

UGM Hosts Book Discussion: Buru Island Memoir

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Universitas Gadjah Mada's Faculty of Social and Political Sciences on Friday (11/3) conducted a gathering to discuss the book entitled *Memoar Pulau Buru* (Buru Island Memoir) written by Hensri Setiawan, a political prisoner during the New Order era who was detained on Buru island over 50 years ago. The discussion was attended by students, activists, and families of former political prisoners in the 1965 era, as well as Director General for Culture at Education and Culture Ministry, Dr. Hilmar Farid.

Hensri Setiawan - alumnus of the Faculty - looked touched and proud to see the discussion. His visit to UGM is the first after his detention on the island. He appreciated the move by the Faculty for conducting the discussion to know more of the story of political prisoners after the 1965 tragedy. "A duration of 50 years is not a long journey for history, but it will be longer if we don't do something and break the chain (of writing the history), UGM has apparently broken that chain," he said.

Hensri viewed that history writing had to be reviewed, particularly on how political prisoners considered to be affiliated to the Indonesian Communist Party were imprisoned without legal proceedings. Despite this fact, Hensri said, what he had suffered during alienation to Buru island did not make him harbour any hatred whatsoever. His book can even serve as a lesson for the current generation.

The book discussion, according to Hensri, reminded him of the time when his fellow students were detained and gone missing in 1965. "I would like to dedicate this award to two of my lecturers and hundreds of UGM students who were missing that year," he said.



Dr. Hilmar Farid appreciated the Faculty that had successfully conducted the discussion on a book telling the dark history of the government in power of that year. “What was submitted by Hensri is a witness, he is capable to overcome the inheritance that has long been passed on to us, which is fear,” he said.

Hilman added the fear created by the old regime not only affected society but also authorities who then created their own fear. “Fear stays with those who have power, a fear that they create on themselves. We have to try to go thorough that fear, removing the fear that so far has formed our personality. For me, Hensri has made a significant contribution to us all,” he said.

Dean of the Faculty, Dr. Erwan Agus Purwanto, said a nation history writing had gone through the ups and downs. But that history has formed the personality of its society. Experience for history makers, said Erwan, has formed their personalities as a complete Indonesian being. “We learn from Hensri that there is no such thing as revenge, fellow citizens have to develop the nation for a better future,” he concluded.

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