukan bukti bahwa kekerasan tidak terjadi.

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Before the TGPF finalized its report, the Volunteer Team on Violence Against Women (TRKP), led by Ita Fatia Nadia, had already documented 158 victims. This figure is significantly higher because humanitarian volunteers were already on the ground while smoke was still billowing from the shop houses. They collected firsthand testimonies from victims before a series of acts of terror, intimidation, and murder forced survivors and key witnesses to remain silent.



Data korban perkosaan massal Mei 1998 temuan Tim Gabungan Pencari Fakta (foto: dok. Konde.co/Luthfi Maulana Adhari)

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During the fact-finding process, the TGPF summoned ten top military and civilian officials who held command authority over security as Jakarta was engulfed in violence. Two of them were Major General Sjafrie Sjamsoeddin, who at the time served as Commander of the Jaya Military Regional Command (Pangdam Jaya), and Lieutenant General Prabowo Subianto, who served as Commander of the Army Strategic Reserve Command (Pangkostrad).

That is why volunteers and human rights activists who have not grown weary of fighting for justice for the victims of the May 1998 Tragedy were furious upon hearing Culture Minister Fadli Zon's statement in June 2025 during an interview with *IDN Times*. Fadli denied that mass rapes had occurred. "There's never been any proof of that. It's just a story. If there is any, show it. Is *it* in any history book? It's never been there."

She argued that the 1998 TGPF draft report contained only a series of numbers without being supported by solid, detailed evidence including the names of the victims, the timing of the incidents, the sequence of events, the locations,

or the identities of the perpetrators.

For Ita Fatia, Fadli's statement made while he was planning a project to rewrite Indonesian history was an affirmation of a structured stance of denial. "Fadli Zon's denial is highly political," she said. "This is part of a grand plan to whitewash history through the writing of Indonesia's national history a whitewashing of this nation's collective memory regarding mass rape," she continued.

Marzuki Darusman, during a press conference at a building in the Cikini area, said that Fadli's statement must be linked to those who bear the highest responsibility for the outbreak of the May 1998 Tragedy.

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Marzuki Darusman, Chair of the May '98 Tragedy Fact-Finding Team (TGPF), alongside Ita Fatia Nadia, at a press conference following the Administrative Court's (PTUN) ruling on Fadli Zon's lawsuit denying the May '98 mass rapes, at the National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan) office. (Photo: Luthfi Maulana A/Konde.co)

"This isn't some isolated incident that happened in the past. The two key figures named in the TGPF report, General Prabowo Subianto and Sjafrie Sjamsoeddin are still alive today. So this is still an ongoing issue," said Marzuki Darusman at a press conference on April 7, 2026.

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10 Pejabat yang Dimintai Keterangan atas Kerusuhan Mei 1998 di Jakarta

Jenderal Subagyo H.S.
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Civil society was in an uproar. A total of 547 individuals, along with various humanitarian organizations that had joined the Civil Society Coalition Against Impunity, filed a lawsuit challenging the Minister of Culture's statement with

the Jakarta Administrative Court (PTUN) on in September 2025. Marzuki Darusman and Ita Fatia, along with Kusmiyati, stood at the forefront as plaintiffs.

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Twenty-eight years after her youngest daughter died under suspicious circumstances, Wiwin Suryadinata stood motionless before the bench of the Jakarta Administrative Court. The seventy-three-year-old woman's steps slowed as she approached the courtroom microphone to identify herself. Her voice trembled as if bearing the weight of her memories.

"Wiwin Suryadinata, the biological mother of Ita Martadinata."

Wiwin Suryadinata was called to the courtroom to testify as the victim's mother. The National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan) provided a stack of expert witness reports to support the lawsuit.



Wiwin Suryadinata and Sumarsih sat side by side during the court proceedings. (Photo: Nurul Nur Azizah/Konde.co)

As she began to recount the events that took her daughter's life in their own home back then, in Sumur Batu, Wiwin's composure crumbled. Her voice broke, filling the austere corners of the courtroom. She questioned how the masterminds behind the 1998 crimes could walk free without facing even the slightest legal consequences. Even the phrase "mass rape" is now being erased from the historical record by a government minister.

"Kill, kill, kill!" his words poured out rapidly, directed at the row of judges' seats. "They have families, too. Imagine being the mother who carried the child, like me, or the father who raised that child. It's not just my child, it's the children of everyone in Indonesia. I represent the Association of Mothers of Victims of State Violence ( ), the mothers whose children were killed," said Wiwin during the hearing at the Jakarta Administrative Court (PTUN) on Thursday, February 5, 2026.

Read more: Celebrating Pride Month 2025, How LGBT Survives in a Situation of Discrimination: Konde.co Research (https://www.konde.co/2025/09/celebrating-pride-month-2025-how-lgbt-survives-in-a-situation-of-discrimination-konde-co-research/)

Ita Fatia was initially very optimistic that their lawsuit would succeed. The reason was that the three Administrative Court judges handling their case were all women. The three had replaced three male judges at the plaintiffs' request.

Unexpectedly, on April 21, 2026, coinciding with Kartini Day the panel of three female judges at the Jakarta Administrative Court actually dismissed the entire civil lawsuit filed against Fadli Zon's statement.

"This rejection by the Administrative Court is a sign of how a fascist and authoritarian state silences the voices of victims," Ita Fatia told *Konde.co.* "In my opinion, those three female judges have lost their conscience as women. They have been blinded by politics, by a political agenda."

On May 4, 2026, the coalition filed an appeal. The appeal brief was submitted on May 11, 2026. Virdinda La Ode Achmad, a member of the legal team and representative of the coalition, explained to *Konde.co* that the core of this appeal is to challenge the first-instance court's interpretation, which is

deemed erroneous. The panel of judges equated Fadli Zon's statement with an administrative decision, rather than a factual act by a government official as defined in the 2014 Government Administration Act.

"What Fadli Zon did was clearly part of a factual act," Virdinda said on Wednesday, May 27, 2026. "Therefore, the panel of judges' ruling is clearly a grossly erroneous and unfounded interpretation."

Rena Herdiyani, Executive Director of Kalyanamitra and one of the plaintiffs, told *Konde.co* that the ruling is proof that the law is not on the side of justice.

"The law no longer functions as an instrument of justice. They've legalized impunity because the very perpetrators of human rights violations have become those in power," she said on Friday, May 22, 2026.

Read more: Sexism in Student Arrests and Maternal Activism Mothers Defend Their Children's Struggles (https://www.konde.co/2025/08/sexism-in-student-arrests-and-maternal-activism-mothers-defend-their-childrens-struggles/)

Virdinda added that the coalition will prepare an appeal to the Supreme Court if the draft appeal is rejected. Their fight will not be limited to the domestic judicial system alone.

"We want to emphasize that what Fadli Zon has done runs counter to the state's obligations under transitional justice: revealing the truth, delivering justice, ensuring non-repetition, and providing redress," Virdinda asserted. "It seems we cannot rely on just one approach. There must be many alternatives to counter denial, whitewashing, or the suppression of the truth."

Kahyanamitra, along with other women's empowerment organizations, is now considering submitting this report to an international treaty through CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women). This step is seen as an extension of civil advocacy efforts if national legal avenues continue to reach a dead end.

"This (the CEDAW report) hasn't been submitted yet because the government itself hasn't submitted its report. But if this drags on, we will take the matter to the international level," said Virdinda.

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Regardless of the outcome of the lawsuit against Fadli Zon's statement, for Ita Fatia, the struggle against forgetting will continue un t the state acknowledges that the mass rapes actually occurred and acts justly. "History does not belong to those in power, but to those who have been marginalized," she said.

Read more: Cabinet Absent, Women's Issues Absent: Research on 100 Days of Prabowo-Gibran Government (https://www.konde.co/2025/07/cabinet-absent-womens-issues-absent-research-on-100-days-of-prabowo-gibran-government/)

Ita Martadinata was only 17 years old and a sophomore in high school when she was raped and murdered. Ita Fatia will not stop advocating for that quiet and shy Chinese-Indonesian teenager—and for other rape victims, at least 19 of whom she has helped directly. "History must be written honestly," said Ita Fatia. Only then can a new generation learn from and avoid atrocities like the May 1998 Tragedy.

"It is up to us to say that the mass rapes of May 1998 did indeed take place. It is up to us to stand tall. And it is the people who must write history. The state has no right to write the historical truth unilaterally," she said as she sipped the unsweetened tea remaining in his cup.

(This coverage is a Konde.co Special Edition for May 2026)

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