

# 2012 Report on International Religious Freedom - Indonesia

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## Executive Summary

The constitution provides for religious freedom, but some laws and regulations restrict it. The government generally respected religious freedom for the six officially recognized religions, but not for groups outside those six religions, or groups within those six religions that espoused interpretations that local or national leaders deemed deviant or blasphemous. The trend in the government's respect for religious freedom did not change significantly during the year; however, as in previous years, the government sometimes failed to protect the rights of religious minority groups. There were reports that police collaborated with hard-line groups against members of sects they deemed to be "deviant" when enforcing laws and regulations that limit religious freedom. In some instances, government security forces failed to act when radical non-state actors attacked minority sects. There were reports that government officials and police witnessed the coerced conversion of dozens of Shia followers to Sunni Islam in East Java. Local governments continued to block construction of houses of worship by minority groups within their communities and the national government failed to enforce two Supreme Court decisions in favor of construction permits for two Christian churches. During the year, a number of regional governments enforced decrees limiting or banning the free practice of Ahmadi Muslims.

There were reports of societal abuses and discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. These abuses occasionally included incidents of majority-on-minority communal violence. While this violence sometimes occurred along sectarian lines, the underlying causes were often more complex and included political manipulation, economic disparity, intra-family conflict, and land disputes. Some hard-line Muslim groups opposed to religious pluralism continued to engage in violent activity against other religious groups and activities deemed contradictory to their view of Islamic values. During the year, religious communal violence claimed approximately 20 lives, left hundreds of homes destroyed, and displaced hundreds.

Throughout the year, the U.S. government discussed religious freedom with government and civil society leaders. Through outreach efforts and cultural programming, the embassy and consulates emphasized respect for diversity and religious tolerance. Through mass media, public speaking engagements, youth exchanges, and educational programs the U.S. government carried the message of religious tolerance to millions of people throughout Indonesia.

## **Section I. Religious Demography**

According to the 2010 government census, the most recent available, the population is approximately 237 million. Approximately 87 percent of the population is Muslim, 7 percent Protestant, 3 percent Roman Catholic, and 1.5 percent Hindu. Other religious groups (Buddhism, followers of traditional indigenous religions, Confucianism, other Christian denominations, and those who did not respond to the census question) comprise approximately 1.25 percent of the population.

The country's Muslim population is overwhelmingly Sunni. Of the more than 207 million Muslims, an estimated one to three million are Shiites. Many smaller Muslim groups exist, including approximately 200,000-400,000 members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community.

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 combine their beliefs with one of the government-recognized religions and register under that recognized religion.

The country has a small Sikh population, estimated at between 10,000 and 15,000, residing primarily in Medan and Jakarta. There are small Jewish communities in Jakarta, Manado, and Surabaya. The Bahai community reports thousands of members, but no reliable figures are available. Falun Dafa (or Falun Gong), which considers itself a spiritual organization rather than a religion, claims several thousand followers, but specific numbers are unavailable. The number of atheists is also unknown, but the group Indonesian Atheists claims to have more than 500 members.

Sunni Islam is the majority religion throughout most of the country. Notable exceptions include the province of Bali, which is predominantly Hindu, and the provinces of Papua, West Papua, East Nusa Tenggara, and North Sulawesi, which are predominantly Protestant Christian.

## **Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom**

### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The constitution protects religious freedom, although some laws, policies, and local regulations restrict religious freedom. The Ministry of Home Affairs holds the authority to review and revoke local regulations that are not in accordance with national legislation. During the year, the ministry reviewed approximately 13,000 local regulations and revoked 824. A ministry spokesperson reported some of the regulations were revoked because they violated religious freedom, but was not able to provide an exact number. The constitution accords "all persons the right to worship according to their own religion or belief" and states that "the nation is based upon belief in one supreme God." The first tenet of the country's national ideology, *Pancasila*, similarly declares belief

in one God. The government does not allow for nonbelief. Government employees must swear allegiance to the nation and to the *Pancasila* ideology. Other laws and policies at the national and regional levels restrict certain types of religious activity, particularly among unrecognized religious groups and "deviant" sects of recognized religious groups.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs extends official status to six religious groups: Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Confucianism. Unrecognized groups may register with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism as social organizations. Although these groups have the right to establish a place of worship, obtain identity cards, and register marriages and births, they sometimes face administrative difficulties in doing so. In some cases, these challenges make it more difficult for individuals to find jobs or enroll children in school. Identity card applications are now legally acceptable when the "religion" section is left blank. However, some individuals report that they sometimes face obstacles in doing this.

The government permits the practice of traditional belief systems, or *Aliran Kepercayaan*, as cultural manifestations rather than as religions. *Aliran Kepercayaan* groups must register with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism at the district or provincial level, and local authorities generally respect their right to practice their beliefs.

In 2008 the government issued a joint ministerial decree freezing certain activities of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. Specifically, it bans both proselytizing by the Ahmadiyya community and vigilantism against the group. Violation of the proselytizing ban carries a maximum five-year prison sentence on charges of blasphemy. Authors of the decree say that it is a compromise designed to give the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community some protection as the minority group would otherwise be subject to a complete ban under the 1965 Blasphemy Law (below). The decree does not prohibit Ahmadi Muslims from worshipping or continuing to practice within their community. Hard-line groups and a government-appointed body, the Coordinating Board for Monitoring Mystical Beliefs in Society, support an outright ban of the group. The minister for religious affairs and the attorney general also publicly support a ban on the Ahmadiyya community. A number of provincial and local laws further restrict practice by Ahmadi Muslims.

The 2008 Information and Electronic Transaction Law forbids disseminating information designed to spread hatred to or dissension among individuals and/or certain community groups on the basis of ethnicity, religion, or race. The law provides for a maximum sentence of five years for inciting hatred.

In April 2010, the Constitutional Court upheld the 1965 Blasphemy Law, holding that the government maintains the power to impose limitations on religious freedoms based upon security considerations. The law provides for a maximum sentence of five years' imprisonment for blasphemy.

The government requires officially recognized religious groups to comply with directives from the Ministry of Religious Affairs and other ministerial directives, such as the Revised Joint Ministerial Decree on the Construction of Houses of Worship (2006), Overseas Aid to Religious Institutions in Indonesia (1978), and Guidelines for the Propagation of Religion (1978).

The 2006 Revised Joint Ministerial Decree on the Construction of Houses of Worship requires religious groups that want to build a house of worship to obtain the signatures of at least 90

members of the group and 60 persons of other religious groups in the community stating that they support the construction. The decree also requires approval from the local religious affairs office, the Forum for Religious Harmony (FKUB). The government established FKUBs under two 2006 joint ministerial decrees. The groups exist at the city or district level and are comprised of religious leaders from the six recognized religions. They are responsible for mediating interreligious conflicts.

The Guidelines for Overseas Aid to Religious Institutions require domestic religious organizations to obtain approval from the Ministry of Religion to receive funding from overseas donors. The Guidelines for Propagation of Religion ban proselytizing to members of recognized religious groups under most circumstances.

The Child Protection Act of 2002 makes conversion of minors to a religion other than their own through "tricks" and/or "lies," terms that can be applied loosely, a crime punishable by up to five years in prison.

Aceh remains the only province authorized by national legislation to implement Sharia (Islamic law). Presidential Decree 11/2003 formally allows for the implementation of Sharia law and established Sharia courts in Aceh. Subsequently, the provincial government passed three Sharia laws, one governing relations between members of the opposite sex and two others banning alcohol consumption and gambling. Non-Muslims are specifically exempted.

The penalty for more serious violations of Sharia can include caning. Persons subject to caning in Aceh are fully clothed – sometimes with several layers of clothes. There are also regulations effectively limiting the amount of force that may be applied during a caning.

Although not specifically classified as Sharia, many local governments attempt to implement Sharia-inspired regulations. A 2011 media report indicated that there are more than 150 Sharia-inspired laws in the country. Although these regulations are unevenly enforced and apply only to Muslims, many Muslim scholars and human rights activists claim that these regulations create or increase discrimination against women. In some cases these laws require Muslim women to wear headscarves in public and prevent Muslim women from receiving government services if they are not wearing headscarves. Some local regulations also mandate that elected Muslim officials, students, civil servants, and individuals seeking marriage licenses be able to read the Quran in Arabic and prohibit Muslims from consuming alcohol and gambling. Other regulations prohibit the sale of food and beverages during the day throughout the month of Ramadan and make mandatory the payment of *zakat*, or alms, for Muslims.

The 1974 marriage law for Muslims draws from Sharia and allows a 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; however, these conditions are not always required in practice. Many women reportedly encounter societal pressures that compel them to grant permission for additional marriages. Islamic women's groups remain divided over whether the system needs revision. In 2007 the Constitutional Court upheld a spouse's right to deny a husband's demand to take on additional wives, ruling that restrictions on polygamy in the marriage law violate neither the constitution nor tenets of Islam and are necessary to protect the rights of women. Some members of Islamic groups view this as a restriction of their religious freedom.

The marriage law makes polygamy illegal for civil servants, except in limited circumstances. A government regulation from 1983 requires male civil servants to receive permission from a government official and their first wives prior to marrying second, third, or fourth wives and prohibits female civil servants from becoming second, third, or fourth wives.

In 2008 the president signed antipornography legislation which some provinces refuse to implement on the grounds that it limits religious and cultural expression, compelling all citizens to adhere to conservative interpretations of Islamic customs. The law outlaws pornographic acts and images, defining pornography as "man-made sexual materials in the form of drawings, sketches, illustrations, photographs, text, voice, sound, moving pictures, animation, cartoons, poetry, conversations, and gestures." It also outlaws public performances that could "incite sexual desire." The governor of Bali stated that the law is incompatible with traditional Hindu dances and customs. The law also appears to proscribe the traditional clothing worn in many areas of the country. In March 2010 the Constitutional Court held that the antipornography law did not violate the constitution.

Under the National Education Law, religious instruction in any one of the six official religions is required when requested by a student.

Religious speeches are permissible if delivered to members of the same religious group and are not intended to convert persons of other religious groups.

Televised religious programming is unrestricted for any of the recognized religious groups.

Publication of religious materials or the use of religious symbols is permitted; however, the government bans dissemination of these materials to persons who do not adhere to the religion of the group disseminating the materials.

Religious groups and social organizations must obtain permits to hold religious concerts or other public events. The government usually grants permits in an unbiased manner unless a concern exists that the activity would raise strong objections from members of another religious group in the area.

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

The law does not discriminate against any recognized religious group in employment, housing, or health care.

The government observes the following religious holidays as national holidays: (Muslim) the Ascension of the Prophet, Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha, the Muslim New Year, the Birth of the Prophet Muhammad; (Christian) Good Friday, the Ascension of Christ, Christmas; (Buddhist) Waisak, the Chinese New Year; and (Hindu) Nyepi. Additional Hindu holy days are recognized as regional holidays in Bali, and the Balinese do not work on Saraswati Day, Galungan, and Kuningan.

### *Government Practices*

There were reports of abuses of religious freedom, including reports of imprisonment and detention. The country has a long tradition of religious pluralism but certain laws, policies, and official actions restricted religious freedom. Due to inaction the government sometimes failed to prevent violence, abuse, and discrimination against individuals based on their religious belief.

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) reported on continuing government abuses of religious freedom during the year. The Setara Institute, an Indonesia-based NGO that conducts advocacy and research on religious and political freedom, reported 145 cases of government abuses of religious freedom during the year, an increase of 40 cases over 2011. Setara also reported a difference in methodology from the previous year including expanding its research area to include six additional provinces and reporting types of violations not accounted for in last year's report. Both Setara and the Wahid Institute, another Indonesia-based NGO that advocates for and carries out research related to good governance and religious harmony, noted inaction by security forces was the most common category of abuse by state actors. Both institutions also agreed government sealing of houses of worship was the second most common category of abuse by state actors.

Despite these abuses, the government did not prosecute victims of societal violence as it did in 2011. Rather, the government arrested and prosecuted ringleaders and some participants in the year's most notable outbreaks of communal religious violence.

NGOs reported an increase in the government's application of the blasphemy law. During the year, the government convicted 10 people under the law, up from four in 2011. According to NGO reports, since the blasphemy law was passed in 1965, the government has used it to convict 38 individuals of crimes related to blasphemy. More than half of all convictions under this law have occurred since 2009.

On July 12, the Sampang District Court sentenced Shia cleric Tajul Muluk to two years in prison for blasphemy following the issuance of a fatwa by a local Islamic clerical council that called his teaching deviant and Shia Islam heretical. Following an appeal by Muluk in September, the sentence was extended to four years. Among other offenses, the judges found Muluk guilty of telling his followers they did not need to pray five times each day.

There were also cases of forced mass resettlement of members of a religious group resulting from a failure to manage social conflict and discrimination. Authorities resettled approximately 300 of Muluk's followers to a sports complex in Sampang following an attack against them by Sunni hard-liners. Government spokespeople said that the resettlement was for the group's own protection. In November members of the group called for help from the central government, as the local government had stopped providing free food and water to the internally displaced persons. At year's end, 198 of Muluk's followers were still living in the sports complex.

Days after the resettlement of Muluk's followers, Minister of Religion Suryadharma Ali publicly expressed his belief that dialogue between the parties could lead the Shia to convert to "mainstream" Islam, thus removing the source of the conflict.

Government officials collaborated with hard-line Islamic groups against members of religious groups deemed "deviant." For example, on July 8 police and local leaders in the village of Cisalopa, West Java, detained the leader of a fringe group of the At Tijaniyah sect of Islam and several of his followers. A group consisting of local government officials, police, military, members

of the local conservative Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI), and the hard-line group Islamic Reform Movement (GARIS) accused the leader, Sumarna, of presenting his followers with a deviant interpretation of Islam and encouraged the sect to return to mainstream Islam. On August 19, approximately 1,000 members of GARIS burned seven homes belonging to Sumarna and his followers. The attack followed the unsuccessful search for the missing GARIS leader, Ustad Edin Zainudin. Police responding to the scene discovered Zainudin's body approximately 1,500 feet from Sumarna's house and arrested Sumarna. According to reports by respected human rights groups, Zainuddin had frequently and vehemently criticized Sumarna and his group for their "deviant" teachings. At year's end, the case against Sumarna was still pending. There were no arrests related to the attack on the sect members.

Atheism came under increased scrutiny during the year after the arrest and conviction of an atheist for allegedly inciting religious hatred with a posting on Facebook. On June 14, a court sentenced civil servant Alexander Aan to 30 months in prison for posting atheist statements and material that a local council of Muslim clerics deemed blasphemous on his Facebook page. Aan was convicted of violating the Information and Electronic Transaction Law, which forbids disseminating information designed to spread hatred toward or dissension among individuals and/or certain community groups on the basis of ethnicity, religion, or race. Following his conviction, Aan publicly renounced atheism and reportedly converted (back) to Islam. At year's end he remained in prison.

Antonius Richmond Bawengan, who was sentenced to five years' imprisonment for blasphemy in February 2011, remained in prison at year's end.

There were also cases of officially encouraged conversion. During a group conversion ceremony in November, 18 Shiites in Sampang converted to Sunni Islam under the observation of police and officials from the Sampang office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The officials who were present reportedly reminded the Shiites that they could be attacked by their neighbors if they did not convert.

Cases related to government-sanctioned closures of houses of worship and the freedom to construct houses of worship involved members of local majority religious groups calling on local government officials to reexamine the licenses of existing or proposed houses of worship. In October officials in Banda Aceh, under pressure from the hard-line Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), ordered the closure of nine Christian churches and six Buddhist temples. According to local government officials, these houses of worship, several of which had existed for more than a decade, failed to meet the requirements set forth in the 2006 decree governing the establishment of houses of worship. Local officials also stated that the local chapter of the FPI brought the congregations to their attention. Home Minister Gamawan Fauzi defended the closures, noting that it was a permit matter and not related to religion. Local government leaders encouraged members of the congregations to join other local churches and temples with similar beliefs.

Members of the Sunni majority experienced similar challenges in areas where they constituted a minority. After initially approving construction, the mayor of the predominantly Christian town of Kupang in East Nusa Tenggara ordered a halt to construction of Nur Musafir Mosque in 2011 after local hard-line Christian groups called for an investigation into the process by which the mosque obtained its permit. At year's end, construction was still blocked and the site of the mosque had a temporary structure to accommodate Muslim worshippers for Friday prayers or the celebration of Muslim holidays.

In September the Supreme Court decided in favor of Radio Era Baru, a Chinese-language, Falun Gong-affiliated radio station that had been closed by authorities in September 2011. This ruling required the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology to refrain from allowing any other parties to use the station's old frequency while two other cases related to the closure were being adjudicated by the Supreme Court.

During the year a number of regional governments enforced decrees limiting or banning the free practice of Ahmadiyya Islam. These decrees were often vague in their language, which led to inconsistent enforcement by local authorities. For example, on October 25, members of the FPI in Bandung, West Java reported to local police that they had observed an Ahmadi Muslim congregation preparing for the ritual slaughter of animals that is part of the observance of the Eid-ul-Adha holiday. The FPI members and police returned to the Ahmadi mosque and arrested three members of the congregation. Police and the FPI reportedly worked together in an attempt to coerce the Ahmadi Muslims to sign admissions of guilt for violating a 2011 gubernatorial decree that limited their right to practice and defined "spreading the sect" as any public display of their faith. Upon the Ahmadi Muslims' refusal to do so, the FPI members returned to the mosque and vandalized it. Provincial-level police then encouraged the previously detained Ahmadiyya congregation members to file criminal complaints against the FPI for damaging their property, resulting in the arrest of a local FPI leader.

Police appeared to act in concert with the FPI and other hard-line groups on other occasions. On May 4, Canadian author Irshad Manji attempted to hold a discussion of her book *Allah, Liberty, and Love* in Jakarta. Following public statements by the FPI condemning the work and attacking Manji for being a lesbian, police and FPI broke up the event. A subsequent discussion was dispersed by Sunni hard-liners in Yogyakarta, as police stood by.

Disability access was an issue for religious buildings and houses of worship, as it was for many buildings throughout the country. The government did not effectively enforce laws requiring accessibility, in effect restricting the ability of persons with disabilities to practice their religion.

The civil registration system continued to discriminate against persons not belonging to one of the six recognized religious groups. Animists, Bahais, and members of other small minority religious groups sometimes found it difficult to register births or marriages, notwithstanding the 2007 regulation pertaining to marriage and civil administration that allowed *Aliran Kepercayaan* marriages to be officially recognized. According to representatives of the *Aliran Kepercayaan* communities, adherents sometimes found it difficult to find employment or educational opportunities due to the blank religion field on their identity cards (KTPs).

In practice, couples prevented from registering their marriage or the birth of a child sometimes converted to one of the recognized religions or misrepresented themselves as belonging to one of the six religions. Those who chose not to register their marriages or births risked future difficulties, such as an inability to obtain birth certificates for children, which were required for school enrollment, scholarships, and government employment.

Interreligious couples also continued to face obstacles to marrying and officially registering their marriages and often had difficulty finding clergy to perform the required ceremonies before registering a marriage. As a result, some couples traveled outside the country to marry and then registered the marriage at an Indonesian embassy. Despite being among the officially recognized



religious groups, Hindus stated that they frequently had to travel long distances to have their marriages registered, because in many rural areas the local government could not or would not process the registration. On November 12, the director of the local office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Salawu, West Java refused to register the marriage of an Ahmadi Muslim groom and Sunni bride, as it was "haram (prohibited under Islamic Law) to record their marriage as they (Ahmadis) are not the real Muslims."

Human rights groups continued to receive occasional reports of local civil registry officials who rejected applications for KTPs submitted by members of unrecognized or minority religious groups. While civil registry regulations allowed the religion field to be left blank or select the choice "other," the decentralized nature of the issuance of identity cards meant that some regions did not comply with these regulations. Some members of unrecognized religious groups found it easier to register with a religion other than their own and were issued KTPs that inaccurately reflected their religions. For example, some animists received KTPs that listed their religion as Islam. Many Sikhs registered as Hindu on their KTPs and marriage certificates. Similarly, some Jews registered as Christians or Muslims. Some citizens without a KTP had difficulty finding work. Several NGOs and religious advocacy groups continued to urge the government to delete the religion field from the KTPs, but made no progress.

Sharia police in Aceh continued to monitor compliance with Sharia regulations, although the level of police activity varied among districts. On September 3, Sharia police arrested four teenagers, two girls and two boys, for violating the prohibition against unmarried males and females being in close proximity to one another. The four were reportedly sitting together in a park after curfew. Following the arrest, local media printed allegations by the Sharia police that the teenage girls were prostitutes – charges that the girls' families and supporters denied. On September 6, one of the girls committed suicide.

During Ramadan, many local governments ordered either the closure or a reduction in operating hours of various entertainment establishments. Several regional governments issued circulars limiting the operating hours of night entertainment venues, cafes, and restaurants during the month of Ramadan. Some of the restaurants chose to close voluntarily while others, if not serving halal food, remained open, often posting a sign that the business was not Muslim-owned.

The government implemented Sharia-based regulations in a number of areas. In August the mayor of Gorontalo, Sulawesi refused to allow a civil servant to take his post after the new employee failed to read the Quran in Arabic during his swearing in ceremony. After two months, the civil servant was able to read the Quran in Arabic and assumed his post.

Christian groups stated that foreign religious workers found it difficult to obtain or extend visas. Requirements for religious worker visas were more onerous than other visa categories. The application required approval from both local and national offices within the Ministry of Religion and disclosure of the number of followers of the religion in the community. The applicants had to attest they would remain in their position no more than two years before being replaced by a local national. Foreigners granted such visas worked relatively unimpeded. Faith-based workers with a primary focus on development work often successfully registered for social visas with the Ministry of Health or the Ministry of Education.

### *Government Inaction*

The government failed to take sufficient action with regard to continued discrimination, restrictions, and occasional attacks toward religious minorities. In June and August followers of jailed Shia cleric Tajul Muluk reportedly informed police that they had received death threats from members of an unknown Sunni group. On August 23, Muluk's followers reported that a number of Sunni hard-liners had visited their section of Sampang, Madura and that the residents felt unsafe. Three days later, on August 26, a group of roughly 500 Sunni hard-liners descended on Sampang, wielding machetes, knives, and Molotov cocktails. Upon receiving reports regarding the mob, police reportedly dispatched five officers who witnessed the ensuing melee. The violence left two Shiites dead, dozens of homes burned, and 300 people displaced. Following the attack, a combined force of 700 security force personnel arrived to secure the area. Police later arrested eight of the hard-liners for their involvement in the unrest.

Militant groups and mobs throughout the country attacked, vandalized, forced to close, or prevented from being established several houses of worship, religious schools, and homes of Muslim groups regarded as unorthodox. In several cases, police temporarily detained members of "deviant groups" who were victims of attacks, ostensibly to ensure their safety, but did not arrest attackers.

During the year the government did not take any concrete action to enforce the Supreme Court decisions permitting the Indonesian Christian (GKI) Yasmin Church in Bogor and the Batak Christian Protestant (HKBP) Filadelfia Church in Bekasi to reopen.

### **Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom**

There were reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. Many incidents of societal violence occurred along sectarian lines, but were the result of both religious and secular causes.

Through coordinated attacks, intimidation, coercion of – and sometimes in collaboration with – government actors, religious hard-line groups such as FPI, as well as local branches of the MUI, often succeeded in restricting the rights of religious minorities. Mobs of people not clearly affiliated with any group also engaged in acts of violence and discrimination on the basis of religion. Between January and June, the Setara Institute reported 111 cases in which non-state actors abused or discriminated against religious minority groups. According to the report, the two provinces most affected by religious communal violence were West Java and East Java. Setara also noted an increase in its societal data collection over the previous year, such as surveying six additional provinces.

Hard-line groups, including the FPI, continued their attacks against Ahmadi Muslims and individuals or groups they deemed deviant.

The FPI also pressured the government to act in accordance with the FPI's desires. In May, just ahead of a planned June 3 concert by pop singer Lady Gaga, FPI members called for the cancellation of the concert. The FPI said that the concert was immoral and that it was seeking to protect Indonesian society from sinfulness. In the lead-up to the event, photos of masked FPI members with concert tickets surfaced on the Internet along with thinly veiled threats of violence if the concert were held. Citing security concerns, police refused to grant the concert a permit, and the show was cancelled. Minister of Religious Affairs Suryadharma Ali noted that he believed the cancellation would benefit the country.

Civil rights activists asserted that Sharia-based regulations violate the constitution and called on the government to exercise its constitutional jurisdiction to revoke or review these regulations.

In the village of Woyla in West Aceh, the MUI (known locally as the MPU) successfully pressured the regent to ban a foreign-funded NGO from operating in the area. The NGO had worked in Aceh since 2004 and was focused on livelihood programs for men and women and life skills programs for children. In September the MUI pressured the group to cease its operations. When the group refused, the MUI accused it of proselytizing in the local newspaper. These accusations, which the NGO stated were unfounded, resulted in an investigation by local authorities and the issuance of a ban by the regent. In carrying out its efforts against the NGO, the MUI employed a messaging campaign using both traditional and social media. At year's end, the NGO remained closed.

Other sectarian conflict during the year included violence against Shia communities in East Java, including violence in August that left two dead and more than 40 homes destroyed.

#### **Section IV. U.S. Government Policy**

The U.S. embassy and the consulates in Surabaya and Medan regularly engaged with all levels of the government on specific religious freedom issues. Embassy officials 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, officials of Muslim 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 staff also met with members of minority religious groups who were victims of violent attacks or found their houses of worship or training facilities forcibly closed.

Throughout July and August, the embassy and consulates conducted their annual Ramadan outreach program. Embassy and consulate personnel led discussions and gave presentations at more than 60 venues throughout the country. Through this program, thousands of high school and university students received messages about diversity and tolerance.

Also during Ramadan, the ambassador hosted more than 1,000 people at 15 iftar celebrations. Widely respected Muslim and interfaith leaders attended these events, and topics of discussion included religious freedom and respect for religious minorities. The events received heavy coverage in the press.

In May the Department of State principal deputy assistant secretary for East Asia and Pacific affairs met with local NGOs and religious leaders in Medan to discuss the importance of promoting religious tolerance at the grass roots level in Sumatra. Similarly, during a June visit to Jakarta, the department's assistant secretary for democracy, human rights, and labor hosted a luncheon with representatives from the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community and GKI Yasmin Church, and other members of civil society. The group discussed issues of religious intolerance in Indonesia and the need for the protection of minority groups.

During an August appearance on a local television program, the embassy's deputy chief of mission reinforced themes of mutual understanding and tolerance.

In September the embassy hosted a dinner for members of three different minority faiths. The event provided a networking opportunity and allowed for the free exchange of information about best practices for dealing with religious discrimination.

Embassy and consulate public outreach emphasized the importance of religious freedom and tolerance in a democratic and diverse society. The embassy and consulates also promoted pluralism and tolerance through exchanges and civil society programs.

During the year, 20 student leaders and one professor travelled to the United States and participated in U.S. government-funded exchange programs for student leaders and scholars on religious pluralism. One of the students who participated in the exchange stated that she was impressed to see how Muslims are able to remain faithful to their religion in a pluralistic society. She also stated that she was deeply touched by what she learned about the holocaust during a trip to Washington, DC.

The embassy and consulates engaged with religious figures through an active outreach program. A number of programs at high schools, universities, and *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) focused on diversity, pluralism, and religious tolerance. The embassy and consulates supported campus seminar programs aimed at strengthening supporters of pluralism on Islamic campuses and reinforcing understanding of religious freedom, tolerance, pluralism, and gender equity. Five of the embassy's 11 American Corners were in Islamic universities and the embassy placed American academic fellows at 19 Islamic universities throughout the country, providing opportunities for programs throughout the year that highlighted, among other things, the U.S. government's commitment to religious freedom at home and abroad.