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Indonesia: UN Committee questions government on protection of children's rights

The Indonesian government must respond to questions on its progress in protecting and promoting children's rights, as guaranteed under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, an international treaty to which Indonesia is a state party.

In its "List of issues", published on 30 October 2013, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the expert group tasked with overseeing compliance with obligations under the Convention, questions Indonesia on a range of areas ahead of its review before the Committee in 2014 in Geneva. Non-governmental organizations, including Amnesty International, had provided written information on the situation of children's rights ahead of the Committee's pre-session working group which was held on 7-11 October 2013.

The following are some of the questions raised by the Committee:

- The Committee asked the government for information on steps taken to "end harmful practices against girls", including female genital mutilation, early marriages and polygamy;
- The Committee asked about "legislative and institutional efforts undertaken to eradicate discrimination against girls" and requested information on awareness raising measures taken to eliminate gender stereotyping;
- The Committee asked the government to provide information on "steps taken to ensure access to reproductive health counselling and services for adolescents and to medical services for pregnant adolescents";
- The Committee asked about efforts to "end all forms of discrimination" against children, including those belonging to minority religious groups, such as the Ahmadiyya and Shi'a communities;
- The Committee asked the government to provide an update on the draft Domestic Workers Protection Bill, which is currently before Parliament. The Committee further asked the government to respond to reports of abuse of child domestic workers and of child forced labour; and
- The Committee requested the Indonesian government to provide information concerning children from Timor-Leste (formerly East Timor) who were separated from their families during the Indonesian occupation (1975-1999) and in the context of the 1999 independence referendum. In particular, the Committee asked the Indonesian authorities to "respond to information that many such children still live in Indonesia and have not yet been re-united with their parents".

The Indonesian government must submit its replies to the Committee by 1 March 2014. The Committee will then review Indonesia's compliance with its obligations under the Convention during its 66th session in May/June 2014.

Non-governmental organizations can submit information to the Committee ahead of the review. Those interested in doing so should contact Child Rights Connect at secretariat@childrightsconnect.org. Information on the 66th session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, including Indonesia's state report, is available at: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/crcs66.htm>

Amnesty International's submission on Indonesia to the pre-session working group provided the Committee with information relating to female genital mutilation; gender stereotypes and early marriage; sexual and reproductive rights; children from minority religious groups; domestic workers; and children and armed conflict. The submission is available at: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA21/027/2013/en>