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Indonesia: Arbitrary detention of nine labour and education rights defenders

On 3 May 2021, nine labour and education rights defenders of the **Gerakan Buruh Bersama Rakyat** movement were arbitrarily detained by national police from the Greater Jakarta Metropolitan Region during a gathering to commemorate National Education Day. The nine human rights defenders detained in Jakarta District Police Station were Yohanes Gesri Ardo Ndahur, Surya Yudiputra, De Niao Tiendass Umboh, Dimas Sulistyanto, Bagja Ginanjar, Sunarno, Sutrisimo Sinaga, Anggie Ero Ratalia Putri and Abdul Rauf. The human rights defenders, who were not granted access to their lawyers whilst detained, were released the following day but continue to be under investigation.

[Gerakan Buruh Bersama Rakyat \(Labour Movement together with People\)](#) is an alliance of labour rights unions, student-youth organisations, farmers, academics, women and civil society organisations. While the movement was first formed in 2017 to promote labour rights, it has since expanded its focus to advocate on issues including education, gender equality, freedom of religion, environment, women's rights, LGBTIQ+ issues, and the rights of the Papua people.

On 3 May 2021, during a peaceful event organised by Gerakan Buruh Bersama Rakyat to commemorate National Education Day, the Greater Jakarta region police arbitrarily forcibly detained nine human rights defenders from the movement, including academics and youth rights defenders. Following their detention, the human rights defenders were accused of 'deliberate intent to not comply with orders' and, 'participation in a riotous assembly' under Articles 216 and 218 of the penal code, and also under Article 14 Paragraph (1) of the Outbreaks of Infectious Diseases Act and an investigation was opened into these allegations.

Ahead of the commemoration event, the organisers and participants had stated their willingness to cooperate with the police to adhere to health protocols in line with the COVID-19 pandemic. The crowd had aimed to ensure that the protocols in place were being followed, including the wearing of face masks, carrying hand sanitizer and maintaining social distancing. During the event however, police reportedly tried to disperse the crowd with unwarranted and excessive use of force, leading to several protestors being beaten and pushed around.

A few days prior to the event, as part of International Labour Day, members of the Gerakan Buruh Bersama Rakyat held peaceful demonstrations, adhering to health protocols, in 27 provinces across the country. During the demonstrations, the group asserted that the government had failed to protect the working class during the COVID-19 pandemic through the implementation of 11 policies and regulations. These policies included wage cuts under the pretext of the pandemic, a vague regulation that does not cap wage deductions or establish a clear benchmark regarding the obligations of companies in financial distress to their employees, and weakened policies in relation to holiday allowances.

Labour rights defenders in the region believe that the nine human rights defenders from Gerakan Buruh Bersama Rakyat have been arbitrarily detained as a result of their criticism of the government's handling of the pandemic, and its detrimental impact on the working class, and that the case against them is an attempt to discourage dissent and intimidate those who seek to hold the government to account.

Front Line Defenders condemns the arbitrary detention and judicial harassment of labour rights defenders from the Gerakan Buruh Bersama Rakyat movement, as it believes they are being targeted for their legitimate and peaceful work in defence of labour rights in Indonesia and

exercising their right to peaceful assembly.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Indonesia to:

1. Immediately drop the case against the labour rights defenders of Gerakan Buruh Bersama Rakyat, as Front Line Defenders believes that they are being targeted solely as a result of their legitimate and peaceful work in the defence of labour rights;
2. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Indonesia are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals, and free of all restrictions including police and judicial harassment.