

INDONESIA 2016 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

The constitution guarantees freedom of religion and the right to worship according to one's own beliefs but states citizens must accept restrictions established by law to protect the rights of others and to satisfy "just demands based upon considerations of morality, religious values, security, and public order in a democratic society." In December the governor of Jakarta, a Christian, was charged with blasphemy for reportedly insulting the Quran. In April authorities in Aceh carried out the first implementation of the province's special sharia law on a non-Muslim. Local authorities said the Christian woman who was caned had chosen to be punished under sharia rather than face civil punishments of fines or imprisonment, and that sharia regulations only applied to Aceh's Muslim residents. Ahmadi Muslims reported incidents of detention, forced conversion, forced eviction, discrimination, and mosque closures. The government banned the Gafatar religious group and arrested three of its leaders for blasphemy and treason. There were reports authorities were complicit in the eviction of nearly 8,000 Gafatar members. Many religious groups outside the six officially recognized religions reported issues with identifying their religion on their national identification cards (KTP). The government took steps to address specific longstanding religious disputes, such as the displacement of Ahmadis on Bangka Island and defacement of Buddhist temples in Tanjung Balai, but not all were resolved. There were instances in which local governments and police gave in to the demands of groups, such as the Islam Defender's Front (FPI), Islamic Community Forum (FUI), Islamic Jihad Front (FJI), and the Indonesian Mujahideen Council (MMI), which are locally labeled as "intolerant groups," to close houses of worship for permit violations or otherwise restrict the rights of minority religious groups. The government at both the national and local levels at times reportedly failed to prevent or appropriately address intimidation and discrimination against individuals based on their religious beliefs. Both the central and local governments included elected and appointed officials from minority religious groups, and elected politicians from religious minorities served in majority Muslim districts. Some local governments imposed local laws and regulations restricting the religious freedom of minority and majority religious groups.

There were two ISIS-inspired attacks on churches, which security services said were carried out by individual, lone-wolf attackers. One attack resulted in the death of a child and the other was a knife attack on a priest. An assailant threw a

Molotov cocktail at a Buddhist temple in November. In response to most cases of attacks on religious facilities or figures, the government apprehended the individuals involved, and together with the community condemned the attacks and called for the protection of religious minority groups. Much of civil society, including religious organizations from all faiths, worked to counter intolerant messages and ideologies and promote tolerance of minority religious groups and pluralism. “Intolerant groups,” however, disrupted religious gatherings, illegally closed houses of worship, and widely disseminated materials promoting intolerance. Shia Muslims and Christians reported threats of violence and intimidation for gathering in public or attempting to return to their hometowns to celebrate holidays.

The U.S. government advocated for religious freedom at the highest levels, with both government and civil society leaders, and spoke out publicly against discrimination and religious violence. The U.S. Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom visited in October and discussed religious freedom with a variety of government officials, civil society leaders, and religious groups in Jakarta, Banda Aceh, Bali, and Surabaya. Embassy and consulate officials engaged on specific issues, including actions against religious minorities, closures of places of worship and access for foreign religious organizations, arrests for blasphemy and defamation of religion the importance of tolerance and the rule of law, the application of sharia to non-Muslims, and religious identification requirements on national identification cards. With support from the U.S. and Indonesian governments, a nonprofit organization initiated the formation of the Indonesia-U.S. Council on Religion and Pluralism comprised of religious and civil society leaders, academics, and experts to promote interfaith dialogue and tolerance and to combat violent extremism. The embassy and consulates carried the message of respect for diversity and religious tolerance to tens of millions of people in the country through outreach efforts, including events, media interviews, social media initiatives, digital and public speaking engagements, youth exchanges, and educational programs.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 258.3 million (July 2016 estimate). According to the 2010 census, approximately 87 percent of the population is Muslim, 7 percent Protestant, 3 percent Roman Catholic, and 1.5 percent Hindu. Those identifying with other religious groups, including Buddhism, traditional indigenous religions, Confucianism, and other Christian

denominations, and those who did not respond to the census question comprise approximately 1.3 percent of the population.

The Muslim population is overwhelmingly Sunni. An estimated one to three million Muslims are Shia. Many smaller Muslim groups exist; estimates put the total number of Ahmadi Muslims at 200,000 to 400,000.

An estimated 20 million people, primarily in Java, Kalimantan, and Papua, practice various traditional belief systems, often referred to collectively as *aliran kepercayaan*. There are approximately 400 different *aliran kepercayaan* communities throughout the archipelago. Many religious groups incorporate elements of Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism, making it difficult to disaggregate the exact number of followers.

There is a small Sikh population estimated at between 10,000 and 15,000, primarily in Medan and Jakarta. There are very small Jewish communities in Jakarta, Manado, Jayapura, and elsewhere. The Bahai Faith and Falun Dafa (or Falun Gong) community report thousands of members, but no independent estimates are available. The number of atheists is also unknown, but the group Indonesian Atheists states it has more than 500 members.

The province of Bali is predominantly Hindu, and the provinces of Papua, West Papua, East Nusa Tenggara, and North Sulawesi are predominantly Christian.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

The constitution guarantees the right to choose and practice the religion of one's choice and specifies that freedom of religion is a human right that cannot be limited. The constitution states, "The nation is based upon belief in one supreme God," but guarantees all persons the right to worship according to their own religion or belief. The law restricts citizens from exercising these rights in a way that impinges on the rights of others, oversteps common moral standards and religious values, or jeopardizes security or public order.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs (MRA) extends official status to six religious groups: Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Confucianism. The law prohibits deliberate public statements or activities that insult or defame any of the six official religious groups, or have the intent of

preventing an individual from adhering to an official religion. The law also stipulates that in any case of defamation of the six officially recognized religions, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA), the MRA, and the Attorney General's Office (AGO) must first warn the individual in question before he or she can be charged. The law also forbids the dissemination of information designed to spread hatred or dissension among individuals and/or certain community groups on the basis of ethnicity, religion, or race. Individuals may be prosecuted for blasphemous, atheistic, or heretical statements under either of these provisions or under the laws against defamation, and can face a maximum jail sentence of five years. The internet law forbids the electronic dissemination of the same types of information, with violations carrying a maximum six-year sentence. Religious groups other than the official six may also register with the government, making them eligible to establish a place of worship, register marriages and births, and obtain national identity cards (KTPs). Laws allow followers of beliefs outside the six recognized religious groups to leave the religion section blank on their KTPs.

Organizations representing one of the six official religious groups are not required to obtain a legal charter if they are established under a notary act and obtain approval from the Ministry of Law and Human Rights. Unofficial religious organizations must obtain a legal charter as a civil society organization from the MOHA. Both ministries consult with the MRA before granting legal status to religious organizations. For an organization to be considered a religion, it must have a prophet, holy book, deity, and be recognized internationally. By law, all religious groups must be registered in some form. Under the law, civil society organizations are required to uphold the national ideology of *Pancasila*, which encompasses the principles of belief in one God (although Buddhism and Hinduism are official religions), justice, unity, democracy, and social justice, and they are prohibited from committing blasphemous acts or spreading religious hatred. Violations of the law could result in a loss of legal status, dissolution of the organization, and arrest of members under the blasphemy law or other applicable laws. Indigenous religious groups may also register with the Ministry of Education and Culture as *aliran kepercayaan* rather than as religious organizations.

A joint ministerial decree bans both proselytizing by the Ahmadi Muslim community and vigilantism against the group. Violation of the proselytizing ban carries a maximum five-year prison sentence on charges of blasphemy. No Ahmadis have ever been charged with blasphemy, but provincial and local regulations based on this decree place tighter restrictions on Ahmadis than on recognized religious groups. The proselytizing ban does not prohibit Ahmadi Muslims from worshipping or continuing to practice within their community.

The government requires all officially registered religious groups to comply with directives from the MRA and other ministerial directives on issues such as construction of houses of worship, foreign aid to domestic religious institutions, and propagation of religion.

According to a joint ministerial decree, religious groups seeking to build a house of worship are required to obtain the signatures of at least 90 members of the group and 60 persons of other religious groups in the community stating they support the construction. Local governments are in charge of implementing the decree, and local regulations, implementation, and enforcement vary widely. The decree also requires approval from the local interfaith council, the Religious Harmony Forum (FKUB). Government-established FKUBs exist at the city or district level and comprise religious leaders from the six official religious groups. They are responsible for mediating interreligious conflicts.

The law requires religious instruction in public schools. Students have the right to request religious instruction in any one of the six official religions. Individuals are not allowed to opt out of religious education requirements.

Under the terms of a 2005 peace agreement that ended a separatist conflict, Aceh Province has unique authority to implement sharia regulations. The law allows for provincial implementation and regulation of sharia, and extends the jurisdiction of religious courts to economic transactions and criminal cases. Aceh's provincial sharia regulations criminalize homosexuality, adultery, gambling, consumption of alcohol, and proximity to members of the opposite sex outside of marriage for Muslim residents of the province. An Aceh governor's decree forbids women from working in or visiting restaurants unaccompanied by their spouse or a male relative after 9:00 p.m. A Banda Aceh mayoral decree forbids women from working in coffee shops, internet cafes, or sports venues after 10:00 p.m. Female Muslim residents of Aceh are prohibited from wearing tight pants in public and must wear headscarves. One district in Aceh prohibits women from sitting astride motorcycles when riding as passengers. A new criminal code that took effect in Aceh during the year calls for caning of those convicted of homosexuality, adultery, and other offenses. The maximum penalties for violations of sharia regulations include imprisonment and public caning. There are also regulations limiting the amount of force that may be applied during a caning.

Many local governments outside of Aceh have enacted regulations based on religious considerations. Most of these are in majority Muslim areas, although

local governments in non-Muslim majority areas also have enacted regulations based on religious considerations. Many of these regulations relate to matters such as religious education and only apply to a specific religious group. Some religiously inspired local regulations in effect, however, apply to all citizens. For instance, some local regulations require restaurants to close during Ramadan fasting hours, ban alcohol, or mandate the collection of *zakat* (Islamic alms). Other local regulations forbid or limit the religious activities of minority religious groups, especially Shia and Ahmadi Muslims.

The marriage law does not explicitly forbid interfaith marriage, but it contains an article stipulating that a marriage must be performed according to the rituals of a religion that is shared by both the bride and groom. This means that a man and woman of different religions who seek to marry may have difficulties finding a religious official willing to perform a wedding ceremony.

The law allows a Muslim man to have up to four wives, provided he is able to support each equally. For a man to take a second, third, or fourth wife, he must obtain court permission and the consent of the first wife. These conditions, however, are not always met in practice.

The marriage law makes polygamy illegal for civil servants, except in limited circumstances. Government regulations require Muslim male civil servants to receive permission from a government official and their first wives prior to marrying a second, third, or fourth wife, and prohibit female civil servants from becoming second, third, or fourth wives.

The law requires the leader of an *aliran kepercayaan* group must prove there are group members in at least three regencies before legally officiating a wedding. This constraint effectively bars believers of some smaller groups without such geographic presence from receiving official marriage services from a member of their faith, although groups can aid each other and facilitate marriages by a group with a similar faith tradition and rituals.

A joint ministerial decree requires domestic religious organizations to obtain approval from the MRA to receive funding from overseas donors and forbids dissemination of religious literature and pamphlets to members of other religious groups as well as going door to door for the purposes of converting others.

Foreign religious workers must obtain religious worker visas, and foreign religious organizations must obtain permission from the MRA to provide any type of assistance (in-kind, personnel, or financial) to local religious groups.

The country is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Government Practices

There were arrests and charges for blasphemy and insulting religion, including charges filed against the governor of Jakarta for insulting the Quran and a man charged in Central Java who reportedly tore apart the Quran. In Aceh, there were public canings by local officials for sharia violations, including for the first time of a non-Muslim. There were reports of government attempts of forced conversions of Ahmadi Muslims to Sunni Islam. Members of the Ahmadi Muslim community on Bangka Island were threatened with forced expulsion from the island in January for not converting. The government banned the Gafatar group and there were reports authorities were complicit in the eviction of nearly 8,000 members from their homes. The government took steps to address certain longstanding religious disputes, including the displacement of Ahmadis on Bangka Island and defacement of Buddhist temples in Tanjung Balai, but not all were resolved. There were instances where local governments and police gave in to the demands of “intolerant groups” to close houses of worship for permit violations, or otherwise restrict the rights of minority religious groups. The National Human Rights Commission (Komnas HAM) reported the government at both the national and local levels at times failed to prevent or appropriately address intimidation and discrimination against individuals based on their religious beliefs. Reportedly people who left the religion portion of their identity card blank were denied public services at times.

The Setara Institute, a domestic nongovernmental organization (NGO) that conducts advocacy and research on religious and political freedom, stated the central government made efforts to reaffirm constitutional guarantees of religious freedom, promote tolerance, and prevent religiously motivated violence. It also stated the central government did little to intervene at the local level or solve past religious conflicts through its mandate to enforce court rulings, override unconstitutional local regulations, or otherwise uphold the constitutional and legal protections afforded to minority religious groups. Local governments selectively enforced blasphemy laws, permitting regulations, and other local regulations in ways that affected various religious groups. For example, local governments issued decrees banning Ahmadi and Shia teachings, and reportedly did not act

when threats were made against these groups. Government officials and police sometimes failed to prevent “intolerant groups” from infringing on others’ religious freedoms and committing other acts of intimidation. Police did not always actively investigate and prosecute crimes by members of “intolerant sectarian groups.” President Joko Widodo publicly stated he expected the police to protect religious communities of all faiths when the new National Police Chief Tito Karnavian was inaugurated in June.

The Setara Institute reported 44 cases of government abuses of religious freedom between January and August, compared to 70 cases in the first eight months of 2015. Abuses cited included the closure of houses of worship and statements by public officials that condoned violence towards minorities, especially Ahmadi Muslims and members of the Gafatar group.

On April 12, a 60-year-old Christian woman was caned in Aceh for selling alcohol, marking the first time a non-Muslim was punished under Aceh’s special sharia-based law. A ban on selling alcohol is both a local and sharia regulation that applies to all residents of the province. Muslims who violate the ban are punished under sharia while non-Muslims may choose to be punished under either sharia or civil procedures. Aceh provincial officials in charge of sharia law enforcement stated the woman chose to be punished under sharia rather than the criminal statutes, which may carry fines and imprisonment. Authorities in Aceh issued a public statement saying sharia did not apply to non-Muslims, foreigners, or Muslim Indonesians not resident in Aceh. In October Aceh authorities also publicly caned 13 men and women for violating sharia laws on proximity and intimacy, such as touching, hugging, and kissing between unmarried people. Aceh’s deputy mayor said that one 22-year-old woman who was pregnant was granted a temporary reprieve to be carried out after she gave birth.

The MRA maintained its authority at both the national and local level to conduct “development” of religious groups and believers, including efforts to convert minority religious groups to Sunni Islam. In several West Java regencies, local governments continued efforts to force or encourage conversion of Ahmadi Muslims with a requirement that Ahmadis sign forms renouncing their beliefs in order to register their marriages or participate in the Hajj.

On January 5, the Regent of Bangka Belitung issued a letter threatening to expel 22 Ahmadi families from Bangka Island where they had lived for decades. The regent gave the families a deadline to convert to Sunni Islam or leave their homes, saying the Ahmadi Muslims were upsetting local community members and threatened

local peace and stability. According to news reports, Ahmadi children also received death threats and on February 5, the Ahmadi families left their homes. The regency said its decision to expel the Ahmadi families was based on a meeting with the FKUB and on a joint agreement signed by three local ministers. On February 10, then National Police Chief Badrodin Haiti gave orders to Bangka police to protect Ahmadi families from expulsion from the island, and instructed police chiefs throughout the country to prevent acts of coercion or violence against Ahmadi families. After these efforts the local government and Ahmadi community said the issue was resolved. Some Ahmadi families chose to move to other regions with larger Ahmadi populations.

On March 23, the MRA, MOHA, and AGO released a joint decree banning Gafatar and all associated groups, saying the group's teachings constituted a deviant form of Islam. On May 25, police arrested the founder and two top leaders of Gafatar on accusations the group was creating a separatist state. The police stated the group would face blasphemy and treason charges. As of the end of the year, the three individuals were awaiting trial.

According to a Human Rights Watch report in May, government officials and security forces were complicit in the forced eviction of 7,000 Gafatar members from their homes after the local government declared Gafatar to be an illegal organization that must disband its activities. The NGO said in other cases security forces prevented attacks on Gafatar members but only by forcibly evacuating them from Kalimantan to Java, then arbitrarily detaining, interrogating, and threatening them with criminal charges. Gafatar members indicated the number of evicted members was closer to 8,000 by year's end and that many of those forced to move to Central and East Java were unable to obtain new KTPs after authorities had confiscated their previous identity cards during their stays in shelters. Reportedly, some were forced to undergo reeducation programs or mandatory all-day "patriotic education." On January 19, approximately 1,200 Gafatar members were forced to evacuate their village in Mempawah Regency, West Kalimantan after a mob set fire to nine homes.

On June 14, police detained eight Ahmadi families on Lombok for participating in Ramadan prayers in their village's Sunni mosque. According to media reports, police detained the Ahmadi families "for their own protection." An Ahmadi spokesperson said police had asked members of the Ahmadi congregation to sign a letter denouncing their beliefs. The Ahmadi community refused to sign but agreed not to gather together in one place or carry out Ramadan prayers in public mosques with Sunnis. The eight detained were subsequently released. Village authorities also

reportedly forced the Ahmadi members to surrender all Ahmadi-related books and forbade Ahmadi preachers from other regions from entering the village. Approximately 200 Ahmadis remained internally displaced in cramped apartments in the main city of Mataram after a mob expelled them from their Lombok village in 2006.

On July 29, a mob looted or burned down 12 Buddhist temples in Tanjung Balai, North Sumatra, after a Buddhist woman of Chinese descent asked the Al Maksum Mosque to lower its loudspeaker volume. President Joko Widodo publicly condemned the act and called upon regional leaders to promote “unity in diversity” and build a tolerant society. He also sent the chief of national police to the city in an effort to contain the situation. Other local and national leaders, including Vice President Jusuf Kalla, called for greater religious and racial tolerance in North Sumatra. More than 20 local government, religious, and ethnic leaders representing the Muslim and ethnic Chinese communities signed a formal memorandum of understanding committing to promote harmony between different religions and ethnicities and supporting law enforcement action against those who would disturb interfaith relations. Police reported the arrests of 21 young men who were directly involved in the incident.

In December the Governor of Jakarta, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (known as “Ahok”), the first Christian governor of Jakarta in more than 50 years, was charged with blasphemy for defaming the Quran during a campaign speech in September in which he told a crowd of voters it was wrong to manipulate verses from the Quran for political gain. The speech was met with criticism from the FPI, the Indonesia Ulema Council (MUI), and other Muslim groups who filed a police complaint to launch an investigation. Minister of Religious Affairs Lukman Hakim Saifuddin said, “Let the police resolve the matter in a civilized manner, without Muslims being provoked and aggravated.” On November 4, an estimated 100,000 to 150,000 people participated in a protest in Jakarta organized by the FPI and other groups calling for Ahok’s arrest for blasphemy. The protest ended in riots that injured more than 100 people, and on November 16, authorities officially named Ahok a suspect. On December 2, a reported 200,000 to 450,000 people rallied in Jakarta in a second protest against the governor. Ahok apologized but denied he committed blasphemy, saying he had no intention to insult the Quran and that his comments were directed at his political opponents, not Islam.

On October 31, police in Central Java charged a man with blasphemy because he reportedly tore apart the Quran. Police said the man tore his girlfriend’s Quran as

an act of jealousy during an argument. The man reportedly converted to Islam in December and as of the end of the year was waiting for trial.

Members of minority religious groups continued to seek official recognition from the government.

On July 26, the local government closed an Ahmadi mosque in Sukabumi, West Java. According to the local officials, the closure was undertaken to preserve public order following complaints against the mosque's Ahmadi affiliation.

East Java Ahmadi leaders said a village leader shut down their mosque in rural Tulungagung in January, citing a 2011 decision by East Java Governor Soekarwo to freeze Ahmadi activities. Ahmadis stated the local leader, supported by local police, had misinterpreted a freeze (which would not have affected private activities) as a ban (which would have required the group to stop practicing its faith altogether). The mosque remained closed at year's end.

Ahmadis reported feeling under constant threat from militant groups. An Ahmadi mosque in South Jakarta remained officially closed by the local government after a July 2015 incident in which members of the FPI blocked the entrance of the Ahmadi headquarters building and mosque. Ahmadis said legal uncertainty among local officials and police, anonymous threats of violence, insufficient police protection, and fear of publicity were the barriers to reopening the building.

There were other cases of local governments, sometimes supported by police, closing houses of worship of minority groups for permit violations, often after protests from "intolerant groups" even if the minority groups had a proper permit. NGOs estimated, however, that as many as 85 percent of houses of worship, the majority of which are Sunni mosques, were operating without a permit. Many houses of worship operated without permits in office buildings, malls, private homes, and shops. Some houses of worship that were established before the joint ministerial decree on house of worship construction came into effect were still obligated to meet the requirements or face closure.

Mayor of Bandung Ridwan Kamil issued a ruling that an "intolerant group's" December 6 disbandment of a large Christmas service held at a public convention center was against the law. He demanded the Muslim group, Pembela Ahli Sunnah, issue a formal apology.

National Police Chief Karnavian said an MUI fatwa prohibiting Muslims from wearing Christmas attire was not a law in the country and instructed police to arrest members of “intolerant groups” who conducted raids to enforce the fatwa. Karnavian reprimanded local police who circulated leaflets based on the MUI edict but said the police would not tolerate companies or store owners who forced their employees to wear Christmas attire. Karnavian’s remarks came after reports FPI members, accompanied by about 200 police officers, went to shopping malls in Surabaya to remind businesses not to require Muslim employees to wear Christmas attire such as Santa hats. President Joko Widodo and Minister of Religious Affairs Saifuddin also urged the public to respect Christians and to be tolerant of the country’s diverse religious groups.

Minority religious groups reported difficulty in meeting permit requirements for new and existing houses of worship and stated local government officials declined to approve construction permits, in one case for more than 15 years for a church. Many could not obtain the requisite number of outside signatures supporting the construction and often faced protest from “intolerant groups” making getting permits nearly impossible. Even when permits were attained, some houses of worship were forced to close or halt construction after facing legal challenges and public protest. Churches also reported “intolerant groups” forced them to pay protection money to continue operating without a permit.

On March 7, approximately 700 protesters who said they represented the Bekasi Islamic Outreach Forum marched to the construction site of Santa Clara Catholic Church in Bekasi to protest its construction. Local police protected the site and in general kept protesters under control. Minister of Religious Affairs Saifuddin issued a statement urging the dispute to be resolved through peaceful dialogue rather than through “excessive force aimed at disturbing interfaith harmony.” Construction of the church was still in progress as of the end of the year.

An Indonesian Christian Church (GKI) congregation in Bogor, West Java, continued negotiating issues related to its building permit after it was closed in 2010 by local authorities who complied with public pressure to close the church. The national ombudsman previously tried unsuccessfully to convince Bogor Mayor Bima Arya to uphold a Supreme Court ruling in favor of the congregation in its dispute with the local government over the building permit. The congregation regularly held services outside of the Presidential Palace.

Across the eastern part of the country, the requirement to cite support from 90 followers and 60 nonadherent neighbors to build a place of worship was not

followed in practice. Balinese Christians and Muslims stated the official requirement to cite a specific number of supporters was undermined, either because governments did not issue permits when the requisite numbers were obtained or because neighbors were pressured to not approve. In many local cases, a few vocal opponents from the local majority religious affiliation were reportedly sufficient to stop construction approvals. State-recognized religious leaders in government-supported interfaith forums reportedly found ways to block *aliran kepercayaan* believers from constructing places of worship, largely through stringent house of worship permit requirements. *Aliran kepercayaan* adherents said they were fearful of being accused of atheism were they to fight this in court. Other religious minorities such as Ahmadi and Shia Muslims and Christians faced problems even when seeking approval to move to temporary facilities while a primary place of worship underwent renovation. Protestant leaders said local and provincial governments did not understand different Christian denominations and were suspicious when members of congregations traveled far to attend church instead of going to whatever church was closest to their residence. Religious minority communities said administrative suspicions and inaction blocked renovation or construction of new facilities even when they fulfilled the legal prerequisites.

Civil rights activists said locally implemented sharia-based regulations violated the constitution and called on the central government to exercise its constitutional jurisdiction to revoke or review these regulations. A 2014 law reaffirmed the MOHA's authority to revoke local regulations concerning religious matters that violated the constitution or national law, but there were no reports the MOHA had exercised this authority.

In May sharia police officers, who are part of the Aceh provincial government's sharia implementation apparatus, stopped dozens of women in Lhokseumawe who were not riding motorcycles sidesaddle, and reprimanded approximately 100 people, both men and women, who were not dressed according to sharia regulations.

On July 4, Armed Forces Commander Gatot Nurmantyo issued an order to allow female soldiers to wear hijabs. In August a fifth-grade student at a state elementary school in Christian-majority Jayapura was given a written warning not to wear a hijab in school on the grounds that it was not in line with the school's uniform.

In May the police chiefs of the Jakarta Metropolitan Area and East Aceh issued directives forbidding “intolerant groups” from conducting sweeps of food stalls open for business before sundown during Ramadan.

Aliran kepercayaan followers said they were pressured to send their children to a religious education class of one of the six recognized religions. Bahai followers said schools often allowed their children to spend religious education time in study hall, but parents were required to sign documents stating their children received official religious education. Ahmadi Muslim students reported religion classes for Islam only focused on Sunni teaching.

Civil servants who openly professed an adherence to an indigenous belief system said they had difficulty getting promoted.

Although the government generally allowed citizens to leave the religion column blank on their KTPs, some members of minority religious groups reported difficulties accessing government services and experiencing other forms of discrimination if they exercised this right. The lack of a KTP led to issues ranging from an inability to register for health insurance to problems applying for mortgages. Faced with this problem, many religious minority members reportedly chose to identify as a member of an officially recognized religion that is close to their beliefs or reflects the locally dominant religion. This practice obscured the real number of adherents to any particular religious group in government statistics. The government continued to allow *aliran kepercayaan* believers to omit religious information on their identity cards, but when accessing basic social services other government forms did not always permit leaving this section blank.

Several NGOs and religious advocacy groups continued to urge the government to delete the religion field from the identity cards. Religious minorities reported they sometimes faced discrimination after others saw their religious affiliation on the KTP. Members of the Jewish community said they felt uncomfortable stating their religion on their KTPs and often chose to state that they were Christians. According to a report in the *Jakarta Post*, followers of Javanese faith Sapto Darmo reported they were prohibited from burying the remains of their family members in public cemeteries after community members realized they did not identify as one of the six official religions on their KTP. Members of the indigenous Parmalim faith also reported being refused KTPs when the officials who processed their registration application saw that they did not declare a religion. Data from an NGO showed approximately 42,000 followers of several traditional faiths were denied basic civil registry documentations such as KTPs, birth certificates, and

marriage licenses, and approximately 80,000 could not access public services. In response, the MOHA said members of indigenous religions were entitled to the same access to basic services, regardless of what they did or did not declare as their religion on their KTP, and that such discrimination was a violation of the law.

Minority Muslim groups also continued to report resistance when they tried to apply for KTPs as Muslims. Many Ahmadis continued to be able to acquire KTPs listing their religion as Islam; Ahmadis in Jakarta, however, reportedly faced difficulties acquiring KTPs, effectively denying them access to public services. Like other religious minorities, Ahmadis and Shia reported discrimination in the administration of public services if they chose to leave the religion column blank on their KTPs. Bahai followers also reported difficulties, as many local officials were unaware of the option to leave the religion section blank and refused to issue the KTP.

Both the central and local governments included elected and appointed officials from minority groups. For example, the Governor of Jakarta was a Protestant, the Mayor of Solo was a Catholic, and a leading Shia figure held a seat in the House of Representatives, elected from a majority Sunni district in Bandung, West Java. As of July, President Joko Widodo's 34-member cabinet included five members of minority faiths.

Foreign religious workers stated they found it relatively easy to obtain visas. Despite laws restricting proselytizing, foreign religious groups reported little government interference with preaching or religious conversions. Police provided special protection to some churches in major cities during Sunday services and Christian holidays.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

One child was killed and three children were injured in what security officials said was a lone-wolf ISIS-inspired attack on November 13 when a former terrorist prisoner detonated a Molotov cocktail in front of a church in Samarinda, East Kalimantan, following a Sunday service. The suspect was arrested and the president called for a thorough investigation and condemned religious violence. Investigation into the attack remained ongoing.

On August 29, a man attacked a priest holding Mass at St. Joseph Catholic Church in Medan. The man had failed to detonate a homemade suicide bomb and instead assaulted the priest with a knife before being overpowered by parishioners. Police

said the man was a lone-wolf attacker who was inspired by ISIS propaganda online, had a connection with an Indonesian in Syria, and was not motivated by sectarian tensions within Indonesia. The priest suffered minor injuries. Government officials and Muslim community leaders condemned the attack.

A Molotov cocktail was thrown at a Buddhist temple in Singkawang, West Kalimantan early in the morning on November 14. The government spoke out against religious intolerance, offered protection and assurances for the religious community affected, and as of the end of the year, had questioned eight people as part of an investigation into the incident, according to media reports.

NGOs warned of rising anti-Shia sentiment in East Java, the heartland of the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) Sunni Muslim organization. According to reports, local NU-affiliated imams continued to block reconciliation and the return of Shia internally displaced people (IDPs) to their homes in a case that has continued for several years. Several days before Eid al-Fitr, certain local Sunnis in East Java prevented hundreds of Shia IDPs from returning to their homes on Madura for the holiday. They threatened to kill Shia who tried to return and harm people who assisted them. No violent clashes were reported during this event, but there were no reports of Shia being able to return home because of the intimidation and threats of violence. More than 300 Shia reportedly remained displaced and unable to return to Madura. Anti-Shia rhetoric was also common in some online media outlets and on social media.

On April 1, hundreds of people calling themselves the Aswaja (Adherents to the Sunnah and the Community), a loose coalition of a number of NU and Persatuan (an Islamic educational organization) schools, broke up a gathering of 100 Shia women in Pasuruan district south of Surabaya. The women were celebrating the birthday of the Prophet's daughter, Fatima, an important event in Shia tradition. Police, military, and district public order forces who were present to safeguard the event responded to Aswaja's demands, and after two hours the Shia dispersed.

On April 6, more than 10,000 Shia from East Java gathered in Bondowoso for a religious commemoration, despite vows by 3,000 anti-Shia protestors to disrupt the event. According to local media, security forces deployed 1,751 police and military to prevent the protestors from disrupting the Shia gathering. The local police chief attended the Shia events as an observer to help prevent clashes, according to a Shia leader.

In Christian-majority North Maluku, on August 24, seven members of the Shia Jafariyah congregation led by Nawawi Husni were subject to intimidation by local residents after holding a religious event in Marikurubu Subdistrict. Local police were deployed to ensure the safety of the Shia members. The police later evacuated the congregation to the police headquarters after local residents tried to damage their houses. The Shia eventually returned safely to their homes.

Members of Manado's small Jewish community reported being intimidated by their Christian neighbors after a weekly Shabbat observance.

People affiliated at the local level with the MUI used rhetoric religious minorities considered intolerant. The MUI issued edicts against members of Gafatar in February. On June 13, the MUI protested the clothing worn by two female hosts of a Ramadan television show, stating it depicted Christian crosses. On August 25, the MUI and FPI protested the uniforms of a group of people raising the national flag in Banten, stating their uniforms depicted the Christian cross.

In March a group of church leaders in a Christian-majority region of Papua called on local officials in the highland town of Wamena to prevent the expansion of an existing mosque, ban the use of mosque loudspeakers, prohibit the wearing of headscarves in public, and stop forcing Papuan children to attend Islamic boarding schools. Several prominent Papuan religious leaders disavowed the petition of the Wamena churches as harmful to religious harmony. Komnas HAM called on the church groups to revoke the petition but agreed that Papuan children, the majority of whom are Christian, should not be forcibly sent to Islamic boarding schools. Papuan provincial Governor Lukas Enembe convened a meeting with the Papuan FKUB, religious leaders, and police to call on all sides to engage in interfaith dialogue to prevent any further escalation.

Religious minorities in Bali stated the close association of Balinese traditional culture with Balinese Hinduism created problems for Balinese who converted to Christianity, Islam, or another religion. Religious minority leaders reported Balinese women could maintain their family and social ties after converting to a new religion under recently introduced laws articulating the rights of inheritance and custody, but the laws were ignored in practice. Balinese men who converted to a new religion faced social banishment and loss of inheritance rights.

According to news reports, unknown perpetrators vandalized an Ahmadi mosque in Purworejo village, Kendal Regency, Central Java Province on May 23. The Ahmadi congregation had been in an ongoing dispute with local leaders over the

construction of the mosque and the local Ahmadi leader cited a recent argument with the local village head as the provocation for the incident. On May 25, the local government facilitated mediation and the Ahmadi's agreed to halt construction on the mosque pending a police investigation. Following the police investigation, the local village leader initiated a community effort to reconstruct the mosque, and police publicly stated they would protect the Ahmadi's right to worship in the community.

Many in the media, civil society, and the general population were vocal and active in protecting and promoting tolerance and pluralism. NGOs reported large numbers of Christian-to-Muslim and Muslim-to-Christian conversions, particularly in urban centers and the province of West Java. Many people who converted faced discrimination. The largest and most influential religious groups and NGOs, including the two largest Islamic groups in the country – NU and Muhammadiyah, with some 40 and 30 million members, respectively – officially endorsed and advocated for tolerance, pluralism, and the protection of minority groups. On April 9, for instance, NU Chairman Said Aqil Siradj publicly called on all NU members to uphold tolerance and moderate values as part of Islam.

Muhammadiyah Chairman Haedar Nasir called on Indonesians to respect other religions and reject all communal violence after the August temple burnings in Tanjung Balai. “Intolerant groups” that were accused of using religion to justify criminal activity and vigilantism, however, continued to take actions against minority religious groups, including intimidation, extortion, vandalism, and protest. “Intolerant groups” reportedly accept bribes to advance corrupt political and business interests through their protests and actions. Komnas HAM stated “intolerant groups” in West Java extorted “hundreds of millions” of rupiah (thousands of dollars) from churches by threatening to vandalize and protest outside churches if they did not comply.

Leaders of the High Council of Indonesian Traditional Belief Adherents reported their numbers were in decline, largely due to formal and informal discrimination from government practices and societal attitudes.

Religious groups cooperated with each other and with other organizations on interfaith conferences and events, advocating for respect and tolerance, and speaking out against violence. For instance, NU Deputy Secretary General Imam Pituduh told the *Jakarta Post* members of the organization's youth wing “will be at the forefront of protecting Christian fellow citizens while conducting prayers and activities ahead of Christmas. This is in the name of tolerance.” A local Hindu leader in Bali suggested the people of Denpasar participate in the *takbiran*, which

are festivities that occur the night before Eid al-Fitr. An estimated 1,500 non-Muslims in Denpasar participated. Muhammadiyah maintained an interfaith humanitarian network, and throughout the country, FKUB chapters took steps to affirm religious pluralism by mediating interreligious conflicts. Christians in Maluku provided free rides for Muslims going to prayer services during Eid al-Fitr after Muslims offered Christians rides to attend Christmas Eve services and safeguarded their churches during religious services in December 2015.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. Embassy in Jakarta, the Consulate General in Surabaya, and the Consulate in Medan regularly engaged with all levels of the government on specific religious freedom issues, such as actions against religious minorities; closures of places of worship; arrests for blasphemy and defamation of religion; the undue influence of “intolerant groups” and the importance of the rule of law; the application of sharia to non-Muslims; religious registration requirements on KTPs; the importance of education and interfaith dialogue in promoting tolerance; and promotion of tolerance in international forums. During his October visit, the U.S. Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom conducted public outreach and met with government, NGO, and religious leaders in Jakarta, Banda Aceh, Bali, and Surabaya to discuss the importance of promoting religious freedom and protecting the rights of all in the country, a message he also underscored through public outreach events.

Representatives of the embassy, consulate general, and consulate spoke publicly about the importance of religious tolerance and protecting minorities from acts of violence. Embassy staff at all levels met frequently with religious leaders, representatives of social organizations, and human rights advocates to clarify U.S. policy in support of religious freedom, discuss religious tolerance, and promote respect for religion. Embassy and consulate officials also met with members of minority religious groups who were victims of religious intolerance.

The United States-Indonesia Society, a nonprofit organization endorsed by the U.S. and Indonesian governments, collaborated with Indonesian and U.S. religious leaders to launch the Indonesia-U.S. Council on Religion and Pluralism in Yogyakarta on August 10-11. The nongovernmental council convened a diverse group of experts, academics, and religious and civil society leaders to promote interfaith dialogue, pluralism, and tolerance, and to combat violent extremism in both countries.

The embassy held numerous events at its cultural center venues that directly and indirectly supported religious freedom. For example, the embassy sponsored a series designed for local audiences to hear directly from prominent local Muslims about their experiences in the United States. An August event in the series focused on the 2016 presidential election and discussed its relation to religious freedom. An Indonesian American imam and a local representative of the Center for Strategic and International Studies discussed the inclusion and involvement of the U.S. Muslim community in the presidential election, and broader themes of fundamental American values such as freedom of religion. Two local TV stations and three print media outlets covered the event.

Embassy and consulate staff appeared on a number of nationally televised programs to discuss themes related to religious tolerance and diversity. Previous participants in U.S. government-funded student exchange programs appeared with embassy and consulate officials to provide accounts of their experiences in the United States including religious tolerance. Embassy and consulate personnel also led discussions and gave presentations at venues throughout the country, conveying the importance of diversity and religious tolerance to thousands of high school, Islamic boarding school, and university students. Collectively, these outreach activities carried messages of religious tolerance and religious freedom to tens of millions of viewers.

During Ramadan, embassy and consulate staff held numerous events and outreach activities that promoted religious tolerance. The embassy again sponsored a team of reporters who visited the United States to create news and documentary stories on topics that included U.S. religious life. The stories were again featured as part of the *Muslim Travelers* reality show during Ramadan and received an award in 2015 from the Indonesian Broadcasters Association for Best Ramadan Program. *Muslim Travelers* videos can be viewed on the embassy's YouTube page. The embassy hosted iftars to advocate for tolerance and pluralism through remarks and discussions to a wide cross section of society, including political figures, civil society representatives, and students.

Embassy and consulate staff conducted extensive print, TV, and digital outreach, including the Ambassador's Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr greeting videos and other religious pluralism initiatives that reached millions of individuals throughout the country. The embassy continued to manage a regular English language-learning column titled "Miss Understanding" on Facebook that aimed to promote religious freedom, diversity, and pluralism. The embassy, consulate general, and consulate also sponsored study exchanges and other civil society programs focusing on

religious pluralism and tolerance, including programs for rising leaders and scholars.