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Public schools in Indonesia feel Islamic pressure

By Yenni Kwok

The New York Times (15.06.2014) - When Lies Marcoes heard that her daughter's high school, in Bogor, Indonesia, required all female Muslim students to wear a head veil once a week, she was furious. Although she herself was a Muslim and a graduate of an Islamic university in Jakarta, she went to the school to object to the imposition of the religious uniform in a state school.

As a result of her protest, she said, the order was rescinded — though her teenage daughter decided to wear the head scarf anyway to fit in with her friends.

About 400 kilometers, or 260 miles, away, in Yogyakarta, central Java, another parent, Tri Agus Susanto Siswiharjo, says he would like to send his daughters to a public secondary school, but he, too, is worried that they would have to wear Islamic dress.

Mr. Tri Agus, a political communications lecturer at a rural-development college whose wife is Catholic, now sends his daughters to a private Catholic primary school. Although he is a Muslim, he said he believed that religion belonged in the private sphere and should not be imposed.

"If they want to learn about their religion, they can learn about it at home," he said in an interview.

Many parents like Ms. Lies and Mr. Tri Agus say they expect public schools to be neutral and to reflect the multicultural heritage of a country that recognizes six religions.

But, in the past 10 to 15 years, schools have increasingly adopted policies that favor Islam, the majority religion, ordering Muslim students to wear Muslim-styled uniforms either every day or at least on Fridays, when Muslims go to mosque. Some schools also require Muslim students to recite verses from the Koran every morning before the lessons begin.

The rise of Islamic practices in public schools, mirroring a rise in fundamentalism across the country, makes parents like Ms. Lies and Mr. Tri Agus uneasy.

"I sent my children to public schools, so that they could learn universal values, have different kinds of friends and learn pluralist ideas," Ms. Lies said.

The rise in such practices has affected teachers too. Henny Supolo, head of Yayasan Cahaya Guru, a teachers' nonprofit foundation, said that from 2007 to 2010, the organization provided training to 4,500 teachers from 2,000 schools, an overwhelming majority of whom were female teachers from public schools. "We noticed that almost all of them wore jilbab as uniform," Ms. Supolo said, referring to what Indonesians call the Islamic head scarf. "Jilbab has become part of uniform for female public school teachers whom we met."

This is alarming, she said: "If jilbab has become part of the uniform at public schools, then the function of public schools as a place to sow plurality to our children will disappear."

Retno Listyarti, secretary general of the Indonesian Teachers' Union Federation, put the issue bluntly: "Public schools have become religious schools," she said.

Some schools now hold a daily mass recital of the Koran before formal classes begin. In one school in eastern Jakarta, Muslim students spend 15 to 20 minutes reading the Koran every morning, guided through a public address system, said a teacher at the school, speaking on condition that neither she nor the school be identified, for fear of professional repercussions.

Christian students sit together in one room, within hearing of the Koranic recital, to read the Bible, the teacher said. Hindu and Buddhist students, who don't have their own religious teachers in the school, read their religious texts while sitting in the same rooms as their Muslim classmates reciting the Koran.

"This shows that the majority is always right, while the minority has to adapt," the teacher said.

Indonesia, which has the world's largest Muslim population — more than 200 million, or nearly 90 percent of its citizens profess the Islamic faith — is often praised as a model of moderate Islam.

But in recent years, the country has faced a rise of Sunni radicalism and religious intolerance. The Indonesian Children Protection Commission has warned that radical tenets are being increasingly being taught at every age level, from kindergarten to university.

Meanwhile, Indonesia has consistently been among the worst performers in the Program for International Student Assessment — the triennial test given to 15- and 16-year-old students from 65 countries by the Organization for Economic Cooperation Development. In the PISA rankings, Indonesian students' scores in math, reading and science lag behind the average of their peers.

Despite this, Indonesia's most recent curriculum overhaul, rolled out last year, gave more emphasis and time to religious education, while merging science and social studies with other classes.

Educators like Ms. Supolo have urged the Education Ministry to take action against the spread of Islamic uniforms and other religious distinctions. But the ministry's spokesman, Ibnu Hamad, says the central government does not have powers to intervene. Such

issues “are largely under the jurisdiction of local governments, in the framework of regional autonomy,” he said.

Emboldened by decentralization, which began after the fall of the authoritarian regime of former President Suharto in 1998, local politicians have often pushed a populist, religiously inspired agenda, saying that it could counter social problems including teenage pregnancy and drug abuse.

“We are so nervous in facing social and moral problems like teen delinquency that we are turning to irrational religious teachings,” Ms. Lies said.

Andreas Harsono, Indonesia researcher for Human Rights Watch, who is doing a field study on women’s rights in several provinces, says the imposition of Muslim dress code on public-school students and teachers is now widespread, “from kindergarten to high school.”

Implementation can vary: “Sometimes it’s based on the school’s own decision, sometimes it’s the district head’s decree, the mayor’s or the governor’s,” Mr. Harsono said. But in each case, “the central government, in this case the Ministry of Education, just lets it happen.”

Jilbab, which has become so ubiquitous in Indonesia, became popular only in the post-Suharto years. Before then, public school students and teachers were banned from wearing head veils on school grounds and those who did so could be expelled. For some female activists like Ms. Lies, wearing a jilbab was a symbol of resistance to Mr. Suharto’s iron-fisted rule.

In those years, the head veil “was the case of Islamic schools versus state- owned ones,” said Dewi Candraningrum, editor of the feminist Jurnal Perempuan (Women’s Journal) and author of the book “Negotiating Women’s Veiling.” The Islamic uniform — a long skirt, a long-sleeved shirt and a jilbab for girls — was worn only by students of schools run by Islamic organizations like Muhammadiyah every Friday.

But as the government loosens up, allowing students and teachers to wear the head veil — should they choose to do so — has become a mark of religious difference even within schools. “Muslim schoolgirls now have to wear a jilbab,” Ms. Dewi said. “Jilbab has become a symbol of Muslim girls, who are supposed to look different from non-Muslim girls.”

Ms. Retno, the teachers’ union official, says nobody should be prohibited from wearing a head veil but no one should be forced or coerced to wear one either. “Wearing a jilbab should be voluntary,” said Ms. Retno, who wears one.

Indonesian Catholic and Protestant groups attacked by Islamists

Link to WWM report: <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2014/06/3181163/>

World Watch Monitor (12.06.2014) - Two church group attacks within 3 days of each other in Indonesia, which has the world’s largest Muslim population, have caused concern

ahead of Presidential elections in July. They both occurred in Yogyakarta province's Sleman regency; the province is in the central region of Java, the country's most populous island.

During the first incident on May 29, over a dozen armed people in white robes attacked members of Santo Francis Agung Banteng Church while they were holding a prayer gathering in a member's house. Julius Felicianus, the house owner, was not present during the incident; he rushed home right after his son texted him about the assault.

As he tried talking to the mob, eight people started to beat him, severely injuring him in the head and back. A few other members were assaulted, including an eight-year-old girl who was given an electric shock. Apart from the worshippers, Julius' neighbour, a reporter from national media Kompas TV, was also beaten up, as he arrived to try to film the raid. Over the next few days, the police arrested three of the assailants, who are allegedly linked to the Islam Defenders Front.

Various assumptions were made about the main motives for the attack. Some were associated with the upcoming Presidential election in July; Julius is apparently an active campaigner of one of the two presidential candidates, the popular Joko "Jokowi" Widodo. In contrast, Yogyakarta Police spokeswoman Adj. Sr. Comr. Anny Pujiastuti stated that the attack was driven by the group's objections to the religious activity conducted in Julius' house. As a result, National Police Chief General Sutarmanto urged the public not to organize collective worship in private residences in order to avoid further acts of violence, as cited by the Jakarta Post.

Only three days after this attack, another incident took place; this time against the Pentecostal Church in Indonesia GPDI El Shaddai in Pangukan village, Sleman Regency. During Sunday Service, a mob of unidentified people barged through the church doors. Police officers came and prevented the violence from escalating. As the congregation left the church, the mob began to calm down. However, several hours later, the assailants returned in greater number and attacked the church with stones. The church building and the house of Nico Lomboan, the lead pastor of the church, were damaged as a result. No one was hurt in the incident.

According to Pastor Agus Haryanto, Chairman of the Inter-Church Cooperation of Sleman, GPDI El Shaddai was established in 1992. In 2011, the church of 100 worshippers tried to build a new and bigger building. In order to gain a place of worship permit, a church has to meet the main requirements of having at least 90 congregation members and gain the consent of 60 neighbours of different faiths. While the first requirement on membership was met, GPDI El Shaddai stumbled upon the second. "For years, the church had failed to obtain the local community's support. Growth in building size is commonly associated with growth in congregation number. People held an unspoken suspicion and fear that the church was converting the locals into Christians," Pastor Haryanto told World Watch Monitor. Despite the absence of a permit, construction went on until the building reached near completion.

In 2012, the local administration sealed the church due to local protests. A village hall was provided for the church as a temporary worship venue. After using the facility for a while, the congregation rented a hotel hall to conduct their Sunday Service.

The church attempted a couple of times to move back to their new premises. The first try was at Christmas 2013, followed by this second attempt on June 1. Both ended in mass protests. "The recent violence, however, was committed not by Pangukan villagers but by outsiders," said Pastor Arief Arianto, leader of the Indonesian Bethel Church located just 50 m away from GPDI El Shaddai.

Responding to this incident, the Inter-Church Cooperation of Sleman planned to hold a meeting with local Muslim leaders to find a solution for the church and ease religious tensions in the region. "Sleman regency is home to 106 churches and sees good inter-

religious relationships," Pastor Haryanto said. The incident came as both surprising and alarming: Yogyakarta had been long known for its religious diversity and tolerance although another church in the province had been vandalized by Muslim fundamentalists in March.

Amidst the euphoria of the upcoming election, the church incidents have seized the attention of high profile politicians. The running mate of Jokowi, Jusuf Kalla, showed his concern by visiting Julius, victim of the prayer gathering raid, in the hospital. "Although Julius has personally forgiven the perpetrators, the case should still be prosecuted under the law. [Otherwise, similar incidents would take place," said Kalla.](#) Opposing Presidential contender, Prabowo Subianto expressed the same concern. Despite his having considerable support from Islamic political parties, he regretted the violence. "There should be no threat of violence," he promised. "If elected, we will try as hard as possible to enforce the laws and create harmony."

Religious freedom in Indonesia has plummeted since the government of Suharto, the authoritarian president who had reigned for 32 years, fell apart in 1998. The new and more lenient democratic system has been abused by Muslim fundamentalist groups to oppress religious minorities, including believers of Islamic sect Ahmadiyya and Christians. The latter make up roughly 10% of the population. "From 2004 to 2010, at least 2,442 churches were attacked or closed down," says Victor Silaen who lectures in International Relations at Pelita Harapan University.

80% of its reported incidents took place in Java, says 2014 Human Rights Watch.

On Java, religious attacks are further concentrated in West Java province. Among the most volatile areas in this province is Cianjur, the regency where seven churches were shut down between December 2013 and January 2014. In their appeal to the National Commission on Human Rights (Komnas HAM) on June 2, the Cianjur Churches' Union claimed that the local administration had forcibly closed the churches, despite some of them operating legally since 1977. They also submitted their report on past intimidations from various extremist groups. "We feel our right to religious freedom has been severely limited because the seven congregations no longer have places to worship," said Oferlin Hia, a spokesman and pastor of one of the [affected churches](#), as quoted by the Jakarta Post.

The ongoing religious restrictions and violence have put Indonesia at 47th in the World Watch List 2014, which ranks the 50 countries where Christians are most oppressed for their faith.

See also <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2014/02/3026911/>

Pluralism in Indonesia is imperilled, says Interfaith Delegation

By Mark Barwick and Vicki McKenna, *Human Rights Without Frontiers*

HRWF (10.03.2014) - A climate of intolerance and violence toward religious minorities, previously limited to certain pockets of conservatism such as West Java and Aceh, has now become more pervasive throughout Indonesia, according to an interfaith delegation from Indonesia invited by Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) at the European Parliament.

The delegation was in Brussels to participate in the launch of a new report by Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), *Indonesia: Pluralism in Peril - The rise of religious intolerance across the archipelago*. The report highlights the fact that the social hostility is not confined to Christians and Ahmadis but that Shi'a Muslims, Sufi Muslims, Confucians, Buddhists, Hindus, Baha'is, Jews, traditional indigenous believers and atheists are all under attack. Among the factors fuelling intolerance is "the inaction and at times complicity of the local, provincial and national authorities." The report stresses that government ministers and President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, "have not simply been guilty of gross negligence, but have in fact been proactively complicit" by making remarks that encourage intolerance, and by implementing or upholding discriminatory laws. The failure to uphold the rule of law and bring the perpetrators of violence to justice has contributed to a culture of impunity, while also giving rise to a disturbing new trend: the criminalisation of victims, who are arrested for acts of violence perpetrated upon them by extremists, the report says.

Human Rights Without Frontiers highlighted Indonesia as a 'country of particular concern' in its 2013 World Report on the Freedom of Religion or Belief.

On 3 March, the group met with a gathering of NGO leaders at the Austrian Permanent Representation. Benedict Rogers, CSW East Asia Team Leader and the chief author of the report, spoke of the 'increasing mainstreaming of intolerance' that has affected Indonesia's religious minorities in recent years. Rogers noted that the situation is worsening and becoming more widespread but added that it is still not too late for the country to recover its tradition of respect and pluralism. This tradition is 'imperilled but not destroyed,' he remarked.

The delegation included The Reverend Favor Bancin from the Communion of Churches in Indonesia; Dr Ahmad Suaedy, Executive Director of the Abdurrahman Wahid Centre for Inter-Faith Dialogue at the University of Indonesia; Father Benny Susetyo from the Catholic Bishops Conference; Ms Muliathy Briany, a Christian teacher who previously worked for Scripture Union Indonesia; Mahmud Mubarik Ahmad, Secretary of Isyaat, a publication produced by the Ahmadiyya Muslim community in Indonesia; and Ahmad Hidayat, General Secretary of the Central Council of Ahlulbait Indonesia and representing the Shi'a Muslim community.

On 4th March, the delegation participated in a hearing at the European Parliament on the topic, sponsored by MEP Hannu Takkula. Speakers repeated their caution that violations of freedom of religion or belief pose a threat to Indonesia's values of pluralism.

During the hearing, participants were scandalised by the embarrassingly denialist remarks of the Indonesian Ambassador to the European Union, Mr Arif Havas Oegroseno.

Recommendations to the Indonesian government include the repeal of discriminatory legislation and ensuring that violations of religious freedom are properly investigated and the perpetrators are brought to justice. The European Union and Member States are asked to raise concerns about rising levels of violent attacks against religious minorities with the Indonesian government, and to encourage the government to extend an invitation to the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief to visit the country.

Indonesia's religious freedom 'in peril'

Report claims 'spiralling intolerance' is destroying country's reputation

World Watch Monitor (27.02.2014) - A new report paints a bleak picture of religious freedom in Indonesia.

Indonesia: Pluralism in Peril, which was launched at the UK Parliament yesterday (Feb. 25), says that in the world's most populous Muslim nation (251 million, 86% Muslim), minority religious groups such as Christians are subject to "spiralling intolerance", which threatens to destroy Indonesia's erstwhile reputation as a place of inter-religious harmony.

The report, written by Christian Solidarity Worldwide's East Asia team leader Benedict Rogers, says extremist ideology has spread nationwide; that local, provincial and national authorities have been guilty of inaction and complicity; and that the majority of Indonesia's Muslims have failed to speak out against intolerance.

While stressing that he deeply admires all Indonesia's achievements as a multi-faith society, Rogers says that as it approaches national elections this year, it is "crucial" that the new President, who in July will replace Susilo Bambang after a decade in office, steers the country back towards its roots as a pluralistic nation whose founding motto was "Unity in Diversity".

The government's stated ideology of 'Pancasila' has at its base communal peace and monotheism. Only six religions are officially recognised: Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Catholicism and Protestantism. But Rogers' report notes that almost all of Indonesia's minority religious communities have been affected by intolerance, including Catholic and Protestant Christians, Ahmadis, Shi'a and Sufi Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, Confucians and Baha'is.

For examples of actions against Christians, Rogers notes the closing down of 17 churches in the space of three days in the Aceh region of northern Sumatra in May 2012; and the closure of two churches in West Java, despite court approval in Jan. 2011 saying they should be allowed to open.

The report states that a variety of radical Islamist organisations and political parties have emerged and gained "disproportionate influence" over policymaking. Rogers says that it is "clear" that ministers, including President Bambang, have not merely shown weak governance by yielding to their demands, but have been "proactively complicit".

Perpetrators of violence against minorities are reported to have been allowed to act with impunity or to receive disproportionately small penalties, such as those sentenced to between four and five months in jail after being found guilty of destroying churches in Temanggung, Central Java.

Speaking at the London launch, Father Antonius Benny Susetyo, Executive Secretary of the Interfaith Relations Commission of the Indonesia Catholics' Bishops Conference, said that many factors have contributed to the rise of intolerance. He says the President had compromised with the Ulemas' Council; that radical groups get police protection; and that economic inequalities also contribute. He pleaded for a President "who will unite Indonesia behind its Constitution, which protects all citizens, including atheists".

Furthermore, Rogers reports of a "new phenomenon" of "criminalisation" of religious minorities on fabricated charges. This occurs, writes Rogers, "even after they themselves have been attacked and the perpetrators of the attacks have not been brought to justice".

Rogers also asks for more support from moderate Indonesian Muslims, saying that while many may oppose extremism and intolerance, a "growing number" have been radicalised.

Rev. Favor A. Bancin, Executive Secretary for Inter-Faith Relations for the main Protestant umbrella organisation, known as PGI, said at the launch that he and his fellow speakers love their country. When sometimes accused of talking too much about intolerance, he said he responds by pointing to incidents such as a church torn down near Jakarta in 2013, just after construction had been completed, or churches in West Java that remain closed two months after protests by Muslim hardliners.

A representative for Christian charity Open Doors International, Thomas Müller, said he welcomed the report.

"In the last four months alone, at least half a dozen reports have emerged of forcefully closed churches or churches that were not allowed to be built," he said. "It is great that Christian Solidarity Worldwide highlighted once more the situation of religious minorities in the country, as Indonesia is in danger of losing its tolerant reputation."

Müller added that the fact that Indonesia's President was presented with an award last year for his work as a world statesman who promotes religious tolerance should be viewed only as a "smokescreen".

"The President was quite successful in travelling the West and highlighting an atmosphere of tolerance. He even received a human rights prize. The smokescreen set up by the Indonesian government should not deceive anybody and the published report helps in talking facts," he said.

Indonesian churches remain closed

World Watch Monitor (12.02.2014) - Four churches in Indonesia remain closed two months after local officials yielded to the demands of protesting Muslim hardliners.

The Indonesian Full Gospel Church, Pentecostal Movement Church, Indonesian Bethel Church and Christian New Covenant Church, which belong to the Cianjur regency of West Java, were closed on Dec. 8 following a protest by more than 150 Muslims from the Reformed Islamic Movement (GARIS) and People's Defenders Front (FPI).

Oferlin Hia, pastor of the Christian New Covenant Church, is leading a petition to have the churches reinstated. He has lodged a complaint with the country's Inter-Religious Harmony Forum and sent a letter to the regency chief, asking for an alternate venue. He has yet to receive a response.

"The churches are still in good spirits, but uncertainty lingers," Hia told World Watch Monitor. "Using other church buildings is just a temporary solution; they're not sure how long it could last."

Before the enforced closure, the four churches – and another church that managed to avoid closure – had faced protests during worship services on Nov. 17 and Dec. 1, during which one church member was assaulted while attempting to take photographs.

Witnesses said that police officers were present, but offered little resistance and later assisted protesters in affixing signs onto the churches proclaiming them shut.

The protesters demanded that the churches obtain a permit to hold Christian gatherings.

Pastor Hia said the congregations had been meeting in local shops or offices while awaiting permits to construct church buildings.

“We had been applying for a permit, but local government officials didn’t respond although all requirements had been met,” he said.

According to local laws, a church must possess at least 90 members and gain the consent of at least 60 neighbours to secure a building permit.

Violations of religious freedom in Indonesia

Prof. Dr. phil. Dr. theol. Thomas Schirrmacher, PhD, ThD, DD
Director of the International Institute for Religious Freedom

The author toured Indonesia for the first time in 1979 for a period of three months. Most recently he visited the country in October 2011 in order to personally hear reports by the Governor of North Sulawesi, among others, as to how he succeeded in bringing calm to the unrest in the province of South Sulawesi and in ending religious persecution there, and in October 2013 to listen to reports by non-Muslim members of the government, eg the vice-gouverneur of Jakarta.

The 240 million inhabitants of the largest Islamic country in the world, Indonesia, are spread out among 750 people groups living on 6,000 islands scattered over 9.5 million square kilometers of ocean. The country is divided into 33 provinces ruled by elected governors.

After the colonial rule of the Portuguese (1511-1605), the Dutch (1605-1942, 1945-1949), the British (1807-1815), and the Japanese (1942-1945), there were dictatorships under President Sukarno (1945-1965) and General Suharto (1965-1998). The transformation into a democracy largely occurred in a peaceful manner, and likewise there were largely peaceful and free elections in 2004 and 2009 which resulted in a majority for a secular nationalistic government with the participation of Muslim parties.

Since the founding of Indonesia, the military has simultaneously exercised police powers ('dwifungsi' = dual function). It is very difficult to bring military personnel before a court, and when martial law is swiftly declared, it is completely forbidden to do so. The military administration encompasses every village and often functions better than civilian administration. 7.5% of all parliamentary seats (a reduction from a previous 15%) are automatically reserved for the military. In the process, the military is only 30% financed by the national budget and generates the remainder itself, through ownership stakes in companies and through personnel leasing, but also through illegal lumber exports, racketeering, extortion, and corruption.

Corruption is arguably the strongest threat to Indonesia's democracy¹ and plays a very large role with respect to the actual situation faced locally by religious minorities. According to Transparency International, Indonesia is one of the countries with the highest rate of corruption in the world, and this enormous level of corruption plays into the hands of Islamists. It is no coincidence that the Catholic Governor, Sinyo Harry Sarundajang, installed by the central government as an emergency measure, counts as one of the few completely corruption-free politicians. In 2002 he was able to pacify the civil war in Sulawesi.

Indonesia's Religions

¹ Comp. Bettina David. "Machtverschiebungen zwischen Indonesiens Zentrum und Peripherie" in Politik und Zeitgeschichte 62 (2012) 11-12: 23-30.

Hinduism was the reigning religion on the islands of Indonesia in the 1st century A.D. Beginning about 1300, Islam slowly began to spread. From 1525 onwards, the Hindu kingdom collapsed in the interior of Java and became Islamic. By the 18th century all of Indonesia had become Islamic, with the exception of the interior of Bali, Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, and Irian.

There are 10 million Hindus, which most notably account for 90% of Bali. Some 20 million inhabitants, above all on Java, Kalimantan, and Papua, belong to tribal religions or animistic systems of belief. However, almost all of them have been registered under one of the six official religions.

Christianity in Indonesia²

The first Christians in Indonesia were Nestorians who emigrated from Persia in the 10th and 11th centuries A.D. The Portuguese came as the first Europeans in 1511 and conquered the island of Matalaya and then the Maluku Islands. Catholic missionary work began in 1534. After that the Catholic Church was oppressed by the Dutch, but in 1806 Holland granted them religious freedom. This led to strong growth, primarily on Flores and East Timor. It also led to massive conversions back from Protestantism.

In 1605 and 1617 the Dutch founded the city of Jakarta. Over the course of the next 300 years the Dutch acquired control everywhere bit by bit. This was mostly accomplished without military action. The ruling East India Company had a hostile stance against missions and allowed Dutch pastors only to care for the Dutch. In 1799 the state took over the trading company and conceded religious freedom in 1806. After that, large Reformed churches developed up to 1950 through the efforts of Dutch missionaries, and large Lutheran churches were formed through the efforts of German missionaries³. Most wellknown among them was the Batak Protestant Christian Church. Among the six Nias peoples (3.8% of the entire population of Indonesia), 70% on Sumatra are Christians. It was not until after 1950 that the entire range of Protestant diversity came about, above all via Anglo Saxon missionaries. What is unusual for an Asian country is the high percentage of Lutheran and Reformed churches. Of the inhabitants of the East Nusa Tenggara Province, 55% are Catholics, while 58% of the Papua province are Protestants. The Maluku Islands and North Sulawesi have additional concentrations of Christians.

The Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs estimates that there are 19 million Protestants and 8 million Catholics in Indonesia. The Christian handbook *Operation World* comes to the following breakdown on the basis of statements by religious communities and leading local experts:⁴ 11% or 26.3 million Protestants (approximately half of them Evangelicals), 3% or 7.1 million Catholics, for a total of 33.4 million.

Christianity grew strongly and exerted a great amount of influence in the 1950s and 1960s.⁵ In the 1970s, the climate between Islam and Christianity began to change, in view of the fact that radical Muslim organizations called for the end of the Pancasila with

² Comp. on the history Thomas Schirrmacher. "Indonesian Christianity" in: George Thomas Kurian (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Christian Civilization*. 4 Vols. Chicester: Wiley---Blackwell, 2011. pp. 1197---1199. Regarding the Indonesian churches see Heuken, Adolf. *Ensiklopedi gereja*. 9 vols. Jakarta: Yayasan Cipta Loka Caraka, 2004-2006 and on the Catholic Church by the same author. *200 tahun Gereja Katolik di Jakarta*. Jakarta: Yayasan Cipta Loka Caraka, 2007.

³Catholic: Raja Oloan Tumanggor. "Adat und christlicher Glaube: Eine missionswissenschaftliche Studie zur Inkulturation des christlichen Glaubens unter den Toba-Batak (Indonesien)". Diss.: Univ. Münster, 2006, Evangelical: Lothar Schreiner. *Adat und Evangelium*. Gütersloh: Mohn, 1972; Paul B. Pedersen. *Batak blood and Protestant soul: the development of national Batak churches in North Sumatra*. Grand Rapids (MI): Eerdmans, 1970.

⁴ Jason Mandryk. *Operation World*. Secunderabad (Indien): Biblica, 2010. pp. 446 - 463.

⁵ Comp. for instance on the situation prior to 1978 Rolf Italiander. *Indonesiens verantwortliche Gesellschaft*. Verlag der Evangelisch Lutherischen Mission: Erlangen, 1976; Theodor Muller---Krüger. *Der Protestantismus in Indonesien*. Stuttgart: Evangelisches Verlagswerk, 1968 or my report "Religion ist Pflicht in Indonesien." *Idea* 80/81/8.10.1981/S.II-III; *Idea-Spektrum* Nr.56 -57/21.10.1981: 25.

its five to six approved religions.⁶ This occurred for the benefit of Islam as the state religion.

In 1978 the government began to limit the exercise of missions work by all religions. The state started to control the foreign relations maintained by churches and to increasingly interfere in the internal affairs of churches. In 1985, the so called Ormas Law committed all religions to the Pancasila; otherwise, their organizations would be dissolved. In 1992, it was ordered that all government positions were to be allocated according to official proportional representation (87% Muslim, 6% Protestant, 4% Catholic, etc.), also in areas where there was a Christian majority. As a result, the public influence of Christians was completely lost in areas where they had their primary concentrations of inhabitants. In 1993 all Christian government ministers were replaced by Muslim ministers.⁷

Wahhabization of the Country

The country as it was in 1979 differs noticeably from the Indonesia of today. Similar to what has occurred in India, the traditionally tolerant line of thought towards other religions has suddenly been covered over by fundamentalist perpetrators of violence. Far more than 200 million inhabitants are worried that the Arabization of Islam could lead to ever increasing tensions, and it is embarrassing to them that their country has so often been present in the international media due to Islamist violence: "Fundamentalist Muslims are still trying to replace Indonesian-Javanese culture with an Arab embossed culture of intolerance."⁸

In light of the tremendous diversity of the country and the diverging colonial history and history of independence of numerous islands, it is almost impossible to make sweeping statements about the entire country. As it relates to our topic, the conservative Islamic island of Aceh, where the sharia applies as the penal code, has little in common with the predominantly Hindu island of Bali or the Catholic areas in Sulawesi. What applies universally is that acts of violence against non Muslims do not come from the majority of the population, which traditionally coexists peacefully with other religions. It also does not come from the government. Rather, it comes from a small percentage of Islamists, who orient themselves towards Arab Islam and in particular Saudi Arabia. Practically all the leaders of parties, organizations and volunteer corps who turn against the Ahmadiyya community and Christians have been educated in Saudi Arabia or in institutions in Indonesia which are sponsored by Saudi Arabia – supported by large amounts of money coming from the Arab world. That represents a creeping Islamization, indeed, a Wahhabization of the country due to a situation where other parties have to consider their demands when it comes to elections.

This creeping Wahhabization of Indonesia has begun to attack the longstanding tradition of religious tolerance and religious freedom in Indonesia. What used to rule, a mystical form of Islam ('Abangan') as well as the fusion of Islam with pre Islamic animistic elements and Javanese Kejawen and Kebatinan mysticism,⁹ still defines the large majority of the inhabitants, but it has recognizably lost influence in politics, legislation, matters of education, and with respect to social work. Pressure from fundamentalists on

⁶ Pancasila has been a central part of the Indonesian constitution since 1945. Its five principles are explained in different orders but include "the belief in one God, just and civilized humanity, Indonesian unity, democracy under the wise guidance of representative consultations, and social justice for all the peoples of Indonesia." <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/440932/Pancasila> (19.02.2013)

⁷ Dieter Becker. *Die Kirchen und der Pancasila Staat: Indonesische Christen zwischen Konsens und Konflikt*. Missionswiss. Forschungen NF 1. Verlag der Ev.-Luth. Mission: Erlangen, 1996 and my comment in this connection in the "Mitarbeiterbrief der Vereinigten Evangelischen Mission" (VEM) 4/1998: 26.

⁸ Pebri and Christian Goweiler. "Christen und Muslime in Indonesien." *Märtyrer 2010*. VKW: Bonn, 2010. pp.209-212, here p. 209.

⁹ Thomas Schirrmacher, "Javanische Mystik." *Factum 10/1987*: 3-6.

the tolerant majority of the population is increasing. Extremism has little support in Indonesia, but it is having major effects.

The starting point of Islamization and the badgering of religious minorities is Saudi Wahhabism.¹⁰ Under the cloak of Islamic solidarity and brotherhood, Saudi Arabia invests enormous sums in Indonesia for the construction of mosques, the building of Islamic schools, and for activities of Da'wa organizations which propagate Islam. The Institute for the Study of Islam and Arabic (LIPIA), which was founded in Jakarta in 1980 and is supported by Saudi Arabia, has been very influential. Ja'far Umar Thalib (born 1961), the founder of the notorious 300 member terror group known as Laskar Jihad,¹¹ studied at LIPIA, together with other leaders of the armies of terror. (Additionally, he studied at the Islamic Mawdudi Institute in Lahore, Pakistan.)¹² The most prominent of the violence prone groups in Indonesia is the Front Pembela Islam (Islamic Defenders Front), or FPI. It is no coincidence that it was founded in 1998 by Muhammad Riziew Syihab, who was trained in Saudi Arabia.

In Aceh, non Muslims are not under the control of the sharia. In actuality, sharia police spare practically no one (after the models of Saudi Arabia and Iran).¹³ In a report dated December 1, 2010, Human Rights Watch collected examples of how the sharia police badger, threaten, and abuse Muslims as well as non Muslims.¹⁴

The Indonesian fatwa council, Majelis Ulama Indonesia (Indonesian Council of Ulema) or MUI, plays a disastrous role since its fatwas directed against religious minorities are actually not legally binding and yet are increasingly used by the government and cast into law. The current President, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, makes no secret of the fact that he supports the decisions of the MUI. "What also belongs to the new culture of intolerance is that the Council of Islamic Scholars of Indonesia declared in a fatwa (Islamic legal opinion) in 2005 that pluralism, secularism, and liberalism are not compatible with Islam. Furthermore, Muslims were forbidden from wishing Christians Merry Christmas or from receiving well wishes from Christians for the Islamic holiday of Idul Fitri – which is still common practice in Indonesia."¹⁵

One of the best German authorities on Indonesia has written: "Islamic fundamentalist parties are gaining increasing influence through shrewd tactics. Indeed the Islamic parties only received about one quarter of the votes (five years earlier it was approximately 37%!).

However, after the non Islamic parties were not at all prepared to form a coalition with the popular President Yudoyono, or only found themselves prepared to do so very late, he was quasi forced to form a coalition with the Islamic parties. Thus the Islamic parties

¹⁰ Noorhaidi Hasan, Professor at the Sunan Kalijaga Islamic University in Yogyakarta (Indonesia) is the best expert on the Islamist influence of Wahhabism in Indonesia; see the list of publications at <http://www.kitlv.nl/home/Projects?id=14> (March 15, 2012). Especially worthy of note are: Noorhaidi Hasan, "The Failure of the Wahhabi Campaign: Transnational Islam and the Salafi Madrasa in Post 9/11 Indonesia," *South East Asia Research* 18 (2010): 675-705; Noorhaidi Hasan, "The Drama of Jihad: The Emergence of Salafi Youth in Indonesia," pp. 49-62 in: Linda Herrera, Asef Bayat (eds.), *Being Young and Muslim: New Cultural Politics in the Global South and North*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010; Noorhaidi Hasan, "Islamist Party, Electoral Politics, and Da'wa Mobilization among Youth: The Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) in Indonesia," RSIS Working Paper 184, Singapore: Rajaratnam School of International Studies, 2009; Noorhaidi Hasan, "Saudi expansion, Wahhabi campaign and Arabised Islam in Indonesia," pp. 263-281 in: Madawi al Rasheed (ed.), *Kingdom without Borders, Saudi Political, Religious and Media*. London: Hurst, 2008.

¹¹ Noorhaidi Hasan. *Laskar Jihad: Islam, Militancy and the Quest for Identity in Post New Order Indonesia*. Leiden: ISIM, 2005.

¹² Noorhaidi Hasan, "Transnational Islam in Indonesia," op. cit. pp. 124. Comp. Frauke Katrin Kandale, *Der Islam in Indonesien nach 1998 am Beispiel der Partai Keadilan Sejahtera*, Berlin: Regiospectra, 2008.

¹³ Kristina Großmann et al., "Aceh nach Konflikt und Tsunami," *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 62 (2012) 11-12: 37-43.

¹⁴ <http://www.hrw.org/news/2010/11/29/indonesia-local-sharia-laws-violate-rights-aceh>, the detailed report "Policing Morality: Abuses in the Application of Sharia in Aceh, Indonesia," at <http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/indonesia1210WebVersionToPost.pdf> (15.3.2012).

¹⁵ Pebri and Christian Goweiler, "Christen und Muslime in Indonesien," *Märtyrer* 2010. VKW: Bonn, 2010. pp. 209-212, here p. 210.

finally received eleven of the 27 available ministerial posts. Among them were, for example, the Justice Minister Patrialis Akbar, who sees no contradiction between the introduction of Islamic sharia law and the Constitution of Indonesia. But even the Interior Minister, Gamawan Fauzi, who has no party affiliation, issued many laws based upon Islam (e.g., a mandatory head scarf for all female civil servants and students, regardless of religion) in his earlier position as Governor of West Sumatra.¹⁶

The Wahhabization is also expressed in the increasingly Arab oriented viewpoint towards understanding the sharia on the part of many citizens. "For a few years observers have noticed that the relationships between the Muslim Sunnite mainstream and adherents of religious minorities as well as non orthodox Muslims has deteriorated. The opinion research institute LSI (Lembaga Survei Indonesia) has, for example, shown in a study in 2007 that 33% of those asked support measures which typically count as the goals of Islamist organizations. Thus 43% were for stoning in the case of adultery, 25% for the mandatory wearing of a head scarf, 34% for the cutting off of the hand for theft, 39% for a prohibition on interest, and 22% were of the opinion that a woman should not be allowed to hold the office of president. The 2010 Muslim Youth Survey, which was conducted by the LSI in cooperation with the Goethe Institute and the Friedrich Naumann Foundation, came to quite comparable results."¹⁷

Religion is a Duty in Indonesia: Pancasila

Since the time of independence, monotheism has been one of the five pillars of the state ideology anchored in the Constitution of Indonesia as the Pancasila. It was adopted into democracy unchanged from the time of the dictators.¹⁸ Among the monotheistic religions fulfilling the requirement, there are six recognized religions, whereby Christianity in its Catholic and its Protestant forms are counted separately.

Whoever does not belong to one of the six religions, for instance animists (if they do not have themselves registered in another religion) or the Baha'i, has difficulties with the authorities when it comes to the registration of births or marriage. That religion in Indonesia is mandatory, naturally and automatically leads to problems for the few atheists in the country. Government employee Alexander Aan (31) was beaten up by a mob on January 24, 2012 and arrested by the police because he expressed his lack of faith in God on Facebook through critical questions, above all 'How can God allow that?' The police chief invoked the scholarly council known as the 'Indonesian Council of Ulema' with respect to his course of action.

The Ahmadiyya Movement

In 2005 and 2007 the MUI issued fierce fatwas against the approximate 300,000 Ahmadiyyas living in the country and belonging to an Islamic 'sect,' which was developed out of Islam by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad in 1889. It recognizes prophets after Mohammed and for that reason majority Islam regards it as 'apostasy.' In 2008 the government, instead of moving against the statement by the MUI, issued a joint decree from a number of ministries freezing the activities of Ahmadiyyas. Ahmadiyyas are not permitted to proselytize Indonesians, an activity which counts as blasphemy and is punishable with up to 5 years of imprisonment. However, Ahmadiyyas may continue to hold their worship services.

Nevertheless, it was not surprising that individual government agencies and many Islamist institutions called for a complete prohibition. And it is also not surprising that in

¹⁶ Pebri and Christian Goweiler, "Christen und Muslime in Indonesien," *Märtyrer* 2010. VKW: Bonn, 2010. pp. 209-212, here p. 210.

¹⁷ Andreas Ufen, "Politischer Islam in Indonesien seit 1998," in *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 62 (2012) 11-12:30-36, p. 31.

¹⁸ Thomas Schirrmacher, "Religion ist Pflicht in Indonesien," *Idea* 80/81/October 8, 1981/pp. II-III; *Idea Spektrum* Nr.56-57/October 21, 1981: 25.

certain cases the police and the army did not intervene or did so much too late when mobs beat up or murdered Ahmadiyyas or destroyed their places of worship. Since 2006, but above all since 2009, Ahmadiyyas have been continually driven from their destroyed homes and live in refugee camps. A worldwide sensation was caused in February 2011 in the case of the public murders of three Ahmadiyyas in front of their homes by a large mob.

Some 30 police stood there and did nothing as the murders occurred. The 12 murderers received a symbolic punishment of between three and six months.

As in Pakistan, where the apostasy laws were at first directed against Ahmadiyyas and only later employed against Christians, the religiously legitimized state force against Ahmadiyyas also appears to be having a negative impact on the tolerance exhibited toward Christians. Thus the murder of the three Ahmadiyyas on February 6, 2011 in the province of Central Java and the burning down of three churches in the province of West Java on February 8, 2011 are arguably connected with each other.

The most significant Cases of Christian Persecution since 1990

The main island of Sulawesi (earlier called Celebes) stretches over 1300 kilometers. Of the 16.8 million inhabitants, 20% are Christians, and about 90% of them are Protestants. They belong to the best educated and wealthiest inhabitants of Indonesia. The Islamist Jihad armies have turned against long established Christians there, where they have been most numerous. In the 1990s and so far after 2000 there have been over 1,000 Christians (and a significantly lower number of Muslims) who have died. It was overwhelmingly Christians who were among the 500,000 directly affected by the events on the Maluku and Central Sulawesi. Many of them have not returned to the life they had before the wave of violence.

The percentage of Christians among the 2.2 million inhabitants spread over the 1,000 islands comprising the two Maluku provinces amounts to 29.5%, and Protestants account for 90% of them. The Maluku church, which has existed since 1605, is the oldest Protestant church in Asia. The brutal violence in 1999 and 2000 changed the provinces forever. A maze of ethnic and economic questions, efforts to secede, and political demands exploded as thousands of heavily armed Islamist fighters fell upon the island and Christians started to defend themselves. 400 churches and mosques were destroyed. The majority of Christians fled the islands of Ambon, Seram, Ternate, Tidore, and parts of Halmahera. Over 20,000 died, and 500,000 became refugees.

After the serious unrest in Ambon from 1999 to 2002, peace held for almost a decade. In September 2011, the accidental death of a taxi driver, which was mistakenly reported in the social media as a case of torture and murder by Christians, led to unrest in which 100 houses were destroyed by fire, leaving 4,000 homeless. Fortunately, the central government immediately sent in the commander in chief, the head of the police, and the security minister and sealed off the island to Mujahedin wishing to enter. 28 potential terrorists were arrested with some 105 weapons. Taking a serious approach to this situation led to a real though fragile calm, a good example that the state, when called upon and when it so wishes, can bring about good results.¹⁹ Additionally, a large role is played by an unbelievably successful civil law institution, 'peace provocateurs.' These are dozens of Christians and Muslims, who together in conversations, restaurants, and the social media rejected false rumours and made it clear that in the case of a renewed civil war, everyone would be a loser.

The percentage of Christians on Irian Jaya is 68%. Irian Jaya is the western part of Papua and has 2.5 million inhabitants. Catholics account for one quarter of the Christians, who are spread out among 238 Melanesian people groups with 274 languages. From among them, only the Ekagi have more than 100,000 adherents. Here

¹⁹ International Crisis Group, "Indonesia: Trouble Again in Ambon," Update Brief, Asia Briefing No. 128, Jakarta & Brüssel, October 4, 2011, [http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/southeast-asia/indonesia/B128indonesia trouble again in ambon.aspx](http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/southeast-asia/indonesia/B128indonesia%20trouble%20again%20in%20ambon.aspx) (15.03.2012).

the discrimination against Christians takes on completely different features. On the one hand, Christians are predominantly members of the many tribes in the forests and as such are not even seen as humans by Javanese settlers. They are harassed and their property is taken from them, and they are treated brutally by the army. On the other hand, at the time of the dictators the government began a large program of forced resettlement which continues today (*transmigrasi*), bringing 5,000 Javanese to Papua every week, of whom large numbers are Muslims who fill government positions.

Compilation of Attacks against Christians and other Minorities in 2010/2011

Organizations as various as the Society for Threatened Peoples, the Islamic Wahid Institute, the Indonesian human rights organization Setara Institute for Democracy and Peace, and the papal council on dialog, have all determined that there is an increase in violent actions against Christians. The *Jakarta Globe* also called the year 2011 "A Bad Year for Religious Rights."²⁰

The best reporting on our topic stems from Muslim and academic research institutes in the country and not from the churches or religions affected.²¹ In addition to that, there are reports by international human rights organizations full of depictions of individual cases.²²

The Wahid Institute, an Islamic organization which promotes tolerance,²³ counted 198 severe attacks against religious minorities in 2010 and 276 in 2011. Furthermore, the institute registered 36 laws or restrictions at a local or provincial level which allegedly place non Islamic practices under penalty.

The Setara Institute for Democracy and Peace in Jakarta and the International Institute for Religious Freedom investigated how many of the 198 violent attacks against religious freedom in 2010 involved government entities. The police were involved in 56 of them, while in 19 cases, district chiefs, and in 17, subdistrict chiefs were involved.²⁴

The US Department of State counted 50 significant violent attacks against Ahmadiyyas and 75 such attacks against Christians in 2010.²⁵ The most frequent activity inimical to Christians in Indonesia is the destruction of churches or their closing, together involving 43 churches in 2011. An investigation by the

International Institute for Religious Freedom has looked at the development of average yearly destruction of churches over the decades and has revealed an unambiguous development up to the year 2000; since that time the numbers have leveled off at some 50 per year:²⁶ 194-54, no churches; 1955-64, 0.2 churches; 1965-74, 5 churches; 1975-84, 9 churches; 1985-94, 13 churches; 1995-2000, 84 churches (all per year).

²⁰ Indonesia: A Bad Year for Religious Rights, "The Jakarta Globe, December 26, 2011, <http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/news/indonesiaabadyearforreligiousrights/486729> (15.03. 2012).

²¹ Most important are: the monthly report of the Islamic Wahid Institute: <http://www.wahidinstitute.org/Documents>; the corresponding annual report, most recently for 2010: http://www.wahidinstitute.org/Documents/Detail/?id=168/hl=en/Executive_Summary_Report_On_Religious_Freedom_And_Tolerance_2010_WI; the annual report of the Setara Institute for Democracy and Peace 2010 is only available in Indonesian; the last version translated into English is the 2008 annual report, <http://www.setarainstitute.org/>.

²² For instance the 2010 blasphemy report for Indonesia: http://expression.freedomhouse.org/reports/blasphemy_report/indonesia; confirmed by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees at <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,,FREEHOU,,IDN,,4d5a700a2d,0.html> (15.03. 2012).

²³ English: www.wahidinstitute.org/?lang=en.

²⁴ Fernando Perez, "Why Religious Violence has Grown in Indonesia," February 18, 2011. <http://www.iirf.eu/>, then click "Indonesia" under countries.

²⁵ http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2010_5/168356.htm, prior years at <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/>; comp. also the recommendations of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom at <http://www.uscirf.gov/component/tag/indonesia.html> (15.03.2012).

²⁶ Vishal Arora, "Why Is Islamic Extremism Growing in Indonesia?" (12.10.2011) www.iirf.eu, then click "Indonesia" under countries.

Additionally, it is not only that churches are destroyed. Rather, they are obstructed from the onset. According to an inter ministerial restriction dating from 2006, a congregation needs 90 members for the construction of a church, 60 signatures from non Christians who live in the neighbourhood, and a letter of recommendation from the local Interfaith Communication Forum (FKUB). The same thing applies to mosques. However, mosques receive the letter of recommendation automatically, and in practice mosques spring up here and there, with even the wildest construction tolerated. In most locations, however, the FKUB – almost always chaired by a Muslim – almost never issues a recommendation with the justification that the building of a church could lead to unrest.

Finally, the use of existing churches is prohibited. A congregation of the longstanding Gereja Kristen Indonesia (GKI) in Bogor, the province of West Java, experienced what Batak churches have mentioned in the past. Although the Supreme Court allowed the congregation on December 9, 2010 to again use their closed church, the province's governor decided contrary to law against it and did not follow the ruling. Subsequent to that, the congregation wanted to celebrate a worship service in front of the building. The governor likewise prohibited it and sought to prevent it on October 9, 2011 by means of police force.

The congregation filed a complaint about the police violence and charged the police with attacking them. The outcome is still pending. The case also clearly shows that the central government lacks determination or assertiveness to enforce the law fairly.

Outlook

On the one hand, the main cause of the increase in the persecution of Christians as well as the overall restrictions on religious freedom is found in the fundamentalist movements.

On the other hand, there is an increasing religious nationalism that equates nationalism with affiliation with a majority religion.²⁷ In Indonesia, an inseparable mixture of both movements presents itself as the main problem behind the declining tolerance with respect to religious minorities.²⁸

The main problem is that most often the central government and the governors combat violence on the part of private Muslim extremists against religious minorities much too late and without resolve. Furthermore, they suspend criminal prosecution or protract the legal process against extremists. The governors frequently act on their own authority and worsen the line of approach taken by the federal government.

In Indonesia, the fight regarding the orientation of the state most essentially rages around conduct towards religious minorities and has surely not been lost.²⁹ This is demonstrated by the fact that Muslim leaders and human rights organizations are calling upon the president at the top of their voices to dismiss the Religious Affairs Minister Suryadharma Ali. They are doing so despite the fact that as the chairman of the co governing Muslim United Development Party (PPP) he appears to be untouchable. He has especially made himself conspicuous through his negative statements about Shiites and Ahmadiyyas.³⁰

Also, there is a shining example of what the state can do in Indonesia. Sinyo Harry Sarundajang was elected as governor of North Sulawesi in 2005 and 2010. He was sent by the central government in 2004 to be the emergency acting governor in South Sulawesi and the province of Maluka, which was in unrest. The terrorist army of Laskar

²⁷ Thomas Schirmacher, "Aktuelle Entwicklungen der Christenverfolgung weltweit," pp. 59-82 in Kuno Kallnbach, Helmut Matthies (eds.), *Bedrängt, verfolgt, getötet*, Gießen: Brunnen, 2012.

²⁸ Comp. Jacques Bertrand, *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict in Indonesia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

²⁹ Andreas Ufen, "Politischer Islam in Indonesien seit 1998" in *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 62 (2012) 11-12:30-36, p. 31, see the sources for the investigations there:

http://www.bpb.de/publikationen/EOLHDR,0,Politischer_Islam_in_Indonesien_seit_1998.html (March 15, 2012).

³⁰ "Controversial Religious Affairs Minister Must Go," *The Jakarta Post* dated January 28, 2012, <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2012/01/28/controversialreligiousaffairsministermustgo.html> (15.03.2012).

Jihad had killed hundreds of Christians in the province of Maluku. Between the tendencies towards secession on the part of Christians and the brutal violence of the Wahhabi insurgents, life had become impossible. Sarundajang, himself a Christian, without bodyguards, personally sought out the commander of the insurgents, Ja'far Umar Thalib, and negotiated the withdrawal of the jihad army and the suspension of secession plans on the part of Christians.

The result was that a governor was again able to be elected in 2005. Thalib witnessed to the fact that it was due to the Christian politician that peace was achieved and that the killing was ended.³¹

The resolution from the European Parliament in 2011 regarding the persecution of religious minorities in Indonesia³² very well expressed the fact that the situation, in face of the long history of tolerance, has become oppressive. However, it also expressed the fact that all the preconditions are present for establishing complete religious freedom in Indonesia.

Widespread religious violence in Indonesia

Agencia Fides (18.01.2014) - Intolerance and violence on religious basis are increasingly common in the Indonesian territory: in 2013 there were 222 incidents of violence that took place in 20 provinces, 7 more compared to the 13 affected provinces in 2012. This was stated in a new Report by "Setara Institute", a study center based in Jakarta, which conducts research and awareness campaigns for democracy, human rights, religious freedom. In the new Report sent to Fides Agency, titled "Diversity is possible", the Institute notes that cases of religiously motivated violence are higher at a regional level.

The Institute notes that it is urgent to eliminate the causes of religious violence, pointing out that in the common mentality of the Indonesian people, citizens "accept and appreciate cultural, ethnic and religious diversity", that characterizes the nation. According to the Institute, "the increased use of violence is due to the slow and inadequate response of the government" that does not take serious measures to counter the Islamic fundamentalist groups.

As for the perpetrators of such violence, the well-known radical Muslim group "Islamic Defenders Front" (FPI) has been responsible for 16 accidents, while 14 violations have been attributed to the young people affiliated to the Indonesian "Ulema Council". Violence, the Report notes, has grown especially against Shite Muslims, but also against other minorities, such as Christians. In 2013 also the "Wahid Institute", another well-known research center, said that "religious intolerance remains a serious problem in Indonesia".

Faced with this situation, Indonesian civil society tries to launch positive messages: on January 5 over 130 thousand people, mostly teachers, educators, students, members of different religious communities, marched through the streets of the capital Jakarta, to reiterate the desire for religious tolerance and respect for human rights. The march celebrated the first national "Day for Religious Harmony", organized by the Federal Ministry of Religious Affairs. The special Day was celebrated with marches or cultural initiatives in 17 provinces of the archipelago.

³¹ All sources are in Indonesian except for the book by H.M. Attamimy. Sinyo Harry Sarundajang, pp. 82. Jakarta/Manado: o. V., 2010. There is a report by Thalib therein, pp. 7-19.

³² "European Parliament Resolution of 7 July 2011 on Indonesia, including Attacks on Minorities," <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P7TA20110341+0+DOC+XML+V0/DE>.

Indonesia is the most populous Muslim country in the world, with 80% of Muslims out of more than 240 million inhabitants. Christians are about 11% . (PA) (Agenzia Fides 18/01/2014)
