

Massacre of Talangsari in Lampung, 1989

On 7 February 1989, a military attack occurred in a village residence of Talangsari Lampung, continued with arbitrary detention and arrest, torture and forced disappearances. The shooting in the series of attack claimed hundreds of victims died, injured, or disappeared. Talangsari residence was also burnt out and closed for public. After the attack, hundreds of people were unfair prosecution. They were charged with subversive, this applied to all victims of Lampung incidents who are in Lampung, Jakarta, Bandung, Central Java, East Java and West Nusa Tenggara.

In 1998 when the national political scene experienced a change, some of the victims and the victims' families started to litigate the past abuse that were kept all along and demand justice. The fight is carried out through various efforts such as meetings with the fractions in Indonesia's House of Representatives and the government, or by pressuring the National Commission on Human Rights (Komnas HAM) to conduct investigation.

In its course, this fight stumbled upon many obstacles, especially politically. Furthermore, there is a strong effort from those responsible for the case –through divide and conquer politics-to take advantage from the victim's poverty by offering an Islamic reconciliation still choose legal process as a solution. Those who accepted, try to stop other victims from demanding the resolution of this case.

The effort to stop the case resolution was also committed by the government by appointing AM Hendropriyono as the Head of National Intelligent Body (BIN) in 2001. As the impact, there has been military intervention from the military officials to close the case. Afterwards, local military and civil officials, active or retired, started to visit the victims not to bring up the case ever again. The village officials also took part in the guerilla movement in Talangsari to visit the victims one by one and ask them to forget about resolving the case while giving money to the victims.

In 2001, Komnas HAM formed the Inquiry Team for the Talangsari Massacre of 1989 and appointed Mr. Koesparmono Irsan as chairperson. The investigations, however, were not immediately implemented. Initially, there were many obstacles to resolving the case of Talangsari. One such obstacle was the availability of deals made with the victims by parties responsible for the massacre which were based solely on "islah," or Islamic peace agreements in the form of monetary compensation. While some victims received "islah," others preferred to resolve the issue in the legal arena. In January 2004, the inquiry process for Talangsari began and Komnas HAM appointed Hasballah M Saad as the new chairperson. The Inquiry Team failed to make progress beyond analyzing pre-existing data by early 2005. In February 2005, Komnas HAM proceeded to re-establish the Inquiry Team under law No.39/1999. The team included members Enny Suprpto, Samsudin, Ruswiyati Suryasaputra and Muhamad Farid. The group conducted field research around Talangsari Lampung and began calling witnesses. After preliminary witness interviews, the team determined that human rights violations had occurred in the form of summary killings, torture, arbitrary detention and arrest, as well as violations of freedom of expression. The team did not finish their report until 2006 as they were waiting for replies from the Military Sub-Area Command (Korem) Garuda Hitam and the Commander of Military Area Command Sriwijaya.

The pro-justicia Inquiry Team resumed work in June 2007, as specified by a letter from the Head of Komnas HAM (National Commission on Human Rights) No: 15/Komnas HAM/V/2007 dated 1 May 2007 (later modified by Letter No: 28/Komnas HAM/IX/2007 dated 12 September 2007).

During a six-month period beginning in June 2007, the team determined that there were at least 94 victims in Lampung, Central Java and Jakarta as a result of the massacre. The team is currently waiting for permission from the Attorney General to begin an exhumation process in Talangsari Village in search of additional victims. The Inquiry Team has called former members of the military and police department to serve as witnesses in their continuing investigation.

Individuals who have answered the team's call include B. Suyitno (former Vice Head of Local Police in Lampung), Edward Aritonang (former Head of Regional Police of South Sumatera) and Soedome (former Chief of Command for the Restoration of Security and Order/Pangkobkamtib). Soedome's account indicated that the Military Sub-District Command (Koramil), the Military Sub-Area Command (Korem), the Military Area Command (Kodam), the former Chief of Armed Forces Staff (KSAD) and the former Commander of Armed Forces (Panglima ABRI) were responsible for the events of the Talangsari Massacre of 1989 that occurred in Jakarta and Lampung. Soedome stated that he did not know exactly what had occurred in the field but shouldered the blame on Mr. Hendropriyono, the acting Commander of Military Sub-Area Command at the time.

Subsequently, the Komnas HAM Inquiry Team called three military officials as witnesses: Wismoyo Arismunandar (former Chief of Military Area Command of Diponegoro), Mr. Hendropriyono (former Commander of Military Sub-Area Command 043 Garuda Hitam) and Try Soetrisno (former Commander of Armed Forces). However, despite multiple calls, none of these individuals appeared.

There has been an effort by Komnas HAM to call the witnesses (subpoena) under law No. 39/1999 of the National Commission on Human Rights article 95 and the Law no 26/2000 on Human Rights Court. Therefore, the Central Court of Jakarta as one of General judicial systems has authority to implement of subpoena. Komnas HAM has met with the Head of Central Court Jakarta, Mrs. Andriyani Nurdin, three times, most recently on 25 June 2008. In the June 25th meeting, Mrs. Andriyani stated that the Central Jakarta Court does not have authority to implement a subpoena, but the human rights court.

On 26 March 2008, President SBY gave his support to the efforts for resolving cases of past abuse, including the Talangsari Massacre of 1989, in a meeting with several victims and members of KONTRAS. The campaign still faces opposition however, as evidenced by the Minister of Defense's statement that he warned the former military officers not attend the meeting with the Komnas HAM Inquiry Team for lack of legal remedy in the Talangsari case.

On 11 June 2008

