

**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. I would like information as to whether there has been any recent anti-Chinese or anti-Christian violence in Java.**
- 2. If there have been such incidents what protection was available from the Indonesian authorities?**
- 3. Please provide information on the treatment of Christians and ethnic Chinese in Java.**

RESPONSE

- 1. I would like information as to whether there has been any recent anti-Chinese or anti-Christian violence in Java.**

A recent RRT research response dated 26 June 2006 provides information on whether there had been any anti-Chinese violence in Jakarta since the riots in 1998 (RRT Country Research 2006, *Research Response IDN30246*, 26 June – Attachment 1).

In relation to Christians, the section on Indonesia in the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom annual report dated May 2006 refers “to a gradual improvement in conditions for human rights, including religious freedom, over the past few years. Nevertheless, the Commission remains concerned about ongoing communal violence, the forcible closures of places of worship belonging to religious minorities, the growing political power and influence of religious extremists, and the lack of civilian control over the military.” The report mentions areas of Indonesia, including “parts of West Java”, in which religiously motivated violence had “continued in the past year”. It is also stated in the report that:

Religious extremist groups in Indonesia continue to be responsible for harassment, intimidation, and acts of violence. Members of these groups intimidate judges and local officials and vandalize and destroy buildings belonging to religious minorities, including Christian churches, Hindu temples, and Ahmadiyah mosques and religious centres. In September 2005, the Islamic Defender Front (FPI) organized protests and intimidated lawyers and judges during the trial of three Christian women who were being tried for allegedly “proselytizing” to Muslim children. Through the intimidation of government officials and the instigation of mob violence, the FPI and another group, the “Alliance for Anti-Apostates,” effectively closed at least 50 Protestant churches in West Java during 2005, a significant increase from the previous year; churches were burned or destroyed by mobs or closed by government officials after intense community pressure. In some cases, police did little to stop the violence and on occasion, even participated in it.

...The Indonesian government continues to restrict the construction and expansion of houses of worship. In the past, Joint Ministerial Decree 1/1969 (“Regulation on Building Houses of Worship) required “community approval” for the expansion of existing or the building of new religious venues. In areas where Christians, Hindus, or Muslims were the minority, new building permits were often difficult, if not impossible, to obtain. In addition, in some places, extremists pressured local government officials to revoke permits of longstanding places of worship and destroyed those operating without permits. In response to public criticism, the Ministry of Religious Affairs issued a new Decree (Joint Ministerial Decree 1/2006), which appears to impose new restrictions and make it even more difficult to obtain a permit. In replacing the vague “community approval” standard, the new decree requires religious groups with 90 or more members to circulate a petition and get 60 local residents to support the building or expansion of their religious venue. The petition then has to gain majority approval from both district and provincial panels of religious leaders. The membership of the panels will be chosen proportionally by the number of religious adherents in the region.

Protestant and Buddhist leaders oppose the measure because many of their religious venues have fewer than 90 members. Other religious leaders believe that extremist groups will intimidate anyone who signs his or her name to a public petition. In addition, critics of the new decree argue that the proportional membership of the district and provincial panels does not protect the rights of religious minorities and opens the permit process to corruption. Muslim leaders are divided about the new decree’s impact. Hazim Muzadi, head of the Nahdatul Ulama (NU), Indonesia’s largest Muslim organization, declared that the new decree was “more restrictive” than the previous one. However, the Chairman of the National Assembly, Hidayat Nur Wahid, pointed out that “restrictive regulation...is needed to avoid sectarian conflicts among religious communities.” The Commission will continue to monitor the implementation of the new decree in the coming year (United States Commission on International Religious Freedom 2006, ‘Annual Report of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom’, May <http://www.uscirf.gov/countries/publications/currentreport/2006annualrpt.pdf#page=1> – Accessed 23 May 2006 – Attachment 2).

According to an article dated 25 April 2006 in *The Jakarta Post*, “[m]ore Christian places of worship have been vandalized or forcibly closed by local Muslims because they have failed to meet the requirements of a controversial ministerial decree.” The article

indicates that “[c]ritics of the 2006 Decree on Places of Worship say the incidents only show the regulation is causing more violence than it is preventing.” The ministerial decree was signed in March 2006 and replaced the previous decree “issued in 1969, which required consent of local administrations and residents to build houses of worship.” Religious minorities had “complained that the requirements in the old decree made it nearly impossible for them to get licenses in majority-Muslim areas and most say the revised decree does little to change the situation.” The article refers to the closure of a church in Mojokerto, East Java, and “a house and shophouses” said by residents to be used by Christians for worship in Gunung Putri, Bogor (Diani, Hera 2006, ‘Revised decree ‘justifies violence’’, *The Jakarta Post*, 25 April – Attachment 3).

A *Compass Direct* report dated 2 May 2006 refers to Muslims forcing Christian churches to cease services in Java. According to the report:

Radical Muslims in mid-April forced three churches to cease services in North Jakarta and the provinces of West Java and Tangerang, claiming the meetings were disturbing Islamic communities. On April 17, a group of 150 people bullied Pastor Yoshua Sugiharto into ceasing worship activities of his Shining Christian Church in West Semper, North Jakarta. In West Java province, police asked the St. Clara Catholic Church in North Bekasi district not to hold a Good Friday worship service on April 14 after Muslim groups threatened to disrupt it. And a mob of some 500 Muslims forced the Ciledug Catholic church, meeting in a residential building in the Regensi Bintaro Ciledug housing complex in Tangerang province, to cease services (Rionaldo, Samuel 2006, ‘Radical Muslims Stop Church Services in Indonesia’, *Compass Direct*, 2 May – Attachment 4).

An article dated 27 March 2006 in *The Jakarta Post* reports that Muslims in Bogor, West Java, had forced Christians to close their church. According to the article:

Violence against religious freedom continued Sunday in West Java when a group of some 200 self-styled religious vigilantes forced Christians to close their church in Bogor.

Police were at the scene during the incident, but did not stop the angry mob, which purportedly consisted of residents from the Griya Bukit Jaya housing complex and other nearby residents.

Besieging the Pentecostal Church located in the complex, the Muslim mob forced about 190 Christians, who were inside the church for regular Sunday service, to leave and close it.

The anti-church mob claimed that the church violated a 1999 decree by the West Java governor that requires the approval of local people to build houses of worship (‘Mob forces church to shut down in Bogor’ 2006, *The Jakarta Post*, 27 March – Attachment 5).

A *Compass Direct* report dated 16 November 2005 indicates that “churches in East Bekasi, West Java, have taken temporary refuge in a Social Affairs Agency office” after being refused permits and ordered not to worship at home or in public. It is stated in the report that:

In September local officials ordered them to close because they did not have the required permits. The congregations altered residential buildings to cater to large numbers of worshipers. The Anti-Apostasy Movement Alliance (AGAP, an alliance of Muslim extremist groups) began to enforce the order, attacking the Pentecostal Church of Indonesia El Shaddai on October 2. They also forced a Lutheran (HKBP) and a Presbyterian church in the complex to cease services. Around 500 Christians from the HKBP church “scuffled” with 200 Muslims on Sunday, October 29, after a third street service, The Jakarta Post reported. Following the clash, district officials on October 30 offered the use of the Social Affairs Agency office for two months while they searched for a building site for each of the churches (Kembaren, Luther & Page, Sarah 2005, ‘Churches Find Temporary Home after Closures in Indonesia’, *Compass Direct*, 16 November – Attachment 6).

The report also refers to a “campaign to close churches in West Java” intensifying in May 2005 “after three local Christians were arrested on charges of “Christianizing” Muslim children”. According to the report:

The campaign to close churches in West Java, though not new, intensified in May after three local Christians were arrested on charges of “Christianising” Muslim children...

Extremist groups including AGAP and the Islamic Defenders Front have forced at least 30 provincial churches to close in recent months, although some churches re-opened within a matter of weeks.

Moderate Muslim leaders have joined former President Abdurrahman Wahid in condemning the attacks on churches (Kembaren, Luther & Page, Sarah 2005, ‘Churches Find Temporary Home after Closures in Indonesia’, *Compass Direct*, 16 November – Attachment 6).

According to an article dated 10 October 2005, increasing intolerance in Indonesia “seems to stem from the edicts of Indonesia’s highest Islamic authority, the Indonesian Council of Scholars (MUI). In July, the MUI issued a much-criticised series of decrees outlawing liberal interpretations of Islam, religious pluralism and secularism.” The article refers to the closure of 23 unlicensed Christian churches in West Java and indicates that Muslim militants were “using the MUI fatwas as justification for the forcible closing of churches”. The article also indicates that “the militants say the Indonesian Government has given them every right to take action against churches without licences”, and refers to the 1969 ministerial decree on the construction of places of worship (Powell, Sian 2005, ‘Jakarta turns blind eye to holy wars’, *The Australian*, 10 October – Attachment 7).

An *Agence France-Presse* article dated 4 September 2005 indicates that a spokesman for Indonesia’s President Yudhoyono had said that the president had “called on all ranks of the government and the community “to prevent violence agains [sic] religious worship activities.”“ The article refers to “reports of forcible closures of several Christian places of worship in the staunchly Muslim provinces of West Java and Banten”. The spokesman had also said that Yudhoyono had “ordered religious affairs minister Muhammad Basyuni and local administrators quickly to find a solution to the closures of Christian

places of worship” (‘President stresses freedom of worship should prevail in Indonesia’ 2005, *Agence France-Presse*, 4 September – Attachment 8).

Another article dated 1 September 2005 in *The Jakarta Post* notes that the Indonesian Ulema Council had “joined the chorus in condemning the much-criticised forced closure of dozens of neighborhood churches in West Java”. According to the article:

The Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) has joined the chorus in condemning the much-criticised forced closure of dozens of neighborhood churches in West Java, saying that such acts were intolerable.

But the MUI has no plans to issue an edict against the violence.

MUI head Umar Shihab said on Wednesday that all actions or efforts that disrupted religious activities were a form of violence, and as such could not be justified.

...MUI, which had been recently criticised for issuing edicts against pluralism, was commenting on the activities of radical Muslim conservatives in forcibly closing Christian places of worship that were not licensed by the authorities.

It was reported that at least 23 churches in the province had been forcibly closed by mobs during the past year, which has led several Christian and Muslim figures to call on the government to take legal action against the so-called hard-liners (Hotland, Tony 2005, ‘MUI condemns action against Christian houses of worship’, *The Jakarta Post*, 1 September – Attachment 9).

A more recent article dated 5 May 2006 refers to an evangelist in Central Java being assaulted by Muslims on 8 March 2006. According to the article, the evangelist was put in a detention cell by police to protect him from the attackers, and “was then transferred to a local prison”. He was initially “charged with committing a displeasing act”, but was subsequently accused “of defaming Islam”. A Christian leader believed “the incident was a set-up” and the problem stemmed “from what seems to be a family dispute” with the evangelist’s Muslim stepsister (‘Evangelist jailed, falsely charged’ 2006, Open Doors UK website, 5 May – Attachment 10).

2. If there have been such incidents what protection was available from the Indonesian authorities?

A number of recent RRT research responses provide information on the protection available from the Indonesian authorities for the Chinese minority in Indonesia. The previously mentioned RRT research response dated 26 June 2006 includes information on whether the Indonesian authorities protect the Chinese from harm. (RRT Country Research 2006, *Research Response IDN30246*, 26 June – Attachment 1).

Another RRT research response dated 16 May 2006 includes information on the current situation regarding the treatment of and attitude of the Indonesian authorities to the Chinese minority (RRT Country Research 2006, *Research Response IDN30158*, 16 May – Attachment 11). The response includes summaries of the information relating to the

protection available to the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia contained in RRT research responses dated 5 December 2005 (RRT Country Research 2005, *Research Response IDN17690*, 5 December – Attachment 12), and 27 May 2003 (RRT Country Research 2003, *Research Response IDN15918*, 27 May – Attachment 13).

A RRT research response dated 12 May 2006 provides an update on the treatment of and protection provided to the Chinese minority by the Indonesian authorities (RRT Country Research 2006, *Research Response IDN30156*, 12 May – Attachment 14).

In relation to Christians in Indonesia, the US Department of State report on religious freedom in Indonesia for 2005 notes that “[a]lthough the Government made significant efforts to reduce inter-religious violence, such violence occurred during the period covered by this report. On some occasions, the Government tolerated the abuse of religious freedom by private groups or failed to punish perpetrators” (US Department of State 2005, *International Religious Freedom Report 2005 – Indonesia*, November, Section II – Attachment 15).

In relation to Christians in Java, as previously mentioned, the section on Indonesia in the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom annual report dated May 2006 indicates that “[t]hrough the intimidation of government officials and the instigation of mob violence, the FPI and another group, the ‘Alliance for Anti-Apostates,’ effectively closed at least 50 Protestant churches in West Java during 2005, a significant increase from the previous year; churches were burned or destroyed by mobs or closed by government officials after intense community pressure. In some cases, police did little to stop the violence and on occasion, even participated in it” (United States Commission on International Religious Freedom 2006, ‘Annual Report of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom’, May <http://www.uscirf.gov/countries/publications/currentreport/2006annualrpt.pdf#page=1> – Accessed 23 May 2006 – Attachment 2).

According to an article dated 30 December 2005 in *The Jakarta Post*, “religious intolerance is on the rise in” Indonesia and “the authorities, particularly the police, have failed to protect people’s constitutional rights.” It is stated in the article that:

The attacks and the forced closure of more than two dozen churches in West Java as reported by the Communion of Indonesian Churches; the lockout of believers from the Sang Timur Catholic School by residents in Ciledug near Jakarta; the skirmishes between Muslim residents and members of a Christian Batak Church in nearby Bekasi; the violent attack against followers of the Muslim Ahmadiyah sect in Parung near Bogor, all these point to two disturbing patterns: That religious intolerance is on the rise in this country, and that the authorities, particularly the police, have failed to protect people’s constitutional rights. Freedom of religion and the right to practice one’s faith are guaranteed in this country – but at times police even sided with the lawbreakers (Bayuni, Endy M 2005, ‘When tolerance is no longer enough’, *The Jakarta Post*, 30 December – Attachment 16).

Another article dated 23 December 2005 in *The Christian Science Monitor* refers to police in Jakarta protecting Christian churches over the 2005 Christmas period after receiving warnings of terrorist attacks. According to the article:

After warnings of terrorist attacks over Christmas, police stepped up security, deploying over 17,000 officers in Jakarta, two-thirds of the city's force. Joining them in protecting hundreds of churches are some 7,000 guards from 11 different Islam-linked organisations.

Police are hoping "Operation Candle," which will run from Dec. 24 to Jan. 3, will be a symbol of goodwill between Christianity and Islam, ending a year that has seen many tests of Indonesia's religious harmony. It's part of a bid by authorities to move beyond physical security to include an ideological campaign against violent strains of Islam (McCawley, Tom 2005, 'Muslims guard Jakarta's Christians', *The Christian Science Monitor*, 23 December – Attachment 17).

A previously mentioned *Agence France-Presse* article dated 4 September 2005 indicates that a spokesman for Indonesia's President Yudhoyono had said that the president had "called on all ranks of the government and the community "to prevent violence against [sic] religious worship activities." The spokesman had also said that Yudhoyono had "ordered religious affairs minister Muhammad Basyuni and local administrators quickly to find a solution to the closures of Christian places of worship" ('President stresses freedom of worship should prevail in Indonesia' 2005, *Agence France-Presse*, 4 September – Attachment 8).

Another article dated 30 August 2005 indicates that the government had "said it would not take action against Muslim hard-liners who closed down dozens of churches in West Java last year, arguing that what was being closed down were not churches but "illegal congregations". The article refers to comments by "Minister of Religious Affairs M. Maftuh Basyuni", who "explained that the group closed down the illegal congregations set up in residential areas because they "had created anxiety among local residents" in the predominantly Muslim province." The article also reports that the West Java police had "also previously said they would not make any arrests of persons involved in the closure of the churches because no violence occurred during the closures" (Saraswati, Muningsari Sri & Suwarni, Yuli Tri 2005, 'Govt won't prosecute Muslim hard-liners over church closure', *The Jakarta Post*, 30 August – Attachment 18).

An article dated 31 August 2005 refers to Jakarta's police chief indicating that "the police would protect licensed churches from forcible closure by militants." The police chief said that "We will protect churches operating with licenses while those that have none should cease from carrying out religious services" ('Police in Indonesian capital vow to protect "licensed churches"' 2005, *BBC Monitoring Alert*, source: *The Jakarta Post*, 31 August – Attachment 19).

3. Please provide information on the treatment of Christians and ethnic Chinese in Java.

In relation to the ethnic Chinese in Java, the previously-mentioned RRT research response dated 26 June 2006 has information on the situation in Jakarta (RRT Country Research 2006, *Research Response IDN30246*, 26 June – Attachment 1).

Other articles and research responses provide information on the general situation of the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia. An article dated 11 July 2006 indicates that Indonesia's House of Representatives had "enacted a law on citizenship that recognizes Chinese-Indonesians as "indigenous" Indonesians", along with members of other ethnic groups. It is stated in the article that:

Indonesians of foreign descent have long been regarded as "nonindigenous." Compared to others of foreign descent, however, Chinese-Indonesians, who dominate 70 percent of the country's economy, always receive discriminatory treatment.

Government officials have been widely reported as forcing Chinese-Indonesians, including poor ones, to pay much higher fees than others when applying for documents such as birth certificates, identification cards and passports.

The law imposes punishment of up to three years in jail against government officials who hamper the citizenship process.

Cyprianus Aoer, a legislator who also joined the formulating team, called the enactment of the law "revolutionary" progress toward eradicating discrimination in Indonesia. But he questioned government readiness to implement the law as discrimination against Chinese-Indonesians is deeply rooted in Indonesia's bureaucracy.

Recognizing Chinese-Indonesians as "indigenous" citizens, according to lawmakers, also means they need not show their "Letter of Evidence of Indonesian Citizenship" when applying for documents.

The regulation obligating them to show the letter of evidence was lifted during the administration of former President Suharto.

But officials still ask for the letter when Chinese-Indonesians apply for documents ('Indonesian citizenship law recognizes Chinese descendants as natives' 2006, *Kabar-Indonesia Digest*, 11 July – Attachment 20).

The previously mentioned RRT research response dated 16 May 2006 includes information on the current situation regarding the treatment of and attitude of the Indonesian authorities to the Chinese minority (RRT Country Research 2006, *Research Response IDN30158*, 16 May – Attachment 11).

The RRT research response dated 12 May 2006 provides an update on the treatment of and protection provided to the Chinese minority by the Indonesian authorities (RRT Country Research 2006, *Research Response IDN30156*, 12 May – Attachment 14).

The US Department of State report on human rights practices in Indonesia for 2005 indicates that:

Instances of discrimination and harassment of ethnic Chinese declined compared with previous years. Recent reforms increased religious and cultural freedoms. However, some ethnic Chinese noted that public servants still discriminated in issuing marriage licenses and in other services and often demanded bribes or a citizenship certificate, although such certificates were no longer legally required. In 2004 an attorney advocate for the rights of ethnic Chinese noted that more than 60 articles of law, regulation, or decree were in effect that discriminated against ethnic Chinese citizens. NGOs such as the Indonesia Anti-Discrimination Movement urged the government to revoke these articles (US Department of State 2006, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2005 – Indonesia*, March, Section 5 – Attachment 21).

Question 6 of a RRT research response dated 7 March 2006 looks at whether it is still official government policy in Indonesia to keep the Chinese out of government jobs (RRT Country Research 2006, *Research Response IDN30000*, 7 March – Attachment 22).

A previously mentioned RRT research response dated 5 December 2005 includes information on whether there is discrimination against ethnic Chinese in Indonesia and whether there is any record of Chinese (or other) small businessmen being targeted by criminals (RRT Country Research 2005, *Research Response IDN17690*, 5 December – Attachment 12).

In relation to Christians in Indonesia, the US Department of State report on religious freedom in Indonesia for 2005 notes that:

The Government generally respects freedom of religion; however, restrictions continued to exist on some types of religious activity and on unrecognized religions. In addition security forces occasionally tolerated discrimination against and abuse of religious groups by private actors, and the Government at times failed to punish perpetrators (US Department of State 2005, *International Religious Freedom Report 2005 – Indonesia*, November, Introduction – Attachment 15).

In relation to the treatment of Christians in Java, there were reports of three women being imprisoned after being accused of attempting to convert children to Christianity, and of churches in Java being closed because they lacked the correct permits. There were also reports of Muslims co-operating with the police to protect Christian churches in Java during the 2005 Christmas period.

The 2006 Amnesty International report on Indonesia indicates that in September 2005, three women who were accused of trying to convert children to Christianity were sentenced in West Java to three years imprisonment. According to the report:

In September Rebekka Zakaria, Eti Pangesti and Ratna Bangun were each sentenced by the Indramayu District Court, West Java, to three years' imprisonment for having violated the 2002 Child Protection Act. The three women, all prisoners of conscience, were accused by a chapter of the Indonesian Council of Muslim Clerics of enticing children to participate in a Sunday school programme and trying to convert them to Christianity. The trial was marred by Islamists who made threats inside and outside the

courtroom to kill the accused. In November the High Court confirmed the sentence (Amnesty International 2006, *Annual Report 2006 – Indonesia* – Attachment 23).

The US Department of State report on religious freedom in Indonesia for 2005 refers to “[t]hree women from the Christian Church of Camp David (GKKD)” being “arrested in Indramayu, West Java, on May 13, 2005, and charged under Indonesia’s Child Protection Law for allegedly attempting to convert Muslim children to Christianity.” The report makes other references to the treatment of Christians in Java including that “Christian groups complained that the Government closed at least three Jakarta churches unfairly during the period covered by this report.” The report also indicates that “[s]ignificantly more attacks on houses of worship were reported during the period covered by this report when compared to the previous one.” The Indonesian Christian Communication Forum (FKKI) reported attacks on at least 13 churches “during the previous period, while at least 26 churches were attacked during this reporting period”, including three churches in Jakarta and 21 churches in West Java (US Department of State 2005, *International Religious Freedom Report 2005 – Indonesia*, November, Sections II & III – Attachment 15).

The US Department of State report on human rights practices in Indonesia for 2005 indicates that “[t]here were frequent efforts to close unlicensed churches during the year. Through intimidation and sometimes force, FPI and the Alliance for Anti-Apostates shut down dozens of Protestant places of worship in West Java that lacked permits. Police did nothing to stop the closures and, in some cases, assisted in the closures. Many of the churches reopened later in the year” (US Department of State 2006, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2005 – Indonesia*, March, Section 2(c) – Attachment 21).

Please also see the answer to question 1 above in relation to recent instances of church closures in Java.

An article dated 26 February 2006 notes that “A string of religious conflicts in Greater Jakarta over the past few years has highlighted the sometimes fragile nature of religious harmony in the capital.” The article refers to residents blocking “off the entrance to a Catholic school in Ciledug, Tangerang, because Catholics in the area were attending Sunday Mass in the school’s auditorium”, to members of the Islam Defenders Front blocking “roads leading to two places of worship in Bekasi, forcing Christians there to hold services in the street”, both during 2005, and to local authorities revoking a building permit for a church following pressure from Muslim residents in Cikarang, east of Jakarta. However, the article also refers to “many instances of Christians and Muslims working and living together as good friends and neighbors”, and mentions the situation in Jati subdistrict in East Jakarta, where Muslims helped guard a Christian church at Christmas and Christians donated to a local Muslim orphanage (‘Locals set example of religious harmony’ 2006, *The Jakarta Post*, 26 February – Attachment 24).

Other articles mention Muslims co-operating with the police to protect Christian churches in Java during the 2005 Christmas period. An article dated 26 December 2005 in *The Jakarta Post* indicates that “Indonesians observed Christmas peacefully across the country as tens of thousands of police and troops remained on high alert for possible

terrorist attacks.” According to the article, “Indonesian Christians living in a number of cities considered susceptible to terror attacks, such as Jakarta, Poso and Palu, marked Christmas Eve without any signs of fear despite the presence of security officers in their churches.” The article also mentions that members of Banser, the Nahdlatul Ulama civilian guards, had “helped police officers to guard the houses of worship,” including “churches across Central Java” (‘Indonesians observe peaceful Christmas’ 2005, *The Jakarta Post*, 26 December – Attachment 25).

Another article dated 24 December 2005 in the *Straits Times*, which comments on the assistance provided by Muslims to Christians in Indonesia during the Christmas period, notes that the Muslim groups involved included mainstream groups such as the Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, and the “fringe radical group” the FPI. The FPI was known “for being active in forcefully closing down churches that they claim were built without government permission.” According to the article:

Analysts noted that many Muslim groups which had previously held on to ultra-conservative views are now more eager to distinguish themselves from terrorist cells responsible for the deaths of more than 300 people in the last five years in Indonesia.

Said Mr Arbi Sanit: ‘This trend seems to mark a turning point for how Indonesia’s Muslim groups position themselves. Hopefully, the show of goodwill during Christmas will be a sign of better relations among Indonesians of different faiths’ (Ghani, Azhar 2005, ‘Tis season of goodwill from Indonesian Muslims’, *Straits Times*, 24 December – Attachment 26).

A previously mentioned article dated 23 December 2005 in *The Christian Science Monitor* refers to “some 7,000 guards from 11 different Islam-linked organisations” joining over 17,000 police “officers in Jakarta, two-thirds of the city’s force” in protecting Christian churches over the 2005 Christmas period. According to the article:

Police are hoping “Operation Candle,” which will run from Dec. 24 to Jan. 3, will be a symbol of goodwill between Christianity and Islam, ending a year that has seen many tests of Indonesia’s religious harmony. It’s part of a bid by authorities to move beyond physical security to include an ideological campaign against violent strains of Islam (McCawley, Tom 2005, ‘Muslims guard Jakarta’s Christians’, *The Christian Science Monitor*, 23 December – Attachment 17).

The article also indicates that “Indonesia, the world’s largest Muslim nation, has long enjoyed a reputation for religious tolerance. Several events in 2005, however, chipped away at that image.” These included “hard-line Islamist mobs” closing “down 40 unregistered churches” in West Java (McCawley, Tom 2005, ‘Muslims guard Jakarta’s Christians’, *The Christian Science Monitor*, 23 December – Attachment 17).

Another previously mentioned article dated 30 December 2005 also notes that “Christmas Eve and Christmas Day passed without any reported violence.” The article indicates that:

In yet another gesture of tolerance on the part of Muslims, Muhammadiyah, one of Indonesia’s largest Muslim organisations, offered the use of its schools and other

buildings for Christians to mark Christmas. Some of the faithful reportedly took up this offer (Bayuni, Endy M 2005, 'When tolerance is no longer enough', *The Jakarta Post*, 30 December – Attachment 16).

However, it is also stated in the article that:

Underneath these displays of religious tolerance -- cynics might describe them as PR stunts – tension has quietly been building up in many parts of Indonesia this past year, pitting the majority Muslims, who make up 88 percent of the population, against other religious minorities.

...Tensions are also building up much closer to home, here in Jakarta and in many parts of Java. In 2005, some of these tensions erupted into violence.

The attacks and the forced closure of more than two dozen churches in West Java as reported by the Communion of Indonesian Churches; the lockout of believers from the Sang Timur Catholic School by residents in Ciledug near Jakarta; the skirmishes between Muslim residents and members of a Christian Batak Church in nearby Bekasi; the violent attack against followers of the Muslim Ahmadiyah sect in Parung near Bogor, all these point to two disturbing patterns: That religious intolerance is on the rise in this country, and that the authorities, particularly the police, have failed to protect people's constitutional rights. Freedom of religion and the right to practice one's faith are guaranteed in this country – but at times police even sided with the lawbreakers.

These are not isolated cases as some people would have us believe. They show an evolving pattern that could spread to other parts of the country, unless the nation, particularly the government, takes immediate steps to address the issue seriously.

Staying in denial mode, as people in the highest authority prefer to do, is certainly not helping (Bayuni, Endy M 2005, 'When tolerance is no longer enough', *The Jakarta Post*, 30 December – Attachment 16).

List of Sources Consulted

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RRT	<i>ISYS</i>	RRT Country Research database, including

		Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, US Department of State <i>Country Reports on Human Rights Practices</i> .
RRT Library	<i>FIRST</i>	RRT Library Catalogue

List of Attachments

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