

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

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18 April 2012

Dear Prime Minister,

I am writing in response to your comments about Indonesia during your trip there last week. While you were right to say that Indonesia has made significant progress in terms of the consolidation of democracy and the growth of a strong civil society and independent media, I respectfully suggest that you have overstated the extent of Indonesia's "transformation", and therefore the extent to which it should be championed by the UK as a model for other Muslim-majority countries to emulate. Specifically, Human Rights Watch remains very concerned by serious, ongoing human rights abuses in Indonesia.

While Indonesia's senior officials pay lip service to protecting human rights, they have done far too little to ensure accountability for human rights abuses committed by Indonesian security forces. As you know, the Indonesian military is still actively engaged in an internal armed conflict in Papua. You yourself, two years ago in an article in the *Daily Telegraph*, described the plight of the tribes people in West Papua as "a terrible situation". Yet serious rights violations continue to be committed in this region. Access to Papua remains tightly controlled by the Indonesian government and very few foreign journalists or human rights researchers are able to visit without close monitoring of their activities. Indonesia is currently holding nearly 100 political activists from Papua and the Moluccas - individuals imprisoned not for violent offences but for peaceful political protest. Human Rights Watch was disappointed that you were not able to make a public statement of concern about these human rights abuses during your trip.

In October 2011, Indonesian security forces used excessive force to break up a pro-independence demonstration in Jayapura, Papua. The security forces then used firearms and batons against the demonstrators. As a result, three people were killed and more than 90 others injured. To date, none of the Indonesian police and military officials involved has been charged for their excessive use of force. In fact, the Jayapura police chief, Imam Setiawan, has subsequently been promoted. At the same time, five Papuan activists - some of whom testified how security forces beat them during the arrest - have been tried and sentenced to three years

in prison, solely for peaceful protest and for the "crime" of calling for independence.

Religious violence in Indonesia is also on the rise and the government is not doing enough to tackle this. Islamist militants have mobilized mobs to attack religious minorities with impunity and the short prison terms handed down against the few convicted of these offences have done little to deter further attacks. Although religious freedom is recognized under Indonesia's constitution, the government has failed to revoke dozens of decrees that discriminate against minority religions, including the 2006 decree on "building house worship" and the 2008 decree on the Ahmadiyah, an Islamic sect. These laws not only infringe on basic religious freedom but they encourage intolerance and even violence against minority religions.

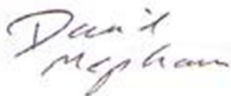
During your visit, you strongly backed the export of military equipment by UK companies, overturning a decade-long policy on the part of the UK government to restrict military exports to Indonesia. Given the ongoing and serious human rights abuses in Indonesia, it is not clear why you have chosen this moment to relax these controls. At the very least, the UK government should publicly press for agreement that this equipment will not be used for the repression of Indonesia's own citizens.

The UK should also press the Indonesian government to ensure that those implicated in serious human rights violations are impartially investigated and disciplined or prosecuted as appropriate. Given serious weaknesses in the Indonesian military justice system, the UK should encourage civilian jurisdiction over military personnel responsible for offences against civilians.

More generally, and in the context of your commitment to deepen UK ties with Indonesia, Human Rights Watch urges you to give greater priority and prominence to human rights issues within this relationship. As a minimum, we believe that this should include public criticism by the UK of the excessive use of force by the Indonesian military and security forces and the harsh suppression of peaceful protest, as well as public support for proper investigations into past abuses. We also hope that the UK government will encourage the Indonesians to facilitate early visits to the country by the UN's human rights special rapporteurs, especially the special rapporteur on torture.

Thank you in advance for looking into these issues. We would be happy to discuss them with relevant members of your staff.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David Mepham".

David Mepham
UK Director
Human Rights Watch