

20 Years of the Helsinki MoU: UPNVJ Review of the Book "Resisting Indonesia's Culture of Impunity"

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UPNVJ Public Relations - To commemorate the 20th anniversary of the signing of the Helsinki Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on August 15, 2005, the Veteran National Development University Jakarta (UPNVJ) held a book review of *Resisting Indonesia's Culture of Impunity: Aceh's Truth and Reconciliation Commission*. This event was held in a hybrid format via Zoom on Monday, September 8, 2025, by the Master of Political Science Study Program, the Center for Citizenship and Human Rights Studies (CCHRS), the Political Science Student Association (HIMAPOL) UPNVJ, in collaboration with Asia Justice and Rights (AJAR).

Published in 2023, this book examines Indonesia's efforts to implement transitional justice through the Aceh Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). The book review featured editors Jess Melvin (University of Sydney), Annie Pohlman (University of Queensland), and Indria Fernida (AJAR), and was moderated by UPNVJ student representatives.

This discussion was enriched by the presence of four respondents, namely Munawar Liza Zainal (former GAM combatant and former Mayor of Sabang), Ehito Kimura (Associate Professor at the University of Hawaii, Manoa), Eki Nur Falahudin (UPNVJ Masters student in Political Science), and Gufron Dymas Wicaksono (UPNVJ Bachelor's student in Political Science).

Jess Melvin, an academic who focuses on political violence in Indonesia, explains that the book analyzes the role of the Aceh KKR in uncovering the truth and pushing for reparations.

"This book highlights how the Aceh TRC was a crucial step in combating the culture of impunity in Indonesia," he said. Annie Pohlman, a specialist in Indonesian history and politics, added that the book critiques the Aceh TRC's operations from civil society and academic perspectives, with a focus on issues of gender violence and torture.

Indria Fernida, AJAR Regional Program Manager, emphasized the book's relevance in the context of transitional justice. "This book is an important resource for understanding the challenges and opportunities in promoting reconciliation in Aceh," she said.

Meanwhile, Munawar Liza Zainal shared her empirical experience as a negotiator of the Helsinki MoU, emphasizing the importance of implementing sustainable peace.

This book consists of chapters written by commissioners of the Aceh TRC, civil society activists, and academics. Each chapter analyzes the role of the Aceh TRC in promoting truth, reparations, and reconciliation, while also evaluating the challenges of the culture of impunity in Indonesia. With a total of

10,652 human rights violations documented by the Aceh TRC between 1976 and 2005, this book is an essential reference for researchers, students, and activists concerned with human rights issues and the history of conflict.

This event reflects UPNVJ's commitment to facilitating critical dialogue on transitional justice and human rights. Through this book review, UPNVJ strengthens its role as a center for academic studies that encourages in-depth reflection on the future of peace in Indonesia.

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