

Consultative Assembly Speaker to speak on *Zero Discrimination Day*

Last Thursday, 19 January 2023, Indonesian lobbyist agency ReThinkbyAWR Strategic Partnership hosted representatives of the University of Indonesia Alumni Association (*Ikatan Alumni Universitas Indonesia - "ILUNI UI"*) and Diesel One Solidarity youth community, to meet the Speaker of the Republic of Indonesia's Consultative Assembly (*Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat Republik Indonesia - "MPR RI"*), Bambang Soesatyo.

The assembled personages discussed several current issues, most specifically the Zero Discrimination Day commemoration event that will be held in March. Ayuningtyas Widari Ramdhaniar, Founder and Executive Director of ReThinkbyAWR Strategic Partnership, acted in her capacity as the event's Project Manager to request that Bambang be the Keynote Speaker. As the UNAIDS representative in Indonesia, ReThinkbyAWR also requested ILUNI UI as a trustworthy academic institution, and Diesel One Solidarity Community as a youth community dedicated to contributing to our State and Nation, to add their voices and opinions to the discussion of discrimination.

The Zero Discrimination Day is commemorated as an effort to promote global solidarity in eliminating discrimination. It was initiated by the Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS ("UNAIDS"). This year, UNAIDS commemorates the day to help eliminate the discrimination suffered by girls and women in their diversity by improving awareness of feminine rights, and mobilizing the efforts to empower girls and women. The theme for the 2023 Zero Discrimination Day, to be commemorated on 1 March 2023, is "Zero Discrimination against Girls and Women".

Discrimination continues to occur in various parts of the. According to UNAIDS, inequalities in terms of income, gender, age, status, health, profession, disability, sexual orientation, drug use, ethnicity, race, class, tribe and religion remain a widespread problem through the



Ayuningtyas Widari Ramdhaniar, ReThinkbyAWR Founder/Executive Director, hands over the invitation to the Zero Discrimination Day event to the Speaker of the RI People's Consultative Assembly.

ages. Such inequalities occur in more than 70% of the global population. Yet many people continue to treat discrimination as something "in the natural order of things". We need to act fast and do our utmost to change this erroneous thought pattern through the Zero Discrimination Day, as gender inequality affects everyone's health and welfare.

By discriminating against girl and women, we lose the services that they can provide and cut off our own potential. Discrimination is a stupid act of self-sabotage, one that triggers resentments, destruction, division, one that slows down economic and social development. Therefore, international organizations like the UN actively promote the day and create many activities and programs designed to allow everyone to celebrate their lives, to live with full dignity no matter what their age, gender, sexuality, nationality, ethnicity, skin color, height and weight, profession, educational level, and faith.

In many countries, laws that discriminate girls and women remain in effect, while laws that strongly respect their basic human rights, that protect them from dangers and

unfair treatment, are far from being the norm. This causes crime to soar, crippling the economy as it is difficult to run businesses properly in unstable countries – and they are naturally undesirable for investors and tourists: Who would want to expand their business in a place that will hinder growth just because the owner happens to be a woman? Who would want to create branches in a place where it's hard to employ women? Who would want to visit a place that's unsafe for themselves as women, that's unsafe for their wives and daughters and sisters if they are men because of discriminatory laws and traditions?

Widespread Sexual Discrimination

Take the case of Indonesia: according to the annual data of violence against women in 2021 released by our National Commission on Women on 7 March 2022, there is a significant increase (50%) in cases of gender-based violence against girls and women: to 338,506 cases in 2021 from the previous 226,062 cases in 2020. Religious Courts have also recorded a 52% jump in the number

of cases of such violence reported to them: from 215,694 complaints in 2020 to 327,629 in 2021. Our National Commission on Women: *no less than 80%* of the 2,134 cases in 2020 to a whopping 3,838 cases in 2021!

The type of gender-based violence against girls and women that predominates in 2021 is sexual violence. Sexual violence is extremely widespread in our country, to the extent that it seems "natural" here. Even though many people treat girls and women humanely, the fact remains that gender-based violence is pervasive in schools (especially religious schools), the world of business, and even in the last bastion of security, homes.

There have been more and more cases *reported* of forced incestuous relations and battery, marital rape, abandonment and estrangement, date rape and violence in personal relationships, workplace abuse and lack of proper work protection, human trafficking, gender-based battery, and femicide.

Behind the scenes and doors are discriminatory policies against Indonesian girls and women, the very people that laws should be protecting. They are generally swept under the proverbial rug, but now the rug is shaken and being cleaned out. These discriminatory policies include crim-

inalizing women under the guise of "morality", the forcing of female public servants and female students of public schools to wear hijab at work or school, the restriction of the rights to religious and spiritual freedoms, such as outright banning and obstruction of the construction of religious facilities other than mosques in some regions, and the unfair and corrupt enforcement of *Qanun Jinayat* or Islamic criminal laws in Aceh. Women are also frequently disadvantaged in conflicts involving natural resources and urban zoning, their own basic human rights such as medical treatment, education, leadership, and recruitments of public officials. Even the police are known to have blackmailed and browbeaten women – and underage girls – to have sex with them, to torture them, to clearly twist police procedures to take advantage of them.

This does not necessarily mean that the number of cases is really increasing – it's just that people are more open about these discriminations, more open in the fighting of their basic rights as human beings.

Even Worse for Disabled People and HIV/AIDS Sufferers

This oppressive situation is worse for women who are disabled and who suffer from HIV/AIDS.

This is because HIV/AIDS is a

sexually transmitted disease, and it means that women, who are more socially and sexually restricted than men, will suffer from even more discrimination if they are positively proven to suffer from the disease. Studies show that they are 4 times more likely to suffer from sexual violence in their marriage, and 6 times to suffer from physical violence when pregnant. The perpetrators of such household violence are frequently these women's own husbands and fathers, with other family members not far behind.

It's not that they do not seek help – but in fact, it is the community itself that will most likely stigmatize them for admitting to having HIV/AIDS. The National Commission on Women records that just 12 women who suffered from HIV/AIDS discrimination had the courage to report their case in 2021. It's even more ironic in view of the fact that most female sufferers of the disease caught it from their philandering husbands!

All humans are the same before God. Therefore, it is again ironic and sad that people who claim to be the followers of Muhammad are the very ones who denigrate their own mothers and sisters. In this era of better openness, in commemorating Zero Discrimination Day, let us correct this error and stop discrimination against girls and women. 10

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The Chinese New Year, a moment of joyful celebration and reunion with family and friends. Even if you do not celebrate it personally, we're sure that you still look forward to the event. This year, the "Chinese New Year of the Water Rabbit" occurs on 22 January 2023. Oakwood Suites La Maison Jakarta, a serviced residence located in the prosperous Barito area of South Jakarta, celebrates an upcoming year of luck, prudence and security, with various attractive programs.

As the Rabbit is a family-oriented animal, and the element of water symbolizes the flow of money, Oakwood names its special price program "Family Fortune Special Offer". The starting price is IDR 1,750,000.00 net per night of stay in its One Bedroom Apartment, a cozy and highly private space with an area size of 110 m². Next is the Two Bedroom Apartment, a space 127 m² wide at IDR 2,250,000.00 staying fee a night, and finally, the Three Bedroom Apartment, a spacious 169 m² priced at IDR

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able on 15-31 January 2023. To sweeten the deal, Oakwood Suites will give you a special hamper when you check in: *nian gao* rice cakes, quaintly called *kue keranjang* ("basket cake") in Indonesian that symbolizes a sweet, rich life for the New Year, coin chocolates for lots of income, lucky *angpao* or holiday red envelopes, and a special Water Rabbit Starbucks Card with a pre-filled balance of IDR 100,000.00.



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