

Party of National Liberation Unity: a new left party formed in Indonesia

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The spirit of unity filled the air as democratic organisations agreed to build a Party of National Liberation Unity (KP-PAPERNAS). Trade unions, student organisations, progressive political parties and poor people's organisations agreed on a common platform and strategy at a conference on June 20-21.

Participants agreed that imperialism and its agent in Indonesia, the government of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, are generating the main crises across the nation. Neoliberal policies have plundered the country's natural resources, devastated its national industry and impoverished its people. It has also removed the nation's independence, sovereignty and dignity.

As the elite's profits-first policies intensify, people's expectations of them are decreasing. Resistance is increasing, but it is fragmented and not yet a significant force. Given this, the conference agreed on the urgent need to unify, and therefore strengthen the progressive movement.

The conference set up a preparation committee for KP-PAPERNAS. "Liberation" reflects a desire to re-appropriate that word, and "unity" refers to the party's strategic project to broaden and deepen the democratic movement.

The following set of demands for the new party was adopted by the conference.

- Repudiate the foreign debt which has absorbed vast amounts of the state budget and prevented the state from modernising the industrial and technological sectors. It also deprives social programs such as education and health of funding; in 2006, debt repayment absorbed more than 27% of the budget (11% for interest payment and 16% for principal). Only 7% has been allocated for development.
- Nationalisation of the oil, gas and electricity industries. The country's energy resources must be controlled by the state with priority given to supporting national industry and public services. Commercialisation will only be considered if the domestic industry and the people's needs are fulfilled. The electricity company has increased its tariffs because of the high price of petroleum and gas. But this accelerates the devastation of national industry, leading to more job losses and greater impoverishment.
- Create jobs through a national industrialisation program. Job creation must not depend on foreign and private investment. Workers' rights have been removed as the government pushes for lower wages. Financial and economic resources are needed for a new national industrialisation of basic industries ? steel, machinery, electricity, agriculture, pharmaceutical, automotive, train, shipping and telecommunications. This program will require a vast number of workers who, in turn, will benefit from having the work. Workers must also have free access to education and health care.

The national founding members of the KP-PAPERNAS are the People's Democratic Party, the

Automotive Workers Union, the Indonesian National Front for Workers Struggle, Unity of Workers Struggle, the National Student League for Democracy, Unity of Buddhist Student, the National Peasant Union, the Urban Poor Union and the Indonesian Transportation Workers Union.

Joining at a local level are: Belawan Transportation Workers Union, (Medan-North Sumatra), Movement of the Poor, Labuhan Batu (North Sumatra), Lampung Street Vendor Union (Lampung Province), Jogjakarta Student Community, Solidarity of Indonesian Students, Amasutra, Lespek Boul, Central Sulawesi Union of the Poor, Forum of Lembata Youth (South East Nusa, NTT), Peasant Community of Rotanolet, Peasant Community of Liavua, Forum of Latena Community and People's Alliance for Decent Housing.

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