



Australian Government
Refugee Review Tribunal

Country Advice

Indonesia

Indonesia – IDN38911 – Catholics –
Maumere – Flores – Churches in Maumere
– Religious Violence – Protection from
Authorities
29 June 2011

1. Is there any demographic information about the numbers of Catholics or Christians in Maumere and Flores?

Maumere is located on the island of Flores, which forms a large part of Nusa Tenggara Timur, or East Nusa Tenggara, province.¹ Flores is highlighted on Map A, below:



Map A: Indonesia

The Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs estimates that eight million Catholics live throughout the country, with 55 per cent living in Nusa Tenggara Timur.² Over 90 per cent of the population on Flores identify as Catholic. This anomaly in the religious landscape of Indonesia owes partly to the fact that in 1913, the Dutch colonial administration assigned Flores to the Society of the Divine Word (SVD) as a proselytising area.³ The East Nusa Tenggara Tourism

¹ International Crisis Group 2002, 'Tensions on Flores: Local Symptoms of National Problems', International Crisis Group website, 10 October <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/south-east-asia/indonesia/B022-tensions-on-flores-local-symptoms-of-national-problems.aspx> – Accessed 17 June 2011 – Attachment 1

² US Department of State 2010, *International Religious Freedom Report for 2010 – Indonesia*, 17 November, Section 1 – Attachment 2

³ Schroter, S. 2010, *Christianity in Indonesia, Perspectives of Power*, Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick; New York, p. 142, Google Books <http://books.google.com.au/books?hl=en&lr=&id=3->

Board website states that “[t]he church dominates practically every tiny village” on Flores.⁴ Map B, below, has been taken from the UNDP Indonesia website. Whilst simplistic, it illustrates that Flores has the highest concentration of Catholics in Indonesia:



In 2002, the International Crisis Group (ICG) wrote that Maumere, a city of 40,000 on Flores, was “noted primarily for its poverty and Catholicism”.⁵ Five kilometres outside the city limits, on top of Nilo hill, a 28 metre high statue of the Mother Mary is erected.⁶ The late Pope John Paul II visited Maumere, conducting a mass, in 1989.⁷ A publication targeting expatriates living in Jakarta states that “there are more churches and monasteries in Maumere than there are schools”. However, the source does not provide exact numbers or supporting evidence for this claim.⁸

The Catholic Church established the diocese of Maumere in 2005. The diocese encompasses the city of Maumere and the surrounding district. According to a Vatican press release at the time, the new diocese of Maumere encompassed 30 parishes and 210 Catholic schools.⁹ Christian website UCA News reported that based on 2008 data, the number of parishes in Maumere diocese had grown to 35. As of 2008 there were reportedly 262,778 Catholics in the diocese, representing 90.2 per cent of the population. UCA further reported that Maumere diocese was home to 157

[9FcgBHNAMC&oi=fnd&pg=PA105&dq=catholic+population+flores+maumere&ots=N3wDRQSJVG&sig=PsMxpdIE9nXyRMdvjWjSwWVj2M#v=onepage&q=Flores&f=false](http://www.lavalontouristinfos.com/flores.html) – Accessed 21 June 2011 – Attachment 3

⁴ ‘Flores Island’ (undated), Lavalon, East Nusa Tenggara Tourism Board website

<http://www.lavalontouristinfos.com/flores.html> – Accessed 21 June 2011 – Attachment 4

⁵ International Crisis Group 2002, ‘Tensions on Flores: Local Symptoms of National Problems’, International Crisis Group website, 10 October <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/south-east-asia/indonesia/B022-tensions-on-flores-local-symptoms-of-national-problems.aspx> – Accessed 17 June 2011 – Attachment 1

⁶ Ivana, P. (undated), ‘Out of This World’, Jakarta Java Kini website

<http://www.jakartajakini.com/travel/journey.html?start=7> – Accessed 21 June 2011 – Attachment 5

⁷ Haberman, C. 1989, ‘In Indonesia, A Quiet Pope Steps Lightly’, *The New York Times*, 12 October – Attachment 6

⁸ Ivana, P. (undated), ‘Out of This World’, Jakarta Java Kini website

<http://www.jakartajakini.com/travel/journey.html?start=7> – Accessed 21 June 2011 – Attachment 5

⁹ ‘The Pope establishes diocese of Maumere and appoints first Bishop’ 2005, Agendia Fides website, 14 December <http://www.fides.org/aree/news/newsdet.php?idnews=6392&lan=eng> – Accessed 16 June 2011 – Attachment 7

diocesan priests, and 142 religious priests, 136 of whom were Indonesians. There were 64 religious brothers (61 Indonesians and 3 foreigners), and 377 religious sisters (347 Indonesians, 30 foreigners).¹⁰

Further demonstrating the strong presence of the church in and around Maumere, UCA News reported that the diocese of Maumere contained: a pontifical aid society; a diocese women’s network; two Catholic hospitals; two Catholic clinics; one Catholic aged care facility; ten other Catholic foundations; and a Catholic automotive workshop. The table below demonstrates a high proportion of Catholic education institutions in the Maumere diocese:¹¹

Catholic Educational Institutions

	Schools	Students	Teachers
Kindergarten	59	2,724	153
Elementary school	297	40,594	2,566
Junior high school	49	10,029	709
Senior high school	22	5,531	485
Academy	1	53	-
University	2	919	-

2. Please identify the name of the Catholic Church in Maumere, and its location, and the identity of the priest there in 2009-2010.

‘Maumere’ refers to both a city,¹² and to a Roman Catholic diocese which covers some 35 parishes.¹³

As mentioned in the response to Question 1, in 2005 the Vatican issued a press release, which reported that Pope Benedict XVI had established the diocese of Maumere. The release further reported that the new diocese covered an area of 1,732 square kilometres, and corresponded to the civil district, or *kecamatan*, of Sikka.¹⁴ Map B, below, encircles the location of Sikka district, showing that the city of Maumere falls within Sikka District and within the Roman Catholic diocese of Maumere:

¹⁰ ‘Diocese of Maumere’ 2009, UCA News website, 22 May http://www.ucanews.com/diocesan-directory/html/dps-ij_maumere.php – Accessed 21 June 2011 – Attachment 8

¹¹ ‘Diocese of Maumere’ 2009, UCA News website, 22 May http://www.ucanews.com/diocesan-directory/html/dps-ij_maumere.php – Accessed 21 June 2011 – Attachment 8

¹² International Crisis Group 2002, ‘Tensions on Flores: Local Symptoms of National Problems’, International Crisis Group website, 10 October <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/south-east-asia/indonesia/B022-tensions-on-flores-local-symptoms-of-national-problems.aspx> – Accessed 17 June 2011 – Attachment 1

¹³ ‘Diocese of Maumere’ 2009, UCA News website, 22 May http://www.ucanews.com/diocesan-directory/html/dps-ij_maumere.php – Accessed 21 June 2011 – Attachment 8

¹⁴ ‘The Pope establishes diocese of Maumere and appoints first Bishop’ 2005, Agendia Fides website, 14 December <http://www.fides.org/aree/news/newsdet.php?idnews=6392&lan=eng> – Accessed 16 June 2011 – Attachment 7



Map B: Administrative districts, Nusa Tenggara Timur province.¹⁵

The most recent figures located, from 2008, state that the diocese of Maumere covers 35 parishes.¹⁶ A list of 35 Catholic parishes within the diocese of Maumere was located, on a diocese directory. This list is included at attachment ten.¹⁷

3. Is there any information about religious violence in Maumere, Flores between Catholics and Muslims?

Flores appears to have been largely immune from ongoing and violent Christian-Muslim conflict¹⁸ of the type that has occurred most notably in Poso, Central Sulawesi and in Ambon, Maluku.¹⁹ According to the International Crisis Group, even the latter two areas have experienced tentative stability and a lack of notable violent flare ups since 2007 and 2008 respectively.²⁰ In fact, a 2011 book on Christianity and Asia refers to the Ambon and Poso conflicts as occurring in 1999-2002.²¹ Where sources reported on religious tension or conflict in Maumere, or on Flores more widely, mobs of Christians were generally described as perpetrators.

Sources report on three incidents involving religious tensions in Maumere. Firstly, in 2006, three Christian men were executed for alleged militia activity, including bombings which resulted in the deaths of Muslims in Poso. International rights activists reportedly protested the fairness of the trial and suggested that the accused were being scapegoated for unrest in the area.²²

¹⁵ 'Peta Wilayah' (undated), BPK RI Perwakilan Provinsi Nusa Tenggara Timur website http://kupang.bpk.go.id/web/?page_id=306 – Accessed 22 June 2011 – Attachment 9

¹⁶ 'Diocese of Maumere' 2009, UCA News website, 22 May http://www.ucanews.com/diocesan-directory/html/dps-ij_maumere.php – Accessed 21 June 2011 – Attachment 8

¹⁷ 'Parishes' (undated) UCA News website http://www.ucanews.com/diocesan-directory/html/dps-ij_maumere_parish.html – Accessed 21 June 2011 – Attachment 10

¹⁸ Perlez, J. 2003, 'Maumere Journal; On an Indonesian Island, a Reverence for Tolerance' *The New York Times*, 11 March <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/03/11/world/maumere-journal-on-an-indonesian-island-a-reverence-for-tolerance.html?pagewanted=print&src=pm> – Accessed 17 June 2011 – Attachment 12

¹⁹ 'Editorial – Stop church burning' 2010, *The Jakarta Post*, 26 January <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2010/01/26/editorial-stop-church-burning.html> – Accessed 21 June 2011 – Attachment 13

²⁰ International Crisis Group 2010, 'Indonesia Conflict History' International Crisis Group website, 16 February <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/key-issues/research-resources/conflict-histories/indonesia.aspx> – Accessed 24 June 2011 – Attachment 14

²¹ Prior, J. 2011, 'Indonesia', in Pahn, P. C. (ed) 2011, *Christianities in Asia*, Blackwell Publishing, West Sussex, Google Books, p. 63 <http://books.google.com.au/books?hl=en&lr=&id=VfTYDHUz2NYC&oi=fnd&pg=PA62&dq=Kupang+conflict+christian+muslim&ots=loat4kIvK&sig=ScjY86wJ6MASvgTgK8CX400yY0Q#v=onepage&q&f=false> – Accessed 24 June 2011 – Attachment 15

²² 'Mourners pray for executed Indonesian Christians' 2006, *Agence France Presse*, 23 September – Attachment 16

Maumere was hometown to one of the men executed. Christian residents of Maumere reportedly conducted street protests against the execution, and burned down the state courthouse.²³ Three men were arrested in relation to the arson attack, and authorities imposed a night curfew.²⁴

Secondly, it is widely reported that in 2002 a Christian mob was “close to attacking a mosque” in Maumere before Catholic priests intervened and diffused the situation. The residents had become angry when a seaman reportedly attended a Roman Catholic mass and desecrated a wafer during communion.²⁵ The parishioners saw this as a sacrilege, and rumours spread that the outsider, although actually protestant, was Muslim.²⁶ The seaman was reportedly convicted for eight years for the desecration; a sentence which one local Reverend stated was too heavy.²⁷

Finally, in April 1995, police reportedly sent reinforcements to control unrest in Maumere which resulted in one death and left seven people injured. The Maumere district court and Sikka district police precinct were targeted, and several houses were ransacked. The situation was reportedly sparked by a lengthy court process against a man “accused of tarnishing the Catholic Church.”²⁸ An article by an Indonesian academic reported that “ethnic and religious conflict” occurred throughout almost all areas of Flores from 1995. However, lack of more recent examples indicates that this conflict seems to have largely abated by the time of the article’s publication in 2006.²⁹

More widely, a 2010 International Crisis Group report states that interfaith relations in Indonesia are increasingly strained:

“Credible public opinion surveys indicate that religious tolerance in Indonesia is slowly decreasing, as measured by the unwillingness of Muslims to have churches built in their neighbourhoods or their children taught by non-Muslim teachers. Hostility of Christians in Christian-majority areas of eastern Indonesia such as Papua towards mosque construction would probably be similar. Attacks on churches have also increased.”³⁰

²³ ‘Atambua Protests’ 2006, Indonesia Matters website, 22 September

<http://www.indonesiamatters.com/714/atambua-protests/> – Accessed 13 February 2007 – Attachment 17

²⁴ ‘Mourners pray for executed Indonesian Christians’ 2006, *Agence France Presse*, 23 September – Attachment 16

²⁵ Perlez, J. 2003, ‘Maumere Journal; On an Indonesian Island, a Reverence for Tolerance’ *The New York Times*, 11 March <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/03/11/world/maumere-journal-on-an-indonesian-island-a-reverence-for-tolerance.html?pagewanted=print&src=pm> – Accessed 17 June 2011 – Attachment 12

²⁶ International Crisis Group 2002, ‘Tensions on Flores: Local Symptoms of National Problems’, International Crisis Group website, 10 October <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/south-east-asia/indonesia/B022-tensions-on-flores-local-symptoms-of-national-problems.aspx> – Accessed 17 June 2011 – Attachment 1

²⁷ Perlez, J. 2003, ‘Maumere Journal; On an Indonesian Island, a Reverence for Tolerance’ *The New York Times*, 11 March <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/03/11/world/maumere-journal-on-an-indonesian-island-a-reverence-for-tolerance.html?pagewanted=print&src=pm> – Accessed 17 June 2011 – Attachment 12

²⁸ ‘Reinforcements Rush to Troubled Maumere’ 1995, *The Jakarta Post*, 30 April – Attachment 18

²⁹ Gomang, S. R. 2006, Muslim and Christian Alliances, ‘Familial relationships’ between inland and coastal peoples of the Belagar community in eastern Indonesia’, *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, Vol. 162, No. 4, p. 469 (p. 468-489) – Attachment 19

³⁰ International Crisis Group 2010, ‘Indonesia: “Christianisation” and Intolerance’ International Crisis Group website, 24 November, p. 16-17 <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-east-asia/indonesia/B114%20Indonesia%20-%20Christianisation%20and%20Intolerance.pdf> – Accessed 21 June 2011 – Attachment 20

In 2006, *The Jakarta Post* reported that Islamic groups had experienced difficulty in constructing new mosques in Nusa Tenggara Timur, a reverse of the situation for some Christian groups in some Muslim-majority areas such as Bandung.³¹

No further reports were located to suggest a violent and ongoing conflict between Christians and Muslims in Maumere, Flores.

4. Is there any information to suggest that authorities on Flores would not act on allegations of religious violence in the area or would not act against Muslims perpetrating such violence?

No reports were located specifically suggesting that authorities on Flores would not act on allegations of religious violence, either towards Catholics or towards minority groups. However, in June 2009, police in Kupang, a city also located in Nusa Tenggara Timur province, reportedly targeted the Sion City of Allah sect, arresting its leader and twelve followers for blasphemy. The leader and followers were later sentenced to six months imprisonment. The sect is based on the book of Jeremiah and led by a self-proclaimed prophet, who forbids followers from attending other church services on Sundays, and wedding ceremonies and Holy Communion conducted by the Timor Evangelical Church.³² Catholicism and Protestantism are two of Indonesia's six officially recognised religions.³³ However, blasphemy laws criminalise practices which deviate from the central tenants of the six religions.³⁴ Human Rights Watch reports that "[s]enior government officials justify restrictions on religious freedom in the name of public order".³⁵

Authorities have been ineffective in preventing and investigating cases of violence against religious minorities across Indonesia. The Deputy Asia director of Human Rights Watch stated in June 2011 that "Indonesia has often failed to successfully prosecute crimes targeting religious minorities, exacerbating a culture of violent persecution".³⁶ The International Crisis Group (ICG) reports that police only tend to intervene in matters of religious intolerance when individual situations get out of hand, and that even then, issues are usually addressed "by capitulating to whoever makes the most noise".³⁷ ICG reports that attacks on churches are increasing.³⁸ Aid to

³¹ 'Let's revive religious tolerance on all sides' 2006, The Persecution website, source: *The Jakarta Post*, 30 March <http://www.thepersecution.org/world/indonesia/06/03/jp30.html> – Accessed 21 June 2011 – Attachment 21

³² US Department of State 2010, *International Religious Freedom Report for 2010 – Indonesia*, 17 November, Section II – Attachment 2

³³ US Department of State 2010, *International Religious Freedom Report for 2010 – Indonesia*, 17 November, Section II – Attachment 2

³⁴ Human Rights Watch 2011, *World Report 2011 – Indonesia*, 24 January– Attachment 22

³⁵ Human Rights Watch 2011, *World Report 2011 – Indonesia*, 24 January– Attachment 22

³⁶ Human Rights Watch 2011, 'Indonesia: Monitor Trials of Deadly Attack on Religious Minority Investigate Mob Attack Further to Find Instigators', 16 June <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2011/06/16/indonesia-monitor-trials-deadly-attack-religious-minority?print> – Accessed 27 June 2011 – Attachment 23

³⁷ International Crisis Group 2010, 'Indonesia: "Christianisation" and Intolerance' International Crisis Group website, 24 November, p. 16-17 [http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-east-asia/indonesia/B114%20Indonesia%20-%20Christianisation%20and%20Intolerance.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/asia/south-east-asia/indonesia/B114%20Indonesia%20-%20Christianisation%20and%20Intolerance.pdf) – Accessed 21 June 2011 – Attachment 20

³⁸ International Crisis Group 2010, 'Indonesia: "Christianisation" and Intolerance' International Crisis Group website, 24 November, p. 16-17 <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-east-asia/indonesia/B114%20Indonesia%20-%20Christianisation%20and%20Intolerance.pdf> – Accessed 21 June 2011 – Attachment 20

the Church in Need reports that there were 14 attacks on Indonesian churches in the first five months of 2011, and 46 attacks throughout 2010.³⁹

Human Rights Watch reports that on several occasions in 2010, militant Islamic groups mobilised civilians and attacked minority places of worship, and that “[p]olice frequently failed to arrest the perpetrators of the violence”. Several reports of religious violence focus on western Java. For example, in August 2010, on the outskirts of Jakarta, a protestant congregation was attacked by protesters, and approximately 20 congregants were injured. The congregation was meeting in a vacant lot after being denied a permit to build a house of worship; an issue cited by several minority congregations in Indonesia.⁴⁰ An article in *Kompas* states that many attacks on minorities are carried out by members of hard line group *Front Pembela Islam* (Islamic Defenders Front).⁴¹ A member of this group was recently sentenced to five and a half months imprisonment for stabbing a church reverend and attacking a congregation member in Bekasi, West Java province. The sentence was criticised by rights activists as too light.⁴²

There are several reports suggesting that the state is failing to protect the Ahmadi minority in particular from harm. The Ahmadis are subject to a particular decree issued by the Indonesian government in June 2008, which requires followers "stop spreading interpretations and activities that deviate from the principal teachings of Islam", which expressly includes "spreading the belief that there is another prophet with his own teachings after Prophet Muhammad". In February 2011 in Banten province, Java, a mob of approximately 1,500 people attacked a group of around 20 Ahmadis^{43 44} at one of the leaders' homes, beating followers with sticks, hoes and machetes. Three Ahmadis died during the attack. Amateur video footage reportedly shows that two police trucks were stationed outside the house, and that one police and one military officer attempted unsuccessfully to talk the mob down.⁴⁵ Trials for twelve defendants arrested for involvement in the attack are ongoing at the time of writing; none have been charged with murder.⁴⁶

In July 2010 a mob attempted to seal an Ahmadiyah mosque, also in West Java. Police made no arrests, and the next month, Indonesia's religious affairs ministers called for a ban on Ahmadiyah.⁴⁷

³⁹ Pontifex, J. 2011, 'Indonesia: President "sleeps" while churches are attacked', Aid to the Church in Need website, 14 June <http://www.acnuk.org/news.php/228/indonesia-president-quotssleepsquot-while-churches-are-attacked> – Accessed 21 June 2011 – Attachment 24

⁴⁰ Human Rights Watch 2011, *World Report 2011 – Indonesia*, 24 January – Attachment 22

⁴¹ 'How Poorly Indonesia Protects Religious Minorities' 2011, News Today website, source: *Kompas*, 9 February <http://www.newsterupdate.com/2011/02/how-poorly-indonesia-protects-religious.html> – Accessed 27 June 2011 – Attachment 25

⁴² Tampubolon, H. D. 2011, 'FPI leader gets less than six months for church attack', 25 February, *The Jakarta Post* <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2011/02/25/fpi-leader-gets-less-six-months-church-attack.html> – Accessed 21 June 2011 – Attachment 26

⁴³ Human Rights Watch 2011, 'Indonesia: Monitor Trials of Deadly Attack on Religious Minority Investigate Mob Attack Further to Find Instigators', 16 June <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2011/06/16/indonesia-monitor-trials-deadly-attack-religious-minority?print> – Accessed 27 June 2011 – Attachment 23

⁴⁴ 'How Poorly Indonesia Protects Religious Minorities' 2011, News Today website, source: *Kompas*, 9 February <http://www.newsterupdate.com/2011/02/how-poorly-indonesia-protects-religious.html> – Accessed 27 June 2011 – Attachment 25

⁴⁵ Human Rights Watch 2011, 'Indonesia: Revoke Decree Against Religious Minority', 7 February <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2011/02/07/indonesia-revoke-decree-against-religious-minority?print> – Accessed 27 June 2011 – Attachment 27

⁴⁶ Human Rights Watch 2011, 'Indonesia: Monitor Trials of Deadly Attack on Religious Minority Investigate Mob Attack Further to Find Instigators', 16 June <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2011/06/16/indonesia-monitor-trials-deadly-attack-religious-minority?print> – Accessed 27 June 2011 – Attachment 25

⁴⁷ Human Rights Watch 2011, *World Report 2011 – Indonesia*, 24 January – Attachment 22

Attachments

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<http://books.google.com.au/books?hl=en&lr=&id=VfTYDHUz2NYC&oi=fnd&pg=PA62&q=Kupang+conflict+christian+muslim&ots=loat4kIvhK&sig=ScjY86wJ6MASvgTgK8CX40OyYOO#v=onepage&q&f=false> – Accessed 24 June 2011.
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