



For immediate release – 20 December 2007

Indonesia: Concerns with Right to Information Law

ARTICLE 19 has written to President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono of Indonesia calling on him to do all within his power to ensure that the draft right to information law currently being discussed by the Indonesian Parliament and government respects international standards. The letter specifically highlights the need for oversight bodies to be independent, for the law to cover State corporations and for sanctions for ‘abuse’ of information to be removed from the law.

“The Indonesian authorities should ensure that the right to information law which is finally adopted is consistent with international standards and that it gives practical effect to the right to access information held by public bodies.” said Dr Agnès Callamard, Executive Director, ARTICLE 19.

A right to information law has been under consideration in Indonesia for over eight years but it now seems likely that one will actually be adopted soon. The Indonesian Parliament has put forward a relatively progressive draft, but the government seems intent on introducing a number of restrictive changes to that draft before it is passed into law.

The ARTICLE 19 letter highlights three particular concerns with the draft Indonesian right to information law which have also been identified by our partners and other local groups. The first is ongoing efforts by government to dilute the guarantees of independence of the Central and Provincial Information Commissions in the Parliamentary draft. Given that these bodies will be tasked with mediating and adjudicating information disputes between individuals and the government, it is essential that they not include government representatives. Second, the government is seeking to remove State corporations from the ambit of the law, contrary to the practice in most countries with right to information legislation. Finally, the draft law imposes severe penalties, potentially including imprisonment, on information users who ‘abuse’ information. This is contrary to the approach taken in other right to information laws and, if left in the law, could have a serious chilling effect on those wishing to access information.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

- For a copy of the letter, go to: <http://www.article19.org/pdfs/letters/indonesia-foi-letter.pdf>
- For more information: please contact Toby Mendel, a19law@hfx.eastlink.ca, +1 902 431-3686.
- ARTICLE 19 is an independent human rights organisation that works around the world to protect and promote the right to freedom of expression. It takes its name from Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees free speech.