

Reflecting on the 20th Anniversary of the Helsinki MOU: UPNVJ Holds International Seminar

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Two decades after the signing of the Helsinki Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on August 15, 2005, which ended the armed conflict between the Indonesian Government and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM), the legacy of nearly 30 years of human rights violations still requires a proper justice resolution. To address this issue, the Veteran National Development University (UPNVJ) Jakarta held a public discussion entitled "Aceh Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Report and Book Review of Resisting Indonesia's Culture of Impunity" on Monday, September 8, 2025, at the Bhinneka Tunggal Ika Auditorium, Jakarta.

This activity was organized by the Institute for Research and Community Service (LPPM) UPNVJ in collaboration with the Master of Political Science Study Program, the Center for Citizenship and Human Rights Studies (CCHRS), the Political Science Student Association (HIMAPOL) UPNVJ, Asia Justice and Rights (AJAR), and the Aceh TRC. This discussion aimed to facilitate critical dialogue on post-conflict transitional justice in Aceh, with a focus on the Aceh TRC report entitled *Peulara Damèe: Caring for Peace*.

In his remarks, Dr. Ardli Johan Kusuma, a political observer and lecturer at UPNVJ, emphasized that the Helsinki MoU is not the end, but rather the beginning of a commitment to implementing transitional justice. "The establishment of the Aceh TRC is an important step towards fulfilling the rights to truth, justice, and reparation for victims. This discussion serves as a forum to ensure the commitment to peace is maintained," he said.

The discussion featured four expert speakers: Afridal Darmi (Commissioner of the Aceh KKR Period I), Masthur Yahya (Chairman of the Aceh KKR), Abdul Haris Semendawai (Deputy Chair of the Indonesian National Human Rights Commission), and Dr. Sri Ayu Wahyuningroem (Director of the CCHRS UPNVJ). The event was attended by approximately 100 participants, including UPNVJ's master's and undergraduate students in Political Science, who actively participated in the question-and-answer session.

Afridal Darmi highlighted the importance of the Aceh KKR report in uncovering the truth about past human rights violations. "This report serves as a tool to strengthen peace through fact-finding, reconciliation, and recommendations for reparations in accordance with universal standards," he said. He added that the report documented 10,652 human rights violations between 1976 and 2005, including arbitrary arrests, torture, sexual violence, killings, enforced disappearances, and property destruction.

Masthur Yahya, Chair of the Aceh KKR, explained the KKR's efforts to heal post-conflict wounds through a local, transitional justice approach. "We focus on truth-telling, reconciliation, and comprehensive reparations to break the chain of revenge," he said. Meanwhile, Abdul Haris Semendawai emphasized that human rights violations are eternal and demands for justice will persist if not resolved. "Justice must be upheld, even after decades have passed," he asserted.

The discussion successfully created a dialogue connecting victims' experiences, the work of the KKR, and academic perspectives. Through this collaboration, UPNVJ affirmed its commitment to supporting transitional justice and sustainable peace in Indonesia, particularly in the post-conflict Aceh region. This activity also strengthened UPNVJ's role as a center for citizenship and human rights studies, encouraging critical reflection on the nation's future.

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