

PRD PRISONERS IN HUNGER STRIKE

Starting on Monday, 17 March 1997, 14 PRD prisoners who are now facing trial on subversion charge, which carries death penalty, will launch a hunger strike protest against unfair treatment by the judges and prosecutor. The judges and prosecutors have refused to allow witnesses called by the defence. Furthermore, they have constantly stopped the accused and defence counsel from speaking. Once a judge of Garda Sembiring's case said to the lawyer in court, "Counsel, if you speak too much, I'll send you out (of court)!"

The judge also overruled objections by the accused concerning their arrest without warrants by plain clothes officers. They were taken to the military intelligence office rather than to the State Prosecution Office. They were moved to the Prosecutor's office only after being detained for two to three weeks by military intelligence.

This process led the lawyers to ask for the dismissal of the cases but the application for dismissal was refused.

The State Prosecutor, Singgih, stated that the trial is planned to finish immediately before the May 1997 Election. It seems that by neglecting the rights of the accused, time will be saved. The schedule of the trials are very hectic, twice a week for each of 17 cases running concurrently. That's how Suharto's Government makes his judicial system

efficient.

According to a joint statement from the 14 PRD prisoners, the aim of the action is to protect the treatment from the State Prosecution Office. The statement says that the trials which have been going on for three months is no more than a manipulation of judicial procedure.

They demand the judges and prosecutors to respect the rights of the accused. The protests include refusing to speak in court. The actions will continue until the PRD members' demands are met.

The statement continues by saying that State Prosecution Office deliberately cut the communication between comrades detained in Jakarta and those in Surabaya. So that, Budiman Sudjatmiko, Petrus Haryanto, and Wilson from Jakarta could not attend as witnesses for Dita Indah Sari's case in Surabaya State Court.

The action will be started by those who are detained in Cipinang Prison, including Budiman Sudjatmiko and Garda Sembiring. It'll be followed by a group in Salemba Prison, including Wilson and Anom, three days later, and then by a group of Surabaya, including Dita Sari.

Urgent action is needed to support the struggle of PRD prisoners against unfair Indonesian judicial system. Their rights have been neglected.

What you can do:

1. Please get in contact with Action in Solidarity with Indonesia and East Timor

(ASIET) for further information and possible solidarity campaign which might be done from here.

2. Please fax the Indonesian Minister of Justice, Mr. Oetoyo Usman, fax number +63-21-5253095 urging that PRD prisoners be granted their rights according to the law.

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