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INDONESIA



These regulations include one banning women from straddling motorcycles—only riding side-saddle is permitted—in Lhokseumawe, Aceh, a neighboring province. In local regulation in the Batak region of Sumatra, women are prohibited from dancing. In Gorontalo, Sulawesi Island, the government transferred its entire female support staff to other offices in July, replacing them with men as part of an initiative to discourage “extramarital affairs.”

In August, an education office in Prabumulih, southern Sumatra, cancelled plans to have high school girls undergo mandatory “virginity tests” to tackle “premarital sex and prostitution.” Despite a public outcry, plans are afoot to introduce similar tests in Pamekasan, East Java.

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According to the Jakarta-based Setara Institute that monitors religious freedom, there were 264 attacks on religious minorities in 2012 and 243 cases in the first 10 months of 2013. The perpetrators were almost all Sunni militants; the targets include Christians, Ahmadiyah, Shia, and Sufis.

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Members of the congregation of the Batak Christian Protestant Church sit near ruins of a church after an excavation in the outskirts of Jakarta, Indonesia, 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 excavation 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.

In a positive step, the government in August signaled a possible end to the informal national taboo on public discussion of the army-led massacres of between 500,000 and over a million communist party members and alleged sympathizers in 1965-66 by allowing the release of the award-winning documentary on the massacre, *The Act of Killing*, as a free Internet download.

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.

These regulations include one banning women from straddling motorcycles—only riding side-saddle is permitted—in Lhokseumawe, Aceh. In neighboring Bireuen, a local regulation prohibits women from dancing. In Gorontalo, Sulawesi Island, the government transferred its entire female support staff to other offices in July, replacing them with men as part of an initiative to discourage “extramarital affairs.”

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Forestry sector corruption and mismanagement continued to bleed Indonesian government coffers, the annual losses reaching US\$2 billion, more than the entire national health budget. Forest mismanagement fuels often violent land disputes and taints Indonesia's self-proclaimed image as a leader in sustainable “green growth.”

Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Indonesia is a transit point to Australia for refugees and asylum seekers fleeing persecution, violence, and poverty in countries including Somalia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Burma. As of March 2013, there were almost 10,000 refugees and asylum seekers in Indonesia, all living in legal limbo because Indonesia lacks an asylum law. This number includes an unprecedented number of unaccompanied migrant children; more than 1,000 such children arrived in Indonesia in 2012 alone.

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