

Press Statement

Stop Stigmatization of LGBTI

LGBTI people are not murderers

The case of the murder and mutilation of Heri Santoso (40 yrs) in Jakarta a few weeks ago has become a national debate. The murder suspect, Verry Idam Henyansyah (30 yrs), better known as Ryan, first acknowledged killing Heri out of jealousy when arrested. He eventually confessed to the murder of at least 10 other persons. Being a serial killer and allegedly gay soon gave way to the wildest speculations whether gays are more prone to crime and cruelty.

Mutilation of murder victims usually attract a lot of media attention but the case of a gay mutilating another gay attracted even more publicity; no day has passed since the discovery of Heri's remains without TV stations and newspapers dedicating substantial space and air time to this case. Why is this?

Pro and counter opinions have cropped up; not the least the opinion of 'experts' like psychiatrists, psychologist, criminologists and other academicians are wildly sought after. Among the most negative ones are:

- Mr Erlangga Masdiana, criminologist of the University of Indonesia, in Tempo [21-27 July 2008; p. 117]: "... that homosexuals commit sadistic killings should not surprise anybody if you know their world. People with deviant sexual behavior are used to be close to criminal world. They are used to make threats and to use force if someone who is invited to intimacy refuses the offer. With such habits they can commit more serious crimes, of course."
- Mr Dadang Hawari, a well-known psychologist, in Berita Kota [20 July 2008]: "... homosexuals have stronger feelings of jealousy and they can act quite violently when their wishes are not granted. Gays/homosexuals have a deviant sexual behavior and their aggressiveness is therefore beyond normal."

There are, fortunately enough, also more balanced opinions regarding the link between sexual orientation and crime:

- Mr Reza Indragiri, a forensic psychologist, in Warta Kota [22 July 2008]: "...there is no relationship between sexual orientation and serial killings. To the contrary, killings among heterogeneous [heterosexual, red.] couples are much more frequent than among homogeneous [homosexual, red.] couples."
- Psychologist Ms Tika Bisono, when interviewed by Arus Pelangi [23 July 2008] about the prevailing view in the society that homosexuals are inherently brutal, said: "...this [violence, red.] is only related to someone's personality, not to the group he belongs to. His background is the determining factor, not his sexual orientation."
- And Dr. Maya Trisiswati also said: "Sexual orientation does not automatically lead to criminality."
- A lecturer in legal psychology, Dr. Yunita Kartikasari, said: "... crime can be committed by all kinds of groups, because basically every individual has potentially negative

emotions that can lead to criminality; it all depends on the triggering factor, not on the particular group he belongs to.”

The fact that the general public still tend to stigmatize LGBTI persons is not surprising. More surprising is the fact that so many academicians still have negative views against homosexuality. This all despite the fact that the international world has moved on in the past four decades.

- The American Association of Psychiatrists declared in 1972 that homosexuality should be erased from the category of mental disorders.
- The World Health Organization [WHO] declared in a resolution in 1980 that homosexuals are not considered mentally ill anymore.
- Those two opinions finally reached the ears of Indonesian psychologists; the Indonesian Guidelines to Categorization and Diagnosis of Mental Disorders, Third Edition (1993), ceased to mention homosexuality as a mental disorder.

Yet, old ideas die hard; the Pandora’s box has been opened and ordinary people, religious leaders and law enforcers alike have made pronouncements and statements which are very detrimental to LGBTI persons.

- A gay named Darso told “Nonstop” Daily [25 July 2008]: “my friend was arrested in Senen area [Jakarta] during a police razzia [in our neighborhood, red.]. The reason was not clear. I am now afraid to be kicked out from my apartment. Since the Ryan affair started all gays have become afraid.”
- Indeed, the local police of Senen area has started checking the rent apartments where many gays live. This action was directly led by police chief A.K.P. Kasmono [Nonstop; 25 July 2008]. In the same article, the Metropolitan Police Chief Irjen. Adang Firman stated: “The Metropolitan police does not discount that it will conduct raids against [hangout places of] homosexuals.”
- Even the (Moslem) para-military group Hisbullah, Fery Alfiansyah Noor, joined in the chorus: “Homosexuality is like an infectious disease. That is why the local government should be tough with the usual gay hangout places. If they are left free, they will ultimately infect the larger population.” [Nonstop, 25 July 2008]
- The chairman of the Association of Ulama of Jakarta, Ashraf Ali, declared: “Gays and lesbians will 100% sure go to hell, because same-sex relationships are forbidden by the Koran.” [Nonstop, 25 July 2008]

To counter all these unsavory pronouncements coming from experts, religious leaders and law enforcers, plus the unprovoked actions by the local police, we want to declare the following:

- Since the Indonesian Law upholds the principle of non-discrimination and equality before the law, and the fact that there are no substantial regulations regarding sexual orientation, the police razzias against gays and arrests by the local police are groundless and illegal. These actions have violated Article 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which Indonesia already ratified through the Act No. 12/2005.

- If the Indonesian government allows these razzias and arrests by local police and/or Moslem para-military groups, then the government has violated Article 5 of the same covenant; it does not condone interpretations that authorize the state, groups or individuals to conduct acts in order to destroy the rights and freedoms recognized in the covenant.

Based on the above mentioned, we want to express:

- Our deepest sympathy to all the families of the victims of Ryan.

Then we exhort:

- To the Indonesian justice court to process the case of Ryan according to spirit of the Indonesian Law, in line with the current laws.
- To the police force to refrain from arbitrary razzias and arrests against LGBTI persons, either conducted by the police themselves or by religious para-military groups.
- To experts, religious leaders and law enforcers to refrain from statements that reinforce the stigmatization of LGBTI persons; this severely inhibits the efforts to fulfill and protect the rights of LGBTI persons as true citizens.

Jakarta, 28 July 2008.

Concerned Civil Society for the Elimination of Stigmatization of LGBTI / Masyarakat Sipil Peduli Penghapusan Stigmanisasi Kelompok LGBTI:

Arus Pelangi, Ardhanary Institute, Forum Komunikasi Waria, Institute Pelangi Perempuan, Jurnal Perempuan, Kalyanamitra, Kapal Perempuan, Kartini Network, Koalisi Perempuan Indonesia, LBH Jakarta, LBH Masyarakat, Our Voice, Yayasan Srikandi Sejati, Violet Grey [Banda Aceh], Komnas HAM, PBHI, KontraS, IKOHI.