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## INDONESIA | CSW Calls for Acquittal

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) is calling on the North Jakarta District Court to acquit Jakarta's governor, Ahok, who is currently on trial for blasphemy, ahead of local elections Feb. 15. CSW also urges the Indonesian government to review the country's blasphemy laws and for blasphemy charges against suspects awaiting trial to be dropped.

Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, known as Ahok, is the governor of Jakarta and as a Chinese Christian, is Indonesia's most prominent ethnic minority politician. He has been charged with blasphemy, which carries a prison sentence of up to five years, despite a lack of credible evidence against him. He is running for re-election on Feb. 15.

The court case against the governor was filed by several conservative Islamic groups after a statement he made on his re-election campaign trail went viral via an allegedly doctored YouTube video. Ahok quoted a Quranic verse on Sept. 27 while addressing concerns that his political opponents may use the verse to discourage people from voting for him as a non-Muslim, but was falsely accused of criticizing the verse itself, prompting allegations of blasphemy. An estimated 500,000 Muslims turned up to a number of rallies in November and December 2016 to protest against his supposed blasphemy. The police officially charged Ahok on Nov. 13, 2016, and his trial began Dec. 13, 2016.

CSW believes that the case against Ahok is part of a broader attempt to undermine Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) in Indonesia. On Jan. 10, the Indonesian National Commission for Human Rights (Komnas HAM) published a report detailing a steady increase in FoRB violations in recent years. The Setara Institute's latest report on FoRB documents 270 incidents of religious intolerance and 208 incidents of violations of FoRB in 2016, an increase on previous years. Indonesia is the world's largest Muslim-majority country, yet it rejected theocracy at its foundation and adopted a state philosophy known as "Pancasila," giving equal recognition to the major religions. Rising religious intolerance poses a threat to Indonesia's strong tradition of religious pluralism. Further evidence of this, including abuses of the blasphemy laws, is found in Christian Solidarity Worldwide's 2014 report *Indonesia: Pluralism in Peril*.

Ahok's case is one of a number of recent blasphemy cases. A lecturer at the prestigious Universitas Indonesia, Ade Amado, was charged in December 2016 for writing on Facebook

that, "God is not an Arab. Surely God would be happy if His scripture was read in the dialects of Minang, Ambon, China, Hip-hop, blues..." He could face up to 11 years in jail on two charges, under the blasphemy law and the Information and Electronics Transaction Act. Three leaders of a spiritual movement known as 'Gafatar' are currently on trial for blasphemy in East Jakarta District Court. For the first time, a prominent Islamist leader, Rizieq Shihab, who leads the vigilante group the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), which is responsible for violent attacks on religious minorities and many church closures, has also been charged with defamation of the Pancasila and blasphemy. Rizieq Shihab is one of the most prominent leaders of the campaign against Ahok.