

Vicious Muslim Threats Force Christians to Cancel Massive Celebration

Indonesian Christians planning to celebrate the 500th anniversary of Protestant Christianity were forced to abandon a stadium event following threats from Muslim hardliners.

“For the sake of interreligious harmony ... and to avoid acts of intolerance, the committee decided to call off the national prayer service to mark 500 years of Reformation,” the Reformed Evangelical Church of Indonesia said in a statement.

“It had the potential to become an arena of apostasy under the guise of mass healing,” a spokesperson from the Forum Ukhuwah Islamiyah (FUI), part of the Indonesian Ulema Council, told Catholic news agency UCAN.

The organizers of the event, which was to be held on October 20 at the Kridosono football stadium in Yogyakarta, on the island of Java, said the aim was prayer, not healing. Local police claimed the event had been cancelled due to permit issues.

The event was to be led by Rev. Tong, whose Christmas 2016 event in West Java was also cancelled following threats by hardliners.

A Muslim scholar told UCAN the cancellation was the latest proof of intolerance in Indonesia.

“It’s a sign that in our society it is difficult to accept people of different beliefs,” said Achmad Nurcholish. “Acts of intolerance will continue unless the government pays serious attention to it.”

Bonar Tigor Naipospos, deputy director of the Setara Institute for Democracy and Peace, told UCAN: “Unfortunately, local governments back [hardliners] by cancelling such events under the pretext of maintaining security.” {eo}

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