



2.24.14

INDONESIA | Interfaith Delegation Starts Week of Advocacy

An interfaith delegation from Indonesia, co-hosted by Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) and the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community UK, has begun a week of advocacy in the UK to coincide with this week's launch of CSW's new report in Indonesia.

The delegation will testify at a hearing to launch the report, *Indonesia: Pluralism in Peril – The rise of religious intolerance across the archipelago*, on Feb. 25 at the House of Commons.

The delegation includes The Rev. Favor Bancin from the Communion of Churches in Indonesia; Dr. Ahmad Suaedy, Executive Director of the Abdurrahman Wahid Centre for Inter-Faith Dialogue at the University of Indonesia; Father Benny Susetyo from the Catholic Bishops Conference; Ms. Muliathy Briany, a Christian teacher who previously worked for Scripture Union Indonesia; Mahmud Mubarik Ahmad, Secretary of Isyaat, a publication produced by the Ahmadiyya Muslim community in Indonesia; and Ahmad Hidayat, General Secretary of the Central Council of Ahlulbait Indonesia, representing the Shi'a Muslim community.

On Feb. 21, the delegation met His Holiness Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, the Fifth Caliph (Khalifa) and current head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community worldwide, and addressed a gathering of Ahmadi Muslims at the Baitul Futuh Mosque in Morden, the largest mosque in Western Europe.

This week, the delegation will also meet the Senior Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Minister for Faith and Communities, Baroness Warsi, as well as opposition Labour Party foreign affairs spokesman John Spellar MP, the Shadow International Development Minister Gavin Shuker MP, Parliamentarians Lord Alton and Baroness Cox, as well as Bishop Declan Lang, Chair of the Department of International Affairs of the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales, senior advisors to the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Muslim counter-extremism think-tank Quilliam Foundation and the Tony Blair Faith Foundation. The delegation will give presentations at the London School of Economics and Oxford University, before travelling to Brussels to launch the report in the European Parliament on March 4.

CSW's new report contains in-depth analysis of the Government of Indonesia's policies and actions which, it concludes, have fuelled religious intolerance which "is no longer confined to areas such as West Java and Aceh, known to be particularly conservative, nor is it confined to Christians and Ahmadis. Shi'a Muslims, Sufi Muslims, Confucians, Buddhists, Hindus, Baha'is, Jews, traditional indigenous believers and atheists are all under attack."

The report has been endorsed by academic experts and policy makers in the US and the UK. Baroness Berridge, Chairman of the All Party Parliamentary Group on International Freedom of

Religion or Belief, said: "As CSW's new report demonstrates, religious intolerance in Indonesia is rising to very serious levels, posing a threat to Indonesia's previous tradition of religious pluralism. The report is detailed, comprehensive, and compelling, and serves as a vital wake-up call for the Government of Indonesia and the international community. By hosting this hearing, we hope we will help highlight the threats to freedom of religion or belief in Indonesia, and urge the British Government and the international community to press the Government of Indonesia to take necessary action to promote and protect religious freedom. Later this year, Indonesia will hold parliamentary and presidential elections, and so we particularly hope that the presidential candidates, and the new President once elected, will set out what they will do to tackle extremism and intolerance. As a friend of Indonesia, we have a responsibility to highlight these grave concerns."

US Congressman Frank Wolf (R-Virginia), co-chair of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, said: "I have long admired CSW's work in championing the cause of religious freedom throughout the globe. Their newly published report upholds this tradition, bringing deserved attention and insightful analysis to the very pertinent topic of endangered religious pluralism in Indonesia."

Congressman Chris Smith (R-New Jersey), a senior member of the House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee and chairman of its Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights and International Organization Subcommittee, said: "Religious freedom is a precious commodity which, once lost, is hard to regain. Christian Solidarity Worldwide's report on Indonesia – a country which at its founding had safeguarded respect for religious pluralism – is alarming, as we see Indonesia slipping towards intolerance and violence. I echo the hope that this report will serve as a wake-up call to Indonesia's leaders – in particular President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono – to take affirmative steps to protect Indonesia's religious minorities and their most basic of human rights."