

Refugee Review Tribunal

AUSTRALIA

RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

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This response was prepared by the Country Research Section of the Refugee Review Tribunal (RRT) after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the RRT within time constraints. This response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum.

Questions

1. Please provide information dealing specifically with Chinese / Chinese Buddhists in Aceh?
2. Is there information indicating that GAM specifically targets ethnic Chinese and, if so, that this is an ongoing problem given recent developments?

RESPONSE

1. Please provide information dealing specifically with Chinese / Chinese Buddhists in Aceh?

Executive Summary

Although only a small minority of Aceh's population, the ethnic Chinese are significantly invested in Aceh's economy. *The Wall Street Journal's* Jay Solomon notes that, "[a]lthough they make up less than 5% of the population of northern Sumatra, ethnic Chinese form the backbone of the entire region's distribution and trading networks. In Banda Aceh, Chinese merchants are estimated to own 50% to 70% of the private-sector businesses, and their companies direct the trade of essential goods like cooking oil, rice and coffee".

Predominantly Buddhist or Christian in faith, the marginality of Aceh's ethnic Chinese population is further reflected by the following 1993 figures for Aceh's religious demography: "Islam (98.11%), Protestant (1.32%), Catholic (0.16%), Hinduism (0.02%), Buddhism (0.37%) and others (0.011%)" (for information on Chinese business ownership in Aceh, see: Solomon, J. 2005, 'Chinese Self-Help Group Assists Refugees in Rebuilding Lives', Aceh-Eye website, source: *Wall Street Journal*, 8 February http://www.acheh-eye.org/a-eye_news_files/a-eye_news_english/news_item.asp?NewsID=487 – Accessed 1 February 2006 – Attachment 1; for demographic information on Aceh, see: 'General Info About Aceh' undated, Aceh-Eye website <http://www.acheh-eye.org>

eye.org/data_files/english_format/general_info/general_info_gouvernement-eng/general-info_statistics_data-eng.html – Accessed 6 February 2006 – Attachment 2).

Agence France-Presse has reported that, of the estimated 5000 ethnic Chinese who formerly resided in the region's capital, Banda Aceh, some 700 were killed by the 2004 Asian Tsunami. In the aftermath of the disaster the greater part of Aceh's ethnic Chinese population fled to Medan, the capital of neighbouring North Sumatra. Few chose to remain in the devastated city, but from those Chinese who did remain to ensure the security of their property have come reports of the subsequent looting of ethnic Chinese businesses – crimes which reportedly went unchecked by local security forces. Separate from this, there were also rumours, circulated via mobile-telephone messaging, that the ethnic Chinese who had been displaced from Aceh were suffering discrimination, and even physical attacks, in refugee centres. Credible ethnic Chinese sources found the messages to be largely untrue; finding that while some instances of discrimination had taken place, there was no evidence of a widespread campaign of discrimination being enacted against the ethnic Chinese community. An *Asia News* report concludes that "Sino-Indonesians [were being] discriminated and robbed because locals think they are the wealthier part of the population"; according to this report, "rich Achenese" were also being targeted in the same manner (for information on the impact of the tsunami on ethnic Chinese of Banda Aceh, see: 'No feasts or fireworks in Indonesia's Aceh as Chinese mark unhappy new year' 2005, *Terradaily* website, source: *Agence France-Presse*, 8 February

<http://www.terradaaily.com/2005/050208012312.gio3r4jf.html> – Accessed 1 February 2006 – Attachment 3; for information on the unchecked looting of ethnic Chinese businesses in the aftermath of the 2005 Asian Tsunami, see: 'Ethnic Chinese 'bullied and robbed'' 2005, *China Morning Post*, 3 January – Attachment 4; and also: McCawley, T. 2005, 'Ethnic Chinese key to Aceh fix-up' *Christian Science Monitor* website, 18 February <http://www.csmonitor.com/2005/0218/p06s01-wosc.html> – Accessed 1 February 2006 – Attachment 5; and: Solomon, J. 2005, 'Chinese Self-Help Group Assists Refugees in Rebuilding Lives', *Acheh-Eye* website, source: *Wall Street Journal*, 8 February http://www.acheh-eye.org/a-eye_news_files/a-eye_news_english/news_item.asp?NewsID=487 – Accessed 1 February 2006 – Attachment 1; for information on the rumours of the mistreatment of Aceh's displaced ethnic Chinese, and on the spurious nature of these rumours, see: 'Rescue workers discriminate against ethnic Chinese tsunami victims' 2005, *Asia News* website, 5 January <http://www.asianews.it/dos.php?l=en&dos=&art=2270> – Accessed 31 January 2006 – Attachment 6; see also: 'Diversity in humanitarian activities' 2005, Centre for Strategic and International Studies website, source: Fellowship of Indonesian Christians in America, 17 January http://www.csis.or.id/feature_view.asp?id=139&tab=0 – Accessed 31 January 2006 – Attachment 7).

In the months that followed the immediate aftermath of the tsunami, local ethnic Chinese organisations began to sponsor the return and reconstitution of Aceh's ethnic Chinese community. The return of Aceh's ethnic Chinese is considered to be a fundamental prerequisite for Aceh's economic recovery; and to be acknowledged by all, including the majority Acehnese population, as integral to the recovery of Aceh as a whole. It has also been reported that Aceh's ethnic Chinese, and Banda Aceh's Dharma Bhatia Buddhist temple in particular, have played a significant role in providing relief to the Acehnese population as a whole. Nonetheless, there have been reports that Aceh's ethnic Chinese community have been unnerved by the arrival in Aceh of large numbers of Islamist relief workers from outside the province. Christian Chinese, in particular, are said to have fled from, or not returned to,

Aceh as a consequence of the arrival of groups with a documented history of inciting sectarian violence; groups such as *Laskar Jihad* and the Islamic Defenders Front (for information on the role of ethnic Chinese institutions in Banda Aceh's rebuilding, see: Eaton, D. & Nathalia, T. 2005, 'Aceh's Chinese usher in sad New Year', *swissinfo.com* website, source: *Reuters*, 9 February <http://www.swissinfo.org/sen/swissinfo.html?siteSect=143&sid=5525349> – Accessed 1 February 2006 – Attachment 8; for information on the acknowledged importance of the return of Aceh's ethnic Chinese, see: McCawley, T. 2005, 'Ethnic Chinese key to Aceh fix-up' *Christian Science Monitor* website, 18 February <http://www.csmonitor.com/2005/0218/p06s01-wosc.html> – Accessed 1 February 2006 – Attachment 5; for information on the arrival of militant Islamist groups in Aceh, see: Perlez, J. 2005, 'Islamic Militants Volunteer to Aid Muslims in Indonesia', *New York Times*, 10 January <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/01/10/international/worldspecial4/10muslims.html?ex=1263099600&en=d8f4840dcf0f3f82&ei=5090&partner=rssuserland> – Accessed 6 February 2006 – Attachment 9; and also: Vltchek, A. 2005 'Aceh Goes To Heaven!', *Z Net* website, 12 January <http://www.zmag.org/sustainers/content/2005-01/12vltchek.cfm> – Accessed 6 January 2006 – Attachment 10).

Several sources note that Aceh's ethnic Chinese population have, historically, lived largely free of the episodes of intense discrimination and violence which have broken out at various moments in other parts of Indonesia, such as the Jakarta anti-Chinese riots of May 1998. Nevertheless, violence against ethnic Chinese owned businesses did occur in Aceh's Lhokseumawe in 1998; although the origins of the violence remain in dispute – with many suggesting that the riot was engineered by the military and incited by outsiders who co-opted unwilling locals into a staged demonstration. Other events have also marred the generally tolerant environment enjoyed by Aceh's ethnic Chinese. In 1966 military forces linked to the Suharto takeover rounded up thousands of ethnic Chinese for deportation to China as suspected communists. Most were eventually able to return to their homes but some were forcibly ejected to China by boat (see: Symonds, P. 1998, 'Behind Indonesia's anti-Chinese riots', *World Socialist* website, 14 February <http://www.wsws.org/news/1998/feb1998/indones.shtml> – Accessed 3 February 2006 – Attachment 11; 'Conflict history: Indonesia' 2005, International Crisis Group, 3 October <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=3630&l=1> – Accessed 3 February 2006 – Attachment 12; and: Bresnan, J 1993, 'Chapter 1: The Coup That Failed', *Managing Indonesia: The Modern Political Economy*, Columbia International Affairs Online website <http://www.ciaonet.org/book/bresnan/bresnan11.html> – Accessed 3 February 2006 – Attachment 13).

Note: RRT Country Research has recently completed a response addressing the treatment of ethnic Chinese in Indonesia generally (RRT Country Research 2005, *Research Response IDN17690*, 5 December – Attachment 14).

Post – 2004 Asian Tsunami

The following source materials are discussed, for the most part, in reverse chronological order of publication.

In the aftermath of the 2004 Asian Tsunami, on 3 January 2005, *The South China Morning Post* reported that "[e]thnic Chinese...[had] become...targets for robbery and intimidation in the devastated Indonesian province of Aceh". "An ethnic Chinese Indonesia[n], who arrived at Medan" having fled tsunami-hit Aceh, had informed Indonesia's *Tianfu Morning Post* that

“ethnic Chinese [in Aceh] were being ‘bullied’ and many of them had seen their property taken away by force” (‘Ethnic Chinese ‘bullied and robbed’” 2005, *China Morning Post*, 3 January – Attachment 4).

On 5 January 2005 the Catholic news service *Asia News* reported from Jakarta that “information [had been] been spread through short message service [SMS]” that tsunami-displaced ethnic Chinese in “some refugee camps in Aceh and North Sumatra provinces” were suffering from discrimination. Ethnic Chinese were believed to have been “denied food and medicines, forced to dig graves, robbed and, in some cases, killed”. Responding to this, the Indonesian Chinese Association (INTI) released a statement in which it reported that while “INTI volunteers working in refugee camps in Aceh and North Sumatra had witnessed minor incidents of discrimination” such occurrences were “to be expected given the extraordinary and desperate situation”. “To counter the anti-Chinese campaign, INTI [was] setting up a centre in Medan to collect information about discrimination and relay it to the public and the media”. The report concludes that “Sino-Indonesians are discriminated and robbed because locals think they are the wealthier part of the population”; observing that “rich Achenese” were also being targeted in the same manner. Relevant extracts follow in detail:

In some refugee camps in Aceh and North Sumatra provinces, aid and rescue workers are believed to discriminate against Sino-Indonesians, who are denied food and medicines, forced to dig graves, robbed and, in some cases, killed. These information have been spread through short message service SMS. Benny G. Setiono, chairman of the Indonesian Chinese Association (INTI) published a statement quoting some messages and trying to appease their effect.

Some messages claim that some Sino-Indonesians are not allowed to board flights to Medan or safer areas away from Banda Aceh; others say that they are being made a scapegoat for the tsunami.

In the statement sent via e-mail, Mr Setiono urges Indonesians “not to be influenced” by the sectarian campaign that a handful of unknown individuals are waging for political gain.

Reporting that INTI volunteers working in refugee camps in Aceh and North Sumatra had witnessed minor incidents of discrimination, Mr Sentiono noted that they are to be expected given the extraordinary and desperate situation.

“For us,” he added, “these things are morally acceptable since both ethnic Chinese and Acehnese have had the same experiences, i.e. shortages of food and medical supplies and rescue workers too hard pressed to bring humanitarian aid”.

Sino-Indonesians are discriminated and robbed because locals think they are the wealthier part of the population. Even though they, too, were affected by the tsunami, they are thought to have been luckier.

To make his point, INTI’s president reports a case of discrimination: a Chinese family was told to pay 400 rupiahs (US\$ 44) to have the body of one of its members removed by public transit motorbike.

Similarly, some Sino-Indonesians fleeing Banda Aceh by plane were forced to pay higher prices for their tickets to strangers who are profiting of the situation to make money.

However, Sino-Indonesians have not been the only victims of extortions; rich Achenese have been as well (‘Rescue workers discriminate against ethnic Chinese tsunami victims’ 2005,

On 17 January 2005, the Fellowship of Indonesian Christians in America (FICA) published an interview with Christine Susanna Tjhin, a Chinese Indonesian who worked with an INTI relief team in Medan which was tasked with investigating “the validity of rumors of persecutions towards Indonesian Chinese minority”. Tjhin, who is a researcher for the Jakarta based Center for Strategic Studies (CSIS), told FICA that “information from the first hand sources” revealed “that these were just unsubstantiated issues”. Though Tjhin did not herself travel beyond Medan and into Aceh itself, she felt informed enough to advise FICA that the rumour of “an organized and collective persecution in Aceh against the Indonesian Chinese” “was simply untrue”. According to Tjhin, the most significant incidents of xenophobic and/or sectarian agitation that she did learn of were the work of outside Javanese Islamist organisations, and not of the local Acehnese. Some relevant extracts follow in detail:

What kind of activities do you do in Medan? We heard Medan was made the center of relief effort coordination.

I also help to disseminate information that we gathered from the disaster area. For example, the information about refugee count, how many had returned to Aceh, what their physical needs are, etc. Additionally, we also investigated the validity of rumors of persecutions towards Indonesian Chinese minority. We talked and gleaned information from the first hand sources. It turned out that these were just unsubstantiated issues. So, we wrote articles to deflect these rumors. In short, our jobs were more towards relief effort coordination and dissemination of information.

So, in your opinion historically there was no discriminative treatment in Aceh?

I don’t know a lot about Aceh history as well as the Indonesian-Chinese community there. Certainly we cannot deny that discrimination exist everywhere across the nation. However, these irresponsible rumors claimed that there was an organized and collective persecution in Aceh against the Indonesian Chinese. This was simply untrue. We are in a disaster situation where hundred of thousand lives need help and those rumors could cause communities to stop sending their relief aids.

...How is Acehnese’ response to foreigners there?

Acehnese are so grateful for the help they received and they are receptive to people helping them. But since Aceh was a closed region prior to the disaster, they were not used to meeting people from out of Aceh (including Javanese). But in the midst of this disaster, they are open and appreciative. Actually those who make issues out of this are those who had not felt the pain these Acehnese were going through.

For example, at Posko (coordination post) Jalan Metal, we came from different backgrounds. One day, this Posko was too full to provide treatment to these Acehnese refugees. So these people were asked if they mind staying at a local Buddhist temple. The refugees understood the shortage of place to accommodate them and did not mind at all to be placed in the temple. But then the Pemda Medan from the religious affairs callously protested, “What is this? Quickly get these Acehnese out from the temple!” So, that’s how ridiculous it is. This became a center issue for some audiences such as IAIN (Institut Agama Islam Negeri) in Medan. These Muslim students issued ultimatum to break into places that they suspect providing accommodation for these Acehnese refugees, like this temple.

So, while the Acehnese were grateful of all the help they could receive, certain parties or groups (who do not feel Acehnese' pains) are more interested to exercise their suspicious thoughts at the cost of hindering the relief effort for these Acehnese.

...For example, recently my contacts in Banda Aceh found provocative pamphlets from PKS (Partai Keadilan Sosial or Social Justice Party, a sizable and well known Muslim political party) at the airport, saying: "Do not give Aceh child to infidels (kafir), Christians, and missionaries!" How provocative! We relay this information to some of my Muslim friends in Komunitas Lintas Iman or Interfaith Community.

They, in turn, relay this information for confirmation to PKS headquarters. PKS denied responsibility for these pamphlets. This is a very potent threat if these pamphlets fell into the hands of people who do not subscribe to pluralism ('Diversity in humanitarian activities' 2005, Centre for Strategic and International Studies website, source: Fellowship of Indonesian Christians in America, 17 January http://www.csis.or.id/feature_view.asp?id=139&tab=0 – Accessed 31 January 2006 – Attachment 7).

On 10 January 2005, *The New York Times* reported "[t]he overt presence of...outside Muslim groups [had]...prompted some of the city's small Christian population to flee". A Catholic priest had told *The New York Times*'s correspondent that "[a]ll but 15 of his 400 church members, most of them shopkeepers and of Chinese origin, were staying in Medan, the major city to the south, where they felt safer"; "[t]here is a fear by the Christians of the Muslims because in the past the Christians suffered," he said. "There is a fear that that suffering will happen again". Relevant extracts follow in detail:

...members of *Lasker Mujahedeen*, a paramilitary group that has fought Christians elsewhere in Indonesia and has had links to *Al Qaeda*, are among hundreds of Indonesian Islamic militants who have come to Aceh in the name of helping their fellow Muslims, they say, to offer a dose of Islamic teachings to the already devout Acehnese, and to recruit members.

The groups, including *Majelis Mujahedeen Indonesia* and Islamic Defenders Front, arrived in the disaster area on Indonesian military transport planes, and on a commercial flight organized by the Indonesian vice president, Jusuf Kalla.

"Islamic law enforcement," is written in English on a sign at the huddle of small igloo tents where some of the *Majelis Mujahedeen Indonesia* volunteers sleep... .

...A senior American official involved in Washington's relief effort said the United States had stopped short of protesting to the Indonesian government about the presence of the groups. But the official said he discussed the matter with the Indonesians in meetings last week. "This is something the Indonesian government has to watch very carefully," the official said.

The overt presence of the outside Muslim groups has, however, prompted some of the city's small Christian population to flee, said the Rev. Ferdinando, who leads the congregation at the Most Sacred Heart Catholic Church here. All but 15 of his 400 church members, most of them shopkeepers and of Chinese origin, were staying in Medan, the major city to the south, where they felt safer, he said.

"There is a fear by the Christians of the Muslims because in the past the Christians suffered," he said. "There is a fear that that suffering will happen again."

The Defenders group won high praise from the Aceh police after it found the body of one of the province's most senior police officers, Sayyed Husaini.

...Besides helping clean up the devastated city, Mr. Hilmy said he was planning to increase the Defenders' membership. Aceh is one of the most devout areas in Indonesia and Islamic law, or Shariah, is formally on the books, though not seriously practiced. Mr. Hilmy said it was a perfect place for recruitment (Perlez, J. 2005, 'Islamic Militants Volunteer to Aid Muslims in Indonesia', *New York Times*, 10 January <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/01/10/international/worldspecial4/10muslims.html?ex=1263099600&en=d8f4840dcf0f3f82&ei=5090&partner=rssuserland> – Accessed 6 February 2006 – Attachment 9).

Z Net's Andre Vltchek also commented on the effect of the arriving Islamist organisations on the ethnic Chinese:

Huge transport planes were sitting on runways all over Java, waiting for the order to take off – an order which never arrived.

Instead of employing professionals trained to cope with emergency situations, vice president Jusuf Kalla used military planes and commercial aircraft to shuttle Muslim militants (they called themselves "volunteers") from *Majelis Mujahedeen* Indonesia and Islamic Defenders Front (*Front Pembela Muslim* – better known as its acronym FPI – militant Muslim group from Jakarta devoted to enforcing Islamic law against drinking, gambling, and prostitution), a fact later reported by *The New York Times*. Then *Laskar Jihad*, one of the most militant Muslim groups in Southeast Asia made inroads into the province. Hundreds of Christians, mainly of Chinese origin, were forced to flee Aceh.

The presence of "volunteers" – directly sponsored by the government – had one main purpose: to secure Indonesian and religious order (already the strictest in entire Indonesia) in the province which was fighting for independence for almost thirty years, at enormous cost. Practically speaking, these untrained urbanites were only taking precious space in scarce flights to the province, although the propaganda machine fired the stories how some of them single-handedly managed to restore electric supplies and telecommunications in Banda Aceh (Vltchek, A. 2005 'Aceh Goes To Heaven!', Z Net website, 12 January <http://www.zmag.org/sustainers/content/2005-01/12vltchek.cfm> – Accessed 6 January 2006 – Attachment 10).

On 8 February 2005, *The Wall Street Journal's* Jay Solomon reported that many ethnic Chinese refugees from tsunami hit Aceh arrived in "Medan and Jakarta" to "tell stories of having their shops and homes looted, on top of the substantial damage wreaked by the powerful earthquake and ensuing waves". According to this report, some of Aceh's Chinese were already reported to be returning to Aceh but "[m]any refugees remain[ed] wary of looters and the threat of disease in Banda Aceh". A program to coordinate and finance the return of Aceh's displaced ethnic Chinese community to their homes was, at this time, being run by "Tolong Menolong – a Chinese self-help group...[which] is operating openly and working with the Indonesian military and government agencies". The article reports that "local Acehnese traders" were working with "ethnic-Chinese businessmen" to ensure the return of Aceh's Chinese community, whose presence is agreed to be fundamental to the restoration of the local Acehnese economy (although only a small fraction of the population "Chinese merchants are estimated to own 50% to 70% of [Banda Aceh's] private-sector businesses"). Pertinent extracts follow in detail:

The return of Aceh's Chinese business people is seen as essential to the province's recovery, say relief organizations and local officials. Although they make up less than 5% of the population of northern Sumatra, ethnic Chinese form the backbone of the entire region's distribution and trading networks. In Banda Aceh, Chinese merchants are estimated to own

50% to 70% of the private-sector businesses, and their companies direct the trade of essential goods like cooking oil, rice and coffee.

Thousands of Indonesia's Chinese fled Banda Aceh and the western coast of Aceh province to Medan and Jakarta in the days after the tsunami struck. Many tell stories of having their shops and homes looted, on top of the substantial damage wreaked by the powerful earthquake and ensuing waves. At least 1,000 ethnic Chinese died, according to Tolong Menolong.

... The process of returning begins at a process center in Tolong Menolong's main refugee complex where men wait in line to sign contracts. Many refugees remain wary of looters and the threat of disease in Banda Aceh. But men who sign pledges to go back will act as scouts to assess the damage. They are provided with cash, transportation and temporary shelter in Aceh's Buddhist temples. In return, they promise not to come back to live on Metal Street.

Lai Fuk Nyen, 60, is one scout preparing for his first visit to Banda Aceh since the tsunami. Mr. Lai didn't lose any close family members, but says his home and business were destroyed. He guardedly holds out hope that he can rebuild his construction business by winning some of the billions of dollars in contracts the Indonesian government is expected to offer to rebuild Aceh.

"If the Chinese people don't go back, the economy won't be functioning well," says Mr. Lai. "If they go back, there will be an improvement."

That sentiment is shared in Banda Aceh, where some ethnic-Chinese businessmen and local Acehnese traders are beginning to map reconstruction plans. The Dharma Bhatia Buddhist temple in the city's central business district serves as a kind of halfway house for Tolong Menolong's program (Solomon, J. 2005, 'Chinese Self-Help Group Assists Refugees in Rebuilding Lives', Aceh-Eye website, source: *Wall Street Journal*, 8 February http://www.aceh-eye.org/a-eye_news_files/a-eye_news_english/news_item.asp?NewsID=487 – Accessed 1 February 2006 – Attachment 1).

On 8 February 2005, *Agence France-Presse* reported that little remained of "Banda Aceh's more than 5,000 strong Chinese community" "after the death of an estimated 700 local Chinese people in the disaster, and the mass desertion of all but a handful to cities such as the Sumatra island's Medan". "Only 20 people [were] expected at the... Vihara Dharma Bhakti [Buddhist] temple, one of two Buddhist structures in Banda Aceh, for New Year prayers"; and Chinese New Year "fireworks and festivities [were kept] at a low key so as not to upset their dominant Muslim neighbours". Vihara Dharma Bhakti temple was "doubling as an ad-hoc relief centre" and "Muslim men and women, many wearing headscarves, queued in the incense-heavy air of the cluttered temple to receive aid packages containing bread, noodles, rice, water and salted fish". The report notes that Aceh's ethnic-Chinese have a strong sense of attachment to Banda Aceh and that Aceh was a haven of tolerance during the anti-Chinese violence of 1998; "[w]hile cities such as Jakarta and Medan were flashpoints, Chinese people in Banda Aceh, one of Indonesia's most devout Muslim regions, were left alone" ('No feasts or fireworks in Indonesia's Aceh as Chinese mark unhappy new year' 2005, *Terradaily* website, source: *Agence France-Presse*, 8 February <http://www.terraily.com/2005/050208012312.gio3r4jf.html> – Accessed 1 February 2006 – Attachment 3; see also: Eaton, D. & Nathalia, T. 2005, 'Aceh's Chinese usher in sad New Year', *swissinfo.com* website, source: *Reuters*, 9 February <http://www.swissinfo.org/sen/swissinfo.html?siteSect=143&sid=5525349> – Accessed 1 February 2006 – Attachment 8).

On 18 February 2005, *The Christian Science Monitor* reported that a Banda Aceh ethnic Chinese couple, who stayed after the Tsunami hit to defend their shop, were “bitter that police and military officers stood by as looters swept through the city’s trading district”. The report notes that Banda Aceh’s economy requires the return of its displaced ethnic Chinese community if it is to recover economically, and that this fact is recognized by the ethnic Acehnese people: “‘If they [the ethnic Chinese] don’t come back, the economy here will die,’ said Udin, a Muslim construction worker taking refuge in a Buddhist temple”. Relevant extracts follow in detail:

The two are part of Banda Aceh’s small ethnic Chinese minority. Unlike an estimated 6,000 other Chinese who left, they decided to stay behind in the city after the Dec. 26 tsunami that killed some 240,000 people in Indonesia.

Ethnic Chinese are the heart of Aceh’s trading community. How fast they return and set up shop will help determine the speed of recovery in the province hardest-hit by the tsunami.

Mrs. Herawati, whose family has survived wars, revolution, and persecution since migrating from China about a century ago, says she is determined to start business again, selling eyeglasses to the citizens of Banda Aceh.

In an interview last month, her husband recounts the story of standing guard on their shop’s roof over five days and nights while looters pillaged their neighbour’s deserted shops. “Either I was going to die, or they were going to die,” says Mr. Pandey. “People thought I was crazy.” The two are bitter that police and military officers stood by as looters swept through the city’s trading district.

...small ethnic Chinese businesses such as Joy Optik have formed a vital trading network linking economic sectors in Aceh, and indeed much of Southeast Asia. ...In Banda Aceh, ethnic Chinese own an estimated 60 percent of the shops and distribute everything from spare parts to business loans.

“If they [the ethnic Chinese] don’t come back, the economy here will die,” said Udin, a Muslim construction worker taking refuge in a Buddhist temple.

The temple, a few hundred yards from Joy Optik, is a way station for Tolong Menolong, an organization that has been helping Aceh’s estimated 200,000 ethnic Chinese. In the city of Medan, hundreds of Acehnese Chinese are living in a camp known as Metal Street, set up by the organization (McCawley, T. 2005, ‘Ethnic Chinese key to Aceh fix-up’ *Christian Science Monitor* website, 18 February <http://www.csmonitor.com/2005/0218/p06s01-wosc.html> – Accessed 1 February 2006 – Attachment 5).

In June 2004 *The China Daily* reported that, “[t]hree months after the disaster”, many more of Aceh’s ethnic Chinese community had begun to return to their homes from Medan”. A recently returned Chinese merchant informed the reporter that business in Aceh’s reviving Peunayong market had been brisk since his arrival, although there were problems of supply. The report notes the comments of an economist from Banda Aceh’s Syiah Kuala University on the importance of the local ethnic-Chinese community to Aceh’s recovery. The tolerant atmosphere of Aceh is also noted. Relevant extracts follow in detail:

Given their dominance in trade, the return of the minority group in the staunchly Muslim Aceh is seen as a key sign that the province is beginning to get back onto its feet after the destruction of the tsunami, which is believed to have killed about 220,000 people in Aceh.

“Their return is a sign that the economy is running again. They play a vital role in Aceh’s economic recovery,” Nazamuddin, an economist at Banda Aceh’s Syiah Kuala University, said.

...”We decided to return together because it’s hard to make a decent living in Medan,” said Budi Hartono, who owns an auto parts shop in the city’s once-bustling Peunayong market where 70 percent of stores were owned by Chinese.

Hartono said business had been booming since he reopened his shop a week ago but getting stock was a problem.

...Those who have chosen to re-build their lives in Banda Aceh have been allocated three rows of semi-permanent government houses in Peunayong.

...The Chinese community has had a troubled history in Indonesia and been the target of bouts of bloody communal violence, including during political and economic upheaval in the capital Jakarta in 1998 that led the downfall of President Suharto.

...The bitterness has mostly been absent from westernmost Aceh, though, and Chinese Indonesians have lived there in peace for decades. Gho Sui Hwa, a guardian of the Dharma Bhaktia Buddhist temple at Peunayong, said Chinese were returning to Aceh because they considered it home. “I was born here and many others were also born here. We want to play our part in the re-construction of Aceh,” he said (‘Return of entrepreneurs a sign of quake recovery’ 2005, *China Daily*, 4 June http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2005-04/06/content_431545.htm – Accessed 1 February 2006 – Attachment 15).

Pre – 2004 Asian Tsunami

The following source materials are discussed, for the most part, in reverse chronological order of publication.

CNN.com’s Amy Chew has reported that “many Chinese...fled to Aceh for shelter” “when Chinese became the target of mob violence during riots in several cities throughout Indonesia” in May 1998. While noting that the Acehnese are “staunchly Muslim”, the report observes that, nonetheless, Acehnese “society is pluralistic and minorities are well-accepted and protected” (Chew, A. 2002, ‘Aceh links to al Qaeda dismissed’, *CNN.com International* website, 14 July <http://edition.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/asiapcf/southeast/07/12/indo.aceh/> – Accessed 31 January 2006 – Attachment 16).

Nonetheless, on 31 August 1998, three months after the Jakarta riots of May 1998, Aceh experienced its own outbreak of anti-Chinese violence in “Lhokseumawe, a centre of Indonesia’s natural gas and petroleum industry”. According to an *Associated Press* report, of 4 September 1998, “about 100 ethnic Chinese were holed up...in military offices”, “[s]leeping on borrowed mattresses and too frightened to return home”, after “mobs burned buildings and looted Chinese-owned stores”. The *Associated Press* reported that that “[b]itterness toward the military triggered the riots, but the mobs turned on the ethnic Chinese, common scapegoats for the nation’s economic problems”. According to *The South China Morning Post*, Lhokseumawe displayed signs of a groundswell of ethno-sectarian feeling. The report describes “[g]raffiti on shop fronts that reads “Chinese dogs!” while “[o]ther shops display “Pure Acehnese” in bright green paint” with “Muslim prayer mats...on every locally owned shopfront in the town”. Other reports, however, suggest that the violence had an origin which was altogether different. Local Acehnese told *Reuters* that “the riots

were engineered by outsiders”. According to one resident, many of the rioters were unknown to the local populace, and the local students who participated in the attacks claimed to have been forced into the action by an unknown group of men. *The Jakarta Post* reported that “Munir of Kontras [had] said...that his organisation suspected the riots were masterminded to ensure the troops from outside the province were not withdrawn in order to safeguard the nearby huge Arun oil and gas field”. Local and national legislators had also come forward to voice their belief that the incident was masterminded by persons from outside Lhokseumawe. Troops fired on the crowds and “[a]t least two were killed in the riot and nine others [were] treated in the hospital for bullet wounds”; “Antara identified the two as Amiruddin bin Jali, 18, of Banda Sakti district and Khalil bin Idris, 20, a resident of the Meurah Mulia district” (‘Indonesia’s Chinese face more terror Mobs turn on minority as scapegoat for the nation’s economic woes’ 1998, *The Globe and Mail*, source: *Associated Press*, 4 September – Attachment 17; ‘Armed soldiers protect shopkeepers looking for sanctuary in aftermath of rioting – Fearful Chinese go into hiding’ 1998, *South China Morning Post*, 3 September – Attachment 18; ‘Troops keep tight grip on Indonesia’s Aceh’ 1998, *Reuters News*, 3 September – Attachment 19; ‘Legislator suspects Aceh riot was masterminded’ 1998, *The Jakarta Post*, 4 September – Attachment 20; see also: ‘Ethnic Chinese in Aceh “too frightened” to return home’ 1998, *BBC Monitoring Service: Asia-Pacific*, source: *Radio Australia* (3 September 1998), 5 September – Attachment 21).

The possible involvement of the military in the unrest which affected Lhokseumawe was noted by Human Rights Watch in its *World Report 1999*:

In August, General Wiranto apologized to the people of Aceh for the abuses they had suffered and declared the “DOM” status revoked. But on September 2, as troops began to leave from the city of Lhokseumawe, popular anger boiled over. Violence directed against the departing soldiers soon turned into a more general riot, amid accusations that the rioting had been sparked by the military elements themselves to ensure their continued presence in Aceh (where some had lucrative commercial operations) (Human Rights Watch 1999, *World Report 1999 – Indonesia and East Timor* – Attachment 22).

Less recently, in 1966, thousands of Aceh’s ethnic Chinese were forcibly deported as suspected communists during the crackdown on the Indonesian Communist Party (*Partai Komunis Indonesia*, or PKI) which followed the Suharto coup of 1965. “Having seized power, the Suharto regime froze diplomatic ties with China and its more rabid elements attacked ethnic Chinese as an unpatriotic ‘fifth column’. In Aceh in 1966 and West Kalimantan in late 1967, tens of thousands of Chinese were driven from their homes”. The violence was not, however, restricted solely to Indonesia’s ethnic Chinese. The International Crisis Group (ICG) has noted that “[t]here is [a] widespread myth [that] ethnic Chinese bore brunt of killings. While [it is] true that Soeharto accused [the] People’s Republic of China of backing [a] “fifth column” of Indonesian Chinese, ethnic Chinese probably do not account for more than 2,000 of hundreds of thousands killed. Most were ethnic Javanese and Balinese” (Symonds, P. 1998, ‘Behind Indonesia’s anti-Chinese riots’, World Socialist website, 14 February <http://www.wsws.org/news/1998/feb1998/indones.shtml> – Accessed 3 February 2006 – Attachment 11; ‘Conflict history: Indonesia’ 2005, International Crisis Group, 3 October <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=3630&l=1> – Accessed 3 February 2006 – Attachment 12).

Columbia University’s John Bresnan provides the following picture of how the events of 1967 affected Indonesia’s Chinese community and the Chinese of Aceh in particular. Bresnan recounts how, “in Aceh, ...an overzealous army commander ordered the entire community of

several thousand Chinese-Indonesians out of the province. These hapless people were stranded in the port city of Medan for several years.” The relevant extract follows in detail:

The most curious misunderstanding of the whole tragic affair, however, is the continuing belief in the West that primarily Chinese and Indonesians of Chinese descent died in the killings. Both groups have long been objects of attack in periods of social unrest in Indonesia, and 1965 was no exception. Their schools were closed, and their shops and even homes were ransacked in many towns. But Chinese-Indonesians were not prominent among the members of the Indonesian Communist Party, unlike the situation in neighbouring Malaysia. Chinese also were not present in any large number in the countryside after 1959, when a presidential decree ordered resident aliens out of the villages as part of a program to reduce their role as middlemen in the economy. Later efforts to calculate the number of Chinese victims have yielded estimates as low as two thousand. Alien Chinese and Chinese-Indonesians undoubtedly lived in great fear for many months, and close to 10,000 opted to leave the country in 1966-67. But the violence was largely to property, and the number who left Indonesia was not to be compared with the estimated 100,000 who left in 1959-60.

The impression abroad might have resulted from press reports of the ransacking of the embassy and other property of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in Jakarta. The press also reported the anti-Chinese action in Aceh, where an overzealous army commander ordered the entire community of several thousand Chinese-Indonesians out of the province. These hapless people were stranded in the port city of Medan for several years, refugees in their own country. The Chinese government carried two shiploads of them to China before official relations collapsed and it became impossible to continue the rescue effort. Christian churches looked after the rest until the matter was finally taken up by higher authorities. The army commander’s order was reversed, at least in practice, and the people were permitted to return to Aceh (Bresnan, J 1993, ‘Chapter 1: The Coup That Failed’, *Managing Indonesia: The Modern Political Economy*, Columbia International Affairs Online website <http://www.ciaonet.org/book/bresnan/bresnan11.html> – Accessed 3 February 2006 – Attachment 13).

2. Is there material indicating that GAM specifically targets ethnic Chinese and, if so, that this is an ongoing problem given recent developments?

Executive Summary

Only two reports could be located which specifically detailed attacks by *Gerakan Aceh Merdeka* (Free Aceh Movement, or GAM; also: the Aceh Sumatra National Liberation Front, or ASNLF) on ethnic Chinese persons or interests in Aceh. The first, a July 2002 article by the ICG’s Sidney Jones, refers to the kidnapping of an ethnic Chinese woman at a time when GAM was practicing extortion with greater frequency. Jones argues that the ethnic Chinese woman was targeted by the GAM guerrillas because of the assumed wealth of Aceh’s ethnic Chinese. In the second instance, a 1992 *Inside Indonesia* article, it was reported that members of GAM operating in the East Aceh District had attacked certain ethnic Chinese business interests which they believed were working with the Javanese establishment to facilitate logging operations that exploited Acehnese resources and which economically marginalised the local Acehnese community. Information was also located which indicated that Aceh’s ethnic Chinese community have been actively antagonistic towards the GAM movement; with reports of Aceh’s ethnic Chinese staging a pro-Jakarta anti-GAM rally on 4 August 2003 (for the Sidney Jones report, see: Jones, S. 2002, ‘The key step for peace is ending corruption Indonesia’s Aceh rebellion’, *International Herald Tribune*, 23 July – Attachment 23; for the *Inside Indonesia* report, see: ‘Growing Money on Trees’, 1992, *Inside Indonesia*, June –

Attachment 24; reports of Aceh's ethnic Chinese staging a pro-Jakarta ant-GAM rally on 4 August 2003, see: 'Aceh Indonesians of Chinese descent voice support for government' 2003, *Xinhua News Agency*, 4 August – Attachment 25; see also: 'Chinese Acehnese Ready to Help Uproot Separatist Movement' 2003, Organisation of Asia-Pacific News Agencies, 4 August – Attachment 26).

Nonetheless, expert commentators on the Aceh conflict, such as Edward Aspinall and Damien Kingsbury, have tended to emphasise GAM's acceptance of all other ethnic and cultural groups with the exception of Javanese transmigrant communities. According to these commentators, the predominantly ethnic Acehnese and Muslim GAM cadres see tolerance of other cultures, ethnicities and religions as an integral aspect of the ethnic Acehnese Muslim identity and of Aceh's nationalist ideology (this is set against what Acehnese see as the intolerant form of Islam practiced by the Javanese other). One of GAM's commanders has even claimed that GAM has ethnic Chinese supporters and that GAM would accept ethnic Chinese into its ranks should they wish to join them (although he states there are no such members at present) (for examples of GAM experts who see the separatists as tolerant of the ethnic Chinese but antipathetic towards Javanese transmigrants, see: Aspinall, E. 2002, 'Modernity, History and Ethnicity: Indonesian and Acehnese Nationalism in Conflict', *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs*, vol.36. no.1, pp.18-22 – Attachment 27; and also: Kingsbury, D. 2002, 'With Aceh's guerrillas', *Inside Indonesia* website, January–March <http://www.insideindonesia.org/edit69/damien.htm> – Accessed 1 February 2006 – Attachment 28; for the GAM commander's discussion of ethnic Chinese support, see: Vltchek, A. 2005, 'Aceh: Take Action Now', *Z Net* website, 30 May http://www.zmag.org/content/print_article.cfm?itemID=7975§ionID=1 – Accessed 6 February 2006 – Attachment 29).

The relationship between Aceh's ethnic Chinese population and the GAM movement would thus appear to be largely dependent upon circumstance and host to any number of discontinuities. With this in mind, it would, nonetheless, seem probable that the success of the recent peace process (which has seen a reduction in episodes of conflict and of the practice of extortion) will mean that those circumstances which have led to the targeting of ethnic Chinese by GAM will be reduced; resulting in an altogether safer security environment for all concerned for so long as the current conditions continue to hold (for information on the peace process and the current security situation in Aceh, see: International Crisis Group 2005, *Aceh: So Far, So Good*, 13 December http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/asia/indonesia/b044_aceh_so_far_so_good.pdf – Accessed 2 February 2006 – Attachment 30).

Note: Information was also located which indicated that some "officials" accused GAM of being "behind [the] anti-Chinese attacks" which erupted in Lhokseumawe, Aceh, on 31 August 1998. But, as this source itself notes, and as the many aforementioned reports have addressed, there seems to exist a far greater degree of belief that the Indonesian military, rather than GAM or the local Acehnese, were responsible for the violence which erupted at this time (see: Center for International Development and Conflict Management 1999, 'Chinese in Indonesia', *asylumlaw.org* website, source: University of Maryland website, 23 April http://www.asylumlaw.org/docs/indonesia/mdu99_indonesia_chinese.pdf – Accessed 2 February 2006 – Attachment 31).

Source Materials

The following source materials are discussed, for the most part, in reverse chronological order of publication.

The ICG's most recent report on the state of the peace process (released 13 December 2005) makes no mention of any information that would suggest that GAM are specifically targeting the region's ethnic Chinese. It is, however, reported that the re-integration of former GAM fighters into the community has unnerved the supporters of some anti-separatist militias; who have avoided their own neighbourhoods since the return of disarmed GAM fighters. The ICG has underlined the need to ensure that such returned fighters are successfully re-integrated into the community: "the danger in the long term is that bored or jobless ex-combatants will turn to crime or seek to resume fighting". Nonetheless, the ICG reports approvingly of the manner in which the GAM leadership has sought to end the practice of extortion which formerly helped to finance GAM's operations during the conflict. According to the ICG, GAM is "stamping out the practice of collecting war taxes" and has "itself 'arrested'" "a young man found collecting *pajak nanggro* in Jeunieb, purportedly on behalf of GAM". All in all, the ICG takes a very optimistic view of the current situation, and although "[n]ine shootouts have taken place since the signing of the peace agreement, with two deaths", the ICG is of the opinion that nothing "serious enough to threaten the peace" has occurred: GAM "have turned in the required number of weapons" and "[t]he Indonesian military (*Tentara Nasional Indonesia*, TNI) has withdrawn troops on schedule" (International Crisis Group 2005, *Aceh: So Far, So Good*, 13 December http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/asia/indonesia/b044_aceh_so_far_so_good.pdf – Accessed 2 February 2006 – Attachment 30).

On 23 June 2005 it was reported that "[s]hots...fired at a Red Cross vehicle in Indonesia's tsunami-ravaged Aceh province" had resulted in the "wounding [of] a female Chinese delegate in the neck". GAM denied have anything to with the incident and it was reportedly unclear whether the Red Cross delegate "was shot in a cross fire incident, or by the military, guerrillas or bandits" ('Red Cross worker from China shot in Indonesia's Aceh' 2005, *China Daily*, 23 June http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2005-06/23/content_453999.htm – Accessed 1 February 2006 – Attachment 32).

On 30 May 2005, *Z Net*'s Andre Vltchek discussed GAM's relationship with non-ethnic-Acehnese, and non-Muslim, persons living in the region with "one of the military leaders of GAM – commander Nasir – who is in charge of the area of Banda Aceh and Aceh Besar". The GAM commander informed Vltchek that GAM "have no atheists and no Christians among our fighters, but we have many supporters who are Chinese or Christians. If any of them would choose to join us, we would have no problems accepting them". The relevant extract follows:

I ask commander Nasir, whether GAM is religious or a secular guerilla force?

"We are definitely not a religious movement, although since this is Aceh, most of us are Muslims. We have no atheists and no Christians among our fighters, but we have many supporters who are Chinese or Christians. If any of them would choose to join us, we would have no problems accepting them. As for the ideology: we are training our fighters in the Acehnese ideology. It means that we give them the Acehnese identity, we teach them our language, our culture and our history" (Vltchek, A. 2005, 'Aceh: Take Action Now', *Z Net* website, 30 May http://www.zmag.org/content/print_article.cfm?itemID=7975§ionID=1 – Accessed 6 February 2006 – Attachment 29).

On 4 August 2003, it was reported by China's *Xinhua News Agency* that "[t]housands of Indonesians of Chinese descent living in the rebellious province of Aceh expressed their support on Monday for the government's efforts to crush rebellion of the separatist Free Aceh

Movement (GAM) in the westernmost province” (‘Aceh Indonesians of Chinese descent voice support for government’ 2003, *Xinhua News Agency*, 4 August – Attachment 25; see also: ‘Chinese Acehnese Ready to Help Uproot Separatist Movement’ 2003, Organisation of Asia-Pacific News Agencies, 4 August – Attachment 26).

In July 2002, the ICG’s Sidney Jones noted a June 2002 incident in which “[a] group of [GAM] guerrillas took an ethnic Chinese woman off a bus...thinking because she was Chinese, she must be rich (she wasn’t)”. According to Jones, GAM had “stepped up kidnappings for ransom” at this time and the GAM guerrillas who abducted the Chinese woman “held her until her family came up with the equivalent of \$3,500”. Jones’s comments on this incident, and on GAM’s involvement with extortion and criminality, follow below:

Shopkeepers have to pay protection money to both the police and the Free Aceh Movement, known by its Indonesian acronym as GAM. It has stepped up kidnappings for ransom: A group of guerrillas took an ethnic Chinese woman off a bus last month, thinking because she was Chinese, she must be rich (she wasn’t).

The gang held her until her family came up with the equivalent of \$3,500. Criminal thugs have reportedly joined GAM because it offers new opportunities for extortion, while the GAM leadership hit hard by the military offensive under way for more than a year does not appear to be particularly selective about recruits (Jones, S. 2002, ‘The key step for peace is ending corruption Indonesia’s Aceh rebellion’, *International Herald Tribune*, 23 July – Attachment 23).

Human Rights Watch has made similar comments with regard to the relationship between GAM, criminality and the practice of extortion:

GAM, for its part, uses within its forces some young men whose main motivation appears to be less the struggle for independence than the possibilities for extortion that possession of a gun opens up. One GAM official told Human Rights Watch that, as a matter of policy, only the wealthy and government civil servants were targeted for extortion (he used the English word). That same day, however, Human Rights Watch learned of an incident in Aceh Besar district in which a young man with a gun tried to extort money and seize a motorcycle from an NGO, and was only stopped from doing so when a staff member of the NGO telephoned a GAM leader he knew to protest (Human Rights Watch 2001, *Indonesia: the War in Aceh*, Vol. 13, No. 4, August, p.6 <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2001/aceh/indacheh0801.pdf> – Accessed 1 February 2006 – Attachment 33).

CNN.com’s Amy Chew has reported that GAM has worked to keep militant Islamist organisations out of Aceh on the grounds that such organisations have incited sectarian violence in other regions of Indonesia. Relevant extracts follow in detail:

Earlier this year, GAM stopped the militant Laskar Jihad – who waged a holy war against Christians in the eastern Maluku islands – from entering Aceh to stage a rally on the grounds of protecting the province from religious incitement.

...Asked if any GAM members went to Afghanistan to fight against the US during the war last year, Kamaruzzaman [a GAM spokesman] said: “Of course not. We are very rational people and we do not believe in such things even though we are Muslims. Those who went there were Javanese.”

While Aceh is staunchly Muslim and Islamic law was implemented in January as part of the government’s promise to grant greater autonomy to the province, the society is pluralistic and minorities are well-accepted and protected.

In May 1998, when Chinese became the target of mob violence during riots in several cities throughout Indonesia, many Chinese from the neighbouring city of Medan fled to Aceh for shelter.

“It is not in the Acehnese character to be racist. We mix freely and are open to all races, not just now but from centuries ago, from the time of the sultanate,” said Kamaruzzaman (Chew, A. 2002, ‘Aceh links to al Qaeda dismissed’, *CNN.com International* website, 14 July <http://edition.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/asiapcf/southeast/07/12/indo.aceh/> – Accessed 31 January 2006 – Attachment 16).

In 2002, Edward Aspinall (then of the University of Sydney, now of the Australian National University) observed that GAM’s separatist identity, and the ideology of Acehnese nationalism generally, is constructed through a variety of “ethnocultural and multicultural” discourses which, while appearing distinct, may also intertwine: “while GAM presents the clearest ethnocultural vision of the various Acehnese nationalist groups, the organisation’s leaders frequently claim to be tolerant of ethnic and religious diversity, pointing to Islamic and Acehnese traditions of tolerance dating back to the era of the sultanate”. “Nationalist Acehnese students” interviewed by Aspinall “in early 2001 were adamant that a distinct Acehnese national identity existed”. “However, they did not depict Acehnese national identity in narrowly ethnic terms”, “[o]n the contrary, it was a source of pride for many that the Acehnese population is, in their view, a polyglot mixture descended from Arabic, Indian, Chinese and Malay ancestors; ...they argued that there had been no anti-Chinese violence in Aceh during the spate of such riots which occurred in other parts of the country in 1998”. Nonetheless, Aspinall also notes that, while “GAM presents its appeal to the outside world largely in secular terms, it is apparent at the village level it is largely presented in an Islamic idiom, involving condemnation of the impious and barbaric behaviour of the rulers”. A discursive investment which has contributed to the “othering of the Indonesian government” and of the “Javanese transmigrants in Aceh, who have been subjected to significant violence since 1998, with large numbers being killed, terrorized or forced to leave the province by armed groups claiming GAM affiliation” (Aspinall, E. 2002, ‘Modernity, History and Ethnicity: Indonesian and Acehnese Nationalism in Conflict’, *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs*, vol.36. no.1, pp.18-22 – Attachment 27). (RRT Library)

Deakin University’s Damien Kingsbury – who acted as an advisor to GAM during the 2005 peace negotiations – has also noted that Aceh’s ethnic Chinese community are not a target of GAM aggression; in stark contrast to GAM’s attitude towards ethnic Javanese transmigrants to Aceh:

Aceh has a devout and usually tolerant form of Islam. The ethnic Chinese and Christian Bataks have lived in peace with their Islamic neighbours since the 1980s. Having said that, there is little tolerance for Javanese transmigrants, who have been attacked by the ASNLF [the Aceh Sumatra National Liberation Front; more popularly known as Gerakan Aceh Merdeka, or GAM]. The ASNLF claims that it has only attacked Javanese militias, although the question of who is a combatant has become blurred in Aceh (Kingsbury, D. 2002, ‘With Aceh’s guerrillas’, *Inside Indonesia* website, January–March <http://www.insideindonesia.org/edit69/damien.htm> – Accessed 1 February 2006 – Attachment 28).

Human Rights Watch provides the following appreciation of the nature of the targeting of ethnic Javanese transmigrants in Aceh by GAM members:

While there is some understanding by both sides that civilian lives and property should be respected, neither party to the conflict has much appreciation of the requirements of international humanitarian law. ...Some GAM officials, for their part, saw nothing wrong with their organisation's forcible expulsions of ethnic Javanese from Aceh. GAM leaders clearly understood the army's torching of entire villages in retaliation for an attack by their forces on a military truck or convoy as unacceptable collective punishment; they did not see their policies toward ethnic Javanese – explained as resulting from the need to prevent the Indonesian government from using Javanese as spies or militia members – in the same light (Human Rights Watch 2001, *Indonesia: the War in Aceh*, Vol. 13, No. 4, August, p.7 <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2001/aceh/indacheh0801.pdf> – Accessed 1 February 2006 – Attachment 33).

An editorial piece published in *The Jakarta Post* in 2001 observes that the conflict in Aceh has not been characterised by the kind of sectarian violence that has so dominated security crises in other parts of Indonesia:

Yet it is not an Islamic war. As a couple of GAM officials separately pointed out, Christian Chinese and Bataks still live comfortably within Aceh's predominantly formal Islamic society without harassment, without having their homes or churches or shops burned. By comparison, in recent times Christian churches and homes had been burned in Java, and (usually Christian) ethnic Chinese women systematically raped ('US War on terrorism may prove tragic for Aceh' 2001, *The Jakarta Post* website, 3 October 2001 <http://www.thejakartapost.com/yesterdaydetail.asp?fileid=20011003.C03> – 05 October 2001 – Attachment 34).

According to chronology of anti-Chinese violence in Indonesia, produced by the University of Maryland's Center for International Development and Conflict Management (CIDCM), some "officials" accused GAM of being "behind [the] anti-Chinese attacks" which erupted in Lhokseumawe, Aceh, on 31 August 1998. The chronology also notes that "the Commission on Disappearances and Violence, [stated that it possesses] documentation that shows that the military engineered riots in Aceh to justify reversing a troop withdrawal". The relevant entries follow:

31 August 1998: Some Chinese businesses are attacked during two days of rioting by some 2000 people in Aceh. The riots erupted as troops were leaving the region in which a separatist insurgency is being waged by the Aceh Merdeka rebel organization. The troop withdrawal is subsequently reversed (Deutsche Presse- Agentur, 09/02/98).

3 September 1998: Officials state that there are strong indications that the Aceh Merdeka was behind anti- Chinese attacks during recent rioting in the region. Riots have also occurred in the Aceh Timur district where Chinese shops were vandalized (Deutsche Presse-Agentur, 09/03/98).

8 September 1998: ...A human rights group, the Commission on Disappearances and Violence, says it has documentation that shows that the military engineered riots in Aceh to justify reversing a troop withdrawal. Two people died when police fired on the crowds (Center for International Development and Conflict Management 1999, 'Chinese in Indonesia', [asylumlaw.org website](http://www.asylumlaw.org/docs/indonesia/mdu99_indonesia_chinese.pdf), source: University of Maryland website, 23 April http://www.asylumlaw.org/docs/indonesia/mdu99_indonesia_chinese.pdf – Accessed 2 February 2006 – Attachment 31).

In June 1992 *Inside Indonesia* reported that members of GAM operating in the East Aceh District felt resentment towards the ethnic Chinese business interests who they believed to be working with the Javanese establishment to facilitate logging operations that exploited

Acehnese resources and which economically marginalised the local Acehnese community. Relevant extracts follow in detail:

In 1990 there were a number of attacks on logging trucks in East Aceh District that were said to have been carried out by local Acehnese people.[sic] Trucks were waylaid and burnt, and on at least one occasion a truck's crew was killed. It is highly probable that the company which owned the logging trucks and which operated the logging concession was based in Medan and owned by non-Acehnese. Acehnese nationalists state that many of the logging companies which operate in Aceh are controlled by Chinese businessmen, working in close conjunction with Javanese officials and that this is not serving Aceh's interests.

The control of natural resource exploitation industries, such as logging, by outside interests was a major cause of resentment among the Acehnese people, especially in East Aceh District. Large-scale plantation agriculture could also be a source of discontent. As well as closing off forest and pasture land to use by local villagers, such operations mainly employed people from other ethnic groups, such as Bataks and Javanese. There were not many economically positive factors for local village people from the intrusion of such highly commercial activities into Aceh. However, there were many economic negatives such as degradation of the environment, which often resulted in more severe flooding, as well as a loss of space for traditional economic activities such as herding, small scale logging, and subsistence agriculture.

Areas of East Aceh District were a key stronghold of the Free Aceh movement in the serious troubles of 1990, and one of the reasons for local support was the movement's strong stance against transmigrants and outsiders in general, particularly Javanese. Free Aceh members believed that the government was deliberately encouraging the migration of outsiders into the vulnerable border areas of the Acehnese ethnic group with the intention of making Acehnese people an increasingly marginalised minority in their own homeland. They also believed that the government was serving the interests of Chinese controlled business groups working in conjunction with a privileged class of largely Javanese officials. There were many deaths in East Aceh District in 1990, the majority of them attributable to harsh counter insurgency activity carried out by forces connected to the Indonesian military ('Growing Money on Trees', 1992, *Inside Indonesia*, June – Attachment 24).

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Non-Government Organisations

Amnesty International website <http://www.amnesty.org/>

asylumlaw.org website <http://www.asylumlaw.org/>

Human Rights Watch (HRW) website <http://www.hrw.org/>

International News & Politics

Asia News website <http://www.asianews.it>

BBC News (World Edition) website <http://news.bbc.co.uk/>

Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Jakarta <http://www.csis.or.id>

The China Daily website <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/home/index.html>

The Christian Science Monitor website <http://www.csmonitor.com>

CNN.com International website <http://edition.cnn.com/>

Inside Indonesia website <http://www.insideindonesia.org>

Jakarta Post website <http://www.thejakartapost.com>

The New York Times website <http://www.nytimes.com/>

Xinhua News Agency website <http://www3.xinhuanet.com/english/>

Z Net website <http://www.zmag.org/>

Region Specific Links

Aceh.Net website <http://www.aceh.net/>

The Aceh Times website <http://www.achehtimes.com/>

Aceh-Eye website <http://www.aceh-eye.org>

Search Engines

All the Web search engine <http://www.alltheweb.com>

Google search engine <http://www.google.com.au/>

Internet Archive WayBackMachine search engine <http://www.archive.org/>

Online Subscription Services

Columbia International Affairs Online website <http://www.ciaonet.org/>

University Sites

University of Maryland – Centre for International Development and Conflict Management (CIDCM) website <http://www.cidcm.umd.edu>

Databases:		
Public	<i>FACTIVA</i>	Reuters Business Briefing
DIMIA	<i>BACIS</i>	Country Information
	<i>REFINFO</i>	IRBDC Research Responses (Canada)
RRT	<i>ISYS</i>	RRT Country Research database, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, US Department of State <i>Country Reports on Human Rights Practices</i> .
RRT Library	<i>FIRST</i>	RRT Library Catalogue

List of Attachments

1. Solomon, J. 2005, 'Chinese Self-Help Group Assists Refugees in Rebuilding Lives', Aceh-Eye website, source: *Wall Street Journal*, 8 February. (http://www.aceh-eye.org/a-eye_news_files/a-eye_news_english/news_item.asp?NewsID=487 – Accessed 1 February 2006)
2. 'General Info About Aceh' undated, Aceh-Eye website. (http://www.aceh-eye.org/data_files/english_format/general_info/general_info_gouvernement-eng/general-info_statistics_data-eng.html – Accessed 6 February 2006)
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