

13 September 2019

Indonesia: Threats against and judicial harassment of human rights lawyer Veronica Koman

On 13 September 2019, the East Java Police announced that **Veronica Koman** must appear at the Indonesian Embassy in Australia to comply with a summons which was scheduled for today. The police stated that if the human rights defender fails to present herself to the Indonesian authorities by 18 September 2019, they will include her on their wanted list and issue an Interpol red notice for her. Veronica Koman is currently in Australia as a result of ongoing threats against her in Indonesia.

[Veronica Koman](#) is a human rights defender and lawyer who advocates extensively for human rights in West Papua. She is a member of International Lawyers for West Papua, an international network of lawyers working to strengthen the human rights of the people of West Papua. Previously, she worked as a public interest lawyer at the Jakarta Legal Aid Institute (LBH Jakarta). In the midst of the recent internet blackout in West Papua following mass demonstrations in the region, Veronica Koman has been disseminating information about developments in the situation on social media and has functioned as a key source of information to the outside world.

On 13 September 2019, Veronica Koman received news that she had until 18 September 2019 to appear at the Indonesian Embassy in Australia to comply with a summons that the East Java Police had issued to her, which was scheduled for today. The police had announced on 10 September 2019 that this was the second summons they had issued to the human rights defender, but she has not received either of them. The police also said that they will include Veronica Koman on the Indonesian National Police's wanted list and issue an Interpol red notice for her in the event that she fails to comply with their directions.

The summons issued to Veronica Koman is linked to information she has been sharing on social media about the ongoing mass demonstrations in the provinces of Papua and West Papua that began on 19 August 2019. These demonstrations were sparked by the intimidation and arrests of 43 Papuan students on 17 August 2019 in Surabaya for allegedly disrespecting the Indonesian flag. Police officers had fired tear gas into the dormitory before arresting the students, some of whom were injured in the process. Veronica Koman shared videos of this incident and the resultant uprisings in Papua and West Papua on her social media channels.

On 19 August 2019, the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology said that the human rights defender's tweet on the arrests in Surabaya was a "hoax", but later apologised for saying so on 22 August 2019. Nonetheless, as a result of this, Veronica Koman began receiving a deluge of online attacks, rape and death threats, and allegations that she was spreading false information about the situation in Papua and West Papua.

On 4 September 2019, the East Java police officially named Veronica Koman a suspect for incitement (under Article 160 of the Criminal Code), spreading fake news (under Article 15 of Law number 1 of 1946 concerning criminal law and procedure), displaying race-based hatred (under Article 16 of Law number 40 of 2008 concerning the Elimination of Racial and Ethnic Discrimination), and disseminating information aimed at inflicting ethnic hatred (under Law number 19 of 2016 concerning Electronic Information and Transactions). The police also

announced that they will collaborate with Interpol to arrest the human rights defender who is currently in Australia.

On 7 September 2019, the East Java police announced that they would invalidate Veronica Koman's passport and freeze both her national and international bank accounts. Following this, on 10 September, the Indonesian immigration department agreed to a police request to cancel the human rights defender's passport and it is reported that the process has been initiated. The Indonesian Minister of Law also publicly announced that the Australian authorities will deport Veronica Koman once her passport is cancelled.

Front Line defenders expresses grave concern at the escalating threats against and judicial harassment of Veronica Koman, which it believes is solely motivated by her peaceful and legitimate work in defence of human rights.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Indonesia to:

1. Immediately revoke the summons of Veronica Koman;
2. Immediately drop all charges against Veronica Koman;
3. 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 judicial censorship.