Civil Society Organizations and State of Law in the Present time

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YOYAKARTA- The existence of civil society organizations (Ormas) in Indonesia cannot be separated from history, reform, democracy, and decentralization. Each of the organizations in the region has its own unique characteristics. The characteristics of the organizations can be seen, among others, from its nature, religious relations, and ethnicity to the relationship with local government.

Those are some notable issues raised in the seminar State of Anxiety, Civil Society Organizations, and State of Law in the Present Time, which is held at the UGM Center for Population and Policy Studies (PSKK) on Thursday (24/2). The attendees of the seminar, among others, are guest researchers, Dr. Laurens Baker (Nijmegen, Netherlands) and Dr. Lee Wilson (Cambridge, UK).

On that occasion, Baker and Wilson cite several organizations in the area, such as the Forum Betawi Rempug (FBR) in Jakarta, Indigenous Command of Dayak (KAD) in Kalimantan, Pecalangan in Bali, and the Brigade Manguni in Minahasa. Of the several organizations that they studied, some indeed obtained legal mandate from the government and society, such as Pecalangan. "Pecalangan is indeed a Civil Society Organization that has a clear mandate from local governments and communities, while there are others that do not have it. In addition, the focus of their activities is different; some are focusing on economy, such as KAD. However, some are more complex, such as the FBR with the motto of 3S (shalat, sekolah dan silat/prayer, school and martial arts)," Baker explained.

Baker mentioned that in relation with the decentralization, the position of Civil Society Organizations in various areas is relatively strong such as the one in the capital. The level of public trust to them is higher than the trust to the state institutions. It is very possible that the attention given by Civil Society Organizations to the realities faced by communities is often better than the attention of the state. "At the basic level, for example, about marriage and death, Civil Society Organizations often provide help in real terms, hence the public trust in the organization is still high," said Baker.
Meanwhile, Wilson added, that along with the change of regime and decentralization, Civil Society Organizations in Indonesia also seem to be divided in various areas. With a motto that they have, such as anti-corruption organization, fighting for human rights, peace-loving, increase of community welfare, and participate to enforce the law, Civil Society Organizations are able to gain sympathy from the public.

With their high bargaining position, including through violent means, the existence of Civil Society Organizations in Indonesia has come into existence in various domains, whether those which are clearly demonstrated like the "thugs" who rely on violence in every activity, those which are associated in the business sector as well as those in political domain. "Everyone already knows all this time organizations that do have relevance and are affiliated with political parties, their mobility will be even higher, they also come into the business domain as well," said Wilson.

Wilson assessed that it is very probable for the Civil Society Organizations and the government to work together and bring benefits to each other in the future. The existence of free markets and democracy which are increasingly open encourage the cooperation between them.

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