

Indonesia: Drop all charges, end judicial harassment against human rights defenders Fatia Maulidiyanti and Haris Azhar

(Bangkok/Jakarta, 25 March 2022) – Human rights groups the Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA), the Commission for the Disappeared and Victims of Violence (KontraS), and 23 organisations condemn the judicial harassment of human rights defenders Haris Azhar and Fatia Maulidiyanti.

‘We call on the police to put an end to the judicial harassment of Fatia and Haris for sharing the research conducted by civil society. The Indonesian government must fulfill its human rights obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and its Constitution that safeguards freedom of expression and opinion,’ FORUM-ASIA said.

On 18 March, Fatia and Haris were named suspects in an alleged defamation case filed by Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan, the Indonesian Coordinating Minister for Maritime Affairs and Investment, after they revealed the Minister’s controversial involvement in business operations in the gold mining sector in Papua Province’s Intan Jaya Regency¹. The following day, Fatia and Haris were summoned by the police for questioning.

Luhut filed a criminal and civil lawsuit for IDR 100 billion (USD 7 million) against the human rights activists last year, which stemmed from an investigative report Haris posted on YouTube, mentioning Luhut. The Minister cited the Electronic Information and Transaction Law, an ambiguous law that criminalises free speech in the country.

The report divulged that Luhut was affiliated with PT Madinah Qurrata’ain, a mining company, which holds the Derewo River Gold Project in Intan Jaya Regency. Luhut is a shareholder of PT Toba Sejahtera, whose subsidiary PT Tobacom Del Mandiri or PT Tambang Raya Sejahtera is said to have acquired a 30 per cent stake in PT Madinah Qurrata’ain². Intan Jaya Regency is a conflict-ridden area in Papu. Frequent clashes between the Indonesian security forces and armed groups in the area have resulted in the deaths of innocent civilians and displaced thousands of residents.

Given this alarming development, it is likely that an arrest warrant could be issued against Fatia and Haris at any time. This is not the first time Fatia and Haris were targeted by state forces over charges filed by Luhut. Early this year, police officers arrived to fetch Fatia and Haris at their respective houses for interrogation³. FORUM-ASIA and many organisations denounced Luhut’s judicial harassment of Fatia and Haris, which clearly aimed to silence the activists.

The plight of Fatia and Haris highlights the country’s trend of repressing human rights defenders for holding public servants accountable within Indonesian President Joko Widodo’s government. Last August, Presidential Office Chief of Staff Moeldoko filed a defamation complaint against two activists of the Indonesian Corruption Watch for exposing Moeldoko’s involvement in racketeering the government’s Ivermectin rollout and rice export program.⁴

¹ <https://jakartaglobe.id/news/luhut-files-defamation-complaint-against-rights-activists>

² <http://l.forum-asia.org/FatiaHarisSept21>

³ <http://l.forum-asia.org/FatiaHarisJan22>

⁴ <https://en.tempo.co/read/1500901/moeldoko-files-police-report-against-icw-over-ivermectin>

'We urge the Indonesian government to immediately drop the charges against Fatia, Haris, and other activists and cease any efforts by public officials to criminalise the fair criticisms of human rights defenders and civil society organisations. Cases like these further erode the country's civic space landscape and deteriorate the country's compliance with international human rights standards. Despite these threats, we will continue to monitor the performance of public officials and call them out for their wrongdoings,' said the groups.

About Fatia and Haris

Fatia Maulidiyanti is the Coordinator of the Commission for the Disappeared and Victims of Violence (KontraS). Haris Azhar is the Co-Founder of Lokataru Foundation.

Signed by:

1. Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)
2. Asia Alliance Against Torture (A3T)
3. Asian Resource Foundation (ARF)
4. Association of Women for Awareness & Motivation (AWAM)
5. Awaz Foundation Pakistan – Centre for Development Services
6. Balay Alternative Legal Advocates for Development in Mindanaw (Balaod Mindanaw)
7. Banglar Manabadhikar Suraksha Mancha (MASUM)
8. Centre for Communication and Development Studies (CCDS)
9. Commission for the Disappeared and Victims of Violence – Komisi untuk Orang Hilang dan Korban Tindak Kekerasan (KontraS)
10. Defence of Human Rights Pakistan
11. Dignity-Kadyr-kassiyet (KK)
12. Jagriti Child and Youth Concern Nepal (JCYCN)
13. Maldivian Democracy Network (MDN)
14. Medical Action Group
15. Musawi
16. Odhikar
17. People's Empowerment Foundation (PEF)
18. People's Watch (PW)
19. Programme Against Custodial Torture and Impunity (PACTI)
20. Suara Rakyat Malaysia (SUARAM)
21. Taiwan Association for Human Rights (TAHR)
22. Task Force Detainees of the Philippines (TFDP)
23. The Indonesian Human Rights Monitor – Inisiatif Masyarakat Partisipatif untuk Transisi Berkeadilan (Imparsial)
24. Think Centre
25. Vietnamese Women for Human Rights

About FORUM-ASIA:

The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) is a network of 85 member organizations across 23 countries, mainly in Asia. Founded in 1991, FORUM-ASIA works to strengthen movements for human rights and sustainable development through research, advocacy, capacity development and solidarity actions in Asia and beyond. It has consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council, and consultative relationship with the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights. The FORUM-ASIA Secretariat is based in Bangkok, with offices in Jakarta, Geneva and Kathmandu.

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