

**PRESS STATEMENT**

**The Netherlands invokes the statute of limitations of the action brought by widows  
Rawagedeh**

Amsterdam, 11 may 2010 – The Netherlands invokes the statute of limitations of the action brought by the widows of Rawagedeh. This is stated in the response of The Netherlands to the summons issued by the widows, which will be submitted to the District Court of the Hague tomorrow.

The Netherlands acknowledges that the summary executions of the men in Rawagedeh (Java) on 9 december 1947, were wrongful. Likewise, The Netherlands acknowledges that these executions carried out by Dutch soldiers constitute (war)crimes. In connection with its explanation and expression of regret towards the surviving relatives, The Netherlands emphasized that it allocated € 850.000 for development aid to the village Rawagedeh.

It is disappointing and incomprehensible to the widows that The Netherlands invoked the statute of limitations of the crimes committed in Rawagedeh. The seriousness of the crimes, the acknowledgement of The Netherlands that these crimes were wrongful, and the grave consequences for the victims, make a plea on the statute of limitations unacceptable. The position of The Netherlands “that it did not have to take into account the possibility of being held liable for the damage” is incomprehensible in light of the continuing debate on the colonial past of The Netherlands.

In addition, The Netherlands still considers claims for restitution of victims of World War II, notwithstanding that the limitation period of these claims has been exceeded. According to The Netherlands, this concerns a choice of the State itself, which cannot be reviewed by the judiciary.

The victims will press their cause of action against The Netherlands. On 12 may 2010 the District Court of the Hague will rule on the next procedural step.

**Background information** – On 9 December 1947 Dutch troops attacked the village of Rawagadeh on Java (Indonesia). Hundreds of male villagers were executed, along with prisoners and refugees. A UN Security Council fact-finding committee in a 1948 report called the actions of the Dutch Army “deliberate and ruthless”. Criminal proceedings against the soldiers responsible for the Rawagedeh bloodbath have never been instituted. The Netherlands has never apologized or paid compensation to the surviving family members of the murdered villagers. This is the first time that Indonesian surviving family members have issued a summons against The Netherlands for crimes committed during the decolonisation wars in Indonesia from 1945 until 1949.

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