

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

October 16, 2020

The Honorable Mark Esper  
Secretary of Defense  
The Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Although we fully agree with the need to move with seriousness of purpose to strengthen and deepen the U.S.-Indonesia strategic partnership, we write to express our concern regarding the visit of Indonesian Minister of Defense Prabowo Subianto to the United States.

As you well know, Minister Prabowo has been banned from entering the United States since 2000 due to his alleged direct involvement in perpetrating human rights abuses while serving as the commander of the army's special forces during the Soeharto regime. Indonesia has made considerable (albeit imperfect) progress in recent years to address some of its past practices. However, without proper handling, we fear the circumstances around his visit could signal U.S. disregard for its commitment to human rights, justice and accountability, or empower anti-democratic elements in Indonesia. We strongly urge you to make clear the United States' U.S. human rights concerns with Minister Prabowo during your meeting, and to work with the State Department to take appropriate steps to ensure our values—human rights, rule of law, good governance, and freedoms of expression—are clear both publicly and privately and sit at the center of our deepening engagement with Indonesia.

Indonesia is a vital U.S. partner and leader in Southeast Asia on issues ranging from maritime security to sustainable development. Indonesia's economic dynamism and flourishing democracy is a success story for the region, one the Indonesian people have every right to be proud of. As the United States continues to work to ensuring security, stability, and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific and to extend our partnership with Jakarta, lifting the visa band and inviting Minister Prabowo to the United States without additional action or policy context to make clear our on-going concerns undermines our commitment to the norms and values we champion. We stress the need for you to personally and publicly underscore the importance of human rights and accountability during Minister Prabowo's visit.

The United States must not be seen as supporting human rights and rule of law only when doing so is convenient. These principles are central to who we are as a country and essential to animate the "free and open" vision of the Free and Open Indo-Pacific. Treating them as a minor

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diplomatic inconvenience cedes our credibility and weakens U.S. leadership internationally.  
Thank you for your attention to thus urgent matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Eliot L. Engel".

ELIOT L. ENGEL

Chairman

House Committee on Foreign Affairs

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robert Menendez".

ROBERT MENENDEZ

Ranking Member

Senate Committee on Foreign Relations

CC: Secretary of State Mike Pompeo