

“Why has Indonesia’s draft domestic workers bill never been passed?”

Friday 13 September 2024, by [SAPTOHUTOMO Aryo Putranto](#) (Date first published: 11 September 2024).

Aryo Putranto Saptohutomo, Jakarta – In the midst of Jakarta’s hustle and bustle on Tuesday September 10, right in front of the House of Representatives (DPR) building in Senayan, Central Jakarta, dozens of domestic workers (PRT) gathered to demand the enactment of the Draft Law on the Protection of Domestic Workers (RUU PPRT).

The draft law, which has sat idle in the DPR for two decades, has become a symbol of domestic workers’ long wait for justice.

The RUU PPRT was first submitted during the DPR’s 2004-2009 period and was proposed again at each of the following DPR periods. Although it was included in the five-year National Legislation Program (Prolegnas), the bill is often not a priority.

In June 2020, the DPR’s Legislation Board (Baleg) successfully completed discussion on the bill. To this day however, the enactment of the bill has been repeatedly postponed.

National Network for Domestic Worker Advocacy (Jala PRT) staff advocacy member Jumisih revealed her disappointment with the RUU PPRT never being ratified.

“For 20 years the RUU PPRT has been left hanging without explanation”, said Jumisih on the sidelines of the protest action in front of the parliament.

The uncertainty surrounding the bill’s status has had a broad impact on the more than 10 million domestic workers in Indonesia and abroad. They continue to be under the shadow of legal uncertainty and without adequate protection.

“The fate of 10 million domestic workers is very much determined by this law”, said Jumisih.

Jumisih believes that the bill should be ratified immediately because domestic workers need clear legal protection.

“We demand that the DPR leadership prioritise humanitarian values, because all the results of an analysis show the positive impacts of the ratification of the RUU PPRT for the nation and the state”, said Jumisih.

On the other hand, the DPR is known for passing other laws in a matter of hours. A member of the DPR from the National Awakening Party (PKB) faction, Luluk Nur Hamidah, has criticised the attitude of legislators who seemed to be sidelining the RUU PPRT.

“In the case of other laws they were able to be passed less than seven hours”, said Hamidah some time ago.

Debates on the draft law are often trapped in a complex vortex involving the interests of various different factions.

On the other hand, support for the ratification of the bill has grown among civil society and human rights organisations, which see the urgency of protecting of domestic workers as a step forward for humanity.

Domestic workers however, continue to try and fight for their interests.

With the permission from employers, the domestic workers gathered yesterday in front of the parliament holding bright red posters and banners with messages such as “Watch over it until it’s legalised, enact the RUU PPRT in September 2024”.

Their action in front of the DPR not only involved speeches but also symbolic actions such as sweeping the road, showing their willingness to “clean away” the obstacles towards justice.

And the action was not only about the ratification of the draft law, but also about prioritising human values ??in all public policies.

The domestic workers, with the support of various different parties, are determined to not stop until the justice they have long been waiting for is realised.

Notes:

According to an article in the Jakarta Post on February 1, 2023 (<https://www.thejakartapost.com/opinion/2023/02/01/analysis-indonesians-drag-feet-on-improving-lot-of-domestic-workers.html>), a politician from the House said that the DPR’s legislation body had agreed on the content of the RUU PPRT in 2020 but it was rejected the Golkar Party and the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P). According to the source, the political parties are reluctant to pass the bill as it would lead to the formalisation of domestic workers. This would then become a burden for those employing domestic workers (such as lawmakers) since it would oblige employers to pay domestic workers the minimum wage, provide health benefits, overtime and severance pay. There are an estimated 4.5 million domestic workers in Indonesia and at least 90 percent of them are women and a large proportion are underage.

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Translated by James Balowski

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