

Komnas HAM renews calls for ICC ratification

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Margareth S. Aritonang, The Jakarta Post, Jakarta | National | Sat, July 20 2013, 8:38 AM

The National Commission on Human Rights (Komnas HAM) and human rights activists have again called on the government to ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC).

They assured the government that Indonesia's accession to the ICC would not only show Indonesia's commitment to global justice but would also improve human rights conditions in the country.

They also stressed that the ICC ratification could not be used as a political tool ahead of the 2014 elections as the statute would not be implemented retroactively.

"We must emphasize that the statute will only be effective for cases of human rights abuses that occur after it is ratified. It is important to highlight this so that it won't be politicized," Komnas HAM Commissioner Roichatul Aswidah told a discussion on Wednesday.

She said the ratification was crucial to making Indonesia's legislation more pro-human rights.

Government officials as well as lawmakers have long stalled on the ICC ratification. Some have claimed that such a move could be used to block the presidential bids of Great Indonesia Movement Party (Gerindra) chief patron Lt Gen. (ret.) Prabowo Subianto and People's Conscience Party (Hanura) chairman Gen. (ret.) Wiranto.

The two generals were alleged to have ordered human rights abuses during the transition period to democracy in the late 1990s, according to an investigation by Komnas HAM in 2003.

Other officials have also argued that the ratification would pose a threat to the country's unity as it would allow the ICC to interfere in matters within the country's

jurisdiction.

Defense Minister Purnomo Yusgiantoro has said that Indonesia needed a longer time to launch a thorough review of the impact of the ratification on the country.

The minister further argued that there was no urgency to ratify the Rome Statute as many countries, including the United States, had yet to accede to it.

“Government officials must be careful when making public statement on the matter. Otherwise, they will only counter all the joint efforts made to promote the ratification for years,” Indri D. Saptaningrum, director of the Institute for Research and Advocacy (ELSAM) said, responding to Purnomo’s statement.

She further reminded the government that the years of discussion on the plans to ratify the statute had been jointly promoted by the government and human rights groups.

Indonesia has been expressing its commitment to ratify the Rome Statute since 1998.

Under the 2004 National Plan of Action on Human Rights (RANHAM), then president Megawati Soekarnoputri vowed to ratify the Rome Statute in 2008. The deadline, however, was extended to 2014 in the 2011 RANHAM.

There are currently 122 countries that have ratified the statute; 34 are in Africa; 18 in Asia Pacific; 27 in the Americas; 18 in eastern Europe; and 25 in western Europe.