

Christmas Celebrations in West Sumatra Banned



Christians from Sungai Tambang, Sijunjung Regency and Jorong Kampung Baru, Dharmasraya Regency in West Sumatra, are banned from holding worship services and Christmas celebrations in 2019.

According to Indonesiakini News, the local government argues that Christmas celebrations were banned in the two locations because they were not carried out in places of worship in general.

“They did not get permission from the local government since the Christmas celebration and worship were held at the house of one of the Christians who had been involved. The local government argued that the situation was not conducive,” said the director of PUSAKA (Center for Inter-Community Studies).

He added that the ban on Christians to celebrate Christmas and the New Year had been going on since 1985. *“It has been going on for a long time, so far they have been quietly worshipping at the home of one of the worshipers, but they have applied for permission several times. Yet the permit to celebrate Christmas was never granted,”*

he said.

“The house where they performed worship services was once burned down in early 2000 due to resistance from residents,” Sudarto believes that the ban is an act that violates human rights, because in Indonesia every religious community is given the freedom to celebrate the holidays of their respective religions.

There are currently around 210 Christian family households in Sungai Tambang, some protestants some Catholics. They have been celebrating Christmas at a church in Sawahlunto which sits 120 kilometers away.

Given the distance, in the end they jointly applied for permission to be able to celebrate Christmas in their neighborhood. *“...They again submitted permission to celebrate together at home, but still did not get permission,”* said Sudarto. Sudarto and several PUSAKA representatives went to the National Human Rights Commission and the ombudsman to complain about their fate, hoping to help them get permission to celebrate Christmas and New Year.

— Source: persecution.org