

PURIFYING INDONESIA, PURIFYING WOMEN: THE NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND THE 1965–1968 ANTI-COMMUNIST VIOLENCE

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Introduction

In May 29, 2006, Komnas Perempuan, the Indonesian National Commission that advocates for the rights of women, met with a delegation of nineteen women survivors of the 1965–1966 anti-Communist violence to consider their official complaint. The moment was historic: these women officially broke their silence of forty years. Between 1965 and 1968, they had been the victims of horrible acts of violence committed by other Indonesians, their neighbors, colleagues, and even friends. Participating in para-military and vigilante groups, the perpetrators had murdered between half and one million Indonesians and incarcerated more than one million. Accused of harboring Communist sympathies or being active members of the party, many of these women spent decades in jail. For forty years, the Suharto government had forbidden any mention of their plight. Their local communities, at times even their own families, had ostracized them. They had been demonized based on their direct, indirect, or alleged involvement in the Indonesian Communist Party

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(Partei Kommunis Indonesia or PKI). The rationale for the massacres, incarceration, and silence was that Communists polluted Indonesian society and made the country impure. By virtue of their gender, women were especially susceptible to allegations of impurity, which gave their adversaries permission to rape and sexually abuse them.

Komnas Perempuan is an abbreviation that stands for Komisi Nasional Anti Kekerasan terhadap Perempuan (The National Commission against Violence against Women).¹ A government-sponsored organization, it was set up on October 15, 1998, after the collapse of the oppressive Suharto regime (1966–1998). When in the spring of 1998, during the transition period from dictatorship to democracy, large-scale communal riots erupted, many women were sexually assaulted.² This was not the first time such patterns of violence and sexual assault had occurred. It had been an open secret that during military operations the regime's security forces violated human rights on a staggering scale. Military personnel targeted women in places the government considered rebellious, such as Aceh, Papua, and Timor Lorosae. All through the 1990s, civil society groups insisted that the state start to accept responsibility for this particular form of gendered violence. The press and many average Indonesians observing the 1998 violence noticed that there was an eerie resemblance between what was happening at the time and previous attacks on women during the 1965–1966 events. As a result, women activists lobbied for the creation of an organization that would focus on basic human rights of women alongside the Indonesian Commission for Human Rights that is called KOMNAS HAM (Komisi Nasional Hak Asasi Manusia).

In this article, I focus on some of the strategies developed by Komnas Perempuan to address the plight of the 1965–1966 victims. By 2005, many of the women survivors were elderly and had lived most of their lives as outcasts. Their numbers were dwindling fast and there was a paucity of information about them. The main sources about their lives are interviews recorded by local organizations that try to collect the women's stories. Especially after 1998, several of such initiatives emerged all over Indonesia. Typically, they locate and interview survivors of the 1965–1966 violence to document their stories. For example, a network of organizations for Human Rights and Women's Rights in the city of Solo, Middle Java, called Koalisi Keadilan dan Pengungkapan Kebenaran (KKPK) or the Coalition for Justice and Truth Telling, collected stories about how the

victims survived and dealt with the massacres. Their findings are collected in a book and a movie.³

The mandate of Komnas Perempuan is to report gender-based human rights abuses and create public awareness campaigns for Indonesian society. This task is not easy since it requires sustained efforts to highlight violence against women in the media. From the beginning, one of its main goals has been to change the pervasive mindset that blames the victims of sexual violence and makes their plight invisible. This attitude explains why so few cases are reported to the authorities. The consistent effort of Komnas Perempuan to inform the public has resulted in the substantial increase of the number of reports to police from 22,512 cases in 2006 to 259,150 in 2016 and 405,178 cases in 2018.⁴

Komnas Perempuan consists of multiple partner organizations (called *mitra*) that operate on the national, provincial, county, and local levels. These partners represent a large spectrum of organizations advocating and protecting women's rights. The fifteen commissioners who constitute its National Board in Jakarta are elected from across Indonesia via a rigorous vetting process that prioritizes their experience in women's rights work.

In 2005, the Komnas Perempuan leaders decided to take on the cause of the victims of the 1965–1966 events, which was a bold and controversial step. Speaking about the 1965–1966 events was taboo and more or less forbidden. Relying on their networks, Komnas Perempuan identified 122 victims of the 1965–1966 violence for their report. Their final report contradicted the dominant narrative broadcast by the Suharto regime over nearly half a century, which blamed the Communists as the sole perpetrators and villains of the violence. The Komnas Perempuan report concluded that the 1965 Tragedy remained the single most controversial problem in Indonesian society that continues to cause trauma and distrust among Indonesia's citizens. It called for the creation of spaces that allowed victims to pursue their rights to truth, justice, and healing. The organization decided not to single out individual perpetrators whose names became known via the women's official testimonies (Monitoring Report 176) but to place primary responsibility for orchestrating the violence on the State (Monitoring Report 178). It pointed to the State as the power responsible for upholding human rights and the healing of national life (Monitoring Report 185).

Officially, Komnas Perempuan is a governmental organization, created by Presidential Decree. One of its tasks is to investigate all forms of violence against women, past as well as present. Its mandate is to fulfill victims' right to truth, justice, and redress (Monitoring Report, 21). It also aims to contribute to the healing of victims (Monitoring Report 175). In the case of the 1965 victims, this mandate meant that when Komnas Perempuan accepted to investigate the women's complaint, it launched a full investigation into the events that had transpired during 1965–1968. The women's report came out five years before its counterpart, the Indonesian Commission for Human Rights (KOMNAS HAM), revisited the violence in 2012, producing an 850-page report.⁵ The Komnas Perempuan report details the stories of different types of torture and abuse the women suffered. It concludes that the various ways of abusing the women constitute crimes against humanity and holds the State responsible for not acting on national reparation, healing, and the restoration of victims' rights (Monitoring Report 11–18). As I will explain shortly, several of the strategies the report mentions to address the women's trauma are not limited to the 1965–1966 victims but apply to all women victims of sexual violence.

As other survivors of atrocities, the women felt a burning need to tell their stories in order to release painful memories and trauma and to pursue a deep yearning to fulfill a deep yearning. While the violence against these victims was particularly extreme, patterns of vilifying certain groups within Indonesian society continue to this day. Since new cycles of violence against women and, for example, religious minorities are bound to happen, Komnas Perempuan leaders consider it of the highest importance to expose the underlying roots by detailing the victims' stories, as well as to help them cope and overcome trauma.

The 1965–1966 tragedy

In spite of considerable scholarly and secondary literature, the events that led to the 65 massacres remain unclear. According to the conventional story, vividly retold by Geoffrey B. Robinson, during a coup attempt in the night of September 30 to October 1, 1965, six Indonesian army generals and one lieutenant were kidnapped and murdered (Robinson 2018). When day broke, the army led by one of the few surviving generals, future President Suharto (1966–1998), took control and issued a statement that

members of the Communist Party, PKI, had been behind the murders. Shortly after, army members and civilians started to hunt down those accused of being Communists. At the time, the PKI party had around three and a half million registered members and an estimated 20 million Indonesians were affiliated with the Party via mass organizations such as the women's group Gerwani. The vast majority of the victims were ordinary people—farmers, teachers, civil servants, laborers, and artists—with no knowledge of what had transpired that September 30. As Robinson observed: “the attack on the PKI and its allies was not based on the presumption of actual complicity in a crime, but rather on the logic of *associative* guilt and the need for *collective* retribution” (Robinson 2018:7).

While the majority of killings and arrests took place in Central and East Java, as well as North Sumatra, local populations in some of the Christian dominated islands equally participated in hunting down Communists (Kolimon *et al.* 2015). Moreover, on the predominantly Hindu island of Bali numerous atrocities took place (Hobart 2014). Indonesia is a multi-religious nation with around 87% of the population professing Islam. A 1951 law had required Indonesians to identify with one of the five official religions (Muslim, Catholic, Protestant, Hindu, or Buddhist) on their identity card. However, during the 1960s, especially in rural areas, many Indonesians combined their faith with indigenous, local rituals. They were called *abangan* and often placed in contrast to practicing Muslims called *santri*. Several Muslim organizations, for example, the Muhammadiyah fought against the mixing of indigenous rituals with Islam, aiming to create a more unified, normative form of Islamic practice. When anti-Communist rhetoric increased, many *abangan* officially converted to Islam or Christianity. This move did not save them from murder or arrest when the anti-Communist purges started (Saptaningtyas and Dirdjosanjoto 2004). In the majority of Muslim areas, the most ardent participants in the purification of society were para-military groups connected to local chapters of large Muslim organizations, especially those of the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). Nowadays, the common consensus among scholars studying this period is that the widespread and synchronized violence did not erupt spontaneously but that these groups were part of a systematic and planned military operation. This connection guaranteed that their actions would go unpunished (Crouch 1988, Kammen and McGregor 2012, Robinson 1998, Cribb 1990).

The killings, arrests, and stigmatization of all those connected with the Left created the foundation for Suharto's long-lasting authoritarian regime called the New Order that controlled Indonesia between 1966 and 1998. During that period, research and public debate about the 1965 coup and the ensuing atrocities were banned. The government created an official discourse that gave credit to the perpetrators who had been led by a self-sacrificing army (Eickhoff *et al.* 2017). Few of the victims dared to speak about their experiences openly. Indonesian poet Goenawan Mohamad captured the situation with the words "silence produces legitimacy" (Zurbuchen 2005: 49). Starting from 1984, the government mandated annual viewing of the anti-Communist government propaganda film *Pengkhianat G30S/PKI* (The Betrayal of the September 30 Movement) in schools and on the state television channel, TVRI. According to the storyline of this film, no blood was shed but the Communist influence on society was eliminated during a legal and peaceful operation. It continues to shape the country's mindset (Emont 2015, Wargaderedia 2018).

After 1998, Indonesia transitioned from a dictatorship to a democratic nation. Liberalization of the media allowed for a hesitant public debate about what really happened during the 1965 events. A younger generation began to realize the level of brainwashing during their high school education, where 97% of the students had watched the anti-Communist film. Children and grandchildren of surviving victims and perpetrators started to ask questions and interview family members. As a result, a sense of communal guilt and a desire for accountability slowly emerged among certain groups, especially among youth linked to Muslim organizations such as the NU.

Purifying society

Purifying society was one of the main arguments that helped the Army convince millions of Indonesians to turn on their neighbors, friends, and even family. Muslim leaders preached that Communists were rendering Indonesia impure because they were against religion. This theme still rules. In 2015, Jakarta's chief of police stated: "Islam and Communism cannot exist together" (Emont 2015). The idea that Indonesian society needed purification from anti-religious propagandists gave para-military groups connected to Muslim and other organizations permission to

involve in murdering, torturing, and imprisoning at least two million Indonesian citizens.

Their actions were justified by various fatwas or legal rulings issued by groups of Muslim scholars across the nation. As early as 1957, a fatwa declared Communism *haram*, strictly forbidden. Several fatwas followed forbidding marriage and other forms of contact between Muslims and Communists (Khoemaeni 2016). Eradication of the PKI was presented as a religious duty. Some NU leaders quoted Chapter two (Al-Baqara), verse 191 of the Qur'an to "Kill them wherever you overtake them and expel them from wherever they have expelled you" (Fealy and McGregor 2012: 121). After the violence began in October 1965, a conference of religious leaders in Aceh, with a group of military officers in attendance, issued a fatwa stating that anyone who died in fighting the PKI would be considered a martyr (Salim 2008: 144–145). Communists were declared atheists and it was easily forgotten that many of the victims, similar to the majority of the population, were nominally practicing Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, or Hindus.

Due to their gender, women were specifically targeted. Shortly after the murder of the military leaders, the army started a vicious campaign of spreading rumors that women members of the PKI-related women's organization Gerwani had participated in savage attacks on the murdered generals. They had allegedly indulged in orgies with the bodies of the generals, cut off their penises, and danced around naked. According to fabricated sources, the women had polluted and desecrated the dead bodies. After dumping them in a deep well called *Lubang Buaya* (crocodile hole), the women had joined the rebels in a nightlong orgy. The goal of these stories was to impress on the general public that these women were barbaric and had broken all the rules of proper women's behavior: to be "polite, well mannered, and feminine" (Monitoring Report, 60). They were the most impure of all.

Australian researcher Annie Pohlman has argued that the new regime's ultimate goal was to portray the Communist Party as an organization that "indoctrinated women in all manner of sexually deviant behaviours" (2017: 200). The accusations that Communist women had acted with sexual license and sadistic violence placed women and women's bodies at the center of the 1965–1966 violence. It resulted in widespread sexual violence against women of all ages accused of being related to the

PKI (Pohlman and Saleh 2015, 2016, 2017:201). The stories gathered by Komnas Perempuan, Pohlman, and others show that in some cases women remained subjected to such violence for decades.

Under international pressure, by the end of the 1970s, many prisoners were released while remaining under strict supervision. However, women prisoners enjoyed little freedom as many of them continued to be raped regularly. Village heads and military leaders exploited many as personal servants and sex slaves. The general population often looked away, tolerating these acts of impunity, referencing the women's low sexual morals and the inferior position of former political prisoners. Ex-prisoners had the code ET (*eks-tahanan* or *eks-tapol*: former prisoner, or former political prisoner) stamped on their identity cards. This label meant that their movements were restricted and that they did not have the basic rights Indonesians enjoy. They could not live among the general population and were not allowed to travel freely. Their children inherited this status, and even their grandchildren could be banned from working in public service, the military, and the press. Most jobs were closed to them, and their children were denied education. As Katharine McGregor observed: "Children and grandchildren of those killed and of political prisoners in Indonesia were stigmatized in society as being of an 'unclean environment'" (2013: 353). Decades later, some grandchildren could be denied permission to register for the pilgrimage to Mecca on the premise of being "unclean" (McGregor 2013: 354).

Women's impurity

In her famous work *Purity and Danger*, Mary Douglas observed that defilement occurs in relation to a systematic ordering of ideas (2002:42). When groups or individuals do not respect the conventional boundaries set by society, the threat to the social equilibrium creates forms of pollutions (Kristeva 2000: 21) Religious systems in particular provide frameworks for beliefs and practices relating to purity as symbolic expressions (Katz 2005: 109). A large part of the Indonesian population still considers Communism as a disturbance and threat to the social order, especially since in the mind of the majority it is joined with atheism. Within religions, upright moral behavior often connects to a high level of purity of the individuals involved. A 2013 Pew Study Report found that, especially, in Southeast Asia, more than nine-in-ten Muslims believe that an

individual's morality is linked to belief in God, which means that Communists are of low morals.⁶ Denial to go on the Hajj is one example of how family connection to an immoral, polluting entity not only prevents full participation in society, but for a Muslim, can become an obstacle for religious practice as well.

Considering these Islamic teachings in conjunction with local culture, these women suffered from a triple layer of impurity, in body as well as in spirit. The first layer was the label of Communism; the second was the general population's assumption that victims of sexual violations are impure; and the third layer derives from cultural beliefs and religious teachings about the inborn nature of a woman. Within this frame of reference, the female political prisoners subjected to rape were impure on all three accounts. Across Indonesia, a tenacious prejudice prevails that blames the victim. Many reports published by Komnas Perempuan document the mechanisms by which victims of rape are blamed for their predicament. In many cases a woman is accused of inviting the attack, even though their attackers are usually in positions of power vis-à-vis the victim. In the case of the former women prisoners, their supervisors abused their authority to violate them with impunity after release from prison.⁷ Members of their village, neighborhood, and even their own family would not interfere assuming that somehow the women had invited their own violations. When women prisoners shared their ordeal with their closest family, they would sometimes be asked to leave the home of their parents or siblings. There are even cases where a husband and wife both survived years of detention, that the husband refused to accept what had happened to his wife and cast her out as "a whore and immoral" (Monitoring Report 157).

The deep-seated prejudices and expectations about women's proper behavior are based on an amalgam of religious teachings as well as local and cultural beliefs and practices. Local culture buttresses the opinion of women as unclean and of lesser spiritual value. Although gender culture is not static across the many islands and cultures of Indonesia, classical texts that remain influential until today teach that a woman has to comply with her husband's wishes and sacrifice herself for the well-being of her husband and children (Smith-Hefner 2019).

Sexual slander about Gerwani women ignored religious affiliations but arose from the deep-seated ideas about a woman's essential or innate

nature (*kodrat*). Many of these ideas derived from classical Javanese texts written at medieval royal courts that are still being referenced in the Islamic handbooks taught at Indonesian Qur'an schools. They portray a woman as weak and submissive; her salvation depends on the husband's spirituality (van Doorn-Harder 2006: 41–42). According to Muslim feminist scholar Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, who teaches at the Islamic University in Cirebon and is one of the founders of the Fahmina Institute, an Indonesian NGO working on gender, democracy, and pluralism from an Islamic perspective: in Javanese culture, “women's virtue was judged entirely by how much pleasure they brought to their husbands' lives ... a woman belongs to her husband. She must surrender her entire life to her husband's desires” (van Doorn-Harder 2006: 108–109). Local Islamic teachings elaborate on these convictions. For example, texts that are still widely used in the traditional Qur'an schools state that God granted men superiority to women in marriage, economics, politics, and knowledge (Anwar 2018:218). Some quote the Islamic Tradition (Hadith), according to which the Prophet Muhammad once said, “women are men's prisoners” (Anwar 2018: 221).

Following Islamic Jurisprudence, a woman is impure when menstruating or experiencing other forms of bleeding that need ritual washing. According to various Islamic interpretations, a state of bodily purity is imperative for ritual participation. External purity reflects internal purity and relates to one's moral agency (Katz 2005). States of minor pollution occur after bodily functions such as using the bathroom, and need to be addressed by performing the *wudu'*, the ritual washing Muslims perform several times a day before ritual prayers. While the *wudu'* involves running water over one's limbs, menstruation causes major pollution and requires a more comprehensive washing ritual. However, based on certain *Hadith* texts, Muslim scholars have stressed that the *wudu'* ritual also points at inner cleansing and washes away sin and purifies the body for the Day of Judgment (Katz 2005: 117–119). The exterior purification of the body thus points to its internal purity (Katz 2005: 121). According to Marion H. Katz, “The *wudu'* ritual thus becomes a concentrated exercise in moral regeneration, culminating with a reaffirmation of one's faith” (Katz 2005: 125).

Due to their alleged corrupted and decadent nature paired with an “atheist” mind and a body defiled by rape, Communist women were

perpetually in a state of pollution. Rape sometimes caused additional bleeding, causing further pollution. The goal of sexually violating them was to destroy physical integrity and any sense of morality. They were made worthless in their own eyes, as well as to society and its institutions, including religious institutions. While not all communities refused these women participation in worship, some Muslims certainly assumed that they should not do so. Furthermore, intense feelings of shame and guilt prevented the women from attempting to participate in public life, including religion. The label of impurity kept them from performing the primary method of purification, ritual washing. This could have severe consequences, as in some cases, decades later, grandchildren could be prohibited from the Hajj, a ritual that can only be performed in a state of purity. Some Muslim leaders even teach that an impure state prevents entry into heaven.

One of the survivors, *Ibu Astuti*, describes this state of limbo as follows:

They tortured us, the women PKI, with sexual abuse, it was sexual abuse against us. They attacked us by destroying our morals, our dignity as women. As women, we became worthless because they destroyed [our dignity], trod on it, we were worthless after that. We were made worthless! People thought that [about us], society thought that, that's what it was like! Normally, we'd be worth 100%, but things turned a complete 180 degrees. We weren't valuable to other people any more (Pohlman and Saleh 2015: 70–71).

The fabricated discourse about the Communist women that the army created during the 1960s was the preamble to what later became official conservative gender ideology of the Suharto regime. Indonesian feminists called the ideology “state ibuism,” “state motherhood.” It taught that women existed to serve husband and nation. It rested on traditional ideas of womanhood, upholding the ideal that the family was the basis of state and society in which women were subordinate to men. During the 1950s, PKI-related Gerwani women had been the most active in advocating the rights of women within the marriage, at the workplace, and when seeking education. Even Suharto’s predecessor, Sukarno, struggled with Gerwani women forcing them to subordinate their agenda that focused on empowering women to the nationalist project (Smith-Hefner 2019: 85). By

vilifying Gerwani members, Suharto also succeeded in linking the idea of women's political activism with sexual and moral depravity (Wieringa 2002: 281, Pohlman and Saleh 2012, 2017). This move not just rendered these women unworthy members of society but also brought other women organizations in line. Suharto's regime ended in 1998, but nowadays, the label of "Communist" continues to be a powerful tool to discredit women activists.

However, during the 1990s, the writings of influential Muslim feminists such as Riffat Hassan and Amina Wadud became available in Indonesia, and religiously based feminist ideas percolated through civil activist groups into newly founded women's studies departments at universities across Indonesia. Muslim feminists started to study primary and secondary texts to learn about human rights, gender equality, and the influence of religion and culture. They reinterpreted the Qur'an and other authoritative texts to empower women. Christian feminists did the same with the Bible. These ideas and activities created a growing cohort of scholar activists who realized the importance of exposing the gender aspects of the anti-Communist atrocities. It was impossible to understand "the violence itself and its legacy for Indonesia," without taking into account the role of sex and gender (Pohlman and Saleh 2015, 2017: 205).

Using different channels such as op-eds in the press, classes at Islamic universities, and civil rights organizations, Muslim feminists started to develop alternative interpretations of the Qur'an and the tradition to counter prejudiced teachings of women's secondary nature (Anwar 2018, van Doorn-Harder 2006). Women's agency is derived from concepts such as becoming a servant of God (*'abd*) and the practice of correct doctrine and worship (*ibādah*). Women's independence comes from observing virtues such as sincerity (*ikhlas*), God-consciousness (*taqwā*), and righteousness (*sālihāt*) (Anwar 2018: 227). This focus on practice and worship requires the performance of ritual prayers five times a day, including the ritual washing or *wudū'*. To activists, it appeared unthinkable that any woman would be denied participation in the ritual worship based on misogynist ideas of purity.

Accountability and responsibility

After the fall of Suharto, several initiatives emerged to encourage national healing and to demand that the numerous human rights

violations during the New Order regime be revisited (Kimura 2015: 77). On March 15, 2000, the president of Indonesia and long-time chair of the NU Abdurrahman Wahid issued a personal apology for the murders of 1965–1968 (Eickhoff *et al.* 2017: 449). However, his apology was not translated into concrete initiatives. Those responsible for the violence have never been prosecuted, let alone punished. Army leadership has prevented any legal recourse for the victims. The Indonesian equivalent of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission that held public hearings about human rights abuses failed. In 2004, a body called The Commission for Truth and Reconciliation was launched, but despite the reality that “pressures for transitional justice have appeared both externally and internally,” the Commission was abolished (Kimura 2015: 90). When in 2014 Joko “Jokowi” Widodo became president, activists hoped that there would be serious attempts to redress past wrongs and again requested an apology from the state. During an official ceremony, which commemorated the slain generals, Jokowi explained why this was not an option: “Apologize to whom?” he asked, “Who should forgive whom when both sides claim to be victims?” (Emont 2015).

One of the pressing questions facing the Komnas Perempuan leaders remains what type of solutions can satisfy the victims of the anti-Communist purge. Part of Indonesia’s younger generation is asking similar questions. A sense of intergenerational guilt confronts them with issues of fairness and equity (Baumeister *et al.* 1994: 251). Although they are not directly responsible for the atrocities, their mindsets were shaped by prejudices that allowed the acts of aggression to take place and could make it possible that similar episodes of violence happen again. Their proof was the 1998 riots. They are also drawing a direct line to recent trends of decreased religious tolerance that have led to lethal attacks on groups labeled as deviant, such as the Ahmadiyah and Shi’ite Muslims (McGregor 2013: 358). Communists were called “deviant” (*sesat*) as well. Whether or not members of their family were involved in the 1965–1966 Tragedy, the cloud of an unaddressed history of violence hangs over the lives of the younger generations.

Philosopher Iris Young has suggested that in cases of historical injustice in which a state refuses any form of accountability or responsibility and when many of the injured parties are no longer alive, it is preferable to apply what she calls the “social connection model of responsibility”

(Young 2013: 178). This model does not assign blame or fault but aims for social reformation and policy reform. Similarly, anthropologist John Borneman defines reconciliation as a departure from violence (Borneman 2011:61). But in current-day Indonesia, violence against women continues to saturate society. Therefore, this reconciliation has not yet happened. Truly diminishing various forms of violence against women would require a social revolution. Minimally, it calls for changes to mindsets that are biased against women, an exercise that will take several generations.

Young's social connection model is helpful to understand the basic approach of Komnas Perempuan, which seeks to create new social structures and to restore a woman's dignity on the basis of women's experience. Helping women regain their dignity and self-worth is the first objective, with changes to prevailing ideas about women's intrinsic secondary status to follow from that. First, Komnas Perempuan seeks to empower the victim and to encourage victims to support each other. But it also looks for opportunities to translate local ways into changes for women's rights in the legal system. Local cultures and conditions provide resources for the oppressed. Despite their focus on victims, they do not ignore state institutions and political actors, whose impunity encourages continuity and repetition. For example, in the border area between Malaysia and the province of Kalimantan, a Komnas-related group found that the local army leaders were the main facilitators in trafficking young girls.⁸

The women victims of 1965–1966 were allowed to tell their stories for the first time in any detail in the Komnas Perempuan report of 2007. Their testimonies and memories provided tools for an entire new generation of Indonesians struggling with their status as members of an implicated community. Memory and storytelling follows the model suggested by John Borneman, which outlines four modes of accountability in order to refigure the losses: (1) retribution, (2) restitution/ compensation, (3) performative redress (for example, apologies), and (4) rites of commemoration (Borneman 2011: 3). In Indonesia, performative address and rites of commemoration remain the most feasible. However, every year the organization mentions newly found information about “unsolved impunity” in its annual reports. Komnas Perempuan also has worked with various governmental agencies to guarantee medical care for the victims. It refers

to the 1965–1966 data as it continues building programs to prevent torture.⁹

Concerning the 1965–1966 women victims, Komnas Perempuan's main strategy seeks a form of rehabilitation that is not just based on justice or monetary compensation, but involves the rehabilitation of the women's humanity. Supported by a cohort of Indonesian Muslim, Christian, and other feminists, Komnas Perempuan seeks to lift the stains of shame and impurity by challenging conventional discourses and prejudices about women. For this exercise, they refer to feminist works that deconstruct and reinterpret traditional misogynist texts. The reeducation of the public, of men and women, is one of their express goals. In the end, it is not society that purifies the women, but the women purify each other as well as themselves. They regain their voice by supporting each other. They find the strength to hold up a mirror to society, in which the perpetrators see themselves, realizing that they are impure, rather than the victims they defiled. Nina Nurmila, Professor of Gender and Islamic Studies at the State Islamic University (UIN) in Bandung, and one of the Komnas Perempuan commissioners expressed this new reality in a meeting with me on June 22, 2019: "Of course, the victims are always pure. It is the perpetrator who is impure!"

In their testimony, many of women who fell victim to the anti-Communist purges speak to their intense experience of shame, which forced them to avoid the main streets of their villages and neighborhoods and to walk through the fields instead of having to deal with hateful looks or gossip from the neighborhood. Regaining their voice was a breakthrough they did not imagine possible during their lifetime. Their autobiographical accounts accelerate and continue to appear.¹⁰ Their voices are finally heard, most powerfully attested by the Dialita Women's Choir organized by survivors of 1965 repression, who were awarded the Gwangju Prize for Human Rights for their contributions to "showing the path of reconciliation and healing through music" in May 2019 (Dipa 2019). They received this prize mostly for helping to remove the stigma of impurity from these victims of 1965. Their personal plight for women is being translated into campaigns for greater justice and accountability and provides impetus to educate a younger generation in finding new understandings of the rights of women on the basis of religious texts.

Notes

1. <http://www.komnasperempuan.or.id/>
2. <https://web.archive.org/web/20000920073842/http://www.serve.com/inside/digest/dig86.htm>
3. For more information about the book and the movie see: <https://www.spekham.org/menemukan-kembali-indonesia/> [accessed June 24, 2019].
4. Komnas Perempuan, “Labirin kekerasan terhadap perempuan: dari perkosaan berkelompok hingga femisida (*femicide*), alarm bagi Negara untuk bertindak tepat. Catatan kekerasan terhadap Perempuan tahun 2016. Komnas report. (Jakarta, March 7, 2017) 10.
5. Only the executive summary is available: Ringkasan eksekutif: Hasil Penyelidikan Tim Ad Hoc Penyelidikan Pelanggaran Ham Yang Berat Peristiwa 1965–1966. http://lama.elsam.or.id/downloads/861153_Ringkasan_Eksekutif_Penyelidikan_Peristiwa_65.pdf
6. The World’s Muslims: Religion, Politics and Society. <https://www.pewforum.org/2013/04/30/the-worlds-muslims-religion-politics-society-morality/> [accessed June 24, 2019].
7. C.F. Komnas Perempuan 2005, “Sistem Peradilan Pidana Terpadu Yang Berkeadilan Jender dalam Penangan Kasus Kekerasan Terhadap Perempuan,” Jakarta.
8. Interview with Ose, Interim Director of the K3JHAM group in Semarang, June 11, 2016.
9. Interview Komnas Perempuan Vice-Chair Yuniarti Chuzaifa and Commissioner Mariana Amir ud-Din, June 24, 2019.
10. <https://www.spekham.org/menemukan-kembali-indonesia/> and <https://tirto.id/ikhtiar-kebenaran-dan-rekonsiliasi-kasus-65-di-solo-dan-palu-dczY> [accessed June 24, 2019].

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