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Keynote
Essays
Photos and Videos
Country Chapters
Publications
About
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Afghanistan
Algeria
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Australia
Azerbaijan
Bahrain
Bangladesh
Belarus
Bolivia
Bosnia and Herzegovina
Brazil
Burma
Burundi
Cambodia
Canada
Central African Republic
Chile
China and Tibet
Colombia
Cote d'Ivoire
Croatia
Cuba
Democratic Republic of Congo
Ecuador
Egypt
Equatorial Guinea
Eritrea
Ethiopia
European Union
France
Georgia
Germany
Greece
Guatemala
Guinea
Haiti
Honduras
Hungary
India
Indonesia
Iran
Iraq
Israel/Palestine
Italy
Jordan
Kazakhstan
Kenya
Kuwait
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INDONESIA



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< prev 1 2 3 next >

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Members of the congregation of the Batak Christian Protestant Church sit near ruins of a church after an excavator demolished it, March 21, 2013. © 2013 Reuters

Indonesia

In the outskirts of Jakarta, Indonesia, members of the congregation of the Batak Christian Protestant Church sit near ruins of a church after an excavator demolished it, March 21, 2013. © 2013 Reuters

Country Chapter

INDONESIA

Human rights showed little improvement in 2013, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's last full year in office. Although the president made public appeals for greater religious freedom and tolerance, national authorities continued to respond weakly to growing violence and discrimination against religious minorities. Other areas of concern include new onerous restrictions on the activities of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), the proliferation of local decrees that violate women's rights, and mistreatment of the increasing number of refugees and migrants, including unaccompanied migrant children, reaching Indonesia.

Forestry sector reforms made some headway in 2013, but timber concessions on lands with pre-existing community claims continue to generate rural conflict and abuse. Corruption and mismanagement deprive government coffers of billions of dollars in forest revenues, and threaten Indonesia's ability to deliver on its "green growth" promises.

Conditions in Papua, still virtually off-limits to foreign journalists, remain volatile, with security forces enjoying virtual impunity for abuses, including excessive and at times lethal use of force against peaceful proponents of independence. Meanwhile, the armed Free Papua Movement, though small and poorly organized, continues to carry out attacks against government forces.

Local elections in Indonesia in recent years have resulted in the emergence of young politicians, including Jakarta's governor Joko Widodo, who have pledged to break with traditional patronage-style politics by tackling corruption, poverty, and crumbling infrastructure. National parliamentary and presidential elections scheduled for 2014 will give an indication of whether these politicians reflect a national trend.

Freedom of Expression

The Alliance of Independent Journalists documented 23 cases of violence against journalists in the first six months of 2013. They included a March 2 attack on Normila Sari Wahyuni of Paser TV while she was covering a land dispute in Rantau Panjang village in East Kalimantan. The assailants repeatedly kicked her stomach, prompting a miscarriage. Police later arrested a village chief and village secretary as suspects in the assault. On March 27, supporters of Gorontalo mayor, Adnan Dhambea, burned down the office of the local TV station, TVRI Gorontalo, following Dhambea's defeat in local elections. Two TVRI journalists were assaulted during the arson attack.

On July 2, Indonesia's parliament enacted a new law on NGOs that infringes on rights to freedom of association, expression, and religion. The law imposes a variety of vague obligations and prohibitions on NGO activities, severely limits foreign funding of NGOs, and forbids NGOs from espousing atheism, communism, Marxist-Leninism, beliefs deemed contrary to Pancasila, the state philosophy.

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Military Reform and Impunity

A military court in September sentenced 12 members of the Special Forces Command (Komando Pasukan Khusus, Kopassus) to prison terms of between several months and 11 years for their role in the well-orchestrated murder of four detainees in a prison in Yogyakarta. The guilty verdicts marked an important departure from the usual impunity enjoyed by soldiers implicated in serious crimes, but the sentences imposed on the three most culpable soldiers failed to match the gravity of their crimes.

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Meanwhile, discriminatory regulations continued to proliferate. An August update by Indonesia's official Commission on Violence against Women reported that national and local governments had passed 60 new discriminatory regulations in 2013. Indonesia has a total of 342 discriminatory regulations, including 79 local bylaws requiring women to wear the hijab. As of July, the Ministry of Home Affairs had signaled its intention to revoke only eight of them.

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