



Australian Government
Refugee Review Tribunal

Country Advice

Indonesia

Indonesia – IDN37996 – Front Pembela
Islam – FPI – Petamburan
20 January 2011

1. Does the FPI target Chinese Buddhists?

There is no information which indicates that the Front Pembela Islam [Islamic Defenders's Front] (FPI) targets Chinese Buddhists because of their ethnicity or religion. According to information contained in the 'Policy Briefing' published by the International Crisis Group (ICG) in November 2010, Indonesia has been largely free of anti-Chinese violence since the 1998 riots which led to Soeharto's resignation. The ICG report found that among the various issues which the FPI opposes is the conversion of Muslims. It commented that many ethnic Chinese are involved in the Christian/Pentecostal evangelical movements and some are involved in the conversion of Muslims. For this reason Chinese Christians who proselytise Muslims can attract adverse attention from the FPI.¹

The FPI was formed in 1998 and its stated goal is to fully implement sharia law.²

Question 2 of a 2009 RRT Research Response provides detailed information on the FPI:

FPI [Front Pembela Islam] [Islamic Defenders Front]

The Australian Government Parliamentary Library website provides a concise summary of the Front Pembela Islam (FPI), or Islamic Defenders Front, an "Indonesian radical Islamic group" formed in 1998 and based in Jakarta. This source claims that "[t]he FPI's stated goal is the full implementation of Islamic Sharia law, although it supports Indonesia's present constitution and avoids calling for an Islamic state". The report also notes that "[t]he FPI has a paramilitary wing called Laskar Pembela Islam and is well known for organising raids on bars, massage parlours and gaming halls", and suggests that "[s]ceptical observers suspect that the police turn a blind eye to, or are complicit in, these activities, knowing that the victims will be encouraged to maintain protection monies to the police":

The Front Pembela Islam (Islamic Defenders Front–FPI) is another Indonesian radical Islamic group. The FPI was formed in August 1998 and now claims

¹ International Crisis Group 2010, 'Indonesia: "Christianisation" and Intolerance – Asia Briefing No.114', International Crisis Group website, 24 November, p.3 <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-east-asia/indonesia/B114%20Indonesia%20-%20Christianisation%20and%20Intolerance.ashx> – Accessed 30 November 2010 – Attachment 1

² 'Islamist militant groups in southeast Asia' 2010, *Reuters News*, 17 March – Attachment 2

branches in 22 provinces. Based in Jakarta, the FPI is led by Habib Muhammad Riziek Syihab, a religious teacher who was educated in Saudi Arabia. Like Habib, many of the top FPI leaders have Arab blood. The FPI's stated goal is the full implementation of Islamic Sharia law, although it supports Indonesia's present constitution and avoids calling for an Islamic state. The FPI has a paramilitary wing called Laskar Pembela Islam and is well known for organising raids on bars, massage parlours and gaming halls. The FPI justifies these raids on the grounds that the police are unable to uphold laws on gambling and prostitution. Sceptical observers suspect that the police turn a blind eye to, or are complicit in, these activities, knowing that the victims will be encouraged to maintain protection monies to the police.³

Further chronological information on the activities of the FPI is contained in RRT Research Response of 26 March 2009.⁴ These two Research Responses indicate that the primary focus of FPI is to promote lifestyles in conformity with the Islamic faith and Sharia law as they perceive it; and do not indicate that the FPI are targeting Chinese Buddhists per se.

2. Is the FPI active in Petamburan Jakbar?

Please note that Jakbar is the short form of 'Jakarta Barat' meaning west Jakarta.⁵



³ RRT Country Advice Service 2009, *Research Response IDN34217*, Question 2, 21 January – Attachment 3

⁴ RRT Country Advice Service 2009, *Research Response IDN34570*, Questions 1–2, 26 March – Attachment 4

⁵ Petamburan' 2000, *Microsoft Encarta Interactive Atlas 2000* – Attachment 5

The headquarters and residence of the FPI leader, chairman Habib Rizieq is located in Petamburan.⁶

A chronology of reported incidents involving the FPI and their location is provided as follows:

1998 Nov. 22: Ketapang incident in Central Jakarta.

1999 September: Raids on prostitution and gambling dens in Jakarta

2000 Dec. 14: Raids on prostitution den in Subang for allegedly harboring thugs involved in the attack on the residence of an FPI senior member.

2001 Oct. 15: Jakarta police deploy around 1,000 officers to storm FPI headquarters. The raid ends in a clash between the police and FPI members.

2002 March 15: A string of massive FPI raids on several clubs in Jakarta.

June 26: The FPI raids several pubs along tourist-packed Jl. Jaksa in Jakarta

2003 April 20: Habib Rizieq is detained by Jakarta police for slandering the force.

Aug. 20: The court sentences Rizieq to 7 months in prison.

2004 Oct. 3: Raids on Catholic school Sang Timur, demanding the shutting down of the school.

Oct. 22: The FPI raids clubs in Kemang, Jakarta

2005 Aug. 5: Raids on the headquarters of the Liberal Islamic Network in Jakarta.

Sept. 19: The FPI raids an Ahmadiyah residential compound in Cianjur, West Java.

2006 April 12: Raids on the office of Playboy Indonesia magazine.

2007 March 29: Attacks on women's movement group Papernas

2008 June 1: Attacks on members of the Alliance for the Freedom of Religion and Faith in the National Monument park, Central Jakarta

Oct. 30: Rizieq and the commander of the Islam Defender Troops (LPI) were sentenced for 18 months for inciting violence.

2010 March 26: FPI members forced their way into a hotel in Surabaya, East Java, demanding that foreign participants of the 4th regional Lesbian, Gay, Transgender and Intersex Association conference.

May 4: FPI members storm a government-backed human rights workshop for transgender individuals in Depok, West Java.

June 24: A raid on a meeting of legislators from the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) in Banyuwangi, East Java.⁷

⁶ Witular, A. and Tampubolon, H.D 2010, 'Islam defenders mutating into splinter cells for hire', *The Jakarta Post*, 16 July – Attachment 6

⁷ Witular, A. and Tampubolon, H.D 2010, 'Islam defenders mutating into splinter cells for hire', *The Jakarta Post*, 16 July – Attachment 6

The following attack took place in Petamburan in May 2010 :

A journalist was badly wounded after his head was beaten (sic) with a bottle by a member of Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) in Petamburan, Central Jakarta on Wednesday night.

Oktobriyan, a journalist from Lampu Hijau newspaper was covering an alcohol raid conducted by the FPI at a small kiosk, Metro TV said. He was taking pictures of FPI members wreaking havoc at the kiosk and beating up the kiosk owner and two locals.

...

Ironically, the kiosk did not sell any alcoholic drinks. The bottles that FPI members thought to be beers were only soft drink bottles. After they finished damaging the kiosk, the mob moved on to attack a convenience store.

Oktobriyan and the three other victims reported the attack to Tanah Abang Sector Police. According to the police, they were not informed about the raid.⁸

At this stage there is no information to indicate what measure the police took after this incident was reported.

The ICG states that when the FPI targets a location it informs the police to seek their support in providing redress:

The thugs, who constitute FPI's militia, are led by a group of more educated and religiously trained activists ... who set policy and procedures, lead religious discussions and determine the group's targets. FPI's central board has an investigation committee which identifies specific locations, usually places of "vice" or unauthorised churches, on the basis of reports from the community. It then files a complaint with the police and takes action if – or more frequently when – the police fail to respond. While the police rarely act on the FPI's complaints, it does give the police the opportunity to give forewarning to businesses on the FPI hit list, which can pay for police protection, strengthen their own security or make the FPI an offer.⁹

3. Do the authorities tolerate the activities of the FPI?

The FPI is tolerated by some government agencies. The FPI is reported to have organised a convoy of approximately a thousand members from its base in Petamburan to Jakarta to celebrate its 12th anniversary.¹⁰ Police and politicians are said to condone the vigilante-style activities of the FPI because they fear that if they criticise the FPI they may be considered to be defending vice. A press report indicates that government authorities have ignored appeals via online petitions and Facebook to disband the FPI.¹¹ *The Wall Street Journal Asia* reported that prominent figures such as the Jakarta Governor Fauzi Bowo and Police chief Timur Pradopo attended the FPI's 12th anniversary celebration and in the

⁸ 'FPI attack photographer during riot' 2010, *The Jakarta Globe*, 27 May -

<http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/home/fpi-attack-photographer-during-riot/377363> - Accessed 20 January 2011 – Attachment 7

⁹ International Crisis Group 2010, 'Indonesia: "Christianisation" and Intolerance – Asia Briefing No.114', International Crisis Group website, 24 November, p.6 <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-east-asia/indonesia/B114%20Indonesia%20-%20Christianisation%20and%20Intolerance.ashx> – Accessed 30 November 2010 – Attachment 1

¹⁰ 'FPI holds convoy in Jakarta to celebrate anniversary' 2010, *The Jakarta Post*, 8 July. <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2010/08/07/fpi-holds-convoy-jakarta-celebrate-anniversary.html> - Accessed 17 January 2011 – Attachment 8

¹¹ Rondonuwu, O. & Creagh, S. 2010, 'Opposition grows to Indonesia's hardline FPI Islamists', *Reuters News*, 30 June – Attachment 9

process they gave the group apparent political legitimacy. In 2010, Jakarta Governor went to the extent of inviting the FPI to monitor Muslims' behaviour in Jakarta during the Muslim fasting period of Ramadan. This invitation gave rise to strong public protest which forced the FPI to back down.¹² Police chief – Timur Pradopo has confirmed that he maintains close ties with the FPI so as to maintain security in Jakarta.¹³

4. Could an individual subject to religious intolerance expect state protection from the FPI?

According to the latest report from Freedom House, there is religious intolerance in Indonesia and the government has failed to address this problem adequately.

There are strong and active civil society organisations. The judiciary is independent however the court system remains plagued by corruption. The police force is also affected by corruption, and dismissed 350 officers annually for rights violations. Freedom House found that ethnic Chinese who make up less than 3 per cent of the population were resented for their reputed wealth and are subjected to harassment and occasional violence.¹⁴

As described in Question 2 the police act to 'protect' a business from the FPI by forewarning it that it will be subjected to an FPI attack so that the business has the possibility of paying the police for police protection, or strengthen its own security or make the FPI an offer.¹⁵

Attachments

1. International Crisis Group 2010, 'Indonesia: "Christianisation" and Intolerance – Asia Briefing No.114', International Crisis Group website, 24 November, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-east-asia/indonesia/B114%20Indonesia%20-%20Christianisation%20and%20Intolerance.ashx> – Accessed 30 November 2010.
2. 'Islamist militant groups in Southeast Asia' 2010, *Reuters News*, 17 March.
3. RRT Country Advice Service 2009, *Research Response IDN34217*, 21 January.
4. RRT Country Advice Service 2009, *Research Response IDN34570*, 26 March.
5. 'Petamburan' 2000, *Microsoft Encarta Interactive Atlas 2000*.
6. Witular, A. and Tampubolon, H.D 2010, 'Islam defenders mutating into splinter cells for hire', *The Jakarta Post*, 16 July – Accessed 17 January 2011.

¹² 'Indonesia and Religious Violence' 2010, *The Wall Street Journal Asia*, 13 August – Attachment 10

¹³ Tampubolon, H. D 2010, 'Sole candidate wants to 'embrace' FPI, *The Jakarta Post*, <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2010/10/07/sole-candidate-wants-'embrace'-fpi.html-0> - Accessed 18 January 2011 – Attachment 11

¹⁴ Freedom House 2010, *Freedom in the World – Indonesia (2010)*, June <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&year=2010&country=7841> – Accessed 10 September 2010 – Attachment 12

¹⁵ International Crisis Group 2010, 'Indonesia: "Christianisation" and Intolerance – Asia Briefing No.114', International Crisis Group website, 24 November, p.6 <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-east-asia/indonesia/B114%20Indonesia%20-%20Christianisation%20and%20Intolerance.ashx> – Accessed 30 November 2010 – Attachment 1

7. 'FPI attack photographer during riot' 2010, *The Jakarta Globe*, 27 May - <http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/home/fpi-attack-photographer-during-riot/377363> - Accessed 20 January 2011.
8. FPI holds convoy in Jakarta to celebrate anniversary' 2010, *The Jakarta Post*, 8 July. <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2010/08/07/fpi-holds-convoy-jakarta-celebrate-anniversary.html> - Accessed 17 January 2011. .
9. Rondonuwu, O. & Creagh, S. 2010, 'Opposition grows to Indonesia's hardline FPI Islamists', *Reuters News*, 30 June.
10. Indonesia and Religious Violence' 2010, *The Wall Street Journal Asia*, 13 August.
11. Tampubolon, H. D 2010, 'Sole candidate wants to 'embrace' FPI, *The Jakarta Post*, <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2010/10/07/sole-candidate-wants-'embrace'-fpi.html-0> - Accessed 18 January 2011.
12. Freedom House 2010, *Freedom in the World – Indonesia (2010)*, June <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&year=2010&country=7841> – Accessed 10 September 2010.