

**Refugee Review Tribunal
AUSTRALIA**

RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

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This response was prepared by the Country Research Section of the Refugee Review Tribunal (RRT) after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the RRT within time constraints. This response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum.

Questions

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RESPONSE

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A May 2007 report in *The Jakarta Post* provides information that would appear to indicate that the political situation of Indonesia's Ahmadiyah remains much as has been; with the Ahmadiyah faith decried as deviationist (heretical) by the influential *Majelis Ulama Indonesia* (MUI; Council of Indonesian Ulama) and the government assuming an ambivalent position and criticised by human rights advocates for failing to protect the rights of a religious minority. This said, it would also appear that 2007 has not seen any significant outbreaks of communal violence against Indonesia's Ahmadiyah communities like those seen in 2005 and 2006. No such reports could be located via the Factiva news database or by searches of Ahmadi websites (attacks on the world's Ahmadi communities are typically documented on the Ahmadi's own monitoring website, *The Persecution of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community*). The most recent attacks would appear to be the events of October and November 2006, which were documented in *Research Response IDN31267* of 5 February 2007. In May 2007 an *ANTARA* report on the ongoing situation of displaced Ahmadi communities in West Nusa Tenggara stated that these Ahmadis were "present still at the Transito Majeluk dormitory here after their homes in Gegerung and Lingsar villages, West Lombok, were attacked and set on fire in December last year", thus suggesting that attacks also took place in December 2006. Previous articles, however, have reported that the house burnings which displaced the Ahmadi's of West Lombok occurred much earlier than this, in February 2006. Extracts from the May 2007 *ANTARA* report follow below, along with extracts from the May 2007 *Jakarta Post* report which illustrates the controversy that Ahmadi

question continues to generate in Indonesian politics (for the May 2007 *Jakarta Post* report, see: Amirrachman, A. 2007, 'M. Dawam Rahardjo: Defending the nation's religious minority groups', *Jakarta Post*, 19 May – Attachment 5; for an overview of the events of October and November 2006, see Question 2 of: RRT Country Research 2007, *Research Response IDN31267*, 5 February – Attachment 1; for an overview of the attacks which occurred prior to this, over 2005–2006, see Question 4 of: RRT Country Research 2006, *Research Response IDN30493*, 7 September 2006 – Attachment 2; for the ANTARA report, see: 'Ahmadiyah followers in W Nusa Tenggara permitted to seek asylum' 2007, *ANTARA News* website, 16 May <http://www.antara.co.id/en/arc/2007/5/16/ahmadiyah-followers-in-w-nusa-tenggara-permitted-to-seek-asylum/> – Accessed 15 June 2007 – Attachment 3; for a report which refers to the West Lombok house burnings as occurring in February 2006, see: Nugraha, P. 2006, 'Let us go home, say *Ahmadiyah*', *Jakarta Post*, 24 July – Attachment 4).

On 16 May 2007 an article by *ANTARA*, Indonesia's national news agency, reported on the ongoing situation of displaced Ahmadi communities in West Nusa Tenggara. The article reports that the local government had sought to solve the problem by relocating the Ahmadi communities elsewhere in Indonesia. The Ahmadiis involved reportedly refused this option. "West Nusa Tenggara (NTB) Deputy Governor HB Thamrin Rayes has said the local administration would not prevent Ahmadiyah religious followers from seeking an asylum in another country". As is noted above, the *ANTARA* article refers to the displacement of these Ahmadiis as resulting from house burnings which took place in December 2006, though other reports indicate that these attacks occurred in February 2006. Pertinent extracts follow:

West Nusa Tenggara (NTB) Deputy Governor HB Thamrin Rayes has said the local administration would not prevent Ahmadiyah religious followers from seeking an asylum in another country.

"Ahmadiyah religious followers are permitted to seek an asylum in other countries because they have the right to do so," Thamrin Rayes said here on Tuesday.

More than 130 of Ahmadiyah faithfuls are at present still at the Transito Majeluk dormitory here after their homes in Gegerung and Lingsar villages, West Lombok, were attacked and set on fire in December last year.

Police were said they only watched and did nothing while the torching of the houses progressed. After the attack about 130 of the Ahmadiyah faithfuls were evacuated to dormitory in Mataram.

...To date they still have no courage to return to their homes in Gegerung village in West Lombok because they still have no way out and refuse to mingle with the local people.

"The government wants to relocate the Ahmadiyah congregation under a transmigration program but they may refuse the offer," said the NTB deputy governor.

Head of the Transmigration office in Mataram, Imbang Saharudin, accompanied by local Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) boss, Mahali Fikry, had once said that transmigration was the final solution to the problem.

But 30 Ahmadiyah families refused to move.

They continued their demand for the responsibility of the government to protect them from attacks and for wherever they choose to live (for the *ANTARA* report, see: 'Ahmadiyah followers in W Nusa Tenggara permitted to seek asylum' 2007, *ANTARA News* website, 16

May <http://www.antara.co.id/en/arc/2007/5/16/ahmadiyah-followers-in-w-nusa-tenggara-permitted-to-seek-asylum/> – Accessed 15 June 2007 – Attachment 3; for a report which refers to the West Lombok house burnings as occurring in February 2006, see: Nugraha, P. 2006, ‘Let us go home, say *Ahmadiyah*’, *Jakarta Post*, 24 July – Attachment 4).

On 19 May 2007 *The Jakarta Post* reported that “veteran Muslim activist M. Dawam Rahardjo [had] blatantly attacked the Indonesian Council of Ulemas (MUI) for declaring Ahmadiyah teachings as hearsay”. The report states that “[t]he discussion, however, turned ugly when some hardliners in the studio audience stood up, approached Dawam and threatened him with violence unless he stopped talking”. Dawam also reportedly criticised the Minister for Religion for failing to adequately protect the rights of the Ahmadiyah. Some pertinent extracts follow:

During a discussion aired by a Jakarta radio station on August 4, 2005 veteran Muslim activist M. Dawam Rahardjo blatantly attacked the Indonesian Council of Ulemas (MUI) for declaring Ahmadiyah teachings as hearsay.

...He also regretted said fatwa had led to many Ahmadiyah members being attacked and their houses of worship destroyed by provoked rioters.

The discussion, however, turned ugly when some hardliners in the studio audience stood up, approached Dawam and threatened him with violence unless he stopped talking.

...On April 17, 2006, Dawam led hundreds of members of the National Alliance for Freedom of Religion and Belief in their march to the Ministry of Religious Affairs to protest the minister’s stance on Ahmadiyah.

The minister said Ahmadiyah was a danger to the spirit of tolerance across the nation (Amirrachman, A. 2007, ‘M. Dawam Rahardjo: Defending the nation’s religious minority groups’, *Jakarta Post*, 19 May – Attachment 5).

List of Sources Consulted

Internet Sources:

Search Engines

Google search engine <http://www.google.com.au/>

Indonesia Matters website <http://www.indonesiamatters.com>

Persecution of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community <http://www.thepersecution.org/>

Databases:

FACTIVA (news database)

BACIS (DIMA Country Information database)

REFINFO (IRBDC (Canada) Country Information database)

ISYS (RRT Country Research database, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, US Department of State Reports)

RRT Library Catalogue

List of Attachments

1. RRT Country Research 2007, *Research Response IDN31267*, 5 February.
2. RRT Country Research 2006, *Research Response IDN30493*, 7 September 2006.
3. 'Ahmadiyah followers in W Nusa Tenggara permitted to seek asylum' 2007, *ANTARA News* website, 16 May <http://www.antara.co.id/en/arc/2007/5/16/ahmadiyah-followers-in-w-nusa-tenggara-permitted-to-seek-asylum/> – Accessed 15 June 2007.
4. Nugraha, P. 2006, 'Let us go home, say *Ahmadiyah*', *Jakarta Post*, 24 July. (FACTIVA)
5. Amirrachman, A. 2007, 'M. Dawam Rahardjo: Defending the nation's religious minority groups', *Jakarta Post*, 19 May. (FACTIVA)