

Open Statement

Appointment of General Wiranto (Retired) as Minister confirms

the deep-rooted impunity in Indonesia

July 27, 2016 - Three human rights groups, TAPOL, ETAN, and Watch Indonesia!, today criticized President Joko (Jokowi) Widodo's appointment of former Indonesian Military (TNI) commander General (Ret.) Wiranto as Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal and Security Affairs. Wiranto replaces General (Ret.) Luhut Pandjaitan. Cabinet Secretary Pramono Anung, told the media that Wiranto was appointed "because he had been well-tested and was experienced in resolving various assignments, especially during the transition period from the New Order to the Reform era in the late 1990s."

The cabinet secretary neglected to mention that Wiranto's experience includes a long and dark record of human rights violations for which he has never been held accountable.

"President Jokowi must annul his appointment of Wiranto and instead bring him to justice," said Basilisa Dengen from Watch Indonesia!

John M. Miller for the East Timor and Indonesia *Action* Network (ETAN) called the Wiranto appointment "an outrage." He added "Jokowi has clearly abandoned all pretense to concern about accountability and justice for past human rights crimes."

Wiranto is the most senior Indonesian official indicted in 2003 by the United Nations' Serious Crimes Unit, which was a section of the Office of the General Prosecutor of Timor-Leste (East Timor).

The appointment of Wiranto as a coordinating minister confirms that Jokowi does not consider human rights as a priority of his government. This is not the first time Jokowi appointed military generals with poor human rights records to his administration. Victims and human rights organizations have been waiting for Jokowi to fulfill his election promises to resolve a number of past and present human rights violations.

"By installing a human rights violator to a key security position, President Jokowi has insulted our sense for justice. He has turned his back on the victims, survivors and their families, and respect for universal human rights," said Adriana Sri Adhiati of TAPOL.

TAPOL, ETAN, and Watch Indonesia! urge President Joko Widodo to prove his commitment to uphold human rights and resolve past human rights abuses. It is long overdue for the Indonesian government to reveal the truth and provide justice and reparations to the victims of human rights violations.

The groups also urge the Indonesian government to work with the Timor-Leste government to promote accountability for human rights violations in Indonesia and East Timor, particularly by implementing the recommendations of CAVR (Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation) and CTF (Commission for Truth and Friendship).

The groups also called for President Joko Widodo to apply a strict vetting policy before the appointment of his ministers in order to realise a respectable and competent government.

BACKGROUND

East Timor was a former colony of Portugal that Indonesia illegally invaded and occupied in 1975. The UN conducted a referendum on the question of independence in 1999. After the East Timorese voted overwhelmingly to reject Indonesian rule, Indonesian security forces and militia under Wiranto's command destroyed most of the territory's infrastructure, killed more than 1,000 independence supporters and forcibly deported more than 250,000 people to West Timor.

The indictment alleges that under international law, General Wiranto, at the time Minister of Defense and chief of the Indonesian Armed Forces, was responsible for crimes against humanity for failing to punish or prevent crimes, including murder and persecution, committed by his subordinates or those acting under his effective control in the period before and after the 1999 popular consultation in East Timor. The indictment is outstanding but no trial has been held.

The indictment was accompanied by an application for a warrant of arrest, meaning that Wiranto and other indicted military officers face the possibility of arrest and extradition to Timor-Leste should they travel outside of Indonesia.

In 2002, the Government of Indonesia set up an Ad-Hoc Human Rights Court for East Timor to hear cases of human rights abuses committed in 1999 in East Timor. However, Wiranto's was excluded from list of suspects.

Wiranto was also the commander in-charge when the shootings of Trisakti University students in Semanggi took place, followed a short time later by the violent riots of May 1998, which are believed to be the work of the military. Many student activists are still missing. The National Commission for Human Rights (Komnas HAM) conducted a *pro justitia* investigation that concluded that the army commander was responsible for these crimes against humanity. Wiranto refused to participate in the investigation.

Despite his indictment, Wiranto - who once said that the atrocities in 1999 resulted from internal conflict in East Timor with no involvement from the Indonesian military - plays a prominent role in Indonesian politics. He ran for president in 2004 and 2009 and served the chair of the Hanura Party (People's Conscience Party), which won 5.26% of the national vote in the last election and joined with other parties supporting Jokowi's run for the presidency.

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