

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

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March 10, 2015

Major General, PhD S. Muhammad Al-Malik

Chairman

International Committee for Military Medicine

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cc

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Re: Indonesian Military's Imposition of "Virginity Tests"

Dear Chairman Al-Malik,

Human Rights Watch is an international nongovernmental organization that monitors human rights abuses by governments and non-state armed groups in more than 90 countries around the world. Since the late 1980s, Human Rights Watch has worked on human rights issues in Indonesia and provided input to the Indonesian government.

I write now to express deep concern about the requirement of the Indonesian National Armed Forces that all female applicants to the military undergo "virginity tests." On November 19, 2014, Indonesia's Coordinating Minister for Politics, Law and Security Tedjo Edhi, told reporters that such tests have long been obligatory for female military recruits.

Human Rights Watch's research in recent months has confirmed Tedjo's statement, and has indicated that the military—the air force, the army, and the navy—has for decades also extended the "virginity test" requirement to the fiancées of military officers prior to marriage.

We interviewed more than a dozen Indonesian military wives and female officers who talked about the physical and psychological trauma of these tests. A doctor who worked at the Army Hospital in Jakarta explained how women are required to strip naked and submit to the “two-finger” test as part of the military medical screening examination.

So-called “virginity tests” have been recognized internationally as a violation of human rights, particularly the prohibition against “cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment” under article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and article 16 of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, both of which Indonesia has ratified. In November 2014 the World Health Organization stated unambiguously, “There is no place for virginity (or 'two-finger') testing; it has no scientific validity.”

Human Rights Watch has documented the use of abusive “virginity tests” in several other countries including Egypt, India, and Afghanistan. Human Rights Watch has previously criticized calls for “virginity tests” for school girls and policewomen in Indonesia, both as human rights violations and for being subjective and unscientific.

Furthermore, subjecting female applicants to “virginity tests” is discriminatory and has no bearing on their ability to perform their job. We hope that you agree that abusive “virginity tests” have no place in any military organization.

In order to protect women’s rights to privacy, dignity, and freedom from violence and discrimination—and given that the International Committee on Military Medicine World Congress on Military Medicine will convene in Indonesia 17-22 May 2015— we respectfully ask that as ICMM Chairman that you contact Maj. Gen. Daniel Tjen, General Surgeon, Indonesian National Armed Forces and urge him to take the following actions:

- Order an immediate cessation of all “virginity tests,” including for female military recruits and the fiancées of military officers;
- Order the excision of any reference to “virginity tests” in procedures and protocols and ensure that supervising officers are aware of the change in policy;

- Issue an unambiguous public statement that the Indonesian National Armed Forces will no longer subject female military recruits and the fiancées of military officers to “virginity tests”; and
- Ensure that female military personnel and wives of military officers who have been subjected to humiliating and invasive “virginity tests” have access to psychological trauma counselling.

We have included Major General Tien’s contact information below for your convenience.

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Brad Adams
Asia Division Director
Human Rights Watch

Contact Information:

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