Questions

1. Please provide information on the current situation for people of Chinese ethnicity in Bandung, West Java, and Indonesia generally?

2. Please provide information on the current situation for Catholics in Bandung, West Java, and Indonesia generally?

RESPONSE

1. Please provide information on the current situation for people of Chinese ethnicity in Bandung, West Java, and Indonesia generally?

No information could be located on the current situation for people of Chinese ethnicity in Bandung specifically, or in the province of West Java. The following information relates to the position of people of Chinese ethnicity in Indonesia generally.

According to the 2007 US Department of State (USDOS) Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Indonesia, the Indonesian government “officially promotes racial and ethnic tolerance”. The report goes on to state that “[i]nstances of discrimination and harassment of ethnic Chinese continued to decline compared with previous years”, and that “[r]ecent reforms increased religious and cultural freedoms”. Nonetheless, the USDOS reports claims from ethnic Chinese Indonesians that they are discriminated against by public servants and that Indonesian law continues to discriminate against ethnic Chinese citizens:

The government officially promotes racial and ethnic tolerance. Ethnic Chinese accounted for approximately 3 percent of the population, by far the largest non-indigenous minority group, and played a major role in the economy. Instances of discrimination and harassment of ethnic Chinese continued to decline compared with previous years. Recent reforms increased religious and cultural freedoms. However, some ethnic Chinese noted that public servants still
discriminated against them when issuing marriage licenses and in other services and often demanded bribes for a citizenship certificate, although such certificates were no longer legally required. An attorney advocate for the rights of ethnic Chinese noted 50 articles of law, regulation, or decree that discriminated against ethnic Chinese citizens. NGOs such as the Indonesia Anti Discrimination Movement urged the government to revoke the remaining discriminatory articles (US Department of State 2008, Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2007 – Indonesia, 11 March – Attachment 1).

The 2008 Freedom House report on Indonesia provides some information on ethnic Chinese:

Ethnic Chinese, who make up less than 3 percent of the population but are resented by some for reputedly holding the lion’s share of private wealth, continue to face some harassment and violence, though far less than in the late 1990s. They must show a citizenship card to obtain a passport, credit card, or business license, or to enroll a child in school – a requirement that makes them vulnerable to extortion by bureaucrats (Freedom House 2008, Freedom in the World – Indonesia (2008) – Attachment 2).

An April 2008 article from the website of the Indonesian human rights NGO TAPOL assesses the progress made in the treatment of ethnic Chinese Indonesian citizens in the post-Suharto era

It is universally accepted that one of the most important features of a healthy democracy is that it treats its minorities well. Applied to the Chinese minority in post-Suharto Indonesia, Indonesia has done quite well.

Let’s take several positive examples. Two laws were recently adopted in parliament, the Law on Citizenship in June 2006 and the Law on Citizens Administration in December 2006. Both laws were adopted Unanimously, recognising the fact that Chinese Indonesians are now legally recognised as ‘Indonesia asli’, native-born Indonesians.

…All the post-Suharto administrations have contributed to eradicating racist policies towards the Chinese. BJ Habibie scrapped more than a dozen racist regulations, a trend which was continued by subsequent administrations. Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) went even further, helping to revive Chinese festivities such as Imlek, the Chinese New Year, Cap Go Meh and Ceng Beng.

However, repealing policies is one thing but showing genuine sympathy for the Chinese is something quite different. At one point Gus Dur said casually that one of his ancestors, Tan Ka Lok, was Chinese, a significant gesture in siding with a minority. Megawati Sukarnoputri made Imlek an official holiday and President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY), who took office in 2004 has made it a habit to attend the official Confucian celebration of Imlek in the midst of the Chinese community. It is amazing how old traditions, despite oppression for more than a generation can be revived so easily.

...Statistics about the Chinese in Indonesia are notoriously inaccurate so let us use the figure of 10 to 12 million ethnic Chinese, used by most Chinese organizations. Name changes and the many inter-marriages have made it far more difficult to know the size of Chinese community in Indonesia. In the big cities, in particular in the capital Jakarta, the Chinese presence is enormous, possibly anything between 500,000 and 750,000. New Chinatowns have also mushroomed in suburban Jakarta.

Chinese Indonesians are the third largest ethnic group after the Javanese and Sundanese. Another universal paradigm, that groups which occupy a strong economic position are bound to exert significant political weight, is definitely valid for present-day Chinese Indonesians.
This has gradually emerged in post-Suharto Indonesia. There are now cabinet ministers of Chinese descent, senior civil servants, members of parliament, as well as elected district chiefs, mayors and even a vice-governor, in places with a sizeable Chinese community (Liong, L.S. 2008, ‘Celebrating Cap Go Meh in Tangerang’, TAPOL website, April http://tapol.gn.apc.org/reports/r080916.html – Accessed 15 December 2008 – Attachment 3).

The most recent research response providing information on ethnic Chinese in Indonesia was *RRT Research Response IDN33058*, of 28 March 2008 (RRT Research & Information 2008, *Research Response IDN33058*, 28 March – Attachment 4). *IDN33058* quotes a 2007 UNHCR report which suggests that the situation of ethnic Chinese citizens of Indonesia has improved since the late 1990s, reporting on “an easing of the legal, political, and social forms of discrimination, extortion, and persecution which this minority seemed to face in the late Suharto period and in the first years of transition to democratic rule”. The report also notes “the decline – indeed, the virtual disappearance – of incidents of violence against ethnic-Chinese Indonesians since the heyday of anti-Chinese riots in the mid-late 1990s”, and “a series of legal reforms and social and political changes which have allowed ‘Indonesian Chinese’ far greater freedoms of expression, association, and political activity” (Sidel, J. 2007, ‘Indonesia: Minorities, Migrant Workers, Refugees, and the New Citizenship Law’, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Status Determination and Protection Information Section, March, p3 http://www.unhcr.org/home/RSDCOI/461b52df4.pdf – Accessed 11 April 2007 – Attachment 5).


2. Please provide information on the current situation for Catholics in Bandung, West Java, and Indonesia generally?

**Catholics in Bandung and West Java**

Two July 2008 reports from the website of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) provide information on the ordination of the new bishop of Bandung. In these reports, there is a sense that the Catholic Church and its representatives are treading very carefully, emphasising outreach activities with Muslims and social activities aimed at helping those in poverty, regardless of religion or ethnicity, and minimising any references to proselytising activities in the region. The first of the reports, from 23 July and located on the CBCP website, states that in Bandung diocese, which “covers the major part of West Java province”, “Muslims form 96.5 percent of the 25.7 million local population and Catholics 0.4 percent”. The report puts the Catholic population of the diocese of Bandung at 101,718, in 23 parishes. In this article, the new bishop of Bandung is quoted to have “urged Catholics...to pursue interpersonal encounters and dialogue with Muslims and people of other religions”, and “that he will encourage Catholics to cooperate, associate and dialogue with all people, especially in tackling poverty”:

The new bishop of Bandung has urged Catholics, a tiny minority in his diocese southeast of Jakarta, to pursue interpersonal encounters and dialogue with Muslims and people of other religions.
Bishop Johannes Pujasumarta, 59, made the call on July 16 after his ordination and installation as bishop of the diocese, where Muslims form 96.5 percent of the 25.7 million local population and Catholics 0.4 percent.

Ethnically, 74 percent of the people are Sundanese, almost all of whom are Muslims, and 11 percent are Javanese. The rest are Chinese and various other ethnic groups that originate from other parts of Indonesia.

...The ceremony was held at Sasana Budaya Ganesha, a convention center in Bandung, about 120 kilometers southeast of Jakarta. The diocesan territory covers the major part of West Java province, its 101,718 Catholics living in 23 parishes.

...The new bishop told UCA News after the Mass that he will encourage Catholics to cooperate, associate and dialogue with all people, especially in tackling poverty, which he describes as “a common problem we must address together.”

Archbishop Girelli agreed the new bishop “should be ready to dialogue and be sensitive to inculturation, because the Catholic Church is always open to dialogue” (‘New Bishop Calls Catholics to Dialogue with Other Religions ‘In the Deep’” 2008, CBCP News website, 23 July http://www.cbcpnews.com/?q=node/3881 – Accessed 12 December 2008 – Attachment 8).

The second CBCP report, from 28 July and sourced from UCAN, the Union of Catholic Asian News, notes that “[s]ome Muslims fear the Church has a hidden agenda of proselytism behind its social work”, but quotes a Catholic spokesman who claims that the church “offers help without the intention to catholicise the Sundanese”, and that “the Church works together with Sundanese Muslims to run health centres”. This spokesman also claims that “[t]he bishop is not encouraging Catholics to proselytise Sundanese people”, and another Catholic priest from Bandung states that Sundanese “tradition makes it difficult for Sundanese to be Catholics” and that “[r]eligious conversion is a big problem for Sundanese” because “a convert can face rejection from his family”:

Provincial secretary Lek Laksamana, representing the governor, welcomed the prelate and expressed thanks to Pope Benedict XVI for the appointment, which ended local Catholics’ two-and-a-half year wait for a new bishop.

He asked the bishop and Catholics to join with other people in “creating a harmonious, tolerant and peaceful life in the province.”

Speaking with UCA News during the event, Yulianus Ruchiyat, secretary of the diocesan pastoral council, said the local Church is actively engaged with Sundanese people.

“Church-run social services are not just for Catholics,” he elaborated. “The diocesan socioeconomic commission runs a cooperative for all members of society. It provides training on farming, livestock breeding and working capital for all who need help.”

Some Muslims fear the Church has a hidden agenda of proselytism behind its social work, Ruchiyat acknowledged. But he insisted it “offers help without the intention to catholicise the Sundanese.” In order to avoid such accusations, he added, the Church works together with Sundanese Muslims to run health centres.

Crosier Father Markus Priyo Kushardjono, who administered the diocese while it had no bishop, told UCA News he hoped people would not misinterpret Bishop Pujasumarta’s
remarks in his first pastoral letter urging Catholics to “sow good seed” in Tatar Sunda (Sundanese land).

The pastoral letter, Sowing Good Seed (Matthew 13:24), was read out at July 19 and 20 Masses in all 23 parishes of the diocese. In it, the bishop said Pope Benedict XVI has given him the task to carry on the work started by the first missioners and continued by local Catholics.

The bishop is not encouraging Catholics to proselytise Sundanese people, Father Kushardjono said. “We welcome Sundanese to be Catholics, but we have no program to catholicise them. Our call is to bring people to salvation, to be the salt of the earth.”

H.R. Maulan, head of West Java’s Mosque Council of Indonesia, said he was impressed with the bishop’s friendliness and eagerness to understand the local situation. “I believe interreligious harmony can be realized in Tatar Sunda,” he said in remarks to UCA News.

Father Antonius Sulastijana of St. Melania Church in Bandung noted that of the 2,791 members of his parish, fewer than 10 are Sundanese, who converted to Catholicism because they married Catholics.

“The Sundanese hold firmly to their tradition, which is reflected in their saying, Islam teh Sunda, Sunda teh Islam (Islam is Sunda, Sunda is Islam). That tradition makes it difficult for Sundanese to be Catholics,” the priest admitted.


The Jakarta Post’s report on the inauguration of the new bishop states that “[h]is new assignment as Bandung bishop is expected to help promote religious tolerance in Bandung and its outskirts where minority Christian groups have been limited in their ability to practice their faith and build churches in the last decade” (‘Pujasumarta sworn in as Bandung bishop’ 2008, The Jakarta Post, 17 July http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2008/07/17/pujasumarta-sworn-bandung-bishop.html – Accessed 15 December 2008 – Attachment 20).

A December 2007 article in The Jakarta Post noted that “[i]n Bandung, some 100 interfaith figures from local Muslim, Protestant, Catholic, Hindu and Buddhist societies gathered at the city’s cathedral and distributed white roses to the members of the congregation, in an attempt to promote peace and harmony among followers of different faiths, news portal detik.com reported” (‘Christmas celebrated peacefully across RI’ 2007, The Jakarta Post, 26 December http://old.thejakartapost.com/yesterdaydetail.asp?fileid=20071226.@01 – Accessed 15 December 2008 – Attachment 21).

Another December 2007 article from The Jakarta Post states that the Indonesian “National Commission on Human Rights (Komnas-HAM) has said it will investigate reports on the increasing incidence of forced closings of churches”. According to this report, “leaders of the Communion of Indonesian Churches (PGI) and the Indonesian Bishops Conference (KWI)...submitted a list of 108 houses of worship, notably in West Java, which they said have been forcibly closed, ransacked, threatened or burned down since 2004”. The Catholic and Protestant leaders claimed that “Christians have difficulty performing religious duties...
due to intimidation”, and that “the strongest resistance to the presence of churches was in West Java province, where congregations using shops and homes as churches had been forced to close. Similar intimidation also forced long-existing churches to shut down, the report said”:

The National Commission on Human Rights (Komnas-HAM) has said it will investigate reports on the increasing incidence of forced closings of churches.

The commission will act on a complaint filed Friday by leaders of the Communion of Indonesian Churches (PGI) and the Indonesian Bishops Conference (KWI).

The Protestant and Catholic leaders submitted a list of 108 houses of worship, notably in West Java, which they said have been forcibly closed, ransacked, threatened or burned down since 2004.

Perpetrators range from local officials to such radical organizations as the Islam Defenders Front (FPI) and the Anti-Apostasy Alliance (AGAP), they said.

…Filing the complaint were PGI chief Rev. Andreas A. Yewangoe, and KWI chairman Bishop Mgr. Martinus D. Situmorang. They said that in many areas, Christians have difficulty performing religious duties due to intimidation.

“From 2004 to now, some 108 houses of worship have been requested and even forced to close,” said Andreas. He added people in some areas have been prohibited from performing their religious duties.

“It (church closure and intimidation) is a violation of both the right to freedom of religion and the right to express one’s religion or beliefs.”

Bishop Martinus said many churches had experienced frequent threats.

…The report filed with commissioners said the strongest resistance to the presence of churches was in West Java province, where congregations using shops and homes as churches had been forced to close. Similar intimidation also forced long-existing churches to shut down, the report said.

Different actors, the report said, have been involved in the effort to close the churches. In some area, the district executive assembly was deemed responsible, while in other areas, mass organizations such as FPI and AGAP (‘Rights body to investigate forced church closures’ 2007, The Jakarta Post, 15 December – Attachment 23).

A December 2007 article in The Straits Times reports the claims of “Mr Theophilus Bela, secretary-general of the Committee for Religious Peace”, who states that “more than 70 churches have either been closed down or have come under attack by extremist groups in the past 12 months”. According to Mr. Bela, “[m]ost were Protestant churches with small congregations located in West Java, but Catholic churches were also hit”. The Straits Times article also quotes Sidney Jones of the International Crisis Group in Jakarta, who states that “the concentration of militant activity in West Java is consistent with the area’s radical tradition, which dates back to the formation of the Darul Islam (Islamic State) movement in the 1950s”, and that “the apparent willingness of the authorities to turn a blind eye to the violence” is also a contributing factor to the anti-Christian violence:
Mr Theophilus Bela, secretary-general of the Committee for Religious Peace, told me last week that more than 70 churches have either been closed down or have come under attack by extremist groups in the past 12 months. Most were Protestant churches with small congregations located in West Java, but Catholic churches were also hit.

Radical Muslim groups involved in forcibly closing down churches include the Front Pembela Islam (Islam Defenders Front) and the Aliansi Gerakan Ant Pemurtadan (Anti-Apostasy Alliance). Their defence is that the buildings hit are not authorised for use as churches.

By law, Indonesian church groups must have a worship permit. But Christian leaders say a joint regulation issued by the Religious Affairs Ministry and the Home Affairs Minister last year makes it almost impossible to obtain one.

The rule stipulates that a house of worship can be built only if it is approved by at least 60 local residents and the congregation has at least 90 members. A separate building permit is also needed. But Christian leaders argue that, even when these rules are met, subdistrict heads are reluctant to grant the permit.

For this reason, many Christians worship in private homes or rented facilities, some of which have also come under attack.

Apart from general references to the growing influence of fundamentalist Islam, few observers can explain the recent surge in religiously motivated violence.

Ms Sidney Jones of the International Crisis Group in Jakarta says the concentration of militant activity in West Java is consistent with the area’s radical tradition, which dates back to the formation of the Darul Islam (Islamic State) movement in the 1950s.

Yet another factor, she argues, is the apparent willingness of the authorities to turn a blind eye to the violence (Gale, B. 2007, ‘Protecting Religious Minorities’, The Straits Times, 21 December – Attachment 22).

It may be of interest to note that, according to Wikipedia\(^1\), there is a Catholic University in Bandung, the Universitas Katolik Parahyangan (or Parahyangan Catholic University) (‘Universitas Katolik Parahyangan’ 2008, Wikipedia, 25 August http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universitas_Katolik_Parahyangan – Accessed 15 December 2008 – Attachment 33).

**Christians in Bandung and West Java**

An April 2008 report from BBC News notes that Christian congregations are being forced to use shopping malls for services, as “[a]ccording to Church groups more than 100 churches have faced attack or intimidation in the past two years” from Muslim groups. The report also states that “West Java has a strong history of Islamic activism”:

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\(^1\) Users should be aware that Wikipedia is a Web-based free-content encyclopaedia which is written collaboratively by volunteers. The Research Service recommends that users of Wikipedia familiarise themselves with the regulatory practices which Wikipedia employs as a preventative measure against vandalism, bias and inaccuracy. For more information, see the recommended background reading available in the Wikipedia Topical Information Package.
Shopping malls in West Java are home to a growing number of Christian congregations. There are 10 in this mall alone.

Few of them want to talk publicly about why they are here, but off the record they admit it comes down to intimidation by Muslim groups.

According to Church groups more than 100 churches have faced attack or intimidation in the past two years.

…One of the groups alleged to be behind some of these incidents is the FPI, or Islamic Defenders Front, a radical group that became a household name when it forced Playboy magazine out of Java.

Church leaders allege the group’s members are forcing churches to close through violence and intimidation.

…West Java has a strong history of Islamic activism.

For decades it was a stronghold of the radical Islamic group Darul Islam, and many areas still retain preachers with hard-line views.

Last November, Pasundan church was attacked by a group of local Muslims.

They threw out the pews and prayer books, and smashed anything else they could – including the cross hanging on the wall.

But Pastor Olbertina doesn’t believe this is simply a bureaucratic row.

“Sometimes I heard that the mosque is saying we are kaffirs, and we’re not allowed to stay here,” she told me.


A May 2008 article from The Jakarta Post reports on an arson attack on a church in Purwakarta, West Java, “by a mob of hundreds of locals angered by the conversion of [a] tile factory to a church”:

Police in West Java are questioning four people in connection with an arson attack on a church in Citeko village, Plered, Purwakarta.

The incident took place at about 11 p.m. on Tuesday. The church, run by the Abdi Karya Foundation (Yadika), occupies a building which used to be a tile factory.

Ten Yadika employees were placed in protective police custody.

Plered Police chief Adj. Comr. Asep Supriadi said the attack was carried out by a mob of hundreds of locals angered by the conversion of the tile factory to a church.

“It’s just a reaction by disgruntled residents who had lodged complaints which went unheeded,” Asep said in a phone interview Wednesday.
Citeko village chief Andri Yani said residents had voiced opposition to the church because the building was initially slated to be renovated as a school (Tri-Suwarmi, Y. 2008, ‘Residents burn down church in Purwakarta’, The Jakarta Post, 22 May http://www.thejakartapost.com/node/169637 – Accessed 15 December 2008 – Attachment 25).

A January 2008 article on the Indonesia Matters website notes that “members of the Himpunan Warga Gereja Indonesia (HAGAI), Indonesian Churchgoers Association, visited the offices of the National Human Rights Commission, (Komnas HAM) in Jakarta to complain about attacks against churches and Christian congregations around the country”. This report also quotes Sidney Jones on “why West Java was the scene of so many anti-Christian disturbances”, and she is quoted as stating that “one theory is that aggressive Protestant evangelicalism there has made inroads in strongly Muslim communities, creating fears of ‘Christianisation’”:

**Persecuted Churches Nationally**

On 14th January members of the Himpunan Warga Gereja Indonesia (HAGAI), Indonesian Churchgoers Association, visited the offices of the National Human Rights Commission, (Komnas HAM) in Jakarta to complain about attacks against churches and Christian congregations around the country.

Pastor Alma Shepard Supit of HAGAI said:

We’re asking that Komnas make very clear its position on religious freedom, that preventing people from performing their religious obligations is a violation of human rights.

The pastor said that in 2007 there were 18 cases of churches being attacked, or forced to close, or vandalised.

**…Why West Java (& Solo)?**

Indonesiast Sidney Jones wondered on 3rd January 2008 why West Java was the scene of so many anti-Christian disturbances (and not, presumably, East Java):

It is not clear why religious vigilantism has been such a problem in West Java.

And offered one possible explanation:

one theory is that aggressive Protestant evangelicalism there has made inroads in strongly Muslim communities, creating fears of “Christianisation”.

However she noted that deviant Islamic communities such as Ahmadiyah often suffer a worse fate in West Java (and perhaps are not seen as proselytizing like the evangelicals) (Patung 2008, ‘Persecuted Church’, Indonesia Matters website, 21 January http://www.indonesiamatters.com/1571/persecuted-churches/ – Accessed 15 December 2008 – Attachment 26).

A September 2007 article on the *AsiaNews.it* website reports an attack on “a domestic Church in the regency of Tangerang, 25 km from Jakarta”, in which “[t]he attackers gravely wounded the pastor and 6 of the faithful, circa 60 people, while they totally destroyed the community’s property”:

A group of over 300 Islamic extremists attacked a domestic Church in the regency of Tangerang, 25 km from Jakarta on September 2nd last. The attackers gravely wounded the
pastor and 6 of the faithful, circa 60 people, while they totally destroyed the community’s property. The attack took place while the faithful where gathered to celebrate Sunday service.

Jau Dolokseribu, pastor of the Protestant Churches of the Christian Synod is currently in hospital in a grave condition. According to early reports, the extremists attacked because the Christians were without permission to erect the domestic Church. In Indonesia, a complicated law governing the religions makes it very difficult for minority Churches to gain this permission, making it practically impossible for them to practice their faith (Hariyadi, M. 2007, ‘Domestic Church attacked, pastor and faithful injured’, AsiaNews.it website, 5 September [http://www.asianews.it/index.php?l=en&art=10218&size – Accessed 15 December 2008 – Attachment 27).

An April 2007 report on the Indonesia Matters website tells of a visit by “members of the Anti Apostasy Division (Divisi Anti Pemurtadan (DAP)) of the Forum Ulama Umat Indonesia” to a church in Bandung “to enquire whether the church had broken its agreement not to convert Muslims to Christianity”:

Dozens of members of the Anti Apostasy Division (Divisi Anti Pemurtadan (DAP)) of the Forum Ulama Umat Indonesia visited a Christian church (Gereja Kristen Pasundan (GKP)) on Kebon Jati road in Bandung on 4th April to enquire whether the church had broken its agreement not to convert Muslims to Christianity.

Suryana of the DAP said the church had agreed two years ago not to approach Muslims and this agreement had been signed by pastor Krisna from GKP and Muhammad Mu’min from another anti-apostasy group, the AGAP (Aliansi Gerakan Antipemurtadan).

However Suryana said the church had violated the agreement by converting some Muslims in the Garut and Pangauuban areas of Bandung. Each convert was given five million rupiah ($550) by the church, he said.

Pastor Krisna was not at the church when the DAP men arrived and a later meeting date has been agreed upon by both the church and the DAP at the West Bandung police station (Patung 2007, ‘Anti Apostasy’, Indonesia Matters website, 12 April [http://www.indonesiamatters.com/1220/apostate/ – Accessed 15 December 2008 – Attachment 28).

Also in April 2007, Indonesia Matters reported on claims made by a Muslim publication that Christians were conspiring to convert Muslims in a manner that was duplicitous and abusive. One example given was of “[a] well-organised gang of Christians at the Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI/IKIP) in Bandung pretend to be Muslims and succeed in converting several Muslim girls who had previously worn headscarfs” (Patung 2007, ‘Christianisation’, Indonesia Matters website, 18 April [http://www.indonesiamatters.com/1228/christianisation/ – Accessed 15 December 2008 – Attachment 29).

**Compass Direct News Reports**

3 reports from *Compass Direct News* provide information on the treatment of Christians in Bandung and West Java.

A July 2008 report relates the demolition of a church in Cimahi regency of Bandung district and also claims continued church closures in Bandung:
Public Order officials on June 26 demolished a church building in Cimahi regency of Bandung district, West Java, to make way for a new shopping mall and bus terminal after church leaders failed to convince authorities that they owned the land on which it was built.

Since the Indonesian Anglican Church of Cirebeum village was established in 1992 – with a letter of approval from 20 families in the immediate neighbourhood – courts have dealt with a succession of people claiming to be the rightful owners of the property. Even as the church building was demolished, a civil tribunal in Bandung district was considering a verdict on rightful ownership following a hearing on June 24.

Public Order officials on June 26 arrived at the site with a demolition order issued by the mayor of Cimahi regency. They proceeded to demolish the building – first breaking and removing furniture before bulldozing the structure. As pastor Raman Saragih tried to stop them, one of the men hit him in the face and chest. Several others then joined in until another church member intervened.

Saragih and his church members are pursuing legal action against the Cimahi government – but it will be too late to save their church building, which now lies in ruins.

At the same time, the Islamic Defender’s Front (FPI), a sub-group of the Anti-Apostasy Alliance Movement (AGAP), has continued to forcibly close churches in Bandung district, citing the lack of necessary worship permits.


A February 2008 report provides information on the imprisonment of three Christian women in West Java for allowing Muslim children to attend their Sunday school (with the consent of their parents) and thus “using deceit to “Christianise” Muslim children”. The report claims that “the influence of Islamic radicals is all too evident, restricting freedom of worship for Christians throughout the province”, and that “[r]adicals forced at least 60 unregistered house churches to close in West Java in 2005, with closures peaking during the Sunday school teachers’ trial in late June, July and August”:

Almost eight months have passed since Dr. Rebekka Zakaria, Eti Pangesti and Ratna Bangun walked free from a prison in Indramayu, West Java, having served two years of a three-year sentence for allegedly using deceit to “Christianise” Muslim children.

Nobody has issued death threats against the women since then, Zakaria told Compass. All three women have settled back into the village of Harguelis and resumed their normal lives to some degree. But the influence of Islamic radicals is all too evident, restricting freedom of worship for Christians throughout the province.

…West Java is home to several radical Muslim groups, including the Anti-Apostasy Movement Alliance. Radicals showed up in force at the trial hearings, waving banners, shouting death threats and warning the judges that blood would be shed if they did not issue a guilty verdict.
Fearing intimidation from such groups, moderate Muslims are reluctant to give written consent for church applications.

Many congregations in West Java have fewer than 90 members. Most live in Muslim-dominated communities – Indramayu, for example, is 99 percent Muslim. In practice, this means it is impossible for most churches in the province to apply for a permit.

“Even if a church meets all the requirements and hands in an application, officials may not bother to read it,” another local source, who preferred to remain anonymous, told Compass. Often churches don’t get a response for months, he added, and the response is almost always negative.

At the same time, many of the several mosques in Harguelis and surrounding areas operate without official permits.

…Radicals forced at least 60 unregistered house churches to close in West Java in 2005, with closures peaking during the Sunday school teachers’ trial in late June, July and August.

Forced church closures have continued since then, with radicals also forcing the closure of Radio Gracia, a Christian radio station based in Cirebon, early this year.

“I don’t think this is the end of persecution,” Zakaria told Compass. “It will get worse in the future.”

Muslims are on edge when they see new churches appearing in their communities, a local source told Compass.

“In their eyes, new churches mean new converts,” he said. “But that’s not necessarily the case.”

…Zakaria, Pangesti and Bangun were arrested on May 13, 2005 after members of the local Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI or Muslim Clerics Council) in Indramayu district accused them of trying to convert Muslim children.


A June 2007 report notes further demonstrations by Muslim groups against Christians and attacks on churches in West Java:

Muslim extremists demonstrating on June 14 in West Java threatened to close down churches operating in private homes, and a pastor on Sunday (June 17) received an anonymous letter promising to destroy his home if it is “still functioning as a church.”

The protest and threats followed two attacks on churches in West Java in early June.

Some 150 protestors from the Mosque Movement Front (FPM) and the Anti-Apostasy Alliance joined the mid-June march, The Jakarta Post reported on June 15. By law,
Indonesian church groups must have a worship permit – but strict terms of a Joint Ministerial Decree (SKB) revised last year make it virtually impossible to obtain one.

…After marching from the al-Ikhlash Mosque to the Katapang district office in Bandung, FPM head Suryana Nur Fatwa warned officials that if they failed to close down illegal churches, FPM would take matters into its own hands: “Every violator must stop their activities or the FPM will be forced to close them down.”

Fatwa presented a list of 26 private homes being used as churches in Bandung regency. He claimed 17 of them had stopped operating “of their own free will,” but that nine others were still meeting for worship.

Katapang district chief Nina Setiyana said she did not wish to take sides but wanted all houses of worship in her area to be authorized, The Jakarta Post reported.

“It would surely be better if they all had permits and did not break the regulation ... so no one could make a problem out of it,” Setiyana added.

…Prior to the demonstration, Muslims mobs attacked two churches in early June.

On June 9, a mob attacked the Assembly of God (GSJA) church in Talegong with stones and wooden clubs, smashing doors, roofs, windows and kitchen furniture. They also took away a Bible and ownership deeds for the church land and threatened the pastor’s wife with a machete.

A government official arrived just in time to prevent further violence, and nobody was hurt in the attack.

On the following day, however, a larger crowd of 300 people gathered and demanded that church members move away from the area.

…A week earlier, on June 3, 56 members of the Anti-Apostasy Alliance Movement broke into a GSJA house church in Soreang, West Java, disturbing a Sunday school class.

The mob demanded that the church be shut down and that all Christian activities cease in the area.

…Mobs attacked four other churches in Soreang in 2005, forcing them to close. Elisa, however, refused to shut down his church or move it to another location.


Christians Elsewhere in Indonesia

An August 2008 report from the Indonesia Matters website quotes Christian claims that “dozens of churches in the greater Jakarta area found themselves in a ‘tense’ situation”, and criticised “the police for often standing by while church attacks took place”. The report also states that “[i]n Central Java at Christmas 2007 Surakarta police chief Yotce Mende said that
85 out of the 500 churches in the city were considered by the police to be under threat of attack or had problems with local Muslim residents:

**Greater Jakarta**

He also cited data from the Jakarta Christian Communication Forum that between September 1969 and March 2006 950 churches had been vandalised or burned down, while between March 2006 and August 2007 67 church congregations had suffered intimidation or disturbances from outsiders.

Presently Supit said dozens of churches in the greater Jakarta area found themselves in a “tense” situation.

Another pastor, Novi Suratinoyo, blamed the government for not enforcing the law, and the police for often standing by while church attacks took place.

Idfal Kasim of Komnas HAM said his group often received reports of this nature but regretted that their recommendations rarely carried any force with the authorities.

**Solo/Surakarta**

In Central Java at Christmas 2007 Surakarta police chief Yotce Mende said that 85 out of the 500 churches in the city were considered by the police to be under threat of attack or had problems with local Muslim residents (Patung 2008, ‘Persecuted Church’, Indonesia Matters website, 21 January [http://www.indonesiamatters.com/1571/persecuted-churches/](http://www.indonesiamatters.com/1571/persecuted-churches/) – Accessed 15 December 2008 – Attachment 26).

A June 2008 report from *Christian Solidarity Worldwide* relates an attack by “[m]ilitants from the Islamic Defenders Forum (FPI) and Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) “ on “a rally promoting religious tolerance at the Indonesian National Monument (Monas) in Jakarta”, in which “[s]ome 30 people were injured, several requiring hospitalisation”:

Militants from the Islamic Defenders Forum (FPI) and Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) attacked participants of a rally promoting religious tolerance at the Indonesian National Monument (Monas) in Jakarta on Sunday 1 June 2008.

The rally, organised by the National Alliance for Freedom of Religion and Faith (AKKBB) to celebrate the 63rd anniversary of the tolerance-based state ideology Pancasila, was suddenly attacked at 13:30 by around 200 militants dressed in ninja masks and wielding sharpened wooden bamboo and steel sticks. The attack lasted about half an hour according to AKKBB and finally came to an end when the militants left to join a Hizb ut-Tahrir demonstration in front of the presidential palace.


A March 2008 report from the Inside Indonesia website provides information on “an Easter celebration at the Yohanes Baptista Catholic parish in Parung, Bogor” which “was broken up by a group of people claiming to be from a Muslim clerical organisation”. The report also
notes the murder of a Christian man in Atambua, capital of Belu regency in East Nusa Tenggara:

**Illegal Service in Bogor**

On the 22nd an Easter celebration at the Yohanes Baptista Catholic parish in Parung, Bogor, was broken up by a group of people claiming to be from a Muslim clerical organisation.

The 200-odd parishioners had set up a tent on the 6000 meter plot of land owned by the Catholic Church. No church building exists yet as the parish has been waiting six years for permission to build to be granted.

The priest, Emil Kleden, says he had received verbal permission to hold the service from the local government, and police and soldiers were on guard. Normally services are held at a private residence in nearby Lebak Wangi.

In order to avoid violence the congregation dispersed.

Darwin Saragih of the Bogor regional parliament asked both groups to restrain themselves and he hoped the church would soon get its paperwork in order

It’s not enough to get verbal permission, they have to get written permission from the RT, RW, the village, the local council, and the regency government.

To avoid creating problems:

Obey the rules, only use proper houses of worship.

He advised the Muslim protestors to complain to the local government and not take things into their own hands.

Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) leader Umar Shihab said the MUI had never instructed that the services of other religions should be broken up and his organisation did not tolerate violence or intimidation.

**“Bloody Easter” in Atambua**

In Atambua, the capital of Belu regency in East Nusa Tenggara, near the border with East Timor, a gang of “drunken youths” were making a nuisance of themselves outside a church on the 22nd. One Paulino Lopes came out of the church and told them to be quiet. Later, as he was walking home from the Easter service the youths set upon him and beat him. He escaped, but, the following day the youths found him again and beat him to death with iron bars.

After this Lopes’ friends and family attacked the Motabuiik area of town, where the youths lived, and in the general mayhem at least 20 houses were burned down.

It seems that the Lopes group are ex-residents of East Timor, while the others are native to the area.

**Everywhere Else**

In case it is not immediately obvious, celebrations of Easter in the vast majority of churches in most places of Indonesia likely went ahead without incident (Patung 2008, ‘Easter Militancy and Mayhem’ 2008, Indonesia Matters website, 24 March)
Government and recent media reports

The 2008 US Department of State (USDOS) report on religious freedom in Indonesia provides a breakdown of religious demographics in Indonesia, and states that 3 percent of the population is Roman Catholic, while noting claims from Christians, Hindus “and members of other minority religious groups…that the census undercounted non-Muslims”. The USDOS report quotes Ministry of Religious Affairs figures which estimate that “8 million Catholics live in the country”, with the highest concentration of Catholics in East Nusa Tenggara. The report notes two incidents involving Catholics in 2007, both in Java, one involving a church in Tambor, West Jakarta, and the other at “Karmel Valley, a Catholic retreat in Cianjur, West Java”. The report also notes that “[s]mall churches in West Java were under the most pressure, including in areas of Bandung”:

According to a 2000 census report, 88 percent of the population is Muslim, 6 percent Protestant, 3 percent Roman Catholic, 2 percent Hindu, and less than 1 percent Buddhist, traditional indigenous religions, other Christian groups, and Jewish. Some Christians, Hindus, and members of other minority religious groups argued that the census undercounted non-Muslims.

…The Ministry of Religious Affairs estimates that 19 million Protestants (referred to locally as Christians) and 8 million Catholics live in the country. The province of East Nusa Tenggara has the highest proportion of Catholics at 55 percent. The province of Papua contains the highest proportion of Protestants at 58 percent. Other areas, such as the Maluku Islands and North Sulawesi, host sizable Christian communities.

…Many of the country’s policies concerning religion are enacted and enforced at the subnational level.

…Since the Government promulgated the Revised Joint Ministerial Decree on the Construction of Houses of Worship in 2006, implementation and defense of rights conferred under the decree have not always been enforced at the local level. During the reporting period, some Christian and Hindu groups pointed to sporadic acts of discrimination in which local authorities refused to authorize the building of churches and temples even though the groups managed to collect the necessary signatures. For example, in the regency of Langkat, North Sumatra, local authorities delayed Catholic officials from building a church, despite the officials having met the legal requirements to do so. The issue was ultimately solved through mediation with the FKUB. While local FKUBs are designed to serve as interfaith forums, they were often dominated by the majority religious group, which could oppose or stall provision of licenses to minority groups. In several cases in West Java, small churches faced difficulties obtaining licenses, frequently due to opposition in the FKUB.

…According to confirmed reports, extremist groups used violence and intimidation to close at least 12 churches during the reporting period. Groups also delayed and in some cases blocked petitions for churches to complete renovations. Small churches in West Java were under the most pressure, including in areas of Bandung, Tangerang, and Bekasih. At least 5 of the 12 churches known to have closed during the reporting period did so due to pressure from nonresident hardline religious groups, while the remaining 7 closed due to pressure from the local community. In at least two cases, the local government urged churches to close as a result of pressure from the local community, although it was unknown in these cases whether the pressure originated with nonresident hardline groups or local ulama. While often present,
police rarely acted to prevent forced church closings and in the past had sometimes assisted militant groups in the closure.

…On November 23, 2007, locals and officials prevented members of a Catholic church in Tambora, West Jakarta, from holding services in their 40-year-old church. During the reporting period, residents objected to plans to enlarge the small church. The church was applying for a building permit. On December 1, 2007, the church received assurances from the Ministry of Religious Affairs that it could continue to operate despite not having a permit.

…On July 20, 2007, thousands of protestors demonstrated at Karmel Valley, a Catholic retreat in Cianjur, West Java, forcing the management to cancel an international religious gathering scheduled for July 24-29, 2007. Protestors claimed the planned gathering of the Holy Trinity group at Karmel Valley was illegal, despite the Holy Trinity group having a police permit for the gathering (US Department of State 2008, International Religious Freedom Report for 2008 – Indonesia, 19 September – Attachment 10).

The Freedom House 2008 country report for Indonesia states that “[w]hile the number of religious attacks declined in 2007 as compared with 2006, concern remains regarding the national government’s failure to respond to intolerance in recent years” (Freedom House 2008, Freedom in the World – Indonesia (2008) – Attachment 2).

Nonetheless, three media reports from December 2008 provide information on recent religious violence in Indonesia.

A December 2008 Jakarta Post article quotes a report issued by the “moderate Islamic think tank” the Wahid Institute which “reported that religious freedom-related violence had increased throughout the country, with 232 cases reported this year compared to 197 last year”. According to the Wahid Institute report, “[m]any of the incidences of violence were perpetrated by state authorities”, and had come in the form of physical attacks, raids, destruction of houses of worship and accusations of apostasy and heresy:

Religious violence is on the rise in the world’s largest Muslim country according to a report by the Wahid Institute, which places the blame on the government for its failing to crack down on radical groups.

The institute, a moderate Islamic think tank founded by former president Abdurrahman “Gus Dur” Wahid to promote pluralism in Indonesia, reported that religious freedom-related violence had increased throughout the country, with 232 cases reported this year compared to 197 last year.

Many of the incidences of violence were perpetrated by state authorities, according to the annual report released on Human Rights Day, Wednesday.

“The acts of violence against religious freedom were 60 percent carried out by civilian groups and 33 percent by the state,” the report said.

It said the state perpetrators included local administrations, police, legislators, courts and the Religious Affairs Ministry.

Civilian perpetrators were identified as members of the Islam Defenders Front (FPI), the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) and the Communications Forum for Religious Harmony.
The frequency and severity of the violence increased from last year, the report said. It noted that the government had been weak in administering punishment, which it said set a worrisome trend for the future.


A report on the same day from the Voice of America News website quotes Sidney Jones, the International Crisis Group’s South East Asian director, on the violence in the Maluku islands:

“It’s an area that’s erupted in differed ways, several times in the last two years, including a police army shoot-out,” Jones said. “It’s got a history of problems going back to the height of the violence, but it’s difficult to see whether this is going to bring in people from outside.”

…Jones says, as long as Islamic militants based in Java Island stay out of the Maluku region, it is likely the area will stay peaceful.

“If it stays local, we’re probably okay,” Jones said. “And, one of the interesting things is that a lot of the people there specifically referred to the earlier conflict and not wanting to see it get out of hand. It’s a case of whether or not some of these guys in Java take it as a green light to come in and scope things out. I think it’ll probably be okay.”


Previous Research Responses

Questions 5 and 6 of RRT Research Response IDN34011, of 4 December 2008, provide information on the treatment of Christians in Indonesia, and whether state protection is available for victims of religious violence and whether the state sponsors discrimination against or maltreatment of Christians (RRT Research & Information 2008, Research Response IDN34011, 4 December – Attachment 11).

Question 3 of RRT Research Response IDN31735, of 15 May 2007, provides information on the treatment of Catholics in Java, and in Indonesia generally. This response details sporadic reports of Catholics being mistreated, including an attack on a school in Tangerang in October 2004, and the closure of churches in Bandung in September 2004 and November
Question 1 of RRT Research Response IDN31354, of 14 February 2007, provides information on conflict between Christians and Muslims in Bandung, while Questions 3-5 of the response address safe areas for Christians in Indonesia, the availability of state protection, and restrictions on relocating (RRT Country Research 2007, Research Response IDN31354, 14 February – Attachment 36).

RRT Research Response IDN33066, of 2 April 2008, provides information on the treatment of Christians in East Java and in Indonesia generally (RRT Research & Information 2008, Research Response IDN33066, 2 April – Attachment 13). Among the sources quoted in this response are:


- A January 2008 report in The Jakarta Post which claims that government and local authorities are complicit, if not active, in allowing abuses against religious minorities to take place. The report cites the 2007 annual report released by Setara (Equal), “a new NGO led by human rights activists and supported by various groups of politicians, activist, and religious scholars”. According to the report, almost half of the “185 cases of violence and intimidation against Islamic, Christian and Catholic sects … were carried out or encouraged by local officials”, while “the other half were witnessed by passive state apparatuses” (Santoso, A. 2008, ‘The fallacy of fatwas’, The Jakarta Post, 2 January – Attachment 15).

- A January 2008 assessment from The Economist Intelligence Unit provides an outline of recent religious developments in Indonesia. It states that “the majority of the Indonesian public are moderate Muslims” and that Indonesian Islam “is not of a politically radical nature”, and points out that “the terrorist attacks believed to be perpetrated by JI are widely condemned in the media and by the public”. Nonetheless, the report notes that “conservative Islamic groups are becoming a notable threat to Indonesia’s pluralistic traditions” and that “intolerance of Christians has become manifest in recent years” (‘Indonesia risk: Political stability risk’ 2008, The Economist Intelligence Unit, 17 January – Attachment 16).


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