

NSS asks Google to remove Indonesian app for reporting blasphemy

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The National Secular Society has written to Google to ask it to remove an app which encourages Indonesians to report people they suspect of religious 'heresy' to the authorities.

Two weeks ago the Indonesian government launched the [Smart Pakem](#) app, which allows Indonesians to report "deviant" religious ideas.

The app lists several religious minority groups, including the Ahmadiyah, Shia, and Gafatar. It names their leaders and Indonesian office addresses and describes their "deviant teachings".

Rights groups have condemned the app but it remains [available](#) on the Google Play store. It has received a series of negative reviews from people concerned about its impact on freedom of expression.

NSS chief executive Stephen Evans has now written to Rajan Anandan, the vice-president of Google in south-east Asia, to ask the company to reconsider its decision to stock the app.

Mr Evans said the app would help Indonesia's government to crack down on freedom of expression and persecute religious minorities.

He said stocking the app made it "very likely" that more people in Indonesia would be prosecuted and convicted under the country's blasphemy law.

Indonesia officially recognises six religions: Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism. Its blasphemy law makes it illegal to promote any other religion or belief system. Supporting atheism is effectively banned. The punishment for infringing these laws is up to five years in prison.

According to [Human Rights Watch](#), 125 people were convicted of blasphemy in Indonesia between 2004 and 2014. Twenty-three have been convicted since 2014.

Mr Evans added that stocking the app was "incongruous with Google's mission statement" and "runs directly contrary to the democratic ideals which Google says it stands for". Google says it exists "to organise the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful".

Mr Evans also said stocking the app would "normalise restrictions on freedom of expression in Indonesia and elsewhere".

The NSS campaigns for the [repeal of blasphemy laws](#) and is committed to challenging infringements on freedom of and from religion around the world.

Explaining his decision to write the letter, Mr Evans said: "Indonesia's blasphemy law is a morally unjustifiable tool of repression which should be repealed as soon as possible. While this law exists anyone who believes in free expression should make it as difficult as possible for the Indonesian government to enforce the law.

"Google has greatly benefited from the freedom to share information globally. We ask it and other multinational companies to consider whether they can in good conscience profit from the repression caused by governments' crackdowns on free speech."

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