

Indonesia - Moderate Risk

Indonesia continues its transition into a stable democracy and continues to adopt measures that contribute to the implementation of R2P. They have relatively strong National Human Rights Institutions and have developed a National Plan of Action for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights. In addition, Indonesia has resolved violent disputes in Timor-Leste and Aceh, and the Widodo government is committed to making progress to easing tensions in West Papua. A number of potential risks remain, however:

Sectarian conflict and incitement in Aceh, Sumatra, Kalimantan and Jakarta

The most significant risk confronting Indonesia stems from the potential for communal violence between the country's significant ethnic and religious minorities and majority Muslim population. While over the past two decades the government has performed relatively well in preventing the escalation of violence, intolerance and inter-communal violence - which has escalated to atrocity crimes - is still prevalent within society. A recent poll conducted by UN Women and the Wahid Foundation indicate that 57.1% of Indonesian Muslims were intolerant against one or more minority groups, an increase from the 51% in 2016.[1] The Indonesian government have also recently made a series of political and legal moves that reflect this rising intolerance in society and are encouraging majority-minority tensions. Within the past two months, the government has banned Tumblr, citing issues with pornographic content on the social media giant. [2] The government are also considering introducing a new set of laws that tighten freedoms and discriminate against Indonesia's LGBTQ communities; including laws that mandate a total ban on sex outside of marriage, a ban on gay sex and a restriction on sex education in schools. [3]

Further, sectarian conflict continues to remain an issue in the provinces of Aceh (Muslim-Christian/Buddhist), Sumatra (Muslim-Buddhist) and, most recently, Kalimantan. Granted significant autonomy by its peace agreement with Jakarta, Aceh's conservative regional government has subsequently tightened religious freedoms and allowed the passage of Sha'ria. Within the past two months, police in North Aceh have led raids on transgender beauty salons, arresting the transgender women found inside and subjecting them to harassment and abuse. The women were forced to shave their heads and wear male clothing.[4] Increasingly harsh punishments for minor offences are further signifying Aceh's growing religious fundamentalism and sectarian divides. In January, a couple were publicly whipped for being too "close" together (with "closeness" seen as a prelude to premarital sex)[5], while in March, an unmarried couple found in a house together were humiliated by an angry mob, with sewage water being dumped on their heads.[6] In February, a Christian couple were arrested and whipped for gambling. Aceh has further made it law that Muslim female flight attendants must be wearing the hijab upon landing in Aceh, regardless of their personal beliefs.[7]

In Sumatra, violence erupted in July 2016 in the town of Tanjung Balai close to Medan. A mob attacked property belonging to the Chinese Buddhist minority destroying at least three Buddhist temples. Order was restored by the security forces and an uneasy peace has prevailed since. More recently, sectarian violence emerged in East Kalimantan. In November 2016, a church in Samarinda was firebombed, allegedly by Muhammed Juhanda, a known extremist and former prisoner.

In the past twelve months, sectarian conflict and incitement to violence has also emerged in Jakarta. On 5 November, 150, 000 protestors spearheaded by the militant Islamic Defenders Front took to the street to demand the arrest of Jakarta's Chinese Christian governor for allegedly 'defaming' the Qu'ran. Similar protests were held elsewhere. The city's Christian major, Ahok, was removed from power and subsequently imprisoned. These events have provoked concerns about the rising influence of extremist organisations and growing religious intolerance, further seen as a man, with connections

in Syria, was arrested for launching an attack with a three-foot sword on a church in the Yogyakarta, Java.

Although the government has intervened each time to ease sectarian tensions and apprehend suspects, this is seen as a short-term solution to a deeper issue within Indonesian society. Ongoing low-level sectarian violence reflects deep-seated animosities between groups and is fuelled by hate speech and occasionally incitements. There are strong indications that in many parts of the country, including its capital, extremist organisations are becoming increasingly influential. The Indonesian government's proposal of the new laws governing sex are worrying, as research in Indonesia indicates conservative Islamic groups are using small issues like these to gain power in the governments, and popularity amongst Indonesian society. Indonesia has many sectarian fault lines and there are evidently extremist groups who seek to escalate tensions and incite violence against other groups. If not properly handled, small scale violence could rapidly escalate into atrocity crimes.

Conflict in West Papua

Separatist conflict in West Papua is intensifying. Clashes between West Papuans and the Indonesian government is leading to sporadic violence, and even death. The Indonesian military has recently been accused of shooting a West Papuan woman dead [8], and torturing a youth to death in an ambush plan [9]. In February, the West Papuan National Liberation Army in the Papuan Highlands made a fresh declaration of war against the Indonesian military. They have "ordered a general mobilisation of all its soldiers in Papua to carry out operations against what it calls the "invaders". Much of this conflict is centred on the control of resources in Papua, a mining rich area, with the West Papua National Liberation Army looking to close the operations of foreign companies that are exploiting the resources. [10]

The tensions in West Papua are being exacerbated by poor living conditions for many West Papuans, with what has been labelled a 'famine' by the international media leading to pervasive starvation and malnutrition[11]. This year, West Papua is also grappling with a measles outbreak, as a result of lacking clean health facilities and immunisations that has killed over 100 people [12]. The Indonesian government is growing sensitive over the publicisation of issues within the region, with an Australian BBC journalist recently arrested and later expelled from West Papua for re-tweeting information about aid conditions there that "hurt the feelings of soldiers".[13]

Islamist terrorism (country-wide)

A number of Islamist terrorist groups, some of them with alleged ties to the Islamic State (IS) or Al Qaeda operate inside Indonesia, and there is a persistent threat of terrorism. There are indications for the rising support of extremists in some parts of the community, linked with the rise of fundamentalism within Indonesian society. With the defeat of IS in the Middle East, there are strong concerns that Indonesian foreign fighters in the Middle East may begin to return to Indonesia in greater numbers. Indeed, IS-linked individuals are increasingly carrying out lone wolf terrorist attacks within Indonesian society. Thus far, more than 400 Indonesian jihadist foreign fighters have been arrested in Turkey. It is thought that the total number of Indonesia foreign fighters in the Middle East numbers in the 'thousands'.

Indonesia is acutely aware of this issue and has stepped up measures to combat it. Amongst other things, Indonesia has adopted large scale education and de-radicalisation programmes, and has recently announced that they would be addressing the rise in lone wolf terrorist attacks by doubling their counter-terrorism police unit, known as Detachment 88.[14] They are also stepping up security and intelligence cooperation with neighbouring states. One such example is the "Our Eyes: initiative

launched January 2018, which sees six ASEAN states (Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Brunei) collaborate on the fight against Islamic terrorism through the sharing of intelligence and resources.[15]

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.

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