

Press Release

Indonesian widows summon The Netherlands for bloodbath Rawagedeh (Java) in 1947

Amsterdam, 9 December 2009 – The widows of the men who were executed by Dutch soldiers in Indonesia exactly 62 years ago, summon The Netherlands. The widows want recognition of the wrongful executions and financial compensation.

The widows do not only summon The Netherlands for the executions, but also for its failure to institute criminal proceedings against the soldiers responsible for the bloodbath. The military officer in charge when the executions took place, major Wynen, was, after joint consultation between the army commander and the procurator general at the time, not prosecuted for reasons of expediency.

Despite several expressions of “regret”, The Netherlands has declared it does not accept responsibility. The main argument of The Netherlands is that the executions are expired.

The victims argue that The Netherlands reasonably cannot invoke the statute of limitations. Claims of Second World War victims are still being handled. The principle equal treatment demands that the claims of the victims of the bloodbath of Rawagedeh are not treated different from the claims of the Second World War victims. Also, invoking time bars with respect to the failure of instituting criminal proceedings is of no avail, since war crimes do not become extinguished by limitation under criminal law.

Background information – On 9 December 1947 Dutch troops attacked the village of Rawagedeh on Java in Indonesia. Hundreds of male villagers were executed, along with prisoners and refugees. A UN Security Council fact-finding committee in a 1948 report called the actions of the Dutch Army “deliberate and ruthless”. Criminal proceedings against the soldiers responsible for the Rawagedeh bloodbath have never been instituted. The Netherlands has never apologized or paid compensation to the surviving family members of the murdered villagers. This is the first time that Indonesian surviving family members issue a summons against The Netherlands for crimes committed during the decolonisation wars in Indonesia from 1945 until 1949.

Contact person:

Prof. dr. Liesbeth Zegveld – Böhler Franken Koppe Wijngaarden Advocaten (BFKW)
Keizersgracht 560-562, 1017 EM Amsterdam
Tel.: +31 (0)20-344 62 00, e-mail: lzegveld@bfkw.nl