

Indonesia: Families of rights victims only invited to meet presidents before elections: Suciwati

Thursday 22 September 2022, by [WIRYONO Singgih](#) (Date first published: 19 September 2022).

Singgih Wiryono, Jakarta — The wife of the late human rights activist Munir Said Thalib, Suciwati, says that Indonesian presidents have never seriously tried to solve the assassination of her husband.

During the administration of Indonesia's sixth president, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) for example, Suciwati was disappointed because Yudhoyono never officially released the findings of the government sanctioned Fact Finding Team (TPF) into the Munir case.

A year before the 2009 presidential elections (pilpres), on March 26, 2008, Yudhoyono invited Suciwati to meet with him at the State Palace.

"I kept asking why SBY only organised the meeting in the lead up to the presidential elections? Is this some kind of magic spell to extend his term in office?," asked Suciwati in her new book titled "Loving Munir".

On that occasion, it was not only Suciwati who was invited, but also the families and lawyers of the victims of other human rights cases such as Teti, the mother of a child who died during the Trisakti student shootings in 1998 in Jakarta.

Then there was Tirta, a victim of the 1984 Tanjung Priok shootings, Sumarsih and Azhar from the 1989 Talangsari tragedy in Lampung, victims of the May 1998 riots in Jakarta and victims of the 1997-1998 abductions of pro-democracy activists.

Yudhoyono's promises at the time were very sweet. Suciwati remembers Yudhoyono firmly emphasising that the cases of gross human rights violations would be resolved through an ad hoc human rights court.

"Those who are guilty, must be punished in accordance with their crimes. Those who have committed minor crimes, their punishments will be minor. Those who committed serious crimes, must be punished severely. Those which are not guilty, yes of course, they won't be punished," said Suciwati imitating Yudhoyono's words.

Yudhoyono's spokesperson at the time, Andi Mallarangeng, held a press conference. In his statement to the mass media, Mallarangeng said that Yudhoyono would form a special team to resolve cases of past gross human rights violations during his second term in office.

The elections took place and Yudhoyono was reelected. But it was as if his pledge to establish the special team just evaporated.

The presidency changed. President Joko “Jokowi” Widodo, the next person to hold the position of head of state then did the same thing as Yudhoyono.

A year before the elections, on May 31, 2018, Widodo invited the families of victims of gross human rights violations, who had been taking part in Kamisan (Thursday) actions in front of the state place each week to meet with him.

Upon hearing of Widodo’s invitation a year before the next presidential election, Suciwati declined.

Her decision to refuse the invitation was reinforced by Widodo’s appointment of Wiranto as Coordinating Minister for Security, Politics and Legal Affairs.

Likewise, AM Hendropriyono was appointed as an advisor on the transition team under the Widodo administration.

“How could I possibly trust that Jokowi would resolve cases of gross human rights violations? It was just rational,” said Suciwati.

However several family members of the victims of gross human rights violations still met with Widodo, including Sumarsih, whose son was killed in the 1998 Semanggi I student shootings and Ho Kim Ngo, the mother of Yap Yun Hap, a student killed in the 1999 Semanggi II student shootings.

Families of victims in the Trisakti, the 1997-98 forced disappearances, the Talangsari and Tanjung Priok cases also met with Widodo.

During the meeting Widodo was accompanied by Presidential Chief of Staff Meoldoko, Presidential Spokesperson Johan Budi and an official from the State Secretariat.

But the views of the families of the victims were not heard directly. Widodo said he would study the dossiers that had been given to him first.

“And in the days that follow, in coming weeks, coming months, I ask that you mothers contact Pak [Mr] Moeldoko,” said Suciwati imitating Widodo’s words.

“The result was, of course, empty or a lie. As has been demonstrated to this day, the cases of past gross human rights violations have never found justice,” said Suciwati.

Notes In 2003, Wiranto was indicted on charges of crimes against humanity by a UN-backed court for his role in the Indonesian military violence during East Timor’s 1999 independence referendum.

A 2003 report by the government’s own National Human Rights Commission (Komnas HAM) also implicated Wiranto in the anti-Chinese riots in May 1998 in Jakarta.

Former State Intelligence Agency (BIN) chief AM Hendropriyono, a close ally of Megawati Sukarnoputri — the chairperson of President Joko Widodo’s ruling Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) — was cited in US diplomatic cables leaked in 2011 as being involved in the planning of Munir’s murder.

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