



## RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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Indonesia: Information on the Badan Eksekutif Mahasiswa (BEM) at Trisakti University and other universities, including how members are chosen, activities and any actions taken by state authorities against past or present members (1994-2005)

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The Badan Eksekutif Mahasiswa (BEM), or Student Executive Body (*Jakarta Post* 1 Mar. 2005; State University of Jakarta n.d.; *Washington Times* 15 Feb. 2001), exists at a number of university campuses in Indonesia, including Trisakti University in Jakarta (ibid.).

BEM has been linked to the Association of Islamic University Students (HMI) (*Washington Times* 15 Feb. 2001) and the Indonesian Muslim Students Action Committee (KAMMI), "the student organ of the Justice Party" (*Green Left Weekly* 30 Jan. 2002; see also ASAP 3 Feb. 2004). HMI alumni reportedly hold key posts in government, as well as in business and in academia (*AsiaWeek* 29 Jan. 1999). The student movement against the government of President Abdurrahman Wahid was allegedly "manipulated and perhaps even funded by the embattled president's opponents, some of whom [were] seen as part of the 'New Order' - the regime of former dictator Suharto" (*Washington Times* 15 Feb. 2001). Reportedly, some HMI alumni worked within the Suharto regime, though the HMI group of alumni is "rife with competing factions" and current students are sometimes at odds with the alumni (*Asia Week* 29 Jan. 1999).

KAMMI was formed in 1998 by a group of *dakwah* activists who were also BEM leaders at the time, in order to gather all *dakwah* activists under one national organization (Collins 2004, 13). *Dakwah* activists hold the belief that Indonesia should be ruled by an Islamic government (ibid. 2). Reportedly, *dakwah* activists "on university campuses used their institutional base to win control of [BEMs] at almost every major university" (ibid. 13).

While information on how members of the Trisakti BEM are selected could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate, information on the Website of the Universitas Katolik De La Salle in Manado indicated that the new chairman of the BEM was selected through an electoral process (26 May 2004). At the State University of Jakarta, the Majelis Permusyawaratan Mahasiswa (Student Assembly) constitutes the "highest forum" where student matters are discussed, while the BEM executes all decisions made by the Student Assembly (State University of Jakarta n.d.).

Members of various university BEMs, as well as the Greater Jakarta BEM, have been involved in rallies and demonstrations protesting government policies (see *Green Left Weekly* 30 Jan. 2002; *Jakarta Post* 7 Aug. 2002; Laksamana.net 20 Oct. 2004). In 2001, the Trisakti University BEM took part in a student movement to oust President Wahid over charges of corruption (*Washington Times* 15 Feb. 2001). According to the *Green Left Weekly*, in early 2002, student protests against rising fuel prices and the government of President Megawati Sukarnoputri were led by two student groups, one of them an unspecified BEM (30 Jan. 2002). Laksamana.net reported in October 2004 that "BEM activists" were among students who rallied outside the national parliament during the inauguration of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, asking that government reforms be instituted (20 Oct. 2004). Plans by Yudhoyono's government to raise fuel prices in early 2005 were likewise greeted by protests by the Greater Jakarta BEM, among other student groups and non-governmental organizations (*Jakarta Post* 1 March 2005). Information on whether the Trisakti University BEM is a member of the Greater Jakarta BEM could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

In February 2004, police broke up a student demonstration in front of the country's supreme court in which the Greater Jakarta BEM was involved, because permission to hold the demonstration had not been granted (ASAP 3 Feb. 2004). Similarly, in 2002, a rally in which students from Trisakti University had participated was dispersed by police as demonstrators attempted to enter the People's Consultative Assembly (*Jakarta Post* 7 Aug. 2002). No arrests or injuries were reported (ibid.). However, Rico Marbun, a former chairman of the University of Indonesia BEM, was acquitted on charges of violating Law No. 9/1998 on freedom of expression by failing to inform the police before holding a rally in January 2003 outside the official presidential residence (*Jakarta Post* 7 Aug. 2003).

While further information on actions taken by state authorities against BEM members could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate, the following may be of interest. In May 1998, a demonstration involving about 5,000 students culminated in the shooting death of four Trisakti university students

after shots were fired on campus (*Jakarta Post* 14 May 2003; Tapol Sep. 2002; see also AFP 12 May 1998). A commission of inquiry looking into the incident concluded that "the killings took place with the full involvement of the security officers who used their power as well as their weapons in an excessive way" (Tapol Sep. 2002).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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#### Additional Sources Consulted

Attempts to consult three oral sources were unsuccessful within the time constraints of this Response.

**Internet sites, including:** Embassy of Indonesia, Ottawa; Indonesian Canadian Community Association; Trisakti University.

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