



INDONESIA

Key Findings

Indonesia's tradition of religious tolerance and pluralism is increasingly threatened by the detentions of individuals considered religiously "deviant" and the ongoing intimidation, discrimination, and violence against religious minorities, including Ahmadis, Christians, Shi'a, Sufis, Hindus, Baha'is, and followers of indigenous religions. Government officials sometimes tolerate, and occasionally actively support, the efforts of extremist groups, such as the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), to stop the perceived growth of religious minorities and police the orthodoxy of the Sunni majority. Based on these ongoing concerns, Indonesia remains a Tier 2 country in 2014. Indonesia has been on Tier 2, formerly USCIRF's Watch List, since 2009.

Background

Reflecting the country's tradition of tolerance, most of Indonesia's diverse religious communities operate openly and with few restrictions, particularly the six recognized religious groups (Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Catholicism, Protestantism, and Confucianism). Nevertheless, Indonesia's transition to democracy and economic stability has been marred by sectarian violence, terrorist attacks, the growth of extremist groups, and rising intolerance toward religious minorities and "heterodox" groups. The government has made strides in dealing with terrorist networks, but groups such as FPI continue to have outsized political influence through their mobilization of large numbers of people. Their activities, sometimes supported by government officials and Muslim religious leaders, send a chilling message to Indonesia's religious minorities, who number between 38 and 42 million.

President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono frequently has promised to protect religious minorities and has linked religious freedom to the survival of Indonesian democracy. Nevertheless, he also supported a 2008

decree "freezing" Ahmadiyya activities, refused to enforce a Supreme Court decision to re-open closed churches, allowed the implementation of laws and regulations restricting religious freedom, and called for an

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anti-blasphemy norm in international law. Members of his cabinet also have sent mixed messages about protecting religious minorities.

Religious Freedom Conditions 2013–2014 Restrictions and Societal Violence Targeting Ahmadis

The 2008 Joint Ministerial decree "freezing" Ahmadiyya religious activity remains in place. Since 2008, at least 62 Ahmadiyya mosques have been vandalized and 45 forcibly closed; three Ahmadis killed in mob violence; and an Ahmadiyya leader imprisoned for two years for saying publicly that he had government permission to re-open his mosque. Over 100 Ahmadis remain displaced in Lombok after violence destroyed their village in 2007.

Forced Closures of and Violence Against Religious Properties

Extremist groups and local government officials during the past year denied permits, forcibly closed, sanctioned protests at, or vandalized minority religious venues,

primarily Protestant or Catholic churches seeking to renovate or build new structures. Authorities often cite the problematic 2006 law on Religious Buildings and Houses of Worship to justify closing or denying permits. The Communion of Churches in Indonesia claims that at least 430 churches have been attacked, closed down or burned in the past decade, and the Jakarta Christian Communication Forum reports attacks on churches rising from just ten in 2010 to 75 in 2013. Weekly confrontations between FPI-backed groups and Christian churches continued in West Java.

Violence Targeting the Minority Shi'a and Sufi Communities

Violence against Shi'a has increased in the past few years, particularly in East Java, after the Religious Affairs Minister, other government officials, and government-supported religious institutions began labeling Shi'a teachings as heresy. Despite promises from government officials, Shi'a remained displaced after mob violence targeted their community in Sampang, Madura province, in 2012, destroying homes and resulting in the death of one villager. Tajul Muluk, the community's cleric, continues to serve a prison sentence for blasphemy. In March 2013, the South Aceh regency ordered the closure of a Sufi madrassa run by the Al-Mujahadah Foundation and police reportedly stood by while a mob vandalized the school's property. Additional vandalism occurred in July and August 2013. To stop them from

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providing home-schooling, local officials also prohibited the foundation's administrators from holding social gatherings. In Aceh and Sumatra, religious leaders issued fatwas declaring Sufi practice a heresy.

Blasphemy Law Enforcement

Article 156(a) of the criminal code punishes "hostility, hatred or contempt against religions" or "disgracing

a religion" with up to five years in prison. Since 2003, more than 120 individuals have been detained under the provision, often as intimidation. For example, in Aceh province, 700 members of the banned Millata Abraham Muslim sect renounced their faith instead of facing blasphemy charges. Some cases have resulted in convictions and sentences. Andreas Guntur, the leader of the spiritual group Amanat Keagungan Ilahi, continues to serve a four-year sentence for blasphemy imposed in 2012. Antonius Richmond Bawengan continues to serve a five-year sentence imposed in 2011. In February 2014, Alexander Aan was released from prison after serving a two-year sentence for starting a Facebook page advocating atheism.

Shari'ah Law in Aceh

Presidential Decree 11/2003 allows the Aceh provincial government to implement a local interpretation of Shari'ah law and operate a vice patrol known as *Wilayatul Hisbah* (WH). WH patrols continue to enforce dress codes and bans on alcohol consumption, gambling, and unchaperoned male-female liaisons. Aceh continues to ban the Sufi, Shi'a, Ahmadiyya, and 11 other sects, and societal attacks against members of banned sects have occurred with impunity. The provincial government forcibly closed 34 venues of various Protestant denominations, Buddhist temples, and Catholic churches, including a chapel that was in operation since 1974, for lacking required permits. The Minister of Home Affairs, which can overturn Acehese decisions in religious affairs, backed the actions of provincial officials.

Recommendations for U.S. Policy

U.S. officials regularly laud Indonesia's religious tolerance and pluralism, but also need to express concerns about the rising tide of intolerance and extremism threatening Indonesian democracy, stability, and the rule of law. USCIRF recommends that the U.S. government should acknowledge the increasing threat to this tradition and prioritize religious freedom by:

- Creating specific bilateral working groups in the annual Comprehensive Partnership and Counterterrorism Cooperation meetings with Indonesia to discuss human rights, religious freedom, and rule of law issues and establishing concrete measures to address them;

- Raising in public and private with Indonesian officials the need to protect Indonesia's tradition of religious tolerance and pluralism by arresting and prosecuting individuals targeting religious groups for violence;
- Urging the Indonesian government to overturn the Joint Ministerial Decree on the Ahmadiyya community and any provincial bans on Ahmadiyya religious practice; amend or repeal Article 156(a) of the Penal Code and release anyone sentenced for "deviancy," "denigrating religion," or "blasphemy," including Andreas Guntur and Antonius Richmond Bawengan; and amend the Joint Ministerial Decree No. 1/2006 (Regulation on Building Houses of Worship) to comply with the Indonesian constitution and international standards;
- Prioritizing funding for governmental, civil society, and media programs that promote religious freedom, counter extremism, build interfaith alliances, expand the reporting ability of human rights defenders, train government and religious officials to mediate sectarian disputes, and build capacity for legal reform advocates, judicial officials, and parliamentarians to better fulfill Indonesia's obligations under international human rights law; and
- Helping to train Indonesian police and counter-terrorism officials, at all levels, to better address sectarian conflict, religiously-related violence and terrorism, including violence against places of worship, through practices consistent with international human rights standards, while ensuring those officers have not been implicated in past human rights abuses.