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Abstract

The struggle of justice for East Timor has been hampered by various problems. After the UN failed to act on the recommendations by various institutions – including the inquiry commission formed by the UNSC – to establish an international tribunal, the chances that the perpetrators would be brought to justice have dropped sharply. This is largely because of the strong resistance by the Indonesian government against the establishment of such a tribunal, and also because of the lack of political will from the international community to push the agenda forward. Another key problem that has been often neglected is the lack of support from the Indonesian public due to the government's ability to manipulate nationalist sentiments and steer public attention away from the problem. In the government propaganda the occupation of East Timor has been portrayed as a struggle to protect national unity. Violence against the people of East Timor has been heralded as 'heroic'. Speaking in front of the notorious 744th Battalion in Atambua, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, who served as the commander of the battalion, said that the history of the battalion – a symbol of the occupation – should be glorified by the Indonesian people. This kind of rhetoric finds resonance among large sections of the Indonesian public. It prevented the public to see the connections between the human rights atrocities in East Timor with the atrocities in Indonesia.

Instead of adding documentation about the different strategies and tactics that the Indonesian government has employed to prevent the pursuit of justice, I will look at areas where the 'glorious history' could be, and in fact has been, disrupted. I will focus on (1) instances such as the protest against the establishment of a Sub-Regional Military Command (Korem) in Flores, the demand to dissolve the 744th Battalion following the killing of a young man by members of the battalion one month after the visit of President Yudhoyono; and (2) the teaching of history in public schools.