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**OPINI**

**Judul : Canberra's politics and impact on human rights**

Eko Waluyo and Haris Azhar, Jakarta

Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard is on a two-day visit to Indonesia at the invitation of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and will hold talks on bilateral cooperation on economic, security, development and environmental issues.

Indonesia is the single largest recipient of development assistance from Australia. Under the government of former prime minister John Howard, aid took the form of security assistance as part of Howard's commitment to then US president George W. Bush's global security doctrine. The Australian government paid US\$38.3 million over five years to the Indonesia Centre for Law Enforcement Cooperation (ICLEC) to deal with transnational crime. In addition Australia funded a \$10 million four-year initiative to help Indonesia to build its counterterrorism capacity.

Meanwhile to secure economic interests, both countries created a security cooperation agreement under the Lombok Treaty. Indonesia and Australia have a trade and economic relationship valued at \$10.3 billion in 2007-2008, making Indonesia Australia's 13th largest trading partner.

World leaders have praised Indonesia for its success in transforming itself from an authoritarian regime into a democratic system where Islam and democracy exist together. There was fundamental security reform achievement at the beginning of the reform era. One key development was the separation of the National Police from the Indonesian Military (TNI) in 1999.

The Bali bombings in 2002 began a new chapter for Indonesia's security agencies, especially the National Police, after their involvement in human rights crimes during Timor Leste's independence referendum. Financial and technical assistance to establish the National Police's antiterror unit Detachment 88 has poured in from countries such as Australia, the US and other European countries.

Eight years after the creation of Detachment 88, a fundamental question needs to be raised: How can the security agency apply human rights under a democratic system in Indonesia?

The latest human rights violation to come to international attention came in the form of a video that depicted men in TNI uniforms allegedly torturing suspected members of a separatist organization in Ambon, Maluku. In response, an Australian embassy official raised the alleged abuse with police and government representatives in Ambon. Canberra also held a senate hearing on the matter.

KontraS, a human rights NGO based in Jakarta, has conducted its own investigation on the incident and determined that between Aug. 5-20, 2010, the National Police held an operation in Ambon under the code name Mutiara Banda

Siwa Lima 2010. The operation, under direct command of then National Police chief Gen. Bambang Hendarso Danuri, involved 1,153 personnel, 20 of whom were members of Detachment 88.

In addition in North Sumatra, Detachment 88 led operations against an alleged terrorist network in the wake of the Aug. 18 robbery of CIMB Niaga bank in Medan, North Sumatra, in which two suspects were shot, two were arrested and one escaped. The suspects were later tortured by Detachment 88 before they were sent to the National Police headquarters in Jakarta. Their wives and children were detained in Tanjung Balai Police headquarters for a week. The suspects were not given access to attorneys, except those provided by Detachment 88.

There are a growing number of cases where Detachment 88 has been involved in alleged human rights abuses. Allegations of human rights abuses in Papua and West Papua and the video featuring the torture of suspected Papuan separatists by suspected TNI members show that security sector reform is at a standstill.

Transparency International Indonesia (TII)'s survey in 2009 indicated that the National Police was the most corrupt institution in Indonesia, while Amnesty International's report mentioned systematic corruption within the police.

The appointment of Comr. Gen. Timur Pradopo as the new National Police chief has also drawn serious concern from Indonesian human rights NGOs, especially when Pradopo refused to explain to the National Commission on Human Rights (Komnas HAM) his role during the student shootings in 1998 when he was West Jakarta Police chief. Meanwhile, his association with the hard-line Islam Defenders Front (FPI) contradicts the principles of diversity, pluralism and tolerance that are guaranteed by the state ideology, Pancasila, and raised the concerns of many people in Indonesia and the international community.

The President said: "The Indonesian police are not just law enforcement officers. They are key agents of change." This indeed is the dream of millions of Indonesians: That security agencies, especially the police, can be agents of change. But the role of the National Police in law enforcement within a democratic system is punctuated by a question mark: How can the National Police be key agents of change if fundamental questions cannot be addressed?

In connection with human rights abuse allegations in West Papua, Australian Greens Party Sen. Bob Brown has been outspoken about social injustice and criticized the Australian government's policy, raising awareness of human rights conditions in West Papua and for murdered activist Munir.

Meanwhile, Greens Party Sen. Sarah Young successfully introduced a motion to the Australian Senate on Aug. 20, 2009, that called on the Australian government to urge the Indonesian government to allow the International Red Cross full and unfettered access in West Papua.

Independent Australian House of Representatives member Rob Oakeshott has raised concern about the presence of Gui Campos in Australia in 2009. Campos is an Timor Leste citizen who was suspected of war crimes during Indonesia's occupation of Timor Leste.

NGOs that promote social justice in Australia are expecting more power in the parliament after newly elected Senate convenes in July 1, 2011. The reason is that the Greens Party seats in the House have increased from five to nine and the party will hold the balance of power in the Senate. It is time to consider how Australian aid can be effective in improving social justice in Indonesia, its biggest aid recipient.

Raising human rights issues during prime ministerial visits must be part of Australia's commitment in

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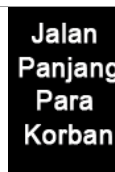
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supporting democracy in Indonesia and strengthening the values of pluralism, diversity, religious tolerant and social justice that are embodied in Pancasila.

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