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JAKARTA \_ The former editor of the Indonesian version of Playboy magazine was released from prison after the Supreme Court overturned his indecency, conviction in a case that drew widespread debate over public morals in the country.

Erwin Arnada was sentenced to two years last October for picking and publishing photos of scantily clad women. While the photos were tame compared to those published in some other local magazines, Playboy's big international profile made it a lightning rod for the wrath of hard-line groups in Indonesia, the world's biggest Muslim-majority nation.

Human-rights groups, meanwhile have accused the government of using cases such as Mr. Arnada's to curry favor with strict Muslims, while failing to protect freedom of the press.

The reasons for Mr. Arnada's acquittal weren't immediately clear. "My release is evidence that freedom of speech is respected" in Indonesia, Mr. Arnada said to a reporter as he was set free Friday.

The debate over the magazine and the fate of its editor has illustrated the tension between Indonesia's many moderate Muslim residents and an influential core of conservatives who back stricter religious laws here.

While the Southeast Asian nation of 240 million has long been seen as moderate and largely secular, a tiny and sometimes violent minority of hard-liners sometimes seeks to impose its views, at times rattling investors.

Regular demonstrations and political pressure from conservative Muslim groups against what they see as Western influences in Indonesia have brought them occasional victories in local governments and in the courts. Earlier this year, one of Indonesia's biggest pop stars was sentenced to 3 1/2 years for making sex tapes that also triggered a large public debate.

## Indonesia Free Editor Of Playboy From Prison - Eric Bellman

Written by

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From the moment Playboy magazine started publishing in 2006, the editor and his staff were targeted by radical Islamists, who threatened his family, trashed his office and reported him to authorities.

Playboy Indonesia relocated its editorial offices and staff to the tourist-resort island of Bali in hopes of avoiding more trouble, but eventually had to shut down before it had been published for a year. Prosecutors agreed to take Mr. Arnada to court, drawing criticism from rights groups that believe the country's laws against indecency and pornography were too strict and were being applied in a capricious manner.

"We need to review the law, which is being used to accommodate political interests rather than addressing what people need" in Indonesia," said Hendardi, executive director of Setara Institute, an Indonesian human-rights group. Like many Indonesians, he goes by only one name.

The acquittal is "a symbol of respect of the state toward freedom of speech," he said.

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