

The International Program – Indonesia



Judicial Watch president, Tom Fitton, met with a delegate from Indonesia on October 28, 2009, at Judicial Watch headquarters in Washington, D.C. The meeting was requested by the Mississippi Consortium for International Development (MCID), under the auspices of the U.S. Department of State's International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP).

In furtherance of the program developed by MCID, Judicial Watch was asked to discuss:

- How Judicial Watch monitors and provides oversight of the government and judiciary.
- The course of legal or civil action for government officials, especially elected or appointed judges, who are implicated in corruption scandals?
- And how Judicial Watch disseminates the information they collect to the public.

As set forth in its Mission Statement, "through its educational endeavors, Judicial Watch advocates high standards of ethics and morality in our nation's public life and seeks to ensure that political and judicial officials do not abuse the powers entrusted to them by the American people. Judicial Watch fulfills its educational mission through litigation, investigations, and public outreach." [The International Program](#) is an integral part of its educational program.

The U.S. Department of State's [country profile](#) for Indonesia reports that since the September 11th terrorist attacks on U.S. soil and the terrorist attacks in Indonesia (Bali in 2002 and Jakarta in 2003 and 2004), the United States and Indonesia have worked together on counterterrorism, with the "common goal of maintaining peace, security, and stability in the region." The State Department indicates that the "U.S.

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is committed to consolidating Indonesia's democratic transition and supports the territorial integrity of the country.”

The country study further reports that “relations between Indonesia and the U.S. are positive and have advanced since the election of President Yudhoyono in October 2004.” President Yudhoyono won reelection to office in 2009, in part, on his promise to combat corruption in government.

His previous administration’s success in combating corruption was due to the work of an anti-corruption court established outside of Indonesia’s normal court system. According to a June 17, 2009, [article](#) published by *Reuters*, “Scores of senior officials, who under previous governments would have been considered untouchable, have been sentenced by the corruption court.” The normal courts are known for treating corruption cases leniently, with over half of the defendants dismissed, and sentences running under six months. In contrast, the anti-corruption court has had “a 100 percent conviction rate,” with the average sentence running about four years, as reported by Indonesia Corruption Watch (ICW).¹

Most recently, however, the corruption court’s existence has experienced a pushback as a result of parliament’s successful efforts to weaken the special Corrupt Crimes Court. According to Freedom House, “the bill passed by parliament allows for the Court to staff a majority of its judges from the regular justice system. Previously, a majority of the judges had to come from outside of the government—including practicing lawyers, academics, and retired prosecutors, among others. As career judges do not tend to have impeccable reputations in corruption cases in Indonesia, such a requirement was seen to allow the court more independence.”²

As the Indonesian delegate agreed, it is a difficult and ongoing fight. Indonesia is still by most measures considered one of the most corrupt countries in the world. However, the long history and culture of corruption in Indonesia make the recent successes of the anti-corruption court even more remarkable.

¹ Olivia Rondonuwu, “Indonesia’s corruption court in fight for existence,” *Reuters*, June 17, 2009 <<http://www.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idUSTRE55G0YI20090617>> accessed October 27, 2009.

² Freedom House, “Corruption-Fighters in Indonesia Feel Pushback,” October 21, 2009 <<http://blog.freedomhouse.org/weblog/2009/10/corruptionfighters-in-indonesia-feel-pushback.html>> accessed October 30, 2009.