



U.S. DEPARTMENT of STATE

Indonesia

International Religious Freedom Report 2005

Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor

The Constitution provides for "all persons the right to worship according to his or her own religion or belief" and states that "the nation is based upon belief in one supreme God." 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.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. Most of the population enjoyed a high degree of religious freedom. However, because the Government recognizes only five major religions, persons of non-recognized faiths frequently experienced official discrimination, often in the context of civil registration of marriages and births or the issuance of identity cards.

Sporadic incidents of possible inter-religious violence continued in Central Sulawesi and the Moluccas, but at a significantly lower rate than during the previous reporting period.

Terrorists and members of religious extremist groups carried out attacks during the year, including the September 2004 bombing in front of the Australian Embassy in Jakarta that killed 12 persons and injured more than 100.

During the period covered by this report, Aceh Province remained the only province within the country specifically authorized to implement Islamic law, or Shari'a. Some smaller political parties remained sympathetic to the idea of adopting Shari'a on a nationwide basis, but this proposal generally remained outside mainstream political discourse, and the country's biggest Muslim social organizations opposed the idea.

Some notable advances in inter-religious tolerance and cooperation occurred during the period covered by this report. Government officials continued to work together with Muslim and Christian community leaders to diffuse tensions in conflict areas, particularly in Central Sulawesi and the Moluccas.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights.

Section I. Religious Demography

An archipelago of more than 17,000 islands, the country covers an area of approximately 1.8 million square miles (approximately 0.7 million square miles landmass) and has a population of approximately 240 million. More than half of the population resides on the island of Java.

The Indonesian Central Statistic Bureau (BPS) conducts a census every 10 years. The latest data available, from 2000, drew on 201,241,999 survey responses; the BPS estimated that the census missed 4.6 million persons. According to the BPS report, 88.2 percent of the population label themselves Muslim, 5.9 percent Protestant, 3.1 percent Catholic, 1.8 percent Hindu, 0.8 percent Buddhist, and 0.2 percent "other," including traditional indigenous religions, other Christian groups, and Judaism. The country's religious composition remains a politically charged issue, and some Christians, Hindus, and members of other minority faiths argue that the census undercounted non-Muslims.

Most Muslims in the country are Sunni, although some follow other branches of Islam, including Shi'a. According to Shi'a headquarters in Jakarta, there are between 1 and 3 million Shi'a practitioners nationwide. In general, the mainstream Muslim community belongs to two orientations: "modernists," who closely adhere to scriptural orthodox theology while embracing modern learning and modern concepts; and predominantly Javanese "traditionalists," who are often followers of charismatic religious scholars and organized around Islamic boarding schools. The leading "modernist" social organization, Muhammadiyah, claims approximately 30 million followers while the largest "traditionalist" social organization claims 40 million.

A number of smaller Islamic organizations cover a broad range of Islamic doctrinal orientations. At one end of the ideological spectrum lies the Islam Liberal Network, which promotes a less literal interpretation of Islamic doctrine. At the other end are groups such as Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia (HTI), which advocates a pan-Islamic caliphate, and the Indonesian Mujahidin Council (MMI), which advocates implementation of

visited 12/18/2008

Shari'a as a precursor to an Islamic state. Countless other small organizations fall between these poles.

Separate from the country's dominant Sunni Islam population, a small minority of people subscribes to the Ahmadiyah interpretation of Islam. This group maintains 242 branches throughout the country. In 1980, the Indonesian Council of Ulama (MUI) issued a "fatwa" (a legal opinion or decree issued by an Islamic religious leader) declaring that Ahmadiyah is not a legitimate form of Islam.

There are also small numbers of other messianic Islamic groups, including the Malaysian-affiliated Darul Arqam, the syncretist Indonesian Jamaah Salamulla group (also called the Salamulla Congregation), and the Indonesian Islamic Propagation Institute (LDII).

Many of the country's Christians reside in the eastern part of the country. Many urban ethnic Chinese citizens adhere to Christian faiths or combine Christianity with Buddhism or Confucianism. Smaller Christian groups include the Jehovah's Witnesses.

Internal migration has altered the demographic makeup of the country over the past 3 decades. It has increased the percentage of Muslims in the predominantly Christian eastern parts of the country. Although government-sponsored transmigration from heavily populated Java and Madura to less populated areas contributed to the increase in the Muslim population in the resettlement areas, no evidence suggests that the Government intended to create a Muslim majority in Christian areas, and most Muslim migration seemed spontaneous. The economic and political consequences of the migration policy contributed to religious conflicts in Maluku and Central Sulawesi and to a lesser extent in Papua.

The Hindu association Parishada Hindu Dharma Indonesia (PHDI) estimates that 18 million Hindus live in the country, a figure that far exceeds the government estimate of 3.6 million. Hindus account for almost 90 percent of the population in Bali. Balinese Hinduism has developed various local characteristics that distinguish it from Hinduism as practiced on the Indian subcontinent. Hindu minorities (called "Keharingan") also reside in Central and East Kalimantan, the city of Medan (North Sumatra), South and Central Sulawesi, and Lombok (West Nusa Tenggara). Some of these Hindus left Bali as part of the Government's transmigration program. Hindu groups such as Hare Krishna and followers of the Indian spiritual leader Sai Baba also exist, although in small numbers.

Some indigenous faiths, including the "Naurus" on Seram Island in Maluku Province, incorporate Hindu beliefs. The Naurus combine Hindu and animist beliefs, and many also have adopted some Protestant principles. The Tamil community in Medan represents another important concentration of Hindus. North Sumatra has a Sikh population of more than 10,000, most residing in Pematang Siantar or Medan. The population is part of the North Sumatra Punjabi community, which is otherwise primarily Hindu. There are seven Sikh gurdwaras (Sikh schools) in North Sumatra. The Government registers Sikhs as "Hindus," a practice many Sikhs object to but have been unable to change.

Among the Buddhists, an estimated 60 percent practice the Mahayana school. Theravada followers account for another 30 percent, with the remaining 10 percent belonging to the Tantrayana, Tridharma, Kasogatan, Nichiren, and Maitreya schools. According to the Young Generation of Indonesian Buddhists (GMBI), most adherents live in Java, Bali, Lampung, West Kalimantan, the Riau islands, and Jakarta. Ethnic Chinese make up an estimated 60 percent of the country's Buddhists. Two major Buddhist social organizations exist, the Indonesian Great Sangha Conference (KASI) and the Indonesian Buddhist Council (WALUBI), and many adherents have affiliated themselves with one or the other.

The number of adherents of Confucianism remains unclear, because the national census no longer enables respondents to identify themselves as Confucian. The percentage of practicing Confucians may well have increased after the Government lifted restrictions related to the faith in 2000. This includes the right to celebrate publicly the Chinese New Year. The Supreme Council for Confucian Religion in Indonesia (MATAKIN) estimates that ethnic Chinese make up 95 percent of Confucians with the balance mostly indigenous Javanese. Many Confucians also practice Buddhism and Christianity. MATAKIN has urged the Government to reinsert the Confucian category into the census.

Sizeable populations in Java, Kalimantan, and Papua practice animism and other types of traditional belief systems termed "Aliran Kepercayaan." Many of those who practice Kepercayaan describe it as more of a meditation-based spiritual path than a religion. Some animists combine their beliefs with one of the government-recognized religions.

Descendants of Iraqi Jews who came to the country more than a century ago to trade spices still live and practice in Surabaya. They have a small synagogue, which is currently inactive. A small Jewish community also exists in Jakarta.

The Baha'i community reported that it had thousands of members in the country, but no reliable figure exists.

Falun Gong representatives claim the group, which considers itself a spiritual organization instead of a religion, has 2,000 to 3,000 followers in the country, nearly half of whom live in Yogyakarta and Bali.

No data exists on the religious affiliations of foreign nationals and immigrants.

visited 12/18/2008

At least 350 foreign missionaries, primarily Christian, operate in the country. Many work in Papua, Kalimantan, and other areas with large numbers of animists.

Section II: Status of Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides "all persons the right to worship according to their own religion or belief" and states that "the nation is based upon belief in one supreme God." The Government generally respects religious freedom; however, some restrictions exist on certain types of religious activity and on unrecognized religions.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs extends official status to five faiths: Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism, and Hinduism. Religious organizations other than the five recognized faiths can register with the Government, but only with the Ministry for Culture and Tourism and only as social organizations. This restricts certain religious activities. Unregistered religious groups cannot rent venues to hold services and must find alternative means to practice their faiths.

The Government permits the practice of the indigenous belief system of Kepercayaan, but as a cultural manifestation, not a religion. Followers of "Aliran Kepercayaan" must register with the Ministry of Education's Department of Education. Some religious minorities whose activities the Government had banned in the past, such as those of the Rosicrucians, may now operate openly.

Despite its overwhelming Muslim majority, the country is not an Islamic state. Over the past 50 years, many Islamic groups sporadically have sought to establish an Islamic state, but the country's mainstream Muslim community has rejected the idea. Proponents of an Islamic state argued unsuccessfully in 1945 and throughout the parliamentary democracy period of the 1950s for the inclusion of language (the "Jakarta Charter") in the Constitution's preamble making it obligatory for Muslims to follow Shari'a. During the Suharto regime, the Government prohibited all advocacy of an Islamic state. However, with the loosening of restrictions on freedom of speech and religion that followed the fall of Suharto in 1998, proponents of the "Jakarta Charter" resumed advocacy efforts. Although these efforts were rejected by the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR), a body that has the power to change the Constitution, the MPR approved changes to the Constitution that mandated that the Government increase "faith and piety" in education. This decision, seen as a compromise to satisfy Islamist parties, set the scene for an education bill signed into law in 2003 that restricted religious freedom by forcing elementary and secondary school students to undergo religious instruction, sometimes in a religion other than their own. Even before the passage of the bill, students had to choose religious instruction from five types of classes, representing only Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism, and Hinduism.

The Shari'a issue generated some debate and concern during the period covered by this report. However, in most areas, Islamization campaigns that began in 2002 seemed to lose momentum and the Shari'a issue received much less attention at the national level. Regencies that passed local Shari'a ordinances in previous periods took few if any new steps to implement the ordinances. Aceh remained the only province within the country in which the central Government specifically authorized Shari'a. Bulukumba Regency in South Sulawesi launched a bylaw (Perda) in 2003 implementing civil Islamic law in that regency for all Muslims; the regulation does not apply to non-Muslims, nor is it enforced in the Tanjung Bira Beach area, frequented by international tourists. The regulation requires Muslims to wear Islamic dress, have the ability to read the Qur'an, and implement strict anti-alcohol and narcotic measures. The Madura regency of Pamekasan established a local Shari'a implementation committee in 2003 calling for the wearing of Muslim attire by Muslim civil servants and the cessation of public and work activities during the call to prayer.

In 2003, Presidential Decree 11/2003 formally established Shari'a courts in Aceh by renaming the existing religious courts and retaining their infrastructure, jurisdiction, and staff. The judges of these new Shari'a courts stated that they would focus on cases related to the "performance of Islamic duties in daily life," the subject of the second local regulation approved by the legislature. Sofyan Saleh, head of the Islamic Law Supreme Court, reported that since the tsunami in December 2004, Aceh's Shari'a courts handled approximately 6,000 cases, two-thirds of which dealt with inheritance or other property related matters.

Religious leaders responsible for drafting and implementing the Shari'a regulations stated that they had no plans to apply criminal sanctions for violations of Shari'a. Islamic law in Aceh, they said, would not provide for strict enforcement of "fiqih" or "hudud," but rather would codify traditional Acehnese Islamic practice and values such as discipline, honesty, and proper behavior. They claimed enforcement would not depend on the police but rather on public education and societal consensus. However, on June 24, 2005, Civil Shari'a police publicly caned 15 men convicted of gambling in its first implementation of corporal punishment in Aceh. A few thousand spectators watched as police administered the canings. Those who were caned fought the ruling, arguing that, because government officials never publicized the provincial decree on caning, the punishment was illegitimate. They also argued that the punishment was degrading and that the Aceh court system punished them twice by making them serve both the common law sentence and undergo the caning.

Provincial and district governments established Shari'a bureaus to handle public education about the new system, and local Islamic leaders, especially in North Aceh and Pidie, called for greater government promotion of Shari'a as a way to address mounting social ills. Some human rights and women's rights activists complained that implementation of Shari'a focused on superficial issues, such as proper Islamic dress, while ignoring deep-seated moral and social problems, such as corruption.

visited 12/18/2008

Other efforts to educate the public about Shari'a included a high-profile public education campaign in the weeks leading up to the fasting month of Ramadan (October 2004), in which police handed out Islamic head coverings to women and encouraged shopkeepers to close during midday prayers. The program lasted only a few weeks. There was no evidence that such rules applied to non-Muslims. Since early 2004, Banda Aceh's main Baiturrahman mosque has continued to operate a "Mosque Brigade" consisting of young men in uniform who patrolled the grounds before and after prayer times to enforce proper dress codes and discourage improper behavior. At times, the police detained people for "public education" if caught wearing improper Islamic dress or dating, but those detained were not arrested or charged with crimes.

The Government requires official religions to comply with Ministry of Religious Affairs and other ministerial directives, such as the Regulation on Building Houses of Worship (1969), the Guidelines for the Propagation of Religion (1978), Overseas Aid to Religious Institutions in Indonesia (1978), and Proselytizing Guidelines (1978).

Of the more than 200 political parties in the country, 24 passed the legal threshold for participation in the 2004 national elections. Of these, seven have direct or partial affiliation with Islam. Five of these are the United Development Party (PPP), the Star and Crescent Party (PBB), the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS), the Star of Reform Party (PBR), and the United Nahdlatul Community Party (PPNUI). Former leaders of the Muhammadiyah and the NU led nationalist parties, the National Mandate Party (PAN) and the National Awakening Party (PKB) respectively, attempted to draw on grassroots support from their former Islamic social organizations. Of the 24 parties that participated in the 2004 legislative election, only the Prosperous Peace Party (PDS) had an openly Christian orientation. No party representing a religion other than Islam or Christianity competed in the 2004 legislative election. In this election, Islamic parties received approximately 21 percent of the vote, nationalist parties associated with Islamic social organizations earned 18 percent, and the Christian PDS received less than 2 percent of the vote.

The armed forces provide religious facilities and programs at all major housing complexes for servicemen and servicewomen who practice one of the five officially recognized religions. Organized services and prayer meetings are available for members of each recognized religion. Although every military housing complex must provide a mosque, a Catholic church, a Protestant church, and worship centers or temples for Buddhists and Hindus, smaller compounds rarely offer facilities for all five religions.

Religious groups and social organizations must obtain permits to hold religious concerts or other public events. Permits are usually granted in an unbiased manner unless a concern exists that the activity could anger members of another faith in the area.

Religious speeches can take place if delivered to coreligionists and not intended to convert persons of other faiths. However, televised religious programming remains unrestricted, and viewers can watch religious programs offered by any of the recognized faiths. Islamic television preacher Abdullah Gymnastiar claims 80 million viewers. In addition to Muslim programs, ranging from religious instruction to talk shows on family issues, many Christian programs are offered, including ones featuring televangelists as well as programs by and for Buddhists and Hindus.

Some Muslim, Christian, Hindu, and Buddhist holy days are national holidays. Muslim holy days celebrated include the Ascension of the Prophet, Idul Fitr, Idul Adha, the Muslim New Year, and the Prophet's Birthday. National Christian holy days are Christmas, Good Friday, and the Ascension of Christ. Three other national holidays are the Hindu holiday Nyepi, the Buddhist holiday Waisak, and Chinese New Year, celebrated by Confucians and other Chinese. In Bali, all Hindu holy days are regional holidays, and public servants and others did not work on Saraswati Day, Galungan, and Kuningan.

The Government has a monopoly on organizing the Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca. In December 2004, the Department of Religious Affairs reduced the number of officials allowed to perform the Hajj because their presence was considered a distraction for Mecca officials that resulted in neglect for non-official pilgrims. The decision freed up enough money to feed pilgrims twice a day during their stay in Medina.

During the period covered by this report, a number of government officials and prominent religious and political leaders interacted with interfaith groups, including the Society for Inter-religious Dialog (MADIA), the Indonesian Anti-Discrimination Movement (GANDI), the Indonesian Conference on Religion and Peace (ICRP), the Indonesian Committee on Religion and Peace (also ICRP), the Institute for Interfaith Dialog (Interfidei), and National People's Solidarity (Solidaritas Nusa Bangsa).

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

During the period covered by this report, certain policies, laws, and official actions restricted religious freedom, and the police and military occasionally tolerated discrimination against and abuse of religious groups by private actors.

The first tenet of the country's national ideology, Pancasila, declares belief in one supreme God. Atheism is not recognized, but there were no reports of the repression of atheists.

The Government continued to restrict the construction and expansion of houses of worship. It also maintained a ban on the use of private homes for worship unless the local community approved and a regional office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs provided a license. National

visited 12/18/2008

law requires that a community agree on the construction of any new house of worship before it is built. Some Protestants complained about the difficulty of obtaining community approval and alleged that in some areas, even when the Muslim community approved a new church, outside activists presented a long list of signatures opposed to the project. In the North Sumatra community of Perbangunan, in Deli Serdang Regency, a Lutheran group bought land in 2003 for a new church, but Islamic militants from outside the area destroyed the partially built church. At the end of the period covered by this report, the congregation had not rebuilt the church.

Many members of minority faiths complained that the Government made it harder for them than for Muslims to build a house of worship. Christian groups complained that the Government closed at least three Jakarta churches unfairly during the period covered by this report. On October 3, 2004, a local Muslim community group, the Karang Tengah Islam Community Foundation (KTICF), with help from members of the Islam Defenders Front (FPI), erected a 2-meter high and 5-meter wide wall that blocked access to Sang Timur Catholic School. The predominantly Muslim local community objected to the school's operation because a Catholic parish routinely held religious ceremonies in the school gymnasium in violation of its operating permit. Following protest against the wall and extensive national publicity, local government workers knocked it down on October 25, 2004, just hours before the arrival of former Indonesian President and Islamic leader Abdurrahman Wahid. Wahid had called for the wall's removal and sought to mediate an end to the dispute.

Muslims routinely reported difficulties in establishing mosques in Muslim-minority areas of Papua, North Sulawesi, and elsewhere.

The civil registration system continued to restrict religious freedom of persons who did not belong to the five officially recognized faiths. Many animists, Baha'is, Confucians, and members of other minority faiths found it impossible to register their marriages or children's births because the Government did not recognize their religion. For example, the National Human Rights Commission (Komnas-HAM) investigated cases in Batam where the registration office refused to register the marriages of Confucian couples. Neither the registration office nor the Mayor has provided Komnas-Ham with an explanation for the refusals. Couples prevented from registering their marriage or the birth of their child in accordance with their faiths must either convert to one of the five recognized faiths or misrepresent themselves as belonging to one of the five. Those who choose not to register their marriages or births risk future difficulties. For example, many children without a birth certificate cannot enroll in school or may not qualify for scholarships. Individuals without birth certificates will not qualify for government jobs.

The Government requires all adult citizens to carry a National Identity Card (KTP), which identifies, among other things, the holder's religion. Members of faiths not recognized by the Government generally cannot obtain KTPs unless they incorrectly identify themselves as a member of a recognized religion. During the period covered by this report, some Civil Registry officials rejected applications submitted by members of unrecognized faiths, while others accepted applications but issued KTPs that inaccurately reflected the applicants' religion. Some animists ended up receiving KTPs that list their religion as Islam. Some Confucians ended up with Buddhist KTPs. Even some Protestants and Catholics ended up receiving KTPs listing them as Muslims. It appears that Civil Registry staff used Islam as the "default" category for many members of unrecognized faiths. Some citizens without a KTP had difficulty finding work. Several nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and religious advocacy groups urged the Government to delete the religion category from KTPs.

Men and women of different religions faced serious obstacles to marrying and officially registering their marriages. Such couples had great difficulty finding a religious official willing to perform an interfaith marriage ceremony, and a religious ceremony is required before a marriage can be registered. As a result, some persons converted, sometimes superficially, in order to marry. Others traveled overseas, where they wed and then registered the marriage at an Indonesian Embassy. In addition, despite being among the officially recognized faiths, Hindus stated that they frequently had to travel long distances to have their marriages registered, because in many rural areas the local government could not or would not perform the registration.

On April 23, 2005, during a visit by Chinese President Hu Jintao to the country, followers of Falun Dafa, a group also known as Falun Gong, peacefully demonstrated in front of the Chinese Embassy. The police arrested 12 members of the Falun Dafa. On April 28, 2005, the courts sentenced all 12 to 2 months in jail and 6 months probation for violating a local ordinance by demonstrating beyond a proscribed area.

The Government continued to restrict the religious freedom of certain messianic Islamic groups. An official ban on the activities of the groups Jamaah Salamullah, Ahmadiyah, and Darul Arqam remained in effect, influenced by a 1980 fatwa by the MUI. However, the Government did not take any action to enforce the ban and thus enabled the groups to stay in operation through the formation of companies that distribute "halal" goods.

Occasionally, hard-line religious groups used pressure, intimidation, or violence against those whose message they found offensive. Despite continued criticism from Islamic hardliners, prominent Islamic intellectual Uliil Abshar-Abdalla maintained his public appeals for a less literal interpretation of Islamic doctrine. Uliil's Islam Liberal Network (JIL) confronted hardliners in public forums, including seminars. On June 25, 2005, 2,000 people calling themselves the Palu City Muslim Community protested against an opinion article, entitled "Islam, A Failed Religion," written by a lecturer at the Muhammadiyah University in Palu. The protestors threatened to bring more people to protest and "settle the problem themselves" if the police did not act within 24 hours. The article, among other things, highlighted the spread of corruption in the country. Bowing to pressure from the protestors, the management of Central Sulawesi's biggest daily, Radar Sulteng, did not publish the newspaper for three days. The police criminally charged the writer for insulting Islam and held him for 5 days before placing him on house arrest.

The Government bans proselytizing, arguing that such activity, especially in areas heavily dominated by members of another religion, could prove disruptive. A joint decree issued by the Ministries of Religion and Home Affairs in 1979 prohibits members of one religion from trying to

visited 12/18/2008

convert members of other faiths. Three women from the Christian Church of Camp David (GKKD) were 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 women were charged after community members complained that during the Sunday school program held at their house, free pencil boxes and t-shirts were given to the attendees, including Muslim children. At the end of the period covered by this report, the trial was ongoing.

Foreign religious organizations must obtain permission from the Ministry of Religious Affairs to provide any type of assistance (in-kind, personnel, and financial) to religious groups in the country. Although the Government generally did not enforce this requirement, some Christian groups stated that the Government applied it more frequently to minority groups than to mainstream Muslim groups.

Foreign missionaries must obtain religious worker visas, which some described as difficult to obtain or extend. The administrative requirements for religious worker visas are more onerous than for other visa categories, requiring not only approval from each office of the Department of Religion from the local to the national level but also statistical information on the number of followers of the religion in the community and a statement confirming that the applicant will work no more than 2 years in the country before replacement by a local citizen. Foreign missionaries granted such visas worked relatively unimpeded. However, many missionaries with a primary focus on development work successfully registered for social visas with the Ministry of Health or the Ministry of Education.

No restrictions exist on the publication of religious materials or the use of religious symbols. However, the Government bans the dissemination of these materials to persons of other faiths.

At times, the government has placed restrictions on religious speech. On May 8, 2005, Muhammad Yusman Roy, an Islamic school leader, was charged with "despoiling an organized religion," a crime that carries a maximum punishment of 5 years in jail, for leading prayers at his Islamic boarding school in Arabic followed by an Indonesian translation. Even though prayers are traditionally led only in Arabic, The country's two largest Muslim associations criticized police for the arrest, claiming Roy did not commit a crime.

The Government did not ban any books because of religious content during the period covered by this report.

Government employees must swear allegiance to the nation and to the national ideology, Pancasila, which includes belief in one supreme God.

The armed forces had no discernable restrictions on religious freedom during the period covered by this report. Ethno-religious representation in the general officer corps appears generally proportional to the religious affiliation of the population at large; Muslims dominate but Christians have representation in the general officer ranks. Although some allege that there is a "glass ceiling" for promotion to the most senior ranks for Christians and other minorities, a Christian serves as the Armed Forces Chief of General Staff. Additionally, a Christian recently served as the Chief of Staff of the Navy, and a Christian has been overall Commander in Chief of the Indonesian Defense Forces. There are high-ranking Hindu officers in the armed forces.

The law does not discriminate against any religious group in employment, education, housing, or health care. However, some Christians and members of other religious minority groups believe they often are excluded from prime civil service postings and graduate student slots at public universities.

In some municipalities across the country, local leaders applied stricter Islamic practices during the period covered by this report than in the past. For example, in the West Java Regency of Cianjur, a local regulation required all government workers to wear Islamic clothing every Friday. Virtually all women complied with the regulation, and women's groups, including Women's Solidarity (Solidaritas Perempuan), said the women were afraid not to comply. Some residents alleged the authorities were meddling in private affairs.

Some residents of the South Sulawesi regencies of Maros, Sinjai, and Gowa, and of the West Java regencies of Indramayu and Garut, had to follow stricter Islamic practices than in the past, such as wearing Muslim clothing or setting aside time for workers to perform group prayers.

As in previous years, during the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, many local governments ordered either the closure or a reduction in operating hours of various types of entertainment establishments. The Jakarta decree ordered the month-long closure of non-hotel bars, discos, nightclubs, sauna spas, massage parlors, and venues for live music. However, billiard parlors, karaoke bars, hotel bars, and discos were permitted to operate for up to 4 hours per night. Some members of minority faiths, as well as some Muslims, felt that these orders infringed on their rights. Enforcement of the orders varied.

Divorce was a legal option available to members of all religions, but Muslims who wished to seek divorce generally had to turn to the Islam-based family court system, while non-Muslims obtained a divorce through the national court system. Marriage law for Muslims is based on Shari'a and allows a man to have up to four wives, provided that he is able to provide equally for each of the wives. For a man to take a second, third, or fourth wife, court permission and the consent of the first wife are required. However, women reportedly find it difficult to refuse, and Islamic women's groups were divided over whether the system should be revised. In divorce cases, women often bear a heavier evidentiary burden than men, especially in the Islam-based family court system. The law requires courts to oblige the former husband to

visited 12/18/2008

provide alimony or its equivalent, but there is no enforcement mechanism, and divorced women rarely receive such support. In 2004, the Department of Religion conducted internal discussions over a draft Islamic family law revision that aimed to enhance the legal rights of Muslim women in many aspects of marriage and divorce law. After mounting criticism by mainstream and conservative Islamic law experts, Minister of Religious Affairs, M. Maftuh Basyuni, shelved the legislation and ended further discourse on the matter.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

Although 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.

In 2003, unknown assailants attacked four villages in Poso, killing eight persons. A joint military/police force searched the surrounding forest and killed six suspects, two of them identified as Rachmat Seba and Madong. Because most of the victims were Christians, and because four of the attacks coincided with the first anniversary of the Bali bombings, some speculated that the perpetrators were Islamic extremists. The Government was continuing its investigation and at least 13 suspects remained in custody at the end of the period covered by this report.

Some Christians criticized the arrest of Rev. Rinaldy Damanik, a leader of the Christian community in Central Sulawesi. Convicted of weapons possession in 2003, Damanik appealed the decision, but a Central Sulawesi court rejected his appeal that year. Some of Damanik's supporters insisted that he had been framed or that he was persecuted for speaking out for the Christian community. In November 2004, Damanik was released almost a year earlier than his original release date. Reflecting the province's success in conflict resolution efforts, the response from both local Christian and Muslim communities to this release was muted.

Some Christians continued to criticize the prosecutions by Maluku courts of members of the separatist Republic of South Maluku (RMS) and its associated group, the Maluku Sovereignty Front (FKM), whose membership is mainly Christian. However, most observers agree that the Government prosecuted these members for separatist activities and not on religious grounds.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

In January 2005, there were erroneous reports that a U.S.-based group had custody of 300 Muslim children orphaned by the December 2004 tsunami and intended to place them in Christian homes as part of a long-term effort to spread Christianity in Aceh. Despite retractions and responsible statements from officials, the reports generated outrage and suspicion of foreign relief operations.

Abuses by Terrorist Organizations

Terrorists active in the region carried out one major attack in the country during the period covered by this report. The September 2004 suicide attack on the Australian Embassy killed 10 persons and injured approximately 100 more. Although the attack was not targeted at any specific religion, it was the work of operatives of the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) terror group in collaboration with members of the extremist Negara Islam Indonesia (NII). The JI's agenda includes using violence in an attempt to create an Islamic super-state in Southeast Asia, while the NII aims to implement Islamic law in the country. The Government subsequently arrested six perpetrators of that attack, which was intended to extract revenge on the Australians for their role in suppressing Muslims in the country. At the end of the period covered by this report, the trials were ongoing.

The Government successfully prosecuted more than 20 terrorists and their associates during the period covered by this report, not only members of JI but also of other groups of terrorists and religious extremists. Among those convicted during this period were about a dozen perpetrators of the 2003 Marriott bombing in Jakarta, and a number of Islamic extremists who accidentally blew up a house while practicing bomb assembly in March 2004.

Some Muslims criticized the arrest and prosecution of Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, the head of the JI terrorist group, who was convicted of immigration violations in 2003. Police rearrested Ba'asyir in April 2004 following the completion of his jail sentence. On March 4, 2005, Ba'asyir was found guilty and sentenced to 30 months in jail for involvement in the 2002 Bali bombings but acquitted of more serious terrorism charges. On May 11, 2005, the country's high court upheld Ba'asyir's conviction. At the end of the period covered by this report, the Supreme Court was reviewing the case.

Improvements in Respect for Religious Freedom

visited 12/18/2008

NGOs in the country made some progress in improving respect for religious freedom, particularly in the conflict zones of Central Sulawesi and the Moluccas. NGOs worked closely with religious leaders and the local community to promote mutual respect and cooperation. Conflict resolution efforts in former conflict areas of Central Sulawesi and the Moluccas continued to progress during the period covered by this report. Religious leaders and their followers visited each other's religious holiday celebrations and often consulted with each other. Sporadic violence incidents in both areas during the period covered by this report failed to spark broader conflict as it had done in years past.

In December 2004, a 2-day International Dialogue on Interfaith Cooperation, organized jointly with Muhammadiyah, was co-sponsored in Yogyakarta by the Government and the Government of Australia. The President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono opened the dialogue with remarks that terrorism must be regarded as the enemy of all religions and that tolerance building was critical. Major faith leaders from Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, and East Timor participated in the Dialogue.

In a national celebration of the Chinese New Year, the President stated that the Constitution guarantees freedom of religion, including Confucianism, and followers should not hesitate to practice their beliefs. The New Year, which took place in February 2005, was celebrated without incident.

Local police displayed significantly more willingness during the period covered by this report to indict security forces allegedly involved in religious violence. In January 2005, local police arrested a senior police officer for his alleged role in the December 2004 church bombings in Palu. Local police also became more active in making arrests of those allegedly involved in violent incidents. A day after the shooting of a Palu clergywoman in July 2004, the Police Chief held a closed door meeting with local religious leaders and promised that the police would guarantee security for both Christians and Muslims. Since that time, local police have protected local churches and other prayer houses during religious services.

Local courts also began, for the first time, to try some cases of those allegedly responsible for violence in Ambon. Beginning in July 2004, local courts began to prosecute a rash of cases, including 17 trials of predominantly Christian separatists in connection with the April 2004 violence.

The Government has taken more steps to prosecute perpetrators involved in Maluku and Sulawesi conflict. On August 28, 2004, 12 Muslim militants were sentenced for their involvement in the Morowali attack in Central Sulawesi in 2003.

Section III: Societal Attitudes

For many years there has been growing Islamic awareness among the country's Muslims and increasing displays of public piety. The number of businesses associated with Islam, religious schools, and community prayer rooms all grew during the period covered by this report. Muslim-only housing estates attracted more attention. Bookshops did a brisk trade in fiction with Islamic themes, and Qur'anic verses were distributed via cellular phone text messages. At public meetings where the topic for discussion was not related to religion, Muslim speakers increasingly addressed mixed-religion crowds with a traditional Muslim greeting, which was seldom heard at such events in years past and resented by some non-Muslims.

The use of Islamic headscarves grew more popular, particularly among younger women, during the period covered by this report. Motivations were myriad; some wore the headscarf as an act of spiritual submission, while others sought a sense of emancipation or security in a society in which law and order were often weak. Still others did so as part of a global identification with Islam or out of a desire to demonstrate their piety. Islamic banking gained popularity during the period covered by this report but still accounted for only a tiny percentage of depositors.

Economic tensions between local or native peoples, who are predominantly non-Muslim, and more recent migrants, who are predominantly Muslim, were a significant factor in incidents of inter-religious and interethnic violence in the Moluccas, Central Sulawesi, Papua, and Kalimantan.

Violence between Christians and Muslims continued during the period covered by this report. On December 12, 2004, unidentified assailants attacked two churches in Palu, injuring three people. On October 21, a man on a motorcycle fired on a house being used for prayer meetings of a local Protestant congregation. On July 18, 2004, a clergywoman was shot to death in Effata Church in Palu, Central Sulawesi, and four churchgoers were injured.

In Maluku Province, the number of those killed in possibly sectarian incidents fell significantly during the period covered by this report from the almost 50 victims during the previous 12-month period. Maluku has been relatively calm since riots surrounding the commemoration of a separatist group in April 2004 killed dozens of Ambon residents. A few minor explosions occurred in some places, but no casualties were reported. One Pentecostal minister was abducted on a small island near Ambon in early December. Police quickly arrested the kidnapper on December 10, 2004.

Extremists purporting to uphold public morality sometimes attacked cafes and nightclubs that they considered venues for prostitution or that had not made payments to extremist groups. On October 24, 2004, during the holy month of Ramadan, the Islamic Defenders' Front (FPI)

visited 12/18/2008

attacked the Star Deli bar in Kemang, South Jakarta. FPI members smashed their way into the bar and destroyed windows, furniture, and alcohol. FPI leader, Jafar Sidik, said the action was taken against those who failed to respect Ramadan. As a result of this incident, police arrested four members of the FPI.

Significantly more attacks on houses of worship were reported during the period covered by this report when compared to the previous one. According to the Indonesian Christian Communication Forum (FKKI), at least 13 churches were attacked: 6 in Jakarta, 3 in West Java, and 1 each in the Moluccas, Central Java, East Java, and Central Sulawesi during the previous period, while at least 26 churches were attacked during this reporting period: 3 in Jakarta, 21 in West Java, and 2 in Central Sulawesi. In June 2004, mobs armed with sticks attacked a church and three shops used for religious services in Pamulang, Tangerang, and Banten Provinces, injuring a minister and damaging pews and windows. Some churches were attacked while services were still in session. Media reports said the churches were targeted because they were established without permission of the local government. The South Jakarta Police arrested four suspects for destruction of property.

In January 2005, at least six Hindu temples in Legian, Tuban, Kuta, and Kedoganan, Bali, were reportedly vandalized. The Bali police made two arrests, but the motive for the crimes remained unknown. One mosque attack was reported during the previous reporting period: the An-Nur mosque in the district of Talake in Ambon. According to Yusuf Elly, a Muslim leader and chairman of the Jazirul Muluk foundation, dozens of Christians burned the mosque on April 26, 2004, after attacking a number of local Muslims with homemade weapons.

On some occasions, publications with controversial religious themes provoked outrage. A popular local rock musician had to change his album cover after receiving complaints from local Muslim groups for using the word "Allah" in Arabic script on the cover. The singer's second band had to change its cover as well after receiving complaints from Hindu groups for publishing a picture of a Hindu god on the cover.

In general Islam in the country remained overwhelmingly tolerant, and had a pluralistic outlook. In 2003, a comprehensive survey asked Muslims whether they felt that Islam should tolerate diverse interpretations of its teachings. A majority, 54 percent, agreed, while 44 percent said there is only one true interpretation of Islam.

Unforced conversions between faiths occur, as allowed by law, but they remain a source of controversy. Some persons converted to marry a person of another faith; others converted in response to religious outreach or social activities organized by religious groups. Some Muslims accused Christian missionaries of using food and micro-credit programs to lure poor Muslims to conversion. Some of those who converted felt compelled not to publicize the event for family and social reasons.

Late in 2004, the Christian-owned leading Medan daily Sinar Indonesia Baru (SIB) ran a caricature suggesting Muslims habitually support corrupt political candidates. The "Si Suar Sair" incident, named after the cartoon character that expressed these views, led to public outrage in parts of the Muslim and Christian communities. North Sumatra police investigated the newspaper's publisher to seek evidence on who was responsible for the caricature. The newspaper's owners apologized for publication of the cartoon.

Sabili, a widely read Islamic magazine, published articles with anti-Semitic statements and themes. It made assertions suggesting the existence of covert conspiratorial "Zionist" activities ongoing in the country.

In Papua, Muslims constitute a religious minority except in the districts of Sorong and Fakfak, where they account for roughly half the population. Most ethnic Papuans practice Christianity, animism, or both. In recent years, migration has changed Papua's ethnic and religious composition. The arrival of Muslim migrants occasionally led to tensions between indigenous Papuans and new arrivals. However, these tensions had less to do with religion than with economics. During the period covered by this report, inter-religious relations were generally good in Papua.

North Sumatra did not experience major inter-religious violence, but some grievances arose among members of different faiths. Some non-Muslims took offense to loud and long prayer calls emanating from mosques and felt the calls invaded their privacy. Muslims complained of pork and dog meat being sold overtly by non-Muslims with signs stating "pork" or "dog" rather than the discreet "B1" and "B2" used in the past. In Medan, Muslims and Christians criticized Hindus for cremating their dead. The illegal gambling industry also caused frictions among religious communities in Medan. Supporters of an Islamist political party carried out a campaign against casinos largely run by Christian and Indonesian Chinese Buddhist mafias. Detractors described the Islamist political party's motivation as a pretense for expressing anti-Christian and anti-Chinese sentiment rather than as a means to support enforcement of anti-gambling laws.

There were reports that faith-based social organizations at times extracted financial contributions from non-Muslim merchants, particularly before major Islamic holidays. Most commonly, these actions relied on social pressure from Muslim-majority communities. Many of those targeted were ethnic Chinese, who generally practiced Buddhism, Christianity, or Confucianism.

Interfaith organizations remained active during the period covered by this report and attracted media coverage. Many of these groups worked together under the umbrella organization True Brotherhood Network (JPS) to seek the repeal of regulations they considered discriminatory and held seminars and discussions on problems related to respect for human rights.

visited 12/18/2008

Other private organizations also promoted respect for religious freedom. The Islam Liberal Network (JIL), an alliance of Muslim intellectuals who aim to stimulate debate on Islamic topics, confronted fundamentalism by participating in dialogue via Internet, radio, newspaper, television, and paid visits to institutes of higher learning.

Section IV: U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. Embassy in Jakarta, the Consulate General in Surabaya, the Embassy's Medan Office, and visiting State Department officials regularly engaged government officials on religious freedom issues and also encouraged officials from other embassies to discuss the subject with the Government. Embassy staff at all levels met frequently with religious leaders and human rights campaigners to promote respect for religious freedom. Embassy staff met regularly with NU and Muhammadiyah officials to clarify U.S. policy and discuss religious tolerance and other issues.

Embassy outreach emphasizes the importance of religious freedom and tolerance in a democratic society. During the period covered by this report, the Embassy arranged eight speaking tours throughout the country for U.S. scholars to address religious tolerance and human rights issues, including a team from Hartford Seminary that spoke at pesantren and universities in Lombok and Yogyakarta on interfaith dialogue. Universitas Islam Negeri and the Liberal Islam Network each received a grant this year to survey attitudes toward religious practice and extremism and determine if they correlate with public opinion critical of the U.S. and its policies.

The Embassy regularly distributed information on religious freedom and religious tolerance in the U.S. through radio, newspaper, and television. It placed 59 programs on 14 television stations, ranging from 13-hour documentaries to 2-minute news features on topics such as Secretary Colin Powell's Iftaar and mosques in America. Books and pamphlets distributed to the public included 152,000 copies of "Muslim Life in America" and 500,000 copies of "Democracy Papers." Approximately 175,000 copies of the American Outline Series were distributed to religiously affiliated organizations at the launch of the translated version. The 5-volume series contains 3 different seminars on "Pluralism in the U.S. and Indonesia." The Embassy also distributed articles to 1200 recipients on topics concerning international religious freedom and religious pluralism in the United States.

During the month of Ramadan, the Embassy made extensive use of the media to convey its key message of U.S. respect for Islam, the important role tolerance plays in a democracy, and shared Indonesian-U.S. values. The Embassy conducted a series of unique public diplomacy activities, including placement of op-ed articles, charity events, and reporting tours in the U.S. These activities resulted in the placement of 93 programs and articles in more than 30 media outlets, reaching tens of millions of Indonesians. One program of note was an original television documentary series televised nationally. This joint project, developed as a TV Co-op between the State Department's Office of Broadcast Services and one of the country's oldest national television networks, Cakrawala Andalas Televisi (ANTV), produced 30 3-minute mini-features on topics concerning Islam in America and profiles of Muslims in the U.S. The stories were broadcasted during the evening news every weekday during Ramadan, minutes before the Maghrib prayer. This program carried the message that Islam has become part of the religious and cultural mix of the United States. ANTV reported very favorable viewer responses to the features. One viewer was cited as saying, "by the footage shown and people depicted, I can see the situation of American Muslims and can feel the positive atmosphere of Muslim life there."

The Embassy sponsored more than 76 religious scholars, religious leaders, human rights activists, community leaders, youth leaders, students, and journalists to travel to the U.S. and participate in programs related to religious freedom during the period covered by this report. Topics included the U.S. Political System and Religious Pluralism, Religious Multiculturalism in a Democratic Society, Inter-religious Dialogue, Conflict Management and Tolerance Promotion, and Educational Development. In addition, the Embassy sent more than 55 pesantren leaders to the U.S. on an exchange program focused on religious tolerance and civic education. In 2004, 38 students and teachers from private boarding schools attended an international youth leadership program on religious diversity, leadership, and civic education. Through the Youth Exchange and Study program (YES) more than 60 Muslim students are spending 1 year at high schools throughout the United States.

During the period covered by this report, the Embassy and the American-Indonesian Exchange Foundation continued to support the country's first graduate-level comparative religion program at Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta. Six English Language Fellows were based in Islamic institutions of higher education. Ten of the country's institutions of higher education, five of which are Islamic universities, have established "American Corners," which are small program and information centers that provide computers with Internet access and reference materials about American life, including religious topics, and venues for discussion about religious pluralism with mission officers and Embassy-sponsored speakers. Grants from the Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs went to two U.S. universities to support conflict resolution and training exchanges and to establish five mediation centers in Islamic institutions of higher learning across the country.

Under the Islam and Civil Society (ICS) program in the country, the United States has continued to maintain one of the most widely heard radio talk shows in Asia, promoting democracy, gender equality, and religious pluralism. This 30-minute call-in weekly radio talk show entitled "Religion and Tolerance" has reached approximately 3 million people since 2001. For the past three years, the transcripts of the "Religion and Tolerance" radio show have been published weekly by a newspaper syndicate of 100 newspapers in about 50 cities reaching 2 million readers. Listeners from Aceh to Papua have responded enthusiastically to the radio program and the stations on which the program is broadcast often received requests for the talk show to be extended to an hour. The response from readers of the transcripts has been equally encouraging, and the newspaper syndicate has had to create a new column to accommodate the flood of reader's comments.

visited 12/18/2008

The U.S. continued to support the production of inexpensive leaflets written with culturally meaningful perspectives and language, and containing themes of pluralism and democracy. These leaflets are currently distributed in 30 key cities throughout Java, Madura, South and North Sulawesi, and West Nusa Tenggara. The leaflets have been published for 5 years, which is a demonstration of their success. Local communities have also recognized the important impact the flyers have in conflict areas. When inter-religious conflict erupted in Mataram, West Lombok, for example, local police officers requested that the leaflets be distributed more widely. Communities in conflict areas such as Poso and Gorontalo have made similar requests.

Released on November 8, 2005

[International Religious Freedom Report Home Page](#)



BACK TO TOP

Published by the U.S. Department of State Website at <http://www.state.gov> maintained by the Bureau of Public Affairs.