

Indonesia – Moderate risk

The risk of atrocity crimes in Indonesia has increased somewhat for three principal reasons. The first is the upcoming 2019 Presidential elections. The second is the ever-increasing rise of radical Islam in Indonesia, not just limited to Sharia-ruled provinces such as Aceh, but spreading across the island nation. This is being seen not only in political realms but in media and in commercial interestsⁱ. Third is an acceleration of tensions in West Papua as separatist movements clash with Indonesian military, and the Indonesian military reportedly employing torture and killing to curb rising pro-separatist sentiment.

2019 Presidential Elections

Indonesia faces federal elections in April, 2019, with the two Presidential prospects taking up divergent political platforms. While both tussle for the populist vote, President Joko (Jokowi) Widodo's platform is centred on honesty and integrating, and "technocratic" populism, while former General Prabowo Subianto appeals to populist nationalism and propagates an "assertive and firm" image of himselfⁱⁱ. Both have employed Islam as a core consideration in their Presidential running, with President Jokowi's running mate Ma'ruf Amin an Islamic scholar and politician and head of the country's most prominent Islamic clerical body. While the election outcome has been predicted in favour of Jokowi, how the incumbent President plans on setting the political tone in Indonesia remains unclear: a pluralist approach advocating equal rights, or one that favours hardliner Islamic agendas, as this segment of Indonesia's population continues to growⁱⁱⁱ.

Islamist Terrorism

Indonesia's anti-terrorism force, Densus 88, remains actively committed to countering terrorism, an ever-present threat in the nation. In March 2019 the group arrested three hardline Islamists between 9-12 March, and during the raid a bomb exploded. These men were affiliates of the Islamic JAD group. This is one of a series of raids carried out by Densus 88 over the first three months of 2019. While terrorism is said to have plateaued in the region, the rise of Islamic extremism remains an ongoing cause of concern both nationally and globally^{iv}.

West Papua

In West Papua, recent reports have escalated that describe the region's Free Papua Movement and the West Papuan National Liberation Army as growing increasingly emboldened.

Tensions are escalating in West Papua. On the 1 December 2018, over 500 civilians were arrested for supporting West Papua Independence Day (the day West Papua got independence from Dutch colonial rule) and raising the Morning Star Flag (an act that is illegal in West Papua). The Indonesian authorities also raided and destroyed a number of headquarters of the West Papua National Committee, the domestic arm of the liberation campaign.^v

On the 2 December, the West Papua Liberation Army (TPNPB) (the armed wing of the liberation campaign), claimed responsibility for an attack on an Indonesian construction site that resulted in 31 deaths.^{vi} The Indonesian military (TNI) responded with further violence; burning churches and killing civilians in attempts to find the culprits of the attack.^{vii} The TNI also strategically repositioned throughout Ndugu, causing over 1000 West Papuans to flee for fear of attack and exacerbating the poor living conditions in the area. West Papuan leaders have attributed the death of three infants in Ndugu to the TNI crackdown, with the authorities refusing humanitarian and medical agencies access to the area.^{viii}

These tensions have emerged amongst a growing number of human rights abuses reportedly perpetrated by the Indonesian authorities in West Papua. In December 2018, the Indonesian authorities were accused of using white phosphorous in West Papua.^{ix} In February 2019, they were forced to extend a rare public apology after interrogating a young civilian with a large snake.^x In March 2019, the *Guardian* reported that at least 15 people had been killed in clashes between “rebels” and Indonesian police, and since mid-2018 there have been intermittent reports of violence and death resulting from similar clashes.^{xi} There was also a report of torture and human rights abuse that made the global press when Indonesian police used a snake to interrogate and intimidate a petty thief.^{xii} In late 2018 there were worrying reports that Indonesia was using white phosphorus to disperse local West Papuans who had reportedly killed 24 Indonesian road workers, some of whom had taken photos of a West Papua independence flag raising ceremony.^{xiii} West Papua remains an ever-growing concern for Indonesia’s government, and Indonesian reactions to separatist movements is said to be dependent on international reaction to reports coming out of the region.

It is crucial for the human rights abuse allegations in West Papua to be dealt with. Indonesian actions in West Papua have also raised critique from multiple UN offices; including the UN Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). Ravina Shamdasani, a spokesperson from the OHCHR, stated that ‘they are troubled by the crackdown over peaceful demonstrations and increasing reports of excessive use of force by security forces, harassment, arbitrary arrests and detentions in Papua’.^{xiv} This is proving challenging however, as Indonesia has restricted foreign media and human rights groups from entering the Papua provinces to independently verify the situation.^{xv}

The situation has been made more complex by increasing demands for a referendum on independence. In January 2019, 1.8 million people (around 70% of the Indigenous population in West Papua) signed a petition that supported an independence referendum in West Papua. Benny Wanda, the chair of the United Liberation Movement of West Papua (ULMWP) attempted to present the same petition in 2017 to the UN Special Committee on Decolonisation but was unsuccessful. In 2019, Wanda accompanied a ni-Vanuatu delegation and successfully presented this petition straight to Michelle Bachelet, the UN Human Rights Commissioner.^{xvi}

This highlights an important shift in West Papua’s fight for independence; they are gaining more regional and international attention, strengthening and amplifying their voice. In 2019, the United Liberation Movement for West Papua (ULMWP) gained observer status in the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG), a move that is considered a step in the right direction for West Papuan independence.^{xvii} Further, in 2019, the Governor of Papua New Guinea’s National Capital District, Powes Parkop, announced plans to amend the existing policy concerning West Papua between PNG and Indonesia. While it is still unlikely that PNG will interfere in the region, it does reference a growing regional consciousness around the West Papua plight.^{xviii}

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 whilst 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 sectarian 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 to the people's needs, 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.
3. Provide assistance when requested to help the government and civil society tackle their remaining challenges.

ⁱ <https://theaseanpost.com/article/halal-indonesia-booming-industry>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2019/03/20/indonesias-upcoming-elections-explained/>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.understandingconflict.org/en/conflict/read/80/Anti-Ahok-To-Anti-Jokowi-Islamist-Influence-on-Indonesias-2019-Election-Campaign>

^{iv} <http://www.futuredirections.org.au/publication/indonesia-threats-and-challenges-to-domestic-security/>

^v <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jan/08/new-chapter-of-persecution-indonesia-cracks-down-on-west-papua-separatists>

^{vi} <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/dec/05/west-papua-fears-of-spiralling-violence-after-attack-leaves-up-to-31-dead>

^{vii} <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/houses-were-burned-papuans-claim-thousands-displaced-in-conflict>, <https://www.sydneycriminallawyers.com.au/blog/violent-crackdown-in-west-papua-an-interview-with-independence-leader-benny-wenda/>

^{viii} <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jan/22/west-papuan-leaders-blame-deaths-of-three-babies-on-indonesian-crackdown>

^{ix} <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/dec/24/indonesia-denies-using-white-phosphorous-in-west-papua>

^x <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/feb/23/un-urges-torture-inquiry-after-indonesia-police-put-snake-on-west-papua-boy>

^{xi} <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/mar/08/west-papua-independence-deaths-battle-indonesia>

^{xii} <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/feb/23/un-urges-torture-inquiry-after-indonesia-police-put-snake-on-west-papua-boy>

^{xiii} <https://www.thesaturdaypaper.com.au/2018/12/22/exclusive-chemical-weapons-dropped-papua/15453972007326>

^{xiv} <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/indonesia-rejects-west-papua-demands-as-troops-hunt-separatists>

^{xv} <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/dec/05/west-papua-fears-of-spiralling-violence-after-attack-leaves-up-to-31-dead>

^{xvi} <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-01-30/west-papuans-fight-for-another-independence-referendum/10584336>

^{xvii} <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-01-30/west-papuans-fight-for-another-independence-referendum/10584336>

^{xviii} <https://www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/381448/push-for-change-in-png-s-west-papua-policy-announced>