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## Gays & Sharia

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Regional laws based on Islamic sharia and their effect on homosexuals.

The Arus Pelangi (Rainbow Flag) recently launched a national campaign against what they say are a wave of “homophobic” or anti-homosexual, regional laws based on Muslim sharia law. Widodo Budi Darmo, a 35-year-old director for Arus Pelangi, claims that homosexuals in Indonesia are regularly harassed by the police, often detained without charges and then released after a few days.

On the laws he says

In 2004, the region of Palembang introduced a regional law that proscribes homosexuality as an act of prostitution that “violates the norms of common decency, religion, and legal norms as they apply to societal rule”. That law says that included under the term “act of prostitution” are “homosexual sex, lesbians, sodomy, sexual harassment, and other indecent acts”.

Dodo claims that there are 52 regencies in Indonesia which have enacted sharia laws and that many of these make specific reference to gays and lesbians.

The Gay Archipelago: Sexuality and Nation in Indonesia

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In Jakarta he says, according to long-standing law, homosexuals are legally regarded as mentally defective and therefore, presumably, they can be sectioned, or incarcerated involuntarily in a mental institution.

Indonesia is full of Islamic nut-jobs says Dodo:

There are many Islamic fundamentalist groups in Indonesia that thrive on premanism, or thuggery, against anyone that goes against what they feel their religion dictates. These groups, in Jakarta they are most predominantly the FPI (Front Pembela Islam) and the FBR (Forum Betawi Rempug), will attack the offices, workplaces, and homes of people they consider to be of particular threat to the morals and values of Islam, and that includes homosexuals.

So far this month Dodo's group has met with officials from the Department of Justice and Human Rights but came away unsatisfied with the response they received. Arus Pelangi also campaigns against the RUU APP, the anti-pornography and indecency law.

Dodo says that there are some parliamentarians, mainly from the PDI-P and the PKB, that are supportive of the efforts of Arus Pelangi. One Arus Pelangi proposal that has won a little support from MP's is to include the matter of sexual orientation in a new minority rights, or anti-discrimination, law being considered by parliament presently. But, the dark forces of Islamic conservatism loom, he says:

There has been strong opposition from various fundamentalist and conservative parties who have threatened to block the Minority Rights bill should the sexual orientation issue be inserted.

Arus Pelangi in Jakarta has about 400 members with a 40-30-30% split between lesbians, gay men, and transsexuals. Outside Jakarta offshoots of the organisation include "Us" in Surabaya, Indonesia's second largest city, a chapter in Medan, North Sumatra, and a new group in the small city of Purwokerto, Central Java, formed to protest the murder last year of Vera, a transsexual. Vera's murder, it is claimed, has not aroused the interest of local police to any great degree.

Dodo then goes on to detail some of the, according to him, many tales of abuse of gays by policemen and prison warders. Adang, a gay man who was arrested in an environmentalist protest at Bojong, Bogor, West Java, was later subjected to much sexual abuse and rape by prison warders and other prisoners. Suffering from a mild form of tuberculosis he received no medical attention while in prison and his condition worsened. After spending seven months in jail he died three weeks after being released.