

Indonesia: Advocacy group threatens hunger strike if domestic worker law not deliberated

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Jakarta — The National Network for Domestic Worker Advocacy (Jala PRT) is threatening to hold a hunger strike in front of the House of Representatives (DPR) complex in Jakarta if the government and the DPR do not start deliberating the Draft Law on the Protection of Domestic Workers (RUU PPRT) by February 14.

Jala PRT Coordinator Lita Anggraini emphasised that it is important to immediately begin deliberating and enact the draft law because cases of violence against domestic workers continue to occur every day.

“We will continue to target that it be ratified, and if by February 14 it has not yet been initiated for deliberation by the government, we will hold a hunger strike and mass fast”, said Anggraini during an interview in front of the DPR building on Wednesday January 1.

“On February 15 we will hold a hunger strike in front of the DPR building”, she added.

Anggraini also questioned why the government and the DPR had not yet deliberated or enacted the RUU PPRT, adding that the cases of violence against domestic workers that have surfaced recently are just the tip of the iceberg.

She also touched on the issue of Indonesia having the largest number of domestic workers in the world after China. Domestic workers also represent a buffer for Indonesia’s macro and micro economy.

“Does the DPR have to continue waiting for more victims to fall, how many more victims does the DPR need, for PRTs to continue suffering and working under slavery like conditions?”, she asked.

Anggraini also conveyed a number of demands related to the RUU PPRT and said that domestic workers are entitled to normative rights and protection like other formal workers.

In addition to this, domestic workers need a legal umbrella, bearing in mind the majority of domestic workers are women and also children who are vulnerable to exploitation.

Anggraini said she hoped that the RUU PPRT would regulate supervision that involves neighbourhood association and community unit (RT/RW) heads. Also that domestic workers can receive rights such as training, dispute resolution mechanisms and social protections guaranteed by the government.

“So if we talk about a mental revolution, yes, it should start in the home”, she said referring to President Joko “Jokowi” Widodo’s much touted campaign slogan of Indonesia needing a “mental revolution”.

The RUU PPRT has stalling in parliament for 19 years and has been repeatedly included then removed from the DPR's National Legislation Program (Prolegnas).

President Widodo has been asking that the law be ratified since mid-last year. He has also asked Justice and Human Rights Minister Yasonna Laoly and Labour Minister Ida Fauziyah to lobby the DPR to immediately begin deliberating the law, which has now been included in the 2023 priority Prolegnas.

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Translated by James Balowski

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