



# Yayasan Komite Utang Kehormatan Belanda

Stichting Comité Nederlandse Ereschulden

Foundation the Dutch Debt of Honor Committee

Heemskerk, 9 August 2023

Dear Mrs Halsema,

My name is Jeffry M. Pondaag and I am the chair person and founder of the *Komite Utang Kerhomatan Belanda foundation* (K.U.K.B., the Committee of Dutch Honorary Debts). We defend the interests of the Indonesian victims of Dutch violence. In addition, we stand up for the 7,000 conscientious objectors, young Dutch men at the time, who received four to seven years prison sentence because they refused to fight against the independent *Republik Indonesia*. This is in contrast to Dutch war criminals (including KNIL soldiers) who have walked free and have never been tried.

It has come to my attention that you initially planned to attend the 'Indies commemoration' on Dam Square of August 15, organized by the Indisch Platform 2.0. Only after realizing that the daughter of war criminal Raymond Westerling was going to speak, you decided not to go. Instead, you are now going to attend the 'decolonial Indonesia Netherlands commemoration' that will be held on August 16 at the Indies monument in Amsterdam South. I think it is only 'wajar', Indonesian for 'reasonable', that you are not going.

However, this does not solve the problem. All Indies commemorations in the Netherlands are colonial, regardless of whether Westerling's daughter speaks or not. This also applies to the National Indies Commemoration in The Hague. Yet, also the commemoration of August 16, that is referred to as 'decolonial', is normalizing colonialism by giving the impression that there is a middle ground, that Dutch-Indies people and Indonesians, and their experience, are equal to each other. But they forget that the Dutch East Indies was not a normal country, it was an illegal occupation. The only decolonial commemoration is the commemoration of August 17, the day that we Indonesians celebrate our independence.

When you commemorate the Second World War, you would not invite descendants of the German SS and Dutch collaborators to come to an equal feeling of 'togetherness' with Jewish descendants. Then you realize very well that the experience of perpetrators, traitors and victims is very different and that it must be handled carefully. In such an event, the stories and feelings of perpetrators and traitors will not dominate.

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In any case, you would not put those experiences on an equal footing with each other. When it comes to the history of the Dutch occupation of Indonesia, there is a lack of awareness of who was the perpetrator and who was the victim. During Indies commemorations, the power relations are equalized, or even reversed, as the commemoration of the Indisch Platform shows.

For many years, my foundation filed successful lawsuits against the Dutch state. Your fellow party member Mariko Peters supported us in this, in the time when you were still party leader. You may remember that we once sat together in the smoking room of the Dutch House of Representatives when I was waiting for Mrs Peters.

We also litigated on behalf of the descendants of the victims of Palmyra's father, who is a war criminal. In 1947, he and his colleagues executed thousands of men in South Sulawesi. Including Mr. Monji's father. On the photograph that we used for our logo, he is on my left. As a ten-year-old boy, he saw from a few meters distance how his father was shot to death. All women and children were forced to watch the executions. Monji's case was heard by the court in The Hague in 2019.

That you now decided not to attend this pro-colonial commemoration is a good decision in itself, but I find it incomprehensible that you, as mayor, allow this commemoration anyway. This is a slap in the face to Indonesians, and in particular to the Indonesian descendants of the victims that we represent. I wonder what your king's apologies and the so-called (non-legal) 'recognition' of 1945 by Prime Minister Rutte actually mean?

To be clear: I do not belong to the so-called Dutch-Indies community. I am from Indonesia and I still have my Indonesian passport. So-called Dutch-Indies people are people of mixed descent who enjoyed European status within the racist apartheid system and are therefore here and not there. They helped the Dutch in maintaining the occupation system. Dutch-Indies people are traitors who executed and killed their Indonesian brothers and sisters on behalf of the kingdom. They owe us an apology.

On August 15, Dutch (Indies) people commemorate that the Second World War ended, while for us the misery then started (again). Although the Netherlands had already been defeated as an occupier in 1942 by the arrival of Japan, they returned between 1945-1949. Hundreds of



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thousands of soldiers, including war criminal Westerling, sowed death and destruction.

The date of August 15 means nothing to Indonesians. Annually on August 17, we celebrate Sukarno and Hatta's declaration of independence of 1945. That is the only real decolonial date. The difference between August 15 and August 17 cannot be bridged by holding a commemoration at a colonial monument. All Indies commemorations must be abolished because they justify and legitimize colonialism.

I am not only opposing the commemoration on Dam Square, or the one in The Hague, but I also find the commemoration at the Indies monument on August 16 equally colonial. The three-layered apartheid system that the Netherlands introduced in Indonesia is still in effect. We Indonesians are not listened to. It is as if we do not exist in the Netherlands. The voices of Dutch-Indies people are dominantly present. Only in very exceptional cases, only for the show, we are allowed to participate in discussions. I ask you and your city council to start listening to critical Indonesians like myself to learn from us how things really are.

You can call me for more information. I hope you are going to do something with my message.

Sincerely,

Jeffry M. Pondaag

Chairman and Founder of Yayasan Komite Utang Kehormatan Belanda (K.U.K.B. Foundation, Dutch Debts of Honor Committee)

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