

Honorable Joko Widodo

17.11.2020

President of the Republic of Indonesia

Jakarta, Indonesia

**Re: A call for the protection of the freedom of religion and belief in Indonesia**

**Your Excellency Sir,**

We are writing to you on behalf of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) and their member churches, representing nearly 200 million Christians in more than 100 countries, to express our deep concern about the recent developments in Indonesia, which have resulted in violations of the freedom of Christians to worship.

In this time of the COVID-19 pandemic, people and communities are facing significant challenges for which spiritual guidance and nourishment is necessary. In our continuous communication with millions of Christians and people of other faiths, we have heard testimonies of how their faith and spiritual communities have been a source of strength and encouragement during these difficult times.

We have been in communication with our member churches in Indonesia, who have confirmed the struggles they are facing, including the recent attacks against their houses of worship and their ability to offer online worship. It has been deeply disturbing to see the intolerance and violence targeted at churches and their various religious activities. Following reports of burning of churches in Aceh Singkil in 2015, we continue to hear cases of destruction and demolition that deny Christians the ability to worship freely and in dignity. In addition, we have been informed of systematic restrictions of churches' existence and their ability to organize online or alternative worship arrangements during the COVID-19 pandemic. This has been the case in areas such as Cikarang and Cibarusah in West Java and Ngastemi in East Java.

In the light of this we call on you to intervene to enable churches to exercise the human right to worship together and be in communion with one another in ways that are safe and that align with public health guidance for the prevention of the spread of the pandemic.

The LWF and the WCRC affirm the freedom of thought, conscience and religion; to manifest religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance. This is an important right that is enshrined in International Human Rights Law and is rooted in justice. Just as we have continued to ask governments all over the world to ensure that this right is fully enjoyed by all citizens, we urge you to take decisive steps to address any policies, laws, and actions that prevent minority religions in Indonesia from exercising their right to practice their religion.

The LWF, the WCRC, and our member churches stand ready to support your government in addressing this very urgent matter and in your work for greater reconciliation, human rights, and dignity for all your people. We shall continue to pray for and stand in solidarity with all people who are particularly vulnerable.



Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Martin Junge".

Rev. Dr. Martin Junge  
General Secretary  
The Lutheran World Federation

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chris Ferguson".

Rev. Dr. Chris Ferguson  
General Secretary  
World Communion of Reformed Churches