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John Carter
The Secretary
Foreign Affairs Sub-Committee
Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

October 20th, 2008



Dear Mr Carter;

Submission to the inquiry on Australia's relations with ASEAN.

Indonesian Solidarity (IS) welcomes to the opportunity to provide a submission to this inquiry on Australia's relations with the countries of The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). ASEAN is one of the most successful stable regional organisations to build broad cooperation amongst ten nations.

This submission is only focused to IS's position in improving human rights between Australia and the countries of ASEAN, especially Indonesia. Indonesia has been a key partner to Australia's goal of closer engagement with ASEAN, formerly for trade and now also for counter-terrorism.

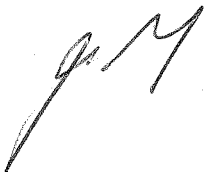
The main points of our submissions:

- In regard to security cooperation with Indonesia, to support Security Sector Reform (SSR) in Indonesia. Working together closely between Indonesian and Australian governments to focus on defence budget transparency and respect for human rights, making officers legally accountable, and reducing the political role of the TNI is important.
- Although Some Civil Society Organisations (CSO) provided alternatives to the ASEAN charter such as ASEAN People Charter, the ASEAN charter is only prospective of ten nation members of ASEAN. ASEAN charter article 14 mentions a human rights body. It is a window of opportunity to address human rights abuses in the region, if the principle of a human rights body is protection, enforcement and their ability to bring justice without impunity for the perpetrators. If the establishment of this body is because ASEAN wants to eliminate the intervention of the international community in human rights in the region, it only creates a bad precedent for ASEAN and their close partners. In this regards the Australian government should work closely and encourage

ASEAN that establishment of a human rights body must meet the principles of the UN charter.

- Regarding the human rights of traditional fishermen from the eastern part of Indonesia such as Roti Island, the Australian government expanded its nautical boundaries and imposed restrictions on them fishing in their traditional grounds. These rules make them more exposed to storms. We should offer much more generous aid to assist developing a sustainable alternative.
- There has been increased number of students from ASEAN countries studying in Australia, most of them from private business and government. But there is little opportunity for activists from civil society organisations who are working on human rights, environment, women's issues, indigenous people, independent journalists and labour rights to study in Australia by scholarship from the Australian government. Scholarships based on experience in those issues are needed from the Australian government.
- The rapid economic growth (especially of the five founders of ASEAN) over several decades with the trend that ASEAN is becoming a single market has created the free flow of business persons, capital, professionals, and migrant workers. Meanwhile migrant workers in ASEAN are the most vulnerable to human rights abuses, they are not citizens in foreign countries. The labour force is human capital and must be humanely developed, the closer economic relationship between Australia and ASEAN should create a mechanism to protect migrant workers from abuses and exploitation. There is good cooperation between ASEAN and European Union known as ASEM to cover migrant workers. It is important that Australia should follow the European Union; in addition the participation of independent labour organisations is critically important.
- The continuing human rights abuses in the province of West Papua in Indonesia and strict permission required for foreign journalists to visit these provinces is only trying to cover up problems in Papua from the international community. In addition the expansion of investment such as palm oil will create natural disasters and deforestation, in contrast to commitment on reduction of emissions to reduce global warming. The Australian government should work closely with ASEAN and ASEAN CSOs to address deforestation, illegal logging and the global warming. Because the global warming can also effect crop production and most members of ASEAN are agricultural nations.

Dr John Leslie Rawson
Director



Eko Waluyo
Program Coordinator