



## Media Statement

London, 3 November 2021

UK Government should apologise for encouraging 1960s massacres of alleged leftists in Indonesia and appoint independent counsel to investigate

On 17 and 24 October, the Observer newspaper published new research undertaken by academics and journalists, disclosing the existence in 1965 of a covert unit in the UK Foreign Office. The unit spread disinformation purporting to be from Indonesian ‘patriots’ living outside Indonesia, encouraging a coup d’etat.

Since the fall of the New Order dictatorship in Indonesia in 1998, many revelations have come to light about the killings, which began in 1965, including the impacts that it has had on the lives of people accused of involvement with the Indonesia Communist Party (PKI). These impacts included summary execution, imprisonment, torture, sexual violence, exile and of those later released from prison, discrimination and the taint of accusation including bans from government employment. The massacres were a horrific initial episode of the New Order which turned Indonesian society upside down, scarring the lives of those accused of involvement and creating legacies of impunity for perpetrators, especially the military, that exists to this day.

TAPOL’s chairperson, Steve Alston, said “TAPOL calls on the UK Government to apologise for its role in encouraging the massacre of alleged leftists in the 1960s. Furthermore, the Government should appoint an independent counsel to investigate the allegations within 18 months.”

“By making a formal apology for its role in the massacres, the UK Government would strengthen truth-seeking processes and provide some measure of justice to victims”, said Alston. In the absence of formal international justice mechanisms, the International People’s Tribunal (IPT) heard testimonies in the Hague, Netherlands, from victims impacted by the massacres in 2015.

The Tribunal found that the Indonesian military had propagated a false narrative of threats supposedly presented by the PKI in order to slaughter alleged communists, but also that the US, UK and Australia had supported this false version of events via its diplomatic and propaganda apparatuses. The US Government furthermore provided small arms and lists of alleged communists to the Indonesian military. The IPT drew strength from these victims’ voices and civil society but was not intended to be a substitute for formal justice mechanisms.

It is therefore essential for the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) to appoint an independent counsel who can establish the facts in this case and report on them to the UK Government and Parliament.

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### Notes for editors

1. P. Lashmar, N. Gilby & J. Oliver 'Slaughter in Indonesia' 17 October 2021. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/oct/17/slaughter-in-indonesia-britains-secret-propaganda-war>
2. P. Lashmar & N. Gilby 'Survivors of 1965 Indonesia massacres urge UK to apologise', 24 October 2021 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/oct/17/slaughter-in-indonesia-britains-secret-propaganda-war>
3. Letters, 24 October, 'Murder in Indonesia' <https://www.theguardian.com/theobserver/commentisfree/2021/oct/24/observer-letters-civility-in-politics-is-more-vital-than-ever>