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November 11, 1996

Mr. Singgih
Attorney General
Jalan Sultan Hasanuttin #1
Kebeyoran Baru
Jakarta, Selatan
Indonesia

Dear Mr. Attorney General:

The American Bar Association and its more than 345,000 member lawyers have a strong commitment to the preservation of the rule of law in the international community. In particular, we affirm our support for an independent legal profession and judiciary, free from governmental interference, which will maintain internationally recognized standards of fairness and justice. These objectives are embodied in "Rule of Law Resolution" adopted by the Association's House of Delegates in February 1975.

In consideration of this resolution, we would like to express our concern about the detainment of trade union lawyer Muchtar Pakpahan. Mr. Pakpahan, founder of the Indonesian Prosperity Labor Union and leader of the Indonesian People's Council, has reportedly been detained on subversion charges since July 30, 1996.

According to our information, Mr. Pakpahan made a speech during the Free Speech Forum of the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI) at the end of July, and also issued a statement accusing the government of hiring men to raid the PDI's headquarters around this same time period. Shortly thereafter, he was arrested by officials of the Junior Supreme Prosecutor, Special Crime-Subversive Division, and charged with provoking the two days of rioting and unrest which followed the Forum. He has reportedly been held since then without trial under Indonesian rules for individuals charged with subversion.

Our concern is that Mr. Pakpahan is being held for the peaceful demonstration of his views and for his association with government opposition parties. The alleged treatment Mr. Pakpahan has received at the hands of the authorities puts at risk the right of individuals to peacefully associate and express their political opinions. It also hinders Mr. Pakpahan's freedom to function as a lawyer and as a labor representative for the Indonesian people.

These facts, if proven correct, constitute a serious violation of the rule of law in Indonesia. The independence of judges and lawyers is fundamental in maintaining the international standards of equal justice and due process. The sole concern of the ABA is the maintenance of the rule of law throughout the international community. Though we agree that preservation of security of the state and public order are responsibilities of any government, we do not feel that these concerns justify the treatment Mr. Pakpahan has received.

We respectfully urge the Indonesian government to investigate the facts of this case. If these alleged incidents are proven to be true, we encourage that those involved be brought to justice.

Thank you for your consideration of these important matters. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "N. Lee Cooper". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "N" being particularly large and stylized.

N. Lee Cooper

cc: The Honorable Warren Christopher
The Honorable Ambassador Roy
His Excellency Minister Usman
His Excellency Ambassador Siregar
IKADIN (Indonesian Bar Association)
Indonesian National Human Rights Commission
Human Rights Institute, International Bar Association