Indonesia - Moderate Risk

Indonesia continues its transition into a stable democracy and continues to adopt measures that contribute to the implementation of R2P. It has relatively strong National Human Rights Institutions and has 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:

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. 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'. Increasing terrorism appears to be having a negative impact on the wider appeal of Islamism within Indonesia, however, with recent polls suggesting a decline in support for Islamist parties there.

Islamist attacks are quite common. In early May, a series of attacks on churches and police buildings killed 14 police officers and civilians. In another incident, extremists attacked police buildings with swords and were killed. The worst attacks, however, were in Surabaya on May 13-14, where two families detonated suicide bombs, killing themselves and 14 others.

Indonesia is acutely aware of this issue and has stepped up measures to combat it. It is increasing the size of its anti-terrorism police unit, Detachment 88. A new anti-terrorism law gives the security forces wide ranging powers to arrest and detain terror suspects for up to nine months without trial. More than 180 suspects were arrested in the wake of the May attacks. In the same month, 18 terrorism suspects were killed in security operations and in July counter-terror forces tracked and killed three suspected terrorists. The judiciary has also begun to adopt a harder line against Islamist terrorism. In June 2018, the IS-linked cleric Aman Abdurrahman was sentenced to death. Besides its increasingly hard-line approach, Indonesia has adopted large scale education and de-radicalization programs aimed at preventing violent extremism. It has also stepped up security and intelligence cooperation with neighbouring states to prevent the undetected return of foreign fighter. One such example is the 'four 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.

Communal conflict and incitement in Aceh, Sumatra, and Kalimantan

Communal violence between the country's many different ethnic and religious groups remains a source of risk. 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 in some parts of the country. Communal violence remains an issue in Aceh, Sumatra, and Kalimantan especially. Granted significant autonomy by its peace agreement with Jakarta, Aceh's conservative regional government has imposed increasingly harsh punishments for minor offences.

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.

The government has intervened each time to ease sectarian tensions and apprehend suspects and has begun to adopt longer-measures aimed at addressing sectarian strife. For example, new election guidelines introduced in January aimed to prevent inflammatory language and sermons, and limit hate speech. Ongoing low-level sectarian violence reflects deep-seated animosities between groups and is fueled by hate speech and occasionally incitement. There are strong indications that in many parts of the country, including its capital, extremist organisations are becoming increasingly influential. If not properly handled, small scale violence could rapidly escalate into atrocity crimes.

Conflict in West Papua

Separatist conflict in West Papua persists. There are sporadic violent and sometimes lethal clashes between West Papuans and the Indonesian government. The Indonesian military has recently been accused of shooting a West Papuan woman dead,[1] and torturing a youth to death in an ambush plan.[2] 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.[3]

The tensions in West Papua are exacerbated by poor living conditions. The province is also grappling with a measles outbreak, as a result of lacking clean health facilities and immunizations, which has killed over 100 people.[4] The Indonesian government is growing sensitive over the publication of issues within the region and recently expelled a BBC journalist from West Papua.[5]

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.

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[1] http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-42985439

[2] https://www.freewestpapua.org/2018/01/06/west-papuan-boy-tortured-to-death-by-the-indonesian-military-in-nduga/

[3] https://www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/350911/west-papua-liberation-army-in-fresh-campaign-against-indonesia

[4] https://citizen.co.za/news/news-world/1797789/indonesia-papua-health-politics-economy/

[5] http://tabloidjubi.com/eng/indonesian-military-sensitivity-sends-bbc-journalist-packing-papua/

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.

8. Support efforts to report and monitor patterns of communal violence.

The international community should:

1. Encourage Indonesia to take active steps to fulfil its responsibility to protect.

2. 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.

4. Support efforts to report and monitor patterns of communal violence.