

## **Indonesian students seek govt OK to fight extremism**

### **Interfaith group wants Jakarta to lift rules restricting moderate student bodies on 'radical infested' campuses**



*Students attend a tolerance and anti-discrimination protest during International Tolerance Day in Jakarta in this Nov. 16, 2018 file photo. One of the protesters holds a banner that says: 'Respect for differences strengthens national identity'. (Photo by Konradus Epa/ucanews.com)*

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An alliance of interfaith student groups has called on the Indonesian government to issue a regulation that allows them to tackle extremism on campuses across the archipelago. Indonesia, which celebrates its Independence Day on Aug. 17, lives under the shadow of extremism and many universities remain hotbeds of Islamic militancy, they say.

The country will not enjoy its independence and will not grow intellectually, unless radical ideology is banished from campus life, said the alliance known as the Cipayung Group. Established in 1972, in Cipayung, West Java, the alliance includes various student bodies, including the Indonesian Catholic Students Association, Indonesia Muslim Students Movement, the Indonesian Christian Students Movement and the Union of Indonesian Buddhist Students among others.

It aims to promote democracy, as well as respect for different religion and cultures. "Radicalism, intolerance and identity politics are flourishing among young intellectuals on campuses," Robaytullah Kusuma Jaya, chairman of the Indonesia Muslim Students Movement, told ucanews.com.

"They have formed cells on campuses that have grown systematically over the past two decades, with many groups taking control of academic facilities, offering scholarships to students wanting to study abroad, and helping for their members become lecturers," he said. They have invaded campus life and use religious divisions to spread radical ideologies, he added.

"This must end. The government must amend laws that will allow the Cipayung Group to conduct campus activities to counter this trend," Juventus Prima Yoris Kago, chairman of the Catholic Students Association told ucanews.com.

He said interfaith students want to help government efforts towards campus deradicalization, but existing regulations such as a 2002 directive prohibiting cross-university organizations conducting activities on campuses, prevents them from doing so.

He said the government must take a firm policy on the formation of students otherwise undesirable groups will take advantage of them. “The government must not allow radical groups to exert influence, particularly in recruitment and electing student leaders in universities,” said Kago.

Moderate groups within a university are restricted in what they do because more often than not they face intimidation from radical rivals, said Alan Christian Singkali, general secretary of the Indonesian Christian Students Movement.

This is why allowing larger organizations such those in the Cipayung Group to exert influence on campuses makes sense, he said.

Stanislaus Riyanta, a political analyst at the University of Indonesia, said state universities were more prone to radicalism because they tend to have more students than private institutions.

He agreed with the Cipayung Group that the government and universities must allow or make it easier for moderate student groups to conduct activities.

If they want to strengthen the national ideology of secularism then this is an obvious path to follow, he said.