



ASIA: Lawyers unlikely to know anything until Bali bombers are dead

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INDON By Karen Michelmore, South East Asia Correspondent

CILACAP, CENTRAL JAVA, Oct 31 AAP - Secrecy surrounds the planned executions of three Bali bombers, with their lawyers saying even they will likely know nothing until after the men are dead.

The Islamic militants behind the 2002 bombings were tonight in isolation on death row as their executions on the prison island loom.

Other inmates at the maximum security prison block have been transferred to other nearby prisons to prevent any rioting.

Defence lawyer Wirawan Adnan said the legal team had not had any contact with Mukhlas, his brother Amrozi, and Imam Samudra since last week when they visited the prison with Mukhlas' family.

"I don't think the attorney-general's office will give us the luxury of that information because we believe it will be done secretly," Wirawan said.

"They know that our attitude will be that the public has the right to know, and any information given to us will be publicised."

He said it was possible that the terrorists had already been given a mandatory 72-hour notice advising that their executions would be carried out. There is no legal requirement for lawyers to be informed.

"We have no way of knowing if they do the executions," he said.

Indonesian authorities remain tightlipped about the timing of the bombers' deaths by firing squad on Nusakambangan Island, in Central Java.

But it could happen anytime after midnight. Authorities have said only that the executions will be carried out in "early November".

Bali prosecutors who will oversee the executions have arrived on Nusakambangan Island.

"Within the next 10 days they will be executed, it could be any moment now," said terrorism expert Rohan Gunaratna, of the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research in Singapore.

He called on Indonesian political and religious leaders to brand the three "deviants of Islam" to reduce the impact of their repeated calls for others to avenge their deaths.

New letters penned by the bombers are circulating on the internet, calling for revenge attacks against those responsible for their executions.

"It's important for the Indonesian government to state categorically that the Bali bombers do not represent Islam, that the Bali bombers are heretics and are deviants of Islam," Gunaratna told AAP.

"To reduce the impact of the statements of the Bali bombers, it is so important for the Indonesian religious leaders to condemn the Bali bombers and their acts as unislamic.

"Unless the Indonesian government (and religious leaders) do that, it will send the wrong message to a small group of Muslims in Indonesia."

Security is tight on Nusakambangan and the closest town of Cilacap ahead of the executions.

More police vehicles were today ferried to the island from Cilacap, where a large media contingent is waiting for news.

It appeared to be business as usual for customary Friday prayers at the prison, although head of Cilacap Islamic Clerics' Council (MUI) Hasan Makarim would not confirm if the bombers were in his congregation.

"I was only preaching, I didn't get close to them," he told reporters in Cilacap.

Police have also beefed up security in the villages where the three men were born, and will be buried, in east and west Java.

Experts today said a terrorist attack to avenge the bombers' executions was unlikely, but warned lower-level unrest could break out when their bodies are returned to their villages.

"I think that the likelihood of a successful retaliatory attack of a terrorist nature is fairly low," the International Crisis Group's Sidney Jones said.

She said she did not doubt there were groups who would like to exact revenge, but believed any plot would be uncovered by Indonesian security forces.

However she warned that when the bodies are returned home "there is a likelihood that you get a large concentration of very angry supporters of the Bali bombers who could go on a rampage".

Police were "well aware of the possibilities of an emotional reaction at that time" and would try to preempt it, she said.

The Australian National University's Greg Fealy, an expert on Islamic politics and radical groups in Indonesia, agreed and said most Muslims in the country had very little sympathy for the three bombers.

"They will not be particularly mourning their executions," he said.

"The only problem will come with that very small number of people in the extremist fringe in Indonesia, committed jihadists. And these people will regard this as an act that should be avenged."

It was possible some unrest could surround the burials.

"But I don't think you're talking about a large number of people here, and the security services have already got much tighter security" in the bombers' home provinces, he said.

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