

Chapter 10

Historical Justice and the Case of the 1965 Killings

Katharine McGregor

In transitions from authoritarian to democratic societies, efforts to deal with human rights claims relating to past cases of state violence and associated justice measures are generally at the forefront of societal and governmental agendas. This is because such initiatives can serve to mark out a clear break with the past. They can work to end discrimination against persecuted groups. In the early post-Suharto era there were signs that Indonesia too would make a break from past traditions of violence, impunity, and discrimination and pay greater attention to human rights abuses. Yet in the case of the most violent episode in Indonesian history, the 1965 killings and imprisonments, there has been mounting resistance largely from the military and Islamic organizations implicated in the violence to any forms of historical justice.

In this essay, I survey a range of efforts to address this case since 1998. I use the broad term historical justice -- by which I mean all forms of possible redress for past violence, including trials, apology, reparation, reconciliation, memorialization, and truth seeking -- to assess multiple approaches to dealing with this past. I examine how the government responded to demands for reform through new human rights laws and mechanisms that could have enabled the government to achieve historical justice for this case. I trace the bases of ongoing resistance to any forms of historical justice that emanate from an alliance of Islamic groups backed by the military. I argue that this alliance is based both on a historical partnership and new trends in Indonesian politics including increasing

emphasis on Islamic values. It is furthermore underpinned by a broader pact of impunity for the military.

Alongside this trend, however, I argue that activists, including those from within communities implicated in the violence, have tried to achieve historical justice particularly by emphasizing alternative truth telling and attempting to re-humanize survivors. Using the fiftieth anniversary of the violence as a point of reflection, I analyze the increasing emphasis in activism on demanding an end to impunity for past human rights crimes and the increasingly defiant positions of government, military and religious officials towards this case. But first, let us review current understandings of the 1965 violence.

BACKGROUND TO THE VIOLENCE

From its beginnings in 1920, the Indonesian Communist Party (*Partai Komunis Indonesia*, PKI) targeted workers promoting an anti-imperialist critique of Dutch colonialism. The PKI experienced the first attack in 1948, during the independence struggle against the Dutch (1945-1949) when following the seizure by leftist troops of the local government in Madiun, the republican army took revenge and executed party leaders without trial. By the mid-1950s, however, the party had recovered by building a mass base amongst workers and peasants. It achieved 16.4 per cent of the vote in the 1955 elections.

In 1959 President Sukarno introduced a new system of government known as Guided Democracy, during which there were no national elections and only “functional groups” that vied for influence through ministerial posts, mass mobilizations, and presidential favor. The army supported this system primarily to block the PKI’s potential electoral success because the army leadership held its own ambitions of an increased political role.

By 1965 the PKI had a membership of 3.5 million, with 20 million more members of affiliated or closely aligned organizations (Mortimer 1974: 366). The party continued to

follow a strategy of working within the existing political system, yet the party leadership was also concerned about a repeat of the Madiun incident. To balance the armed power of the military, the PKI began to call for the formation of a fifth force comprised of armed civilians. This was an idea that Sukarno began to back early in 1965 as a way of checking the army's influence (Mortimer 1974: 381-382). The army, however, blocked the proposal.

Sukarno was successful in his campaign for the return of West Irian (now West Papua) from the Dutch. Nevertheless, his more controversial "Confrontation" campaign, designed to prevent the formation of the British-backed new nation of Malaysia, on the grounds that it was an imperialist project, raised alarm in Western countries and led them to increasingly support anti-communists in the army (Simpson 2008: 122-144). These countries especially feared that resource-rich Indonesia might become communist, which could jeopardize foreign investment.

Several factors contributed to increased tensions in Indonesian society in the 1960s. First, President Sukarno promoted the concept of "three pillars" of Indonesian society, *Nasakom* (*Nationalisme, Agama, Komunisme*), or nationalism, religion, and communism. This led to competing accusations from the PKI of the army being Communist-phobic or from religious organizations of the PKI being anti-religion. Second, the passage of legislation in 1959 and 1960 enabling land reform led to increasing frustration when bureaucrats stalled in implementing these reforms. In parts of Indonesia peasants began to seize land, leading to violent clashes with those with large land holdings such as the *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU) in East Java. In response NU created a defense force called *Banser* (*Barisan Ansor Serbaguna*, Multipurpose *Ansor* Troops) to defend land interests, especially in East Java, and in preparation for future armed clashes with the PKI (Fealy and McGregor 2010: 40-41). Third, the failing economy resulted in spiraling inflation and widespread poverty.

Looking back on this period, historians have increasingly emphasized the army's preparation for some form of clash with the PKI. Roosa (2006: 31) argues that that the army was waiting for a "pretext" to crush the party. Melvin (2017) points more specifically to the army's use of the Confrontation campaign to arm and train anti-communist civilians in Sumatra in preparation for such a clash.

In the early hours of October 1 1965, a group calling itself the September 30th Movement kidnapped and killed six leading generals and one military aide. The corpses of the generals were discarded in a disused well on the outskirts of Jakarta in an area known as Lubang Buaya (Crocodile Hole). The army under the leadership of Major-General Suharto as head of KOSTRAD (*Komando Stratejis Angkatan Darat*, Army Strategic Command) moved quickly to crush the Movement and to label it a PKI plot. PKI members were falsely accused of torturing and mutilating the generals before their deaths (Wieringa 2002: 291). The army then orchestrated mass demonstrations by student and religious organizations, which led to attacks, first on the properties associated with the PKI, and then on those labeled "communist." During the course of late 1965 through to 1968, between 500,000 or one million Indonesians were killed by the army, police, and civilian vigilantes (Cribb 1990: 1). More than one million people were imprisoned, mostly without trial (Amnesty International 1977: 41-44). They targeted all persons who were suspected of being "communist," including not only PKI members, but also members of all PKI-aligned or affiliated organizations, and persons with any ties to the party or these organizations.

Due to limited access to sources and conflicting accounts from participants it has been difficult for historians to pinpoint precise responsibility for the violence (Roosa 2016: 286-291). There is now increasing consensus, however, that the violence was orchestrated by the anti-communist leadership of the army. In her pathbreaking work Melvin (2017) has uncovered evidence of extensive planning by Suharto as commander of KOSTRAD and the

regional army commander in Aceh to crush the PKI by deploying trained civilians. It is likely that similar efforts were made to co-ordinate attacks with other regional army commanders. In some provinces, such as East Java, this was more difficult due to loyalties within the army to Sukarno. Here, Suharto relied more heavily on co-operation with NU's *Banser* forces (Fealy and McGregor 2010: 43-44). The violence was particularly fierce in Bali, East Java, and Central Java where the PKI had strong support. In Bali, RPKAD (*Resimen Pasukan Komando Angkatan Darat*, Army Commando Regiment) forces relied on *tameng* (guards) associated with the right wing of the Indonesian National Party (Robinson 1995: 299-301). In Eastern Indonesia, the army co-opted Christian and Catholic anti-communists (Webb 1986: 98-99). In Sumatra, the army used *Pemuda Pancasila* (*Pancasila Youth*) (Ryter 1998: 55-56). Despite army complicity, the army promoted the fiction that it was "spontaneous violence" (Roosa 2016: 283-285). Western governments also supported a thorough purge of communists (Simpson 2008: 184-194).

Most people were killed after being held for short periods of time in police and military facilities. Quotas of prisoners were taken by civilian militias at night and shot, beheaded, or bludgeoned to death in remote locations such as forests (Kammen and McGregor 2012: 17-20). Prisoners suffered from inadequate food, torture, sexual violence, and lack of medicines. The army subjected prisoners detained in remote prison camps such as Buru or Moncongloe in Sulawesi to forced labor (Ahmad 2012: 174-180).

The 1965-1968 violence cleared the way for a new military-dominated government. The army was regularly used to crush dissent, and anti-communism became a cornerstone of the regime. The families of those imprisoned and killed and former political prisoners suffered through intense stigmatization due to official versions of history including textbooks, the annual screening of the docudrama *Pengkhianatan G30S/PKI* (The Betrayal of the 30 September Movements/PKI), the Sacred Pancasila Monument, and annual

commemoration of October 1 that demonized those branded PKI as national traitors (McGregor 2007: 61-111). Further to this, a series of laws barred them from working in occupations such as teachers, journalists or civil servants (Bedner 2015). The long duration of the regime (32 years) meant that anti-communist propaganda became entrenched and advocacy for survivors was limited. The label “communist” was also used to discredit any critics of the regime. This elaborate web of anti-communism contributed to fears of expressing sympathy for those persecuted.

DEMOCRATIZATION AND ADVOCACY FOR HISTORICAL JUSTICE

The Indonesian government took critical steps towards democratization following Suharto’s resignation, including paying new attention to human rights and winding back the political influence of the Indonesian military. In 1999 the government passed Law No. 39 on human rights, which committed the state to respecting, upholding, and advancing human rights consistent with the international human rights agreements to which Indonesia is a signatory. Then with Law No. 26 of 2000, the government set up a new mechanism for the prosecution of past cases of human rights abuses via either Ad Hoc Human Rights Courts or a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) following investigations by the National Commission of Human Rights (*Komisi Nasional Hak-Hak Asasi Manusia*, KOMNAS HAM). Work began on drafting a law for the formation of a TRC. The military technically rescinded its political role, gave up previously reserved seats in the parliament, and the police force separated from the armed forces.

The interim President Habibie signaled some loosening of the intense anti-communism of the past, first by releasing all remaining political prisoners from the 1965 case. These prisoners had been detained for so long on the grounds that they, as die-hard communists, remained a threat to society. Furthermore, Habibie cancelled the annual

compulsory screening on state television of the docudrama about the September 30th Movement, and promised revisions to school history textbooks that had previously promoted vigilant anti-communism. By shutting down the Ministry of Information and ending press censorship, he created a new public space for survivors and activists to air new versions of history focusing no longer on the terror of communists, but on the intense and enduring suffering of persons accused of being communist.

Seizing on this new space, some high profile former political prisoners formed the organization YPKP (*Yayasan Penelitian Korban Pembunuhan 1965/66*, Foundation for Research into the 1965/66 Killings).¹ YPKP's membership comprised mostly of former political prisoners, for whom there was a sense of urgency about gaining recognition and redress for their suffering. They placed a strong emphasis on rebutting versions of history in which they were dehumanized, by publishing memoirs about experiences of detention. Further to this, and building on global trends, they sought to document the locations and details of mass graves from 1965, so as to present society with undeniable evidence of the atrocities committed against alleged communists (McGregor 2012: 242).

In this immediate transition period, other human rights activists and lawmakers looked to examples of recent transitions for inspiration. The 1990s seemed to offer many examples. South Africa's then recent TRC guided the formulation of Indonesia's draft TRC legislation. The wave of apologies from state leaders for past crimes or neglect of human rights violations that characterized the 1990s (Barkan 2000: xvii) may also have in part inspired the newly elected president Abdurrahman Wahid. In 2000 he offered a personal apology for the role of NU in the 1965 violence and proposed lifting the long standing 1966 ban on communism. Coming from the man who had headed NU in the 1980s, this was very significant for it suggested that he was speaking on behalf of the largest Muslim community in Indonesia.

Although this was an important and rare form of recognition from a senior government official for the suffering of those targeted in 1965, it remained a personal apology. Furthermore, the apology and the proposal to lift the ban on communism generated mass public protests. Scores of protestors in Jakarta and Medan took to the streets using the names of new and sometimes established Islamic organizations such as NU and *Forum Ukhuwah Islamiyah* (Islamic Fraternity Forum), a puritanical organization created in 1989 and loosely aligned with the conservative *Majelis Ulama Indonesia* (MUI, Indonesian Ulama Council), to present an “Islamic” protest against the revival of communism in Indonesia (“New Wave of Protests Target Plan on Communism,” 2000). A year later, when the YPKP sought to rebury the remains of unidentified persons from the exhumed grave in Wonosobo, a coalition of “Islamic groups” violently disrupted the reburial on the grounds that the town of Kaloran was no place for communists (McGregor 2012: 246-247). This protest was based on the rejection of any effort to rehumanize and potentially memorialize victims.

As indicated above, some Islamic organizations participated in the killings and thus they are invested in the narrative that the violence was justified. However, in the post-Suharto era, the military has also, behind the scenes, encouraged protests in the name of Islam as a way of blocking developments that would also implicate the military, given that it can no longer itself use violence to crush such actions (Mietzner 2008: 366-367). This tactic has been effective because of an increasing emphasis on so called “Islamic values” in society and politics such that framing any debate in terms of Islam can draw support from Islamic groups.

The story is, however, more complex than this, because alongside the military’s use of political Islam, activism for historical justice has also come from within so-called “implicated communities” (Morris-Suzuki 2005: 26-27). One of the most remarkable examples is *Syarikat (Masyarakat Santri untuk Advokasi Rakyat, Santri Society for People’s Advocacy)* which was formed by young people in NU in 2000, in an effort to address the

stigma attached to NU youth as a result of *Banser*'s actions in the 1960s, and to promote reconciliation between survivors and NU members. Inspired by a new emphasis on human rights and tolerance from within NU after the 1980s and with the support of Abdurrahman Wahid, they conducted research into NU's role in the violence by interviewing survivors and published some of these accounts in internal NU publications as a way of rehumanizing those branded "communist." They promoted joint community projects and discussions involving survivors and NU members in East Java, as a way of bringing together these long opposing communities. In an effort to challenge entrenched anti-communism in the broader populace, they ran a film-making competition amongst students and hosted an exhibition in Yogyakarta on the women's prison Plantungan (McGregor 2009: 206-215). They also assisted with securing community approval and providing security during the YPKP's exhumation of the mass grave at Wonosobo. *Syarikat* activists, however, faced intense pressure from more conservative members of NU and they enjoyed less and less protection following Wahid's impeachment as president and the backlash against both him and so-called liberal Islam more generally (McGregor 2009: 215-221).

There were many additional setbacks during the presidencies of Megawati Sukarnoputri (2001-2004) and Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (2004-2012). It was during their terms that the new human rights laws and mechanisms were really tested. A series of cases of past human rights abuses were investigated by KOMNAS HAM, but senior military men continued to obstruct investigations by refusing summons to appear at hearings (Setiawan 2016: 25). Only two cases advanced from an investigation to an Ad Hoc Human Rights Courts: the violence following the independence ballot in East Timor (1999) and the shooting of Muslim protestors in Tanjung Priok (1984). In each case, however, only low-ranking officers were convicted and all their sentences were eventually overturned. This suggests that senior military figures remained above the law. By 2004 the legislation for establishing a

TRC was ready for the parliament, but in response to objections to amnesty provisions, the Constitutional Court rejected the entire bill rather than addressing those particular provisions (Pohlman 2016: 70). Lawmakers seemed unwilling to risk confrontation with the military, the organization most likely to be investigated by a TRC.

The government did, however, give KOMNAS HAM a new mandate in 2008 to undertake a nation-wide investigation into the 1965 violence. In 2012 the Commission announced its findings of gross human rights violations including killings, exterminations, slavery, forced removal from an area, restrictions on physical freedom, torture, rape, and other forms of sexual violence, and forced disappearances.² Further to this, the commission attributed responsibility for the violence to Suharto and to regional and local military commanders. The findings were quite remarkable because they directly pointed the finger at the military and at the former General who had led Indonesia. Commissioners recommended further investigations by the Attorney-General. This could have led to the formation of an Ad Hoc Human Rights Court or a non-judicial settlement if agreed to by survivors.

The announcement of the findings put some pressure on President Bambang Yudhoyono to respond. There were rumors of a potential apology for all cases of past human rights abuses, yet following an intense public backlash from both Islamic organizations and retired military men, this did not eventuate (Revianur 2012). Further complicating matters was Yudhoyono's position as a son-in-law of the former RPKAD Commander Sarwo Edhie who was celebrated in New Order historiography for crushing the communists. By apologizing for the violence, he would have undermined both his family and the Indonesian military, an institution to which he, as a former general, also remained loyal. His links to this the repression remind us of some of the reasons politicians will not address this case. Meanwhile, successive Attorney Generals repeatedly declared the evidence in the KOMNAS HAM report to be inadequate and refused to proceed with further investigations. To date, the

full report is under embargo and has not been released to the public. As a result the report cannot serve the function of an alternative state-authorized history of the violence.

Despite these challenges, activism for the survivors of 1965 continued and took many forms reflecting grassroots-based recognition of the need for historical justice for survivors. In Bali, for example, in 2005 young people created a community space called Taman 65 (1965 Park) within a family complex for the purposes of hosting discussions and exhibitions related to the 1965 violence which had deeply impacted the local community. The collective behind the park also conducted oral history interviews to record testimonies of survivors. In 2015 they recorded some of the songs of former Balinese political prisoners to connect new audiences with these experiences for the purposes of challenging long-held stigmas against this community (“Prison Songs: Nyanyian yang Dibungkam” 2015). Amongst the Taman 65 collective are those whose families had been killed and those who had participated in the killings, thereby creating difficult fractures in understanding this past (Dwyer 2015: 22-25). These activists have also faced military, police, and community surveillance.

In the city of Solo activist and survivors formed the organization SEKBER 65 (*Sekretariat Bersama 65*, Joint Secretariat 65) in 2005. SEKBER 65 is run by two activists who co-ordinate a support and advocacy network for hundreds of survivors in the Solo area and surrounding districts. Emphasizing reconciliation they have focused on hosting discussions and events with survivors and other community groups, including students and fiercely anti-communist groups, as a way of building greater understanding and lobbying the local government to support survivors’ health care (Wardaya 2015).

In other cases, advocacy work for 1965 survivors has arisen out of the work of local organizations with wider ambitions than this case alone. From 2004 for example, a broader victims’ advocacy group in Sulawesi, SKP HAM (*Solidaritas Sulawesi Korban Pelanggaran Hak Asasi Manusia*, Sulawesi Solidarity for the Victims of Human Rights Violations), took

up advocacy for victims of the 1965 violence. This organization focused on truth seeking by conducting oral history research with survivors and reparation. After socializing their ideas in community discussions in 2012, the Mayor of Palu offered an official apology to the victims of the violence (Lamasitudju 2014: 380-383).

Similarly in Eastern Indonesia, the Network of Women of Eastern Indonesia for the Study of Women in Religion and Culture (*Jaringan Perempuan Indonesia Timur*, JPIT) decided in 2010 to research the case of the 1965 violence in the region of East Nusa Tenggara. Researchers documented the experiences of women survivors of the violence in this region, and applying ideas from liberation theology they sought to understand how the Protestant church and its members contributed to the suffering and how they could work to remedy this suffering (Kolimon 2015: 4-7). JPIT emphasizes “truth telling” and ongoing support for survivors. JPIT members have also faced some societal resistance.

Some advocacy groups have focused on evidence gathering and working towards legal forms of justice. Most groups, however, have decided that an important part of their work is to first confront stereotypes about those branded PKI, by engaging in alternative truth telling, by sharing the stories of suffering of survivors. One survivor of the violence, the former political prisoner Ibu Kadmiyati puts it this way:

I also demand and hope for justice for the violence against the victims of 1965. For the sadistic torture and killing of millions of people and those detained up to 14 years. When will the law be upheld? ... Who is sadistic and cruel? The communists? Or the perpetrators of the killings? Find out the truth (Ibu Kadmiyati, cited in Yuniar and Easton 2015).

She and many activists continue to push for recognition at a government level of the suffering of survivors of state violence for the purposes of endorsing a new social consensus about the effects of the 1965 violence and creating a genuine break from the past and associated anti-communism.

Based on the failure of all legal avenues for redress and the failure to pass new legislation for a TRC, activists from a broad coalition of the activists groups including some mentioned above, calling itself KKPK (*Koalisi Keadilan dan Penungkapan Kebenaraan*, Coalition for Justice and Truth Telling), joined together from 2008 onwards to perform the work of a TRC outside of a formal state process. From 2012-2013, which they dubbed “The Year of Truth Telling,” they hosted independent public hearings across different cities of Indonesia for multiple cases of past human rights abuses (Pohlman 2016: 64-65). By bringing in respected members of society, they used the hearings to assist in validating the experiences of survivors and to try and build a stronger consensus on the need for action.

The year 2014 was highly significant for human rights activists, because of the presidential election contested by the populist civilian governor of Jakarta, Djoko Widodo (Jokowi), who had no links to the New Order regime, and the retired General Prabowo who was accused of complicity in past human rights crimes. Sparked in part by fear of a Prabowo presidency and his apparent popularity among young people, activists launched a campaign during the election to “oppose the forgetting” of all cases of human rights abuses that remained unaddressed (Hutabarat 2012).

With the electoral win of Jokowi over Prabowo, activists were optimistic of greater attention to the 1965 case because one of Jokowi’s electoral promises was to address past human rights abuses, including this case. To conclude this essay, I will reflect on the fiftieth anniversary of the violence in 2015, to consider the latest developments in activism for this case and signs of intensified resistance to these initiatives during Jokowi’s presidency.

THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE 1965 VIOLENCE

Anniversaries of major historical events can serve as triggers for significant reflection and sometimes action on cases of past violence. For this reason, there was some anticipation that in 2015, his first full year as president, Jokowi might finally seek to deal with the 1965 case. In May 2015, he announced the formation of a Reconciliation Committee that would investigate past human rights cases. The membership of this committee was, however, troubling because it included the Attorney General's department which had repeatedly refused to proceed with investigations, and members of the military and police who were for the most part the accused parties (Aritonang 2015). Already it seemed that Jokowi was making major compromises on addressing human rights cases.

Perhaps more disheartening for survivors was Jokowi's attendance on 1 October at the ceremony at the Sacred Pancasila Monument at Lubang Buaya, where he categorically rejected offering an apology to survivors (Suwanti 2015). It is not clear what prompted this statement, but due to his party's minority position in the parliament, he faced pressure to build a broader coalition of support. As a concession, he appointed the highly conservative General Gatot Nurmantyo head of the Indonesian military earlier in the year (Fikri 2015). Jokowi may well thus have made this statement to shore up support from military men and from Islamic constituencies.

In a show of force designed to consolidate the support of Islamic groups for anti-communism, the Military Commander for the district of Jakarta held a mass prayer at the monument on the night before the ceremony, which was attended by Army Chief of Staff and the families of the military victims of 30 September Movement (Pratiwi 2015). An official from MUI used the anniversary to call for the return of compulsory screening of the

docudrama “The Betrayal of the 30th September Movement/PKI” (“MUI Minta Film G 30 S-PKI Kembali Diputar”).

In recent years, former executioners have also been more vocal in rejecting historical justice for 1965 survivors. In a 2015 press interview, a self-confessed former executioner Burham, who goes by the name “The Butcher” and is now part of the *Front Anti-Komunis Indonesia* (Indonesian Anti-Communist Front) in Yogyakarta, stated that if the president made the apology, “this would be a betrayal” (Affan 2015). His reaction conveys the strength of conviction felt by some who had participated in the killings that what they did was righteous.

In 2015, anti-communist actions seemed to intensify. Members of local society, for example, forcibly cancelled a planned YPKP meeting in West Sumatra in February, on the basis that they were “afraid of a revival of PKI ideology” (Agustino 2015). The military and police also became more heavy handed. In the small city of Salatiga, Central Java, the police forced students from Satya Wacana University to withdraw from circulation an edition of their magazine devoted to local experiences of the violence and reports on mass graves and killings (Sukerdjoko 2015). In Bali, police threatened to cancel the permit for the Ubud Writers and Readers’ Festival scheduled for late October, if the organizers did not cancel three sessions, a film screening, a book launch, and a photo exhibition related to the 1965 violence (Ervianti and Anindita 2015).

Meanwhile activists tried to use the new global spotlight on the 1965 violence, generated largely through the acclaim of the 2012 film *The Act of Killing*, to their benefit. A group of activists headed by Indonesian human rights lawyers Nursyahbani Katjasungkana began to prepare an International People’s Tribunal (IPT) for the 1965 case to be heard by a panel of international judges in The Hague in November 2015. The IPT, built on the precedent of multiple people’s trials, aimed to perform the work that no trial in Indonesia

seemed capable of doing: hearing witness testimony, processing case submissions, and forming a judgement.

A host of government and military officials tried to dismiss it on the basis that the Indonesian government would handle the case. Representatives from NU and *Pemuda Pancasila* respectively, went so far as to call for the prosecution of those involved in the IPT on the basis that they were betraying the nation by holding this tribunal abroad (Adib 2015 and *Pemuda Pancasila* 2015). Indicative of the general tone of former military men serving in the government, former KOSTRAD commander retired General Luhut Panjaitan, who was then Coordinating Minister for Politics, Law, and Security and in charge of resolving past human rights cases, deflected attention from the tribunal. He suggested that it was just not clear who would be put on trial given generals were killed and communists were killed (Henschke 2015).

The purpose of the IPT was to increase pressure on the Indonesian government to address this past. Yet the only feeble step that the government took was to host the first national symposium on the events of 1965 in April 2016. The most senior military representative in attendance, retired Lieutenant-General Sintong Panjaitan, used the opportunity to cast doubt on the number of people killed, claiming that only one person died during the time he and his troops were in Central Java (Affan 2016). Minister Luhut took this denial further by asking the press where all the mass graves were from 1965, if indeed so many people had been killed. This outraged activists/survivors who had for years documented such graves (“Jokowi Perintahkan” 2016). The Minister reiterated that the government would never apologize for this case. These increasingly assertive statements by retired military men seemed a far cry from the steps taken by Presidents Habibie and Wahid over fifteen years earlier, to begin to recognize the suffering of 1965 survivors and to put an end to vengeful anti-communism.

In June 2016, two months after this symposium and as an anti-PKI symposium was being held in Jakarta, the judges of the ITP 1965 announced their findings that the Indonesian state was responsible for multiple crimes against humanity, describing the violence as “a genocide” (IPT 1965, 2016). They recommended that the government should quickly address these crimes.

At the time of writing (March 2017) no further progress has been made on this case. Meanwhile, survivors of the violence are rapidly ageing and passing away. Neither they, nor all activists, agree on what forms of historical justice should be applied. Yet they hope at the very least, as does Ibu Kadmiyati (quoted earlier in this essay), for a significant break from the past and for new histories of 1965 in which those targeted in the violence are no longer portrayed as sadistic and evil, and in which their suffering and the scale of violence against them is finally recognized.

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Abstract

In transitions from authoritarian to democratic societies, efforts to deal with human rights claims relating to past cases of state violence and associated justice measures are generally at the forefront of societal and governmental agendas. Yet in the case of post-Suharto Indonesia, demands for historical justice for the 1965 killings and imprisonments continue to meet with strong resistance. Using recent examples of Indonesian activism relating to this case, I examine the connection between historical justice and Indonesian democratization more broadly.

Author Katharine McGregor, The University of Melbourne.

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ENDNOTES

¹ YPKP was founded by the high profile former political prisoner and novelist Pramoedya Anata Toer, the prominent former Gerwani activist and political prisoner Sulami, and the political exile Umar Said, who campaigned for years abroad in France for justice for this case. YPKP had strong representation around Indonesia and adopted several strategies to gain redress.

² Komnasham, *Pernyataan Komnasham tentang Hasil Penyelidikan Pelanggaran HAM yang Berat Persitiwa 1965-1966*, at:

http://stopimpunity.org/content/stopimpunity/eksekutif_summary_peristiwa_1965_4.pdf.

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