

Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner  
Commissioner for External Relations  
and European Neighbourhood Policy  
European Commission  
Rue de la Loi, 200  
Bruxelles 1049

20 April 2006

Dear Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner,

### **Religious Freedom in Indonesia**

I am writing to ask what action, if any, the Commission is taking on the growing religious freedom crisis in Indonesia, and to urge that pressure on the Indonesian authorities be stepped up to bring the violence to an end.

I have received reports of a variety of shocking practices currently taking place in Indonesia, aimed at the suppression of pluralism and interfaith relations, including:

- Christians being banned from worshipping in their church buildings or their homes.
- Physical harassment of pastors and worshippers by militants, without any action by onlooking police.
- The closure or destruction of more than 100 churches in West Java during the last five years.
- The burning down of four mosques and Islamic schools and numerous houses belonging to the moderate Ahmadiyah faith group in September 2005.
- The beheading of three teenage girls on their way to a Christian school.
- The prosecution and sentencing to three years' imprisonment of three ladies for running a children's holiday camp, allegedly for offering gifts to persuade conversion to Christianity (allegations which were unfounded and for which no relevant evidence was presented).

As you may be aware, the government has yet to take any concrete action to bring those responsible to justice, instead denying the incidents. In contrast the moderate Muslim community has reacted strongly, with former President Abdurrahman Wahid leading a demonstration of some 1500 people to protest against the attacks, and many Muslim leaders calling on the government to take measures to stop the church closures.

I would like to know the extent of the Commission's awareness and actions to date on this worrying situation, which clearly runs directly counter to fundamental human rights of individuals and communities.

In particular, there is a clear need for the Indonesian authorities to receive pressure from the international community to stop the forcible closure of churches and other places of worship, and to revoke decrees which are contrary to religious freedom. Reports of local government / police participation in the militants' attacks must also be investigated, as must the alleged involvement of the militant coalition AGAP, the Front Pembela Islam (FPI) and the National Council of Ulama / Muslim Clerics (MUI). The situation must be closely monitored, with much greater efforts to identify actions likely to improve tolerance, religious freedom and inter-faith respect. The need for active international support for and defence of these ideals whose public support is made all the more urgent given the prevailing international climate of heightened religious tensions, and the EU has a duty to lead in calling for this.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Caroline Lucas'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. Caroline Lucas MEP