

## PERSONAL EXPLANATION

**HON. CAROLYN B. MALONEY**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, February 12, 1999*

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, during rollcall vote No. 18 (S. Con. Res. 7), honoring the life and legacy of King Hussein of Jordan, I was unavoidably detained. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea."

## HUMAN RIGHTS

**HON. JOSEPH R. PITTS**

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, February 12, 1999*

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, this week, I chaired a Congressional Human Rights Caucus Briefing in which expert witnesses from Indonesia showed photographic evidence and reported on the situation facing their people.

Attacks on ethnic and religious minorities, particularly Chinese minorities, are continuing and in some instances appear to be orchestrated. Ninety-five churches have been burned or destroyed since May of 1998.

Today I am submitting record and statements from this week's briefing. These statements help to note the severity of acts being committed in Indonesia.

## STATEMENT FOR MEMBERS BRIEFING ON CURRENT HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES IN INDONESIA

Good morning ladies and gentlemen. It is a privilege for me to welcome you to the Congressional Human Rights Caucus Briefing on Current Human Rights Abuses in Indonesia. The extreme nature of the recent human rights abuses in Indonesia has shocked the world. Reports show that churches and mosques have been burned, businesses of ethnic minorities have been looted and destroyed, students were arrested and killed, and women and girls have been brutally raped and sometimes murdered.

Today's hearing is sponsored by the Congressional Human Rights Caucus. The Caucus, co-chaired by Congressman John Porter and Congressman Tom Lantos, is a bipartisan group of members dedicated to advocating for the protection of human rights worldwide. The situation in Indonesia has long concerned Human Rights Caucus Members and many American people because of the long-standing human rights violations in East Timor. It was not until more recently, however, that the world watched as the horrors perpetrated in East Timor spread throughout Indonesia.

As you may know, early last year, riots broke out in major cities in Indonesia. As people stood and watched in horror, rioters looted and destroyed businesses, burned churches, and caused mass destruction. Then, last May, the world stood horrified as it learned of the perpetration of mass rapes. Well-documented reports suggest a systematic plan on the part of the rapists to terrorize the Chinese ethnic community. Groups of unknown assailants would descend on a community, enter businesses, demand money, rape women who were present (often while uttering anti-Chinese rhetoric), and loot and sometimes burn the businesses.

Despite the change in the leadership of Indonesia's government, human rights abuses

continue. Unfortunately, the stories of situations similar to last year's tragedies have not ceased in Indonesia. Killing and rioting is still occurring. In January of this year, 40 people were murdered in a village in Ambon. Attackers in other areas of the island of Ambon stopped individuals in the streets, asked them what their religion was, and upon the admittance of Christian beliefs, killed the individuals. Reports suggest that approximately "20,000 people sought refuge in military bases, police barracks, churches and mosques" in riots in which "seven mosques, nine churches, and 570 buildings were burned." Similar reports have come from Banyuwangi, Ketapang, Poso, and other regions of Indonesia.

Other reports give details that during the rioting in the region known as the "Spice Islands," in one week 15 churches and 11 mosques were badly damaged or completely destroyed. Local inhabitants of attacked areas often state that villagers lived in harmony until outsiders came to their homes and, armed with various weapons, instigated the various riots and attacks on ethnic and religious minorities. These attacks continue throughout Indonesia.

Many human rights reports suggest that the riots of 1998 and 1999 were orchestrated by a particular individual or group of individuals. The question in people's minds is who or what is behind the terrible violence sweeping through the various regions of Indonesia?

Unfortunately, a large portion of the Indonesian population is afraid to report what they have seen. However, today, we will hear from some courageous individuals who desire to see justice and national reconciliation in their country so that stability, based on democracy, will be the norm in Indonesia.

The actions of the perpetrators of rape, murder and other crimes and human rights abuses are cowardly and should be internationally condemned. In addition, the government of Indonesia must engage in a thorough investigation to bring to justice those who are responsible for the horrifying human rights abuses occurring even today.

I applaud the courage of today's panel and thank them for their willingness, though possibly putting their own lives in danger, to share their knowledge about current human rights violations in Indonesia and who or what might be behind those abuses. The Congressional Human Rights Caucus encourages you in your pursuit of justice and protection of fundamental human rights for the Indonesian people.

## IN A NUTSHELL: LAW AND SOCIO-POLITICAL PROBLEMS IN INDONESIA

Many articles have been published by the media related to the regime of Suharto. At that time, violations against human rights happened frequently. Aside from the cases in Aceh, East Timor, Irian, Java and other areas, there were many other violations of human rights. At that time people were afraid of speaking out about the violations of human rights, especially related to the abduction of some activists who spoke out on human rights and democracy. After Suharto collapsed the mass media finally revealed the kidnapping committed by certain personnel of Kopassus (the case of General Prabowo).

The law enforcement during Suharto's reign was so worrisome. The judges were influenced by the authorities, although they denied it. They were even "bought" which is very difficult to prove legally. However, this can be witnessed empirically and it has been

an open secret through the publication of the press. The violations against human rights such as the cases of Marsinah in East Java, Hanoch Ohee in Irian Jaya, Ghandi Memorial School, Kedungombo Dam, Bintang Pamungkas, Mochtar Pakpahan, and other cases, published by the mass media speak for themselves. The law at that time seemed to be upright but justice and human rights were neglected.

The socio-political condition was overpowered by Suharto. Nobody dared to express their disagreement except a few people, such as Budiman Sudjatmiko, Bintang Pamungkas as well as Mochtar Pakpahan. The political parties at that time endorsed all the actions of Suharto. However, recently, they have started opening their mouth and honestly admitted that they did not have the courage to speak out at that time because they were frightened of Suharto's power. In brief, Suharto was a dictator.

Thus is the short explanation about justice, socio-political and human rights during the regime of Suharto. It is indisputable that corruption, collusion and nepotism were committed in all sectors of public life as the truth has now been disclosed by the press. To say that all government officials were involved, including the Armed Forces is not an exaggeration at all, though it is hard to prove legally.

What happens after Habibie comes on stage (de facto), because judicially Suharto's decree as President, has not been revoked. Essentially and fundamentally, it can be said that there has been no meaningful change occur except the freedom of the press. The freedom of democracy has been born with the permission to establish a hundred political parties. Despite all of this, the pattern of thinking and behavior of President Habibie keeps following the pattern of Suharto, with several exceptions. Some observations have to be given to the socio-political conditions. Another point needs to be discussed related to the religious life in Indonesia.

The law enforcement related to political issues is really ambivalent. After Suharto stepped down, more and more breaches of law were committed by the masses, let alone robbery and other violent crimes. They invaded the places such as fertilizer and rice warehouses, as well as plundering stores selling basic daily needs. Places of worship (churches) were destroyed and burned down. The government officials "accused" of committing corruption, collusion and nepotism were picketed by the people, who do not respect and acknowledge the authority of the local government officials. Even government and police offices were destroyed and burned, as happened to Lakarsanti in Surabaya (1999) and in some other places. People have acted the way they liked because they are fed up of being treated unfairly, and also because the spreading rumors were incorrect, manipulated and distorted. The law enforcement and the security agencies seem hesitant to take action or if they act, it is too late. It is unsurprising if small-scaled social anarchy takes place. In this reformation era during which the law and human rights should be enforced, what happens is the other way around.

Apparent transgression of human rights took place in Aceh in the past and recently (in Lohkseumawe), as well as mass murder against those accused of black magic by ninjas in Banyuwangi (East Java). These incidents seemed to be directed against NU supporters and it was argued that some military persons were involved in the murders.