

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

- 1. What is the situation of Javanese Christians?**
- 2. Are there any reports of difficulties for relocating Christians?**

RESPONSE

- 1. What is the situation of Javanese Christians?**

A recent research response dated 11 August 2006 provides comprehensive advice on the situation of Christians in Java. The response cites a range of sources which note that despite some improvement in the situation of the community, religiously motivated violence targeting Christians continues. With respect to Java, the response notes for the recent period that dozens of “churches were burned or destroyed by mobs or closed down by government officials after intense community pressure”; and that, “in some cases, police did little to stop the violence and on occasion, even participated in it”. The response also cites recent instances of Christians being targeted for alleged acts of proselytisation. According to reports cited in the response, increasing intolerance stems from the increasing strength of hardline Islamist groups in the state (RRT Country Research 2006, *Research Response IDN30344*, 11 August – Attachment 1).

- 2. Are there any reports of difficulties for relocating Christians?**

Violence against Christians occurs in many parts of Indonesia. The following briefly summarises the situation of Christians in areas that are known to have large Christian populations. The information excludes the situation in Java, which is provided in response to question 1. It may be noted that before the recent intensification of religious violence, Java appears to have been a safe area for the Christian community (Bayuni, E. M. 2006, ‘When tolerance is no longer enough’, *The Jakarta Post* online edition, 8 September <http://www.thejakartapost.com/Outlook2006/pol03b.asp> – Accessed 8 September 2006 –

Attachment 2; Rabasa, A. 2001, 'Chapter One. Introduction: The Regional Context', in *Indonesia's Transformation and the Stability of Southeast Asia*, Rand, Santa Monica, p. 2 – Attachment 3).

Kalimantan

The situation of Christians in Kalimantan is best understood in a wider context of ethnic violence. This violence occurs with frequency between the island's indigenous population and Madurese immigrants. The indigenous population comprises a group known as Dayak, who are mostly Christian. Country information indicates that violence between the two groups first erupted in 1996, and that the most serious incidents took place in 2001 when around 5000 Madurese were killed. Indonesian experts have recently warned that the island could witness a resumption of hostilities in the absence of government intervention ('Kalimantan' (undated), Building Human Security in Indonesia website http://www.preventconflict.org/portal/main/maps_kalimantan_actors.php – Accessed 11 September 2006 – Attachment 4; 'Moluccas, Kalimantan risk new conflicts' 2006, *AsiaNews.it* website, 6 May <http://www.asianews.it/view.php?l=en&art=6094> – Accessed 11 September 2006 – Attachment 5; Gershman, J. 2002, 'Indonesia: An archipelago of self-determination and communal conflicts', Self-Determination website, 21 October http://www.irc-online.org/selfdetermine/conflicts/indonesia_body.html – Accessed 11 September 2006 – Attachment 6; Sijabat R.M. 2006, 'Maluku, Kalimantan strife "lingering"', *The Jakarta Post*, 1 May 2006 – Attachment 7; McDougall, D. 2005, 'Machete killings fuel Indonesia's religious hatred', *The Guardian* online edition, 20 November <http://observer.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,6903,1646661,00.html> – Accessed 11 September 2006 – Attachment 8).

Sulawesi

Sulawesi has been the scene of particularly intense inter-religious violence. Battles between Christians and Muslims on the island in 2001 and 2002 left around "1,000 people dead". News reports indicate that parts of the island, central Sulawesi in particular, continue to witness "a sporadic campaign of bombings, shootings and other attacks against Christians". Recent incidents have included bombings and beheadings targeting the island's Christian community. In September 2006 alone, the island witnessed two separate bombings which appear to have been communally motivated ('Christian man decapitated in new violence in Indonesia's Poso' 2004, *AsiaNews.it* website, 5 November <http://www.asianews.it/view.php?l=en&art=1831> – Accessed 11 September 2006 – Attachment 9; 'Bomb kills one on Indonesia's Sulawesi island' 2006, *The International Herald Tribune* online edition, 5 September http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2006/09/06/asia/AS_GEN_Indonesia_Bomb.php – Accessed 7 September 2006 – Attachment 10; 'Indonesia: Bombings linked to political feuds and rogue Islamists', *Inter Press Service*, 13 June – Attachment 11; McDougall, D. 2005, 'Machete killings fuel Indonesia's religious hatred', *The Guardian* online edition, 20 November <http://observer.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,6903,1646661,00.html> – Accessed 11 September 2006 – Attachment 8; 'Bomb blast kills one in Indonesia's Sulawesi' 2006, *Reuters*, 10 September – Attachment 12; 'Man dies in Central Sulawesi bomb blast' 2006, *The Jakarta Post*, 7 September – Attachment 13).

A February 2004 International Crisis Group report provides information on the involvement of the Islamic militant groups in the conflicts which have affected Central Sulawesi. The report

lists a great number of the many Islamic militant groups, as well as a number of the Christian militant groups, who have been active in Poso over recent years. The report provides information on the manner in which the internal politics of these various groups produced diverse operational effects within the Poso conflict; including outbreaks of violence between the Islamic militants themselves. Particular attention is given to *Jemaah Islamiyah* (JI) and its off-shoot *Mujahidin KOMPAK* as well as *Laskar Jihad*, the some-time ally, some-time rival, of the former two organisations (which have themselves been known to clash). The recruitment methods, training programs, logistical networks and competing ideologies of these organisations are addressed in great detail. Pertinent extracts follow:

Recent violence in Poso (Central Sulawesi) suggests a need to revise assessments about the nature and gravity of the terrorist threat in Indonesia. While the shorter term prospects are somewhat encouraging, there is an under appreciated longer term security risk.

In October 2003, masked gunmen attacked Christian villagers in the Morowali and Poso districts of Central Sulawesi, killing thirteen. The attacks took many outside the area by surprise. In December 2001, after three years of bitter sectarian conflict in which hundreds of Muslims and Christians had been killed, leaders of the warring parties had signed a peace agreement, the Malino Accord, which produced a dramatic decline in communal clashes. However, systematic, one-sided violence – bombings and “mysterious killings” by unidentified assailants, with overwhelmingly non-Muslim victims – continued. The October 2003 attacks thus continued a well-established pattern.

...Bombings and shootings by the special forces units of JI and Mujahidin KOMPAK, as well as by ordinary members of Mujahidin KOMPAK, continued through early December 2002. With the exception of two bombs reportedly placed by Mujahidin KOMPAK’s special forces at a Pentecostal church and a post of the Mobile Police Brigade (Brimob) in the village of Malaeli, subdistrict Lage on 25 and 28 December 2002 respectively, violence halted after the Makassar bombings of 5 December. Attacks on Christians did not resume until May 2003.

...While the violence in October 2003 finally attracted Jakarta’s attention, it had been preceded earlier in the year by a number of “mysterious killings” and bombings: a farmer hacked to death on 30 May in Kayamanya, two more killed in Madale on 2 June, another farmer killed in Pinedapa on 9 July, another in Lembomawo village two days later, and another murder in Pandimi village, Poso city on 1 October. Several bombings took place during the same period, including one on 7 August in which a young man named Bachtiar alias Manto, believed to have been recruited as a suicide bomber by JI, was killed in Kayamanya when a bomb he was making exploded prematurely. Had these incidents (and all the killings in 2002) been examined more closely, perhaps the October attacks could have been averted. At the very least, they would not have come as such a shock.

On the night of 9-10 October 2003, a group of gunmen attacked the village of Beteleme, in Lembo subdistrict, Morowali. Two people were killed; three others were wounded. A bomb had reportedly gone off before the gunmen arrived, causing many villagers to flee in panic, so many houses were empty when the gunmen arrived.

In Saatu village, Poso Pesisir subdistrict, two nights later, the gunmen appeared to be more intent on deliberate executions. They surrounded houses, ordered the inhabitants out, and then shot them. Four villagers were killed, one was wounded. The attackers moved on to nearby Pinedapa village, where they entered houses, ignored pleas for mercy, and wounded a man and two women.

Proceeding to Pantangolemba village, they first shot the night watchmen, injuring five, then two schoolgirls, aged nine and eleven. Five other villagers, three men and two women, were executed.

On the night of 12 October, a fishmonger, Djafar Susanto, disappeared after leaving his house on a motorcycle in response to an order from a customer; his body was found four days later in the Poso River. His body had been stuffed into a sack and weighed down with rocks. He was believed to have been beaten before being drowned. On 27 October, a farmer from Pinedapa, where one of the earlier attacks had taken place, was shot and killed in the morning as he was clearing his fields.

On 16 November, a Christian theology student was killed by an angry mob in the centre of Poso (see below). On the same day, the bodies of Oranye Tajoja, treasurer of the Christian Church of South Sulawesi and his nephew, Buce, were found in Ratolene, Kasiguncu, Poso Pesisir subdistrict. They had apparently been dragged from their car and murdered. On 17 November, a public bus from the Alugoro company was stopped by three armed men in Kuku village, Lage subdistrict. One passenger, a civil servant from Palu named Husain Garusu, who had stepped down from the bus, disappeared. Police, who believe he may have been kidnapped by the gunmen, said they were extending the search to Menado, North Sulawesi. He remains missing.

...Although many of the attackers appear to have had training under JI instructors and some Javanese were involved, it seems unlikely that the decision to undertake the attacks was made by JI, either at the central command or local wakalah level.

...The involvement of a few KOMPAK special forces members, however, suggests two possibilities. One is that some of the same dissident JI members involved in setting up the special forces unit in Poso could have given support or encouragement. The other is that JI succeeded in doing precisely what it set out to do: raise the capacity of local mujahidin to the point where they no longer needed to depend on outside assistance.

...The involvement of Mujahidin KOMPAK in the violence does not exclude the possibility of some level of backing or support from the security forces. ICG believes, however, that it is possible to explain the attacks without such support (International Crisis Group 2004, 'Indonesia Backgrounder: Jihad in Central Sulawesi', 3 February – Attachment 14).

East Nusa Tenggara

The province of East Nusa Tenggara is predominantly Christian. In December 2005, media reports indicated that threats of a bombing campaign were made against the community. In neighbouring West Nusa Tenggara, reports also indicate an increase in religious intolerance. West Nusa Tenggara recently witnessed a large-scale attack on the Ahmadiyya community – a minority Muslim group widely regarded as heretical by mainstream Muslims ('The Poso tragedy and its significance for security' 2005, *The Jakarta Post*, 8 November – Attachment 15; 'Serious threats made against 31 churches in Indonesia' 2005, *AsiaNews.it* website, 30 November <http://www.asianews.it/view.php?l=en&art=5002> – Accessed 11 September 2006 – Attachment 16; 'Four arrested in Indonesia for attacks on Muslim sect' 2006, *BBC Monitoring*, sourced from *The Jakarta Post*, 7 February – Attachment 17).

Maluku

Maluku has been the scene of ongoing communal violence between Christians and Muslims. A 2004 report by the International Crisis Group (ICG) provides an overview of violence which gripped parts of the province in 2004. Recent incidents have included a bombing in 2005, which left nine persons injured. Although the province has “faded out of the headlines”, as one news report indicates, it remains a potential hotspot for the resumption of inter-religious hostilities (International Crisis Group 2004, ‘Indonesia: Violence Erupts Again in Ambon’, 17 May – Attachment 18; ‘Nine injured in latest Ambon bomb blast’ 2005, *The Jakarta Post*, 26 August – Attachment 19; ‘Ambon and law enforcement’ 2006, *The Jakarta Post*, 7 March – Attachment 20; Sijabat R.M. 2006, ‘Maluku, Kalimantan strife “lingering”’, *The Jakarta Post*, 1 May 2006 – Attachment 7).

List of Sources Consulted

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International News & Politics

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The Guardian online <http://observer.guardian.co.uk/>

Search Engines

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

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 2006, *Research Response IDN30344*, 11 August.
2. Bayuni, E. M. 2006, ‘When tolerance is no longer enough’, *The Jakarta Post* online edition, 8 September. (<http://www.thejakartapost.com/Outlook2006/pol03b.asp> – Accessed 8 September 2006)
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18. International Crisis Group 2004, 'Indonesia: Violence Erupts Again in Ambon', 17 May.
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20. 'Ambon and law enforcement' 2006, *The Jakarta Post*, 7 March. (FACTIVA).