

14 December 2020

His Excellency Ambassador Muhammad Lufti
The Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia
2020 Massachusetts Ave NW
Washington, DC 20036
USA

Subject: Call for Immediate Action to Ensure the Safety of Christians and others in Sulawesi

Your Excellency,

We identify ourselves as a group of religiously and ethnically diverse individuals and organizations that share a common goal to ensure the procurement and advancement of religious freedom on a global scale.

On November 27, Islamist militants attacked the Christian-majority village of lembantongoa in Sulawesi, Indonesia, killing the village elder and three other Christian farmers. The attackers also burned a church and six houses forcing around 750 villagers to flee their homes.ⁱ

We urge H.E. President Joko Widodo and Indonesian authorities to effectively address the attacks by the East Indonesia Mujahideen, an affiliate of the Islamic State (ISIS), noting the history of the group targeting “non-Muslims” and Muslims who they consider “worship other than Allah.”ⁱⁱ It is therefore with concern we note that the national police spokesman Ali Setiyono, knowing this, reportedly denied that the November attack was religiously motivated.ⁱⁱⁱ

We are also concerned by the application of blasphemy charges against religious minorities and freethinkers in Indonesia. Most recently the police arrested Mr. 70-years old Apollinaris Darmawan in August 2020 after a mob stormed his house and dragged him out into the street, stripping him of his clothes. The mob said they attacked Mr. Darmawan’s house on account of alleged blasphemy. Mr. Darmawan is a Catholic from a Muslim background and has used his social media to discuss religion and what he believes. The prosecutor has called for a six-year prison sentence which given Mr. Darmawan’s age is effectively a death sentence.

Noting that Indonesia is the, “third largest democracy with the world’s largest Muslim population,” and has committed to adhere to the principles of, “religious freedom and tolerance,”^{iv} it is incumbent upon Indonesia to not appease the demands of the mob violence and instead release religious prisoners of conscience.

We also echo the statement made by the UN Special experts in 2017, that the blasphemy law has no place in a tolerant nation like Indonesia. The former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has also called on the Government of Indonesia to review and repeal its criminalisation of blasphemy as it is used to target religious minorities and hamper religious dialogue.^v

We kindly ask that your Excellency raise these issues with the President and work for greater tolerance in Indonesia by ensuring the protection of religious minorities from attacks by the East Indonesia Mujahideen and its splinter groups and ensure the enjoyment of freedom of conscience and religion for all its citizens by repealing the blasphemy laws as a means to target diverse thought and opinions.

Yours sincerely,

Organizations:

Anglican Persecuted Church Network

Buddhist Solidarity Association

Center for Pluralism

China Aid

Christian Freedom International

Church of Scientology National Affairs Office

Coordination des Associations et des Particuliers pour la Liberté de Conscience

CSW UK

Global Anglican Future (GAFCON) Suffering Church Network

Global Christian Ministers Federation

Indian American Muslim Council

International Christian Concern

Jubilee Campaign USA

Jubilee Campaign Netherlands

Katartismos Global

The Observatory for Religious Freedom (Spain)

The Orthodox Public Affairs Committee (OPAC)

The Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church of America

Saint Nicholas Freedom Group

Save the Persecuted Christians

Set My People Free

United Macedonian Diaspora

World Muslim Congress, Washington DC

Individuals:

Puneet
Executive
South Asia Minorities Alliance Foundation

Ahluwalia
Director

Fr. President Saint Nicholas Freedom Group	John	Anderson
Rev. Director Harvest Family Network	Brian	Britton
Nehemiah Co-Chair Global Christian Ministers Federation		Christie
The Rt. Reverend Bishop, Diocese of Episcopal Church of Sudan	Andudu Kadugli and	Adam Nuba Elnail Mountains
Tom Former VA05	Member of	Garrett Congress
Hamid US International Organization to Preserve Human Rights		Gharagozloo Representative
Dr. President Center for Pluralism	Mike	Ghouse
S. Chairman The Jesus Alliance	Bryan of the	Hickox Board
Lauren President Law and Liberty International	B.	Homer
Dipan Founder Bureau of Minority Rights Bangladesh (BMRB)		Mitra President
Faith Director Katartismos Global	J. of	McDonnell Advocacy
Scott President Red Eagle Enterprises		Morgan
George Executive Revealing Light Ministries		Parker Director
Raji CEO International United Women Federation		Patterson

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Jianli
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Initiatives

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Yang
President
China

CC:

Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief

ⁱ Human Rights Watch, “Brutal Attack in Indonesia Targets Christian Farmers,” December 2 2020, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/12/02/brutal-attack-indonesia-targets-christian-farmers> .

ⁱⁱ Human Rights Watch, “Brutal Attack in Indonesia Targets Christian Farmers,” December 2 2020, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/12/02/brutal-attack-indonesia-targets-christian-farmers> .

ⁱⁱⁱ “Suspected militants kill four Christians in remote Indonesian village,” 29 November 2020, Guardian, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/nov/29/suspected-militants-kill-four-christians-in-remote-indonesian-village>.

^{iv} United Nations, General Assembly, *Note verbale dated 2 July 2014 from the Permanent Mission of Indonesia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly*, A/69/375 (10 September 2014).

^v United Nations, Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights, *Blasphemy law has no place in a tolerant nation like Indonesia*, 22 May 2017, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=21646&LangID=E> .