

PRISONER PROFILE

Prisoner Name: **Basuki Tjahaja Purnama**

Location: **Indonesia**

Sentenced: **May 2017**



Arrest and background

Last May the former governor of Jakarta, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama – affectionately known as ‘Ahok’ (pictured) – was imprisoned for blasphemy in a politically-motivated campaign and sentenced to two years in prison. His troubles began in September 2016, while campaigning for re-election, when he suggested political rivals were using a Koranic verse to trick people into voting against him as a non-Muslim. An edited version of his speech went viral and fundamental Islamist groups accused him of insulting Islam’s holy book, demanding he be jailed under draconian blasphemy laws.

Although he denied the blasphemy allegation and apologised for the comments, tens of thousands of protesters, led by the Islamic Defenders Front, a group accused of inciting violence, took to the streets in mass rallies. Ahok’s prosecutors downgraded the blasphemy charges against him, saying he should not have to serve prison time, yet on May 9, 2017, the judge still issued a harsh two-year sentence against him.

Ahok chose not to appeal the conviction ‘for the good of the nation.’ Tensions threatened to spill over during the fasting month of Ramadan between extremist opponents and aggrieved supporters.

Now more than nine months after being convicted of blasphemy, former governor Ahok has officially challenged his conviction through a case review petition to the Supreme Court. The preliminary hearing of the petition, which lasted only 10 minutes, was held at the North Jakarta District Court. The Supreme Court justices will later decide whether or not to grant his case review petition. The hearing at the North Jakarta District Court was presided over by Judge Mulyadi, who had previously presided over his trial at the district level.

Speaking to reporters after Monday’s hearing, Ahok’s lawyer and sister, Fifi Letya Indra, said she believed the North Jakarta District Court had made a mistake in declaring Ahok guilty of blasphemy. She said the guilty verdict against Buni Yani, a communications lecturer found guilty of tampering with video footage of a speech given by Ahok that was used as evidence to lodge the blasphemy allegations against him, was the basis for the case review request.

The prosecutors told reporters after the hearing that the defence team had not brought new evidence to back up their latest legal move.

Release partners in Indonesia who know Ahok's family say he is a man that loves to read and study God's Word and has been permitted to have his Bible during his imprisonment.

PRAY:

1. For God's continued protection for Ahok and that he would experience a profound sense of the presence of God as well as courage, wisdom and power that comes from the Holy Spirit.
2. That his appeal will be successful and that he will be freed.
3. For his family, friends and future ministry in the place of God's appointing.

SEND A CARD OF ENCOURAGEMENT TO AHOK:

Address cards to:

Basuki Tjahaja Purnama
c/o Release International,
PO Box 54,
Orpington,
BR5 4RT.

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