

Trauma, Church, and Peace Building

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Context of My Stories and Reflections

- Accompaniment of victims of human right violation
 - 2009-now: study and advocacy of JPIT and GMIT on the topic of anti communist movement in Indonesia (1965-1966)



Understanding the 1965 Tragedy in Indonesia

- It started in Jakarta, in September 1965, known as G 30 S: the communist party was accused as trying to take power from the first president of Indonesia: Soekarno, by killing 7 generals.
- Victims: no definite figure = around 500.000 to 3 milliard people.



Macro Context: Cold War

- The 1965 Tragedy was also fed by global tensions and competitions: the United States and the Soviet Union vied for influence in Indonesia.
- Bradley Simpson: what happened during this Tragedy was ultimately about national and global grabs for political and economic power. Western nations wanted power over Indonesia's rich natural resources such as oil and precious stones, plantations, and forest products.



What Happened in East Nusa Tenggara During and After 1965 Tragedy?

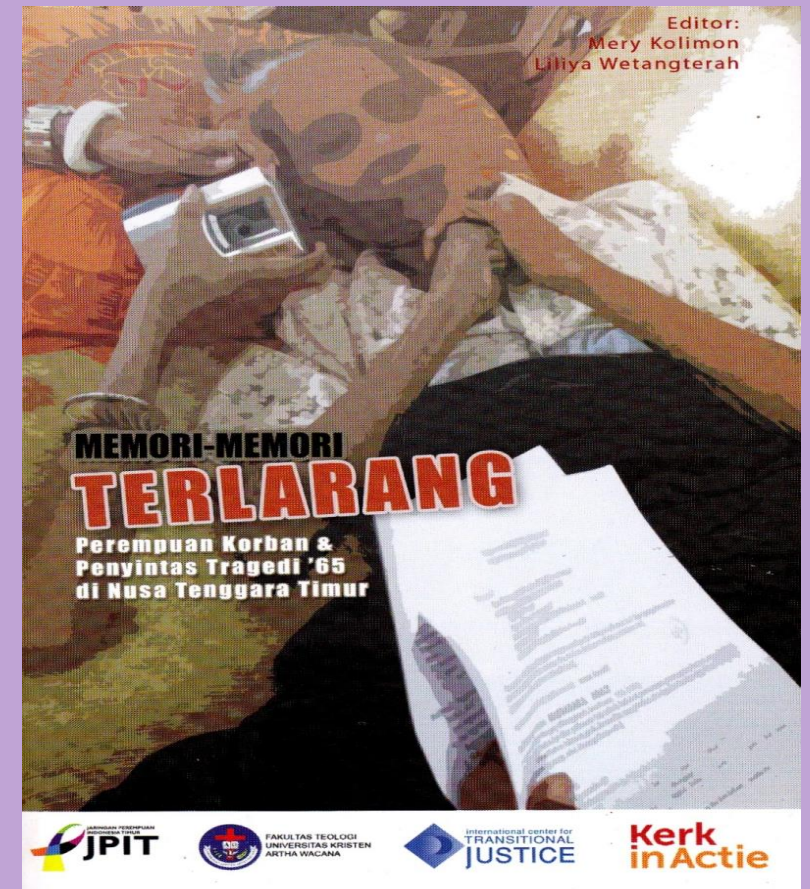
- In late 1965 (Dec), massacres began throughout East Nusa Tenggara (*Nusa Tenggara Timur/NTT*) Province.
- The killing of seven generals on September 30, 1965, in Jakarta, that was blamed on the Indonesian Communist Party (*Partai Komunis Indonesia/PKI*) became the excuse for detaining, torturing, and killing those accused as members and sympathizers of the PKI.
- The army worked with police and youth groups, including church youth groups, to destroy the PKI that was, in fact, a legally recognized party at the time. By sheer number, the PKI was the second largest Communist party in the world.

Protestant Churches in NTT and 1965

- The Evangelical Christian Church of Timor (GMIT) and the Christian Church of Sumba (GKS) clearly rejected the PKI, stating that communism denies God and creates enmity amongst social-economic classes.
- Although it may seem as if Christianity benefited from the anti-Communist movement because it triggered an explosion in church membership, the church actually suffered both institutionally and in terms of fellowship.
- We have to acknowledge that in the face of massive state violence, the church lacked courage to protest.
- Church discrimination of victims and their families included prohibition from communion or election to church councils (become elders, etc).
- Some churches refused to baptize victims' children; others required them to participate in a special worship service to confess their sin before reinstatement into full fellowship with the congregation.
- One can say that the church discriminated against victims and their families while honoring the perpetrators with important positions in the church. It went along with the policy of the New Order's 32-year regime.

What are the Developments Within The Churches in Relation to 1965 Tragedy?

- JPIT launched the book, *Forbidden Memories* in September 2012.
- All researchers and writers of JPIT were pastors and future pastors from 2 Protestant denominations in NTT: GMIT and GKS.
- The book has been translated into English by Monash University with the title *Forbidden Memories: Women's Experience of 1965 in Eastern Indonesia*.
- This book is used as lecture material in several theological schools in Indonesia and other countries, related to the field of Human Rights Theology, Theology of Trauma , etc.
- Furthermore, several friends and I also interviewed a number of perpetrators, including my father and wrote feature articles as well as paper for academic journals, around this issue.



Some Progresses at GMIT

- GMIT synod board meeting in August 2018: GMIT is willing to cooperate with JPIT to learn to understand this problem and to provide assistance to the victims.
- There is a commitment to GMIT to be with the survivor in their struggle for rehabilitation and reparation of their rights and dignity.
- Pastors in congregation invited JPIT's team to educate the church members about why we need go beyond stigma and discrimination around this issue.
- August 22, 2022: in the context of the 77th Indonesian Independence Day, there is a celebration with the the grandpas and grandmas (survivors) at the Synod Office.



What Still Needs to be Done in Relation to 1965 Tragedy and Why?

- Further research and publication on this subject in other parts of Indonesia.
- Public education through popular forms: popular books, film, tiktok, etc, especially for the millennials.
- Economic empowerment of the victims/survivors.
- Indonesian churches need to work together with other civil society organizations, including other religious institutions that work on this issue.
- Voices from partner churches in Europe on this matter are important to invite churches in Indonesia to start a conversational process regarding this and its impact on churches in Indonesia.
- Encouraging the importance of state/government recognition:
 - the victims of 1965 human rights violations, in many people's views, are still seen as perpetrators of crimes against the state.
 - state recognition of the human rights violations that the victims experienced becomes important.
- Encouraging for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (cf. South Africa and East Timor/Chega!)



Thank You Terima Kasih

