

# Military Elections?

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Indonesia's Presidential election goes into its first round on July 8, 2009. This second election process in Post-Suharto Indonesia is an important step in the country's short democratic history, yet it remains flawed with shadows of the country's past military rule. Two of the three presidential candidates have made a very careless choice by nominating former military leaders from the Suharto regime to run as their vice presidential running mates.

Presidential candidate Megawati Sukarnoputri, the daughter of Indonesia's first President Sukarno is running for office with Prabowo Subianto as the candidate for the vice president's office. Under Suharto's New Order regime, Prabowo served as head of Kopassus, the Army Special Forces Command. This special unit conducted unconventional warfare, counter-insurgency operations and is known for its numerous human rights atrocities, in particular during Prabowo's reign of the Kopassus forces. A military court found him guilty for his role in the disappearances of student protestors during the 1998 civil uprising. Prabowo continues to benefit from old business, family and military ties.

Presidential candidate Yusuf Kalla from the Golkar Party decided to run with retired General Wiranto as his vice presidential candidate. Wiranto is accused of committing crimes against humanity in East Timor. He served his indictment in East Timor after the Serious Crimes Unit under the UN Transitional Authority in East Timor had gathered evidence of the atrocities that took place under his command.

Military rule in Indonesia was overthrown by the 1998 uprising. Yet, how much has the country overcome impunity and military elitist rule since then? Certainly a large share of political decisions and executive orders are in the hands of democratically elected persons, but if major violators of human rights such as Prabowo or Wiranto remain not only unpunished and are allowed to run for top political positions, the strength of the rule of law is questionable.

Most countries make clean criminal records a precondition to run for political office. In Indonesia's case, it is not only ordinary crimes that speak against the candidature, but human rights atrocities and crimes against humanity. When military rulers can be elected for civil offices to help rule a country from the top level of the government while the country suffers from impunity and ongoing military violence, then civil rights in Indonesia hang on a thread.

A civil democracy remains illusive and so does the respect for human rights and victims rights to remedies. In face of this, Indonesia still has a long way to go until it can be recognized as a country that has overcome its past. Until then military influence remains a major factor in internal politics. Indonesia is not at war with any country, but with its many citizens. The last response this situation requires is the reestablishment of military careerists to extend kratocracy in Indonesia.

The AHRC is of the view that credible investigations of all allegations of criminal involvement of presidential candidates and vice presidential candidates are unavoidable in Indonesia. Permitting actors such as Prabowo or Wiranto to take part in high ranking government posts can be considered not only as a constitutional shortcoming, but also as an attack on civil rule in one of the world-s largest democracies.