

### Indonesia – Moderate risk

On 21 May 2019, Indonesia's Electoral Commission announced the results of the April election.<sup>1</sup> This occurred a day earlier than planned and in the middle of the night, ostensibly to reduce the risk of immediate protests. Incumbent President Joko 'Jokowi' Widodo was named the winner of the presidential poll, with 55.5 per cent of the vote, or approximately 17 million votes ahead of his challenger, retired General Prabowo Subianto. The result was not accepted by Mr Prabowo, who threatened a legal challenge.

The potential for post-election violence had been highlighted as a concern and did in fact eventuate after the result announcement. On the first day of mass rallies in Jakarta, which initially began peacefully, six people were killed and 200 injured.<sup>2</sup> Protests continued, with those involved throwing rocks, Molotov cocktails and fireworks, and setting cars on fire. At least 10,000 protestors were involved.<sup>3</sup> Riot police fired tear gas at the crowds and the government restricted social media, reportedly to stop the spread of misinformation, blaming organised groups from outside of Jakarta for provoking the mass violence. Hundreds of protesters were arrested.<sup>4</sup>

Although the protests were contained fairly quickly, they left eight people dead, hundreds injured, many shops financially affected. They also obscured what was otherwise a peaceful, free, and fair democratic process. Further, the riots stoked fears among Chinese Indonesians of a return to ethnic violence similar to that which occurred in 1998.<sup>5</sup> It is possible that ethnic and religious tensions between different will escalate as a result of the violence, but there is no clear evidence of that happening yet.<sup>6</sup>

One of the sources of tension is the perceived use of legal mechanisms and other forms of control by the Indonesian government, for instance with the aim of suppressing Prabowo supporters. Further, the influence of social media in spreading misinformation and inciting hatred (with both political and ethnic/religious overtones) had been significant during this election period.<sup>7</sup> The government's order to internet service providers to restrict access during the riots raises issues around freedom and free speech, and what authority governments should have around the control of social media platforms, particularly when these are being used for incitement and hate speech.

The effect of the riots reverberated across the country and in local contexts. For example, a riot in the province of Papua triggered by the election result led to four people being shot by police.<sup>8</sup> In West Papua, there has been a movement for a boycott of the election led by exiled leader of the United Liberation Movement, Benny Wenda.<sup>9</sup> Independence activists claimed a majority of West Papuans did not vote, however the official results from the electoral commission do not support that claim.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-05-21/indonesia-election-results-released-president-joko-widodo-wins/11132840>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-48361782>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-05-23/more-than-250-arrested-indonesia-post-election-riots-second-day/11140758>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/22/world/asia/indonesia-election-riots.html>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/southeast-asia/article/3011977/indonesia-riots-shops-jakarta-grapple-income-loss-crowds>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3015060/indonesian-democracy-doomed-repeat-cycle-violence>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/indonesia-don-t-over-react-jakarta-violence>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.nst.com.my/world/2019/05/491888/four-killed-indonesias-post-election-unrest-spreads-papua>

<sup>9</sup> <https://asiapacificreport.nz/2019/06/05/papuan-activists-dispute-indonesias-poll-numbers-claim-boycott-success/>

Activists have claimed that Widodo has not effectively addressed human rights issues in West Papua. Indonesian authorities have been accused of using white phosphorous in the region, and clashes between ‘rebels’ and authorities have led to deaths. Despite the re-elected government promising greater infrastructure development in Papua, some West Papuans are not anticipating any positive change for their community post-election. It is therefore crucial for the human rights abuse allegations in West Papua to be dealt with.

Of ongoing concern in Indonesia is the continuing rise of radical Islam which appears to be spreading beyond Sharia-ruled provinces such as Aceh. The post-election result period was characterised not only by riots but also by threats of terrorist attack. As such, the risk of Islamic terrorism remains high in Indonesia.

### **Recommendations**

#### **The government of Indonesia should:**

1. Appoint a senior official as National R2P Focal Point to coordinate national and international efforts to implement R2P.
2. Develop and implement a comprehensive strategy for tackling violent extremism that strengthens the security forces while protecting core human rights.
3. Take steps to ensure the maintenance of the rule of law and order in areas afflicted by sectarian violence.
4. Conduct a thorough assessment of risks of communal violence and develop an action plan to address it.
5. Promote inter-faith dialogue and local capacities for conflict resolution in regions affected by communal strife.
6. Accelerate efforts to reform the governance of West Papua, to make it more inclusive, accountable and responsive and stimulate economic development.
7. Ensure that security operations against non-state armed groups, including those in West Papua, are conducted in a manner consistent with Indonesia’s international legal obligations.

#### **The international community should:**

1. Encourage Indonesia to take active steps to fulfil its responsibility to protect.
2. Actively explore avenues for cooperation with the Indonesian government and society in the areas of combatting violent extremism and terrorism, preventing sectarian conflict, and reducing incitement and hate speech.