

# INDONESIA Briefing

Jakarta/Brussels, 10 October 2001



## INDONESIA: VIOLENCE AND RADICAL MUSLIMS

### OVERVIEW

The destruction of the World Trade Centre and part of the Pentagon by terrorists has again focused international attention on radical Muslims and their potential to engage in acts of terrorism. Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida organisation is said to have cells in 34 countries including the United States, most European countries, and various countries in the Arab world. Informed observers have also speculated that al-Qaida has a presence in several Southeast Asian countries, including Malaysia, the Philippines and Indonesia. At the very least it has been claimed that Osama bin Laden has 'links' with radical Islamic groups in these countries although the exact nature of these links has not been specified.

The U.S.-led air strikes against military targets in Afghanistan – accompanied by inevitable civilian casualties – have outraged public opinion in largely Muslim Indonesia and presented President Megawati Soekarnoputri's government with a huge dilemma. Megawati recently completed a successful visit to the U.S. and obtained President George W. Bush's support for increased economic assistance as well as a relaxation of restrictions on military co-operation. Although the Indonesian government condemned the 11 September attacks and 'pledged to cooperate with the international community in combating terrorism', it has refrained from endorsing the current U.S.-led military campaign.<sup>1</sup> On the one hand, the government does not want to prejudice its economic relationship with the U.S. but, on the other, it cannot afford, in the new democratic era,

to ignore the sentiments of a large part of its population.

In a statement issued on 8 October, the government 'urged that the operations that have started should truly be very limited in the use of force, in its targets and in its timing, and thus reduce or minimise casualties among those who are innocent'.<sup>2</sup> Earlier, the government had warned that the U.S. response should 'be proportional, have precise targets, not exceed proper limits, and avoid creating a new human tragedy'.<sup>3</sup> The government also called on the UN to adopt a collective response to the crisis.<sup>4</sup>

During the weeks before the attacks on Afghanistan, radical Muslim organisations had been rallying their supporters in the streets of Jakarta and other major cities. After the air campaign began, demonstrations became larger and more widespread. The main targets are the American embassy and its consulates where demonstrators, carrying banners with slogans such as 'America is the Great Terrorist' and 'Osama My Hero', have burnt the U.S. flag and chanted anti-American slogans. More ominously, some organisations are threatening to carry out what they term 'sweeping' of U.S. citizens together with citizens of allied nations. The aim of the 'sweeping' would be to drive such foreigners out of Indonesia. The U.S. ambassador, Robert Gelbard, publicly declared his lack of confidence in the police and permitted embassy staff to leave

<sup>1</sup> Joint Statement between the United States of American and the Republic of Indonesia, Washington, 19 September 2001.

<sup>2</sup> 'PBB Harus Ambil Langkah Bersama', Kompas, 9 October 2001.

<sup>3</sup> 'Pemerintah Larang "Sweeping"', Kompas, 5 October 2001.

<sup>4</sup> 'PBB Harus Ambil Langkah Bersama', Kompas, 9 October 2001.

Indonesia.<sup>5</sup> So far demonstrations have been restrained and relatively small. On the first two days after the raids on Afghanistan, a thousand or more demonstrated at the U.S. embassy in Jakarta while smaller numbers protested in other cities.

Although the radical Muslim organisations have taken the lead in opposing the U.S. attacks on Afghanistan, their sentiments are widely shared within the Muslim community. Leaders of the moderate Nahdatul Ulama (NU) and the Mohamadiyah have issued statements condemning the American action and the semi-official *Majelis Ulama Indonesia* (MUI – Indonesian Ulama's Council) has called for the suspension of diplomatic relations with the U.S..<sup>6</sup> The foreign affairs commission of the parliament has described the attack as 'brutal' and in conflict with international law and humanitarianism.<sup>7</sup> The negative reaction, however, is not limited to Muslim opinion and has also been expressed by secular groups.<sup>8</sup>

The government is naturally concerned that conflict in Afghanistan could boost domestic support for Islamic radicalism. In recent years Indonesia has experienced an increasing number of terrorist attacks – particularly bombings. While by no means all terrorism can be linked to radical Muslims, some attacks – such as those on churches – were quickly blamed on Muslim groups. Two of the biggest bomb blasts – one aimed at the Philippine ambassador to Indonesia and another at the Jakarta Stock Exchange building – were also linked to Muslim groups. Much lower on the scale of violence, radical Muslim vigilante groups have often taken the law into their own hands by attacking night-clubs, gambling centres and

brothels in various parts of Jakarta and in other cities, and in Central Java last year one group attempted to drive American tourists from the city of Solo (also known as Surakarta).

Muslims have also been involved in violent conflicts in various regions of Indonesia. It is estimated that around 5000 people have been killed in Muslim-Christian conflict in Maluku and North Maluku since January 1999; hundreds have been killed in continuing Muslim-Christian violence in Poso in Central Sulawesi; the separatist guerrillas of the *Gerakan Aceh Merdeka* (GAM – Aceh Freedom Movement) are Muslims fighting government forces in Aceh; and Muslims have participated in dozens of smaller outbreaks of violence in other parts of Indonesia.

International concern has been focussed on the possibility that Muslim violence in Indonesia might be associated with terrorist organisations based in the Middle East but so far, at least, there is little firm public evidence to demonstrate such links. Several hundred Indonesians joined the Islamic resistance to the Soviet Union's occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s and others have apparently received 'training' in that country since then but neither the numbers nor the nature of the 'training' are clear.<sup>9</sup> It has also been claimed that Osama bin Laden's network has provided financial support to a minority Muslim militia in Maluku.<sup>10</sup> In any case, much of the violence in Indonesia involving Muslims can be adequately explained in domestic terms – although there is some evidence of limited involvement of foreigners.

As this paper will show, radical Islam in Indonesia is still quite weak and the goal of its proponents of turning Indonesia into a state based on Islam is far from achievement. Nevertheless, Indonesia's democratic transition is being accompanied by a crisis of lawlessness that has allowed many groups – including radical Muslim groups – to flaunt the law by engaging in violent behaviour with impunity. Needless to say, however, it is not only

<sup>5</sup> 'Dubest Kecewa terhadap Polri', Kompas, 28 September 2001.

<sup>6</sup> 'PBB Harus Ambil Langkah Bersama', Kompas, 9 October 2001.

<sup>7</sup> Detikcom, 8 October 2001.

<sup>8</sup> In the wake of the initial terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, the English-language Jakarta Post, which has never shown sympathy for radical Islam, stated: 'Following the revulsion that came with watching the horrific scenes of last week's attacks in New York and Washington, the world is not quite ready to witness another round of grisly killing of innocent civilians anywhere in the world. If that should happen, then this becomes solely America's war, and the rest of the world will have no part in it'. Editorial, Jakarta Post, 17 September 2001.

<sup>9</sup> According to one report, a military intelligence source estimated that 800 Indonesians had fought in Afghanistan in the 1980s. A spokesman for the *Laskar Jihad* estimated that the number was more than 400. Tempo, 7 October 2001, p.23. One prominent Muslim scholar, however, wonders how many actually went further than Peshawar in Pakistan. ICG interview, October 2001.

<sup>10</sup> 'Yang Menanti Berkah Osama', Tempo, 30 September 2001, p. 25.

explicitly Muslim groups that have been responsible for growing violence.

## I. 'RELIGIOUS' VIOLENCE IN INDONESIA

Violence perpetrated by Muslim radicals is not a new phenomenon in Indonesia and was common from time to time during Soeharto's authoritarian New Order. In fact it is often argued that the Soeharto regime's severe repression of political Islam contributed to the radicalisation of Muslim dissent. While the Muslim mainstream has welcomed the democratisation of Indonesia since Soeharto's fall, a small radical fringe has resorted to intimidation and violence. Such violence has included bombing and various forms of local-level violence against Chinese, Christians and 'vice'. Muslims have also been involved in communal violence in various parts of Indonesia. Communal conflict, however, always has local roots that are usually unrelated to radical Islamic aspirations – although radicals can sometimes aggravate such conflict.

### A. BOMBING

The throwing or planting of bombs to further political goals was not unknown in the past but since the fall of the New Order regime in May 1998, bomb explosions have become more common. Between May and the end of 1998, six bombings were recorded, followed by nine in 1999 and twenty in 2000.<sup>11</sup> Not all bombings, of course, have been the work of Muslim organisations. In fact several major bomb explosions took place immediately before various members of the Soeharto family faced legal proceedings – interrogation in the case of the former president's son, Tommy, and the opening of his trial in the case of Soeharto himself – and were apparently intended by their supporters to intimidate prosecutors and judges. Others are simply unexplained.

Major bombing attacks that had Islamic links were of three types. The first category involved bombings carried out by supporters of independence for staunchly Islamic Aceh. Secondly, a powerful bomb was used in an attempt to murder the Philippine ambassador to Indonesia, presumably at the behest of Muslim separatists in

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<sup>11</sup> 'Bombings after 1998 have not been resolved', Jakarta Post 19 January 2001.

the Philippines. And thirdly, a series of church bombings received at least marginal support from a radical Malaysian group. The affiliations of their Indonesian partners have yet to be identified.

The first category of bombing was carried out by supporters of Aceh's independence. The biggest bomb explosion in Indonesia during the last few years occurred on 13 September 2000 in the basement car-park of the Jakarta Stock Exchange Building – which also houses the offices of the World Bank. A powerful explosion killed ten people, injured 34 and wrecked more than one hundred cars but caused no serious structural damage to the building itself. Eventually eight people were charged in this case and a related case involving a grenade thrown into the grounds of the Malaysian embassy. However, only six were convicted as two remained at large following the recapture of two of four who had managed to escape from prison. The key figures in the plot, including three soldiers with bomb-assembling skills, were Acehnese although GAM denied police claims that they were members of the movement.

Despite the successful conclusion of the trials, public suspicion that the full story had not been told was widespread. No evidence was presented to show that Tengku Ismuhadi, the leader of the group, really was a GAM member while the link between the struggle for Acehnese independence and the grenade attack on the Malaysian embassy (and another planned attack on the U.S. embassy) was never explained. Observers also noted the huge gap in the sophistication of the powerful bomb explosion at the stock exchange and the simplicity of the grenade attack on the Malaysian embassy and the naivety of the plan to throw a grenade over the fence of the heavily guarded U.S. embassy. Scepticism was also expressed about the series of 'coincidences' that led to the arrest of the suspects.<sup>12</sup>

Another Aceh-related bomb explosion took place on 10 May 2001 at a student boarding house in Jakarta. The boarding house was occupied by Acehnese, some of whom were apparently associated with the Aceh Referendum Information

Centre (SIRA), a student-based movement calling for a referendum on Aceh independence. Although SIRA maintains a distinct identity, the police and military tend to regard it as part of the GAM network. Three people were killed in the explosion. It seems that a bomb had been assembled in the house but had exploded prematurely.<sup>13</sup>

There was no indication that the Aceh-linked explosions had any foreign backing. But a massive explosion on 1 August 2000 in front of the home of the ambassador of the Philippines is inexplicable without foreign involvement. The ambassador, whose car was blown up as he returned for lunch, was badly wounded in the attack which killed two unconnected passers-by. No progress has been made in identifying the perpetrators but it is widely assumed that the bombing was carried out at the behest of Muslim rebels in southern Philippines. It is possible that the perpetrators were Filipinos but it is hard to believe that such a massive bombing could have been accomplished without local support. Naturally suspicion has fallen on Muslim radicals but in the absence of evidence it is no less possible that professional criminals were paid to kill the ambassador.

Churches were the targets of several bombing attacks. On 28 May 2000 in Medan, North Sumatra, an explosion at a Protestant church injured at least 47 people while bombs found in two other churches had failed to explode. Three months later another church was damaged in a bomb explosion in Medan.<sup>14</sup>

The most extensive bombing attacks on churches occurred on Christmas eve, 2000, when bombs exploded at roughly the same time in or near churches – both Catholic and Protestant – in ten Indonesian cities in six provinces in Sumatra, Java and Lombok. Among the churches were six in Jakarta, including the Catholic cathedral. In several places police were successful in defusing bombs placed in churches or sent as 'Christmas parcels' to the homes of clergymen. Eighteen people were killed and another 36 suffered severe injuries.

<sup>12</sup> 'Keganjilan yang Terus Menyelimuti Kasus Bom BEJ', *Koran Tempo*, 20 July 2001; 'Bom BEJ dan Sejumlah Aneh', editorial, *Tempo*, 8 October 2000. This issue of *Tempo* also includes several articles raising questions about the case.

<sup>13</sup> 'Police say SIRA activists involved in Guntur blast', *Jakarta Post*, 14 May 2001.

<sup>14</sup> '47 Injured in Medan Church Blast', *Jakarta Post*, 29 May 2000; 'Medan Church Bombs Linked to Provocateurs', *Indonesian Observer*, 21 August 2000.

Not all the victims, however, were targets. Among those killed or injured were several involved in assembling or delivering bombs. One of the survivors of a premature explosion had a mobile phone in which numbers were recorded showing that he had been in contact with people in Malaysia and Afghanistan.<sup>15</sup> In Bandung, West Java, the accidental explosion of a bomb being assembled in a house enabled police to capture four members of the plot including a religious teacher, Iqbal, who was regarded as the ringleader of the Bandung group. Iqbal was later sentenced to fifteen years imprisonment together with three others.<sup>16</sup> In Medan, North Sumatra, a man was sentenced to eleven years imprisonment for assembling the bombs that were sent to churches in North Sumatra and Riau. He claimed that the bombs had been ordered by a representative of GAM who had paid him Rp 28 million (U.S.\$2800) to assemble and deliver the bombs.<sup>17</sup>

Seven months later, two churches in East Jakarta – one Catholic and one Protestant – were the targets of bomb attacks on 22 July 2001 in which five were injured in one case and 64 in the other. Police were able to achieve a breakthrough a week later when an almost identical bomb exploded at the entrance of the Atrium shopping mall in Central Jakarta on 1 August. The Atrium mall was not the target as the bomb had exploded prematurely, seriously injuring six, including the bearer of the bomb who was taking it to another target.<sup>18</sup> Although the police initially blamed GAM for the attack and arrested 57 Acehnese suspects, the Malaysian government identified one of the injured as Taufik Abdul Halim, also known as Dani, a member of the Malaysian Mujahidin, who had joined a group of nine conducting *jihād* in Indonesia. Dani, aged 26, had reportedly recently returned to Malaysia from Pakistan. In Malaysia the group, with about fifty members, was said to have had contact with the Taliban in Afghanistan and was accused of blowing up a church and a

Hindu temple in Malaysia.<sup>19</sup> In Indonesia, Dani said he had been working with an Indonesian group.<sup>20</sup> The evidence so far does not suggest that Malaysian involvement was more than marginal.

Six weeks later, following their interrogation of Dani, the police captured thirteen men in a group of fifteen, one of whom was Malaysian, undergoing self-defence and military-style training in a village near Pandeglang in Banten province. The group called itself the *Forum Studi Kajian Islam* (Foski – Islamic Studies Forum). Reportedly some among them admitted to involvement in the Christmas Eve bombings and one claimed to have fought alongside Muslims in Ambon. Another was quoted as saying that ‘After our training, we want to join the *jihād* in Ambon and Poso’.<sup>21</sup>

The spate of Muslim-connected bombing caused considerable concern but was the work of a very small number of people. The Acehnese group apparently behind the stock exchange blast did not appear to have formal ties to the mainstream of GAM although they may have had informal links with elements within GAM. The bombing of the Philippine ambassador’s home appeared to be a one-off attack sponsored from outside Indonesia. The church-bombing group, however, seemed to have a wider network within Indonesia – ranging from North Sumatra to Lombok, and an international connection with a similar group in Malaysia and perhaps elsewhere. But there was no indication to suggest that the Indonesian group was especially large or that it was acting at the behest of international terrorists.

## B. LOCAL VIOLENCE

Apart from major bombing attacks, outbreaks of violence and intimidation involving Muslims has taken place from time to time. In some cases radical Islamic organisations have played a role but usually these conflicts are related to particular local circumstances and issues.

<sup>15</sup> ‘Malam Kudus, Ramai Bom’ and ‘Jaringan Bom Laknat di Malam Kudus’, *Tempo*, 14 January 2001.

<sup>16</sup> ‘Otak Pengeboman di Bandung Divonis 15 Tahun Penjara’, *Koran Tempo*, 24 July 2001.

<sup>17</sup> ‘Bomb blast convict gets 11 years’ imprisonment’, *Jakarta Post*, 14 August 2001. Police earlier claimed that he received Rp 160 million. ‘Eight named suspects in bombings’, *Jakarta Post*, 17 January 2001.

<sup>18</sup> ‘Bom Meledak di Jakarta, GAM Dituding’, *Tempo*, 12 August 2001.

<sup>19</sup> ‘Atrium Plaza Bomber Malaysian: KL ministry’, *Jakarta Post*, 14 August 2001; ‘Jakarta Post 18 August 2001.

<sup>20</sup> ‘Menunggu Perintah Abbas’, *Gatra*, 22 September 2001.

<sup>21</sup> ‘Komplotan Pengebom Atrium Ditangkap’, *Koran Tempo*, 15 September 2001; ‘Kakinya Ditembak di Halaman Kantor Polisi’, *Koran Tempo*, 21 September 2001; ‘Jalur Bom Pandeglang-Malaysia’, *Tempo*, 23 September 2001; ‘Gerombolan Bukit Pandeglang’, *Gatra*, 22 September 2001.

## 1. Anti-Chinese Rioting

Indonesia has a long history of periodic violence against the Chinese community which has always played a prominent role in the economy. Although Chinese make up only 3 to 4 per cent of the national population, they are heavily concentrated in urban areas where their business activities range from huge national conglomerates to retail trade in small towns. It has been the small shop-keepers and traders who have been the main victims of anti-Chinese violence. Many indigenous Indonesians resent the relative wealth of the Chinese while rioters and looters find Chinese property an attractive target. During the Soeharto era, the symbiotic ties between the military and bureaucratic elite on one hand and the Chinese business community on the other aggravated anti-Chinese sentiments outside the elite.

Anti-Chinese sentiments have been particularly strong in parts of the Muslim community that had historically been engaged in a losing competition with Chinese business. To this was added their suspicion of non-Muslims, especially Christians.<sup>22</sup> In particular many Muslims believe that Christian missionary activity is financed by Chinese donors as well as international organisations. Anti-Chinese themes have often been taken up in Muslim publications. This is not to say, of course, that anti-Chinese sentiment is a monopoly of orthodox Muslims but only that it has been more marked in that community.

Anti-Chinese rioting was not uncommon during the three decades of rule by Soeharto's New Order. Often trivial incidents, such as a traffic accident, led to attacks on shops, churches and temples. In many cases, riots broke out shortly after the weekly Friday prayers in mosques. These clashes, however, were usually controlled quickly partly because local military and police units depended on regular financial contributions from local Chinese business.

During the last few years of the Soeharto era anti-Chinese rioting – in which radical Islamic groups were often involved but not necessarily the main instigators – became more common and appeared to be related to rivalries between military factions

over the coming succession. From late in 1996 a series of anti-Chinese riots broke out in many small towns of Java and elsewhere – Situbondo in East Java in October 1996, Tasikmalaya in West Java in December 1996, Rengasdengklok in West Java in January 1997, Pekalongan in Central Java in March 1997, Kadipaten in West Java in June 1997 and Ujungpandang in Sulawesi in September 1997. Following the economic collapse in the wake of the Asian monetary crisis in late 1997 and the approaching presidential election in March 1998, small-scale anti-Chinese rioting virtually swept through the country as the rhetoric of military officers in the so-called 'green' faction adopted an increasingly anti-Chinese tone.<sup>23</sup> Although Soeharto was re-elected, his last term did not last long. In the week after a large anti-Chinese riot in Medan in North Sumatra in May, three days of rioting destroyed much of Jakarta's Chinese business area as well as enterprises associated with the president's cronies and children. The political consequence was that on 21 May the president resigned in favour of his vice president, B. J. Habibie.

Although anti-Chinese riots in small towns continue to break out from time to time, their frequency has declined drastically and no significant clash has taken place in a major city since the fall of Soeharto.

## 2. Attacks On Churches

Muslim attacks on churches have also been common in Indonesia's history. Usually such attacks arise from particular local circumstances rather than as part of a broad campaign by radical Muslims – although the rhetoric of radical Muslims can contribute to an atmosphere where Christians churches and other institutions become targets. In many cases attacks on churches cannot be separated from anti-Chinese violence or conflict between members of rival communities, such as in Maluku. A common issue sparking local attacks on churches is missionary activity on the part of Christians trying to convert Muslims.

Often conflict between Muslims and Christians in one part of Indonesia can trigger clashes in other regions. In November 1998 a brawl between Muslims residents in Ketapang, Jakarta, and Ambonese Christian gang members at an illegal

<sup>22</sup> Chinese are divided among Christians, Buddhists and Confucianists. The Chinese, however, make up only a minority of Indonesia's Christian community.

<sup>23</sup> Green is often regarded as the colour of Islam.

gambling hall resulted in a dozen or so Christians being killed and was followed by attacks on 27 churches and schools in the area.<sup>24</sup> A week later Christians in predominantly-Christian Kupang in West Timor destroyed mosques, shops and homes in districts inhabited by the Muslim minority.

The upsurge in fighting in Maluku in late 1999 and early 2000 provided the occasion for Muslim attacks on churches and Christians in other distant regions. In late 1999 Christian fighters had been getting the better of their Muslim rivals in parts of Maluku and Muslim casualties were rising. In response in January 2000 churches were attacked in Mataram, Christian motorists were attacked in South Sulawesi and Muslim youths threw stones at churches in Yogyakarta after a rally to protest against anti-Muslim violence in Maluku.

For the period 1 July 1999 to 30 June 2000, Christian groups recorded 135 attacks on churches and other Christian facilities but, as the U.S. State Department's Report on Religious Freedom in Indonesia notes, 'the reports ranged in severity from broken windowpanes to total destruction'.<sup>25</sup> It also needs to be noted that much of this violence occurred in Maluku and Poso (Central Sulawesi) where Christians were also destroying mosques.

In most cases attacks on churches and Christians have arisen from particular local circumstances and were not always motivated primarily by religious concerns. Despite their suspicions of Christians, none of the prominent radical Muslim organisations have launched one-sided campaigns of violence against churches and Christians during the last few years. Organised inter-religious violence usually involves 'war' conducted by both sides as in Maluku and Poso.

### 3. 'Anti-Vice' Campaigns

In the past radical Muslims organisations have often carried out campaigns against prostitution, gambling, alcohol, drugs and so on. These

campaigns have sometimes resulted in physical attacks on massage parlours, bars, night-clubs, discotheques, casinos and other centres of 'entertainment'. Sometimes the campaigns are carried out spontaneously by Muslim residents in neighbourhoods where such centres have been established but in other cases radical Muslim organisations have conducted the attacks.

These attacks usually peak during the period leading to, and during, the month of Ramadhan – the Muslim fasting month. On 14 December 1999 – during the fasting month – the radical group, *Front Pembela Islam* (FPI – Front to Defend Islam) occupied the office of the Jakarta regional government in response to a government decision to close entertainment centres during the first two days of Ramadhan. The FPI demanded that 'places of sin' should be closed for the entire month. The FPI had already attacked four such places – including a massage parlour, a discotheque and a billiard hall – in Jakarta and had burnt down dozens in the nearby city of Bogor.<sup>26</sup> In April 2000 the FPI launched a new series of raids which included damaging a karaoke bar and wounding three female prostitutes and a transvestite in a machete attack.<sup>27</sup> In June night clubs and karaoke bars in several parts of Jakarta were raided by the FPI which demanded that they close as a mark of respect for the Prophet Mohammad's birthday the following day. After another attack in September – in which the raiders injured seven people and shaved the head of a woman – one of the FPI leaders, Reza Pahlevei, justified the action. 'We observed the area previously and later identified several bars and cafes as our target since these places were used for vice activities', he said.<sup>28</sup> In November dozens of FPI members in green and white robes destroyed restaurants, cafes and small kiosks and smashed bottles of alcohol in Depok on the outskirts of Jakarta. 'How dare the operators of the cafes open their business on the day before Ramadhan?', one of the FPI leaders asked.<sup>29</sup>

A similar attack on cafes took place during the month of Ramadhan in Solo in December 2000. In

<sup>24</sup> The Western press tended to portray this incident as a case of persecution of Christianity. The 'Christians' in this case, however, were not pillars of the local church but petty criminals who happened to have been born into the Christian community of Maluku. Similar gangs of Muslim Ambonese also operate in Jakarta.

<sup>25</sup> U.S. Department of State, 2000 Annual Report on International Religious Freedom: Indonesia. 5 September 2000.

<sup>26</sup> 'Antara Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar dan Ancaman SARA', *Tajuk*, 2:22, January 2000.

<sup>27</sup> 'Police finally act to stop raids by groups at entertainment centers', *Jakarta Post*, 8 January 2001.

<sup>28</sup> 'Seven injured in FPI attack on Tebet cafes, bars', *Jakarta Post*, 4 September 2000.

<sup>29</sup> 'FPI vandalism and terror strike Depok', *Jakarta Post*, 27 November 2000.

the attack bottles of alcohol were smashed and a refrigerator damaged. In this case the perpetrators were members the *Laskar Jihad* (LJ). According to the LJ leader, Ja'far Umar Thalib, 'We told them ... politely to shun immoral acts, but they ignored us and challenged us, so we have to fight them back.'<sup>30</sup> In Makassar, in South Sulawesi, an organisation called *Laskar Jundullah*, led the campaign. Hundreds of bottles of liquor and 'pornographic' video discs were destroyed in several raids.<sup>31</sup> In Riau a group calling themselves the United Malay Laskar Jihad burnt down as many as 100 buildings that they claimed were used for prostitution.<sup>32</sup>

Initially the police failed to take action against the raids – although they clearly conflicted with the law. After one of the attacks in Jakarta in June 2000 the police chief for South Jakarta, Lt. Col. Edward Aritonang, explained that 'We didn't arrest the perpetrators of the damage because we considered the psychological aspect. Our forces were not equal to theirs. We only attempted to make sure that their destruction did not spread'.<sup>33</sup> In Surakarta the district police chief provided a similar excuse, namely that the police avoided taking action against the LJ to prevent casualties.<sup>34</sup>

By the end of the year, however, the police's failure to curb the Muslim radicals was worrying moderate Muslims. Nadjamuddin Ramly, a leader of the Muhammadiyah youth association, described FPI's behaviour as 'criminal' and said that the 'police should arrest the people who commit such acts'.<sup>35</sup> This was backed by the Jakarta governor, Lt. Gen. (ret.) Sutiyoso, who said that 'The police should have done their jobs and put an end to such attacks'.<sup>36</sup>

During Ramadhan at the end of 2000, the police finally detained 58 FPI members after they had

wrecked a pinball arcade and injured six guards.<sup>37</sup> A few days later police fired at the tires of a truck carrying FPI men who had just completed a raid. 'It was such an uncivilised act', complained the FPI's chairman.<sup>38</sup> But it was only after a man was killed while trying to stop FPI men who were cutting the hair of three women they suspected of being prostitutes that the police seemed more serious. Two days later three police were injured when FPI members attacked a police station at Karawang, ninety kilometres east of Jakarta.<sup>39</sup> However, no FPI activists have been charged in relation to these matters.

The FPI justified its raids on the grounds that the police had failed to uphold the law, particularly a recently adopted regulation in Jakarta requiring places of entertainment to close during the fasting month. According to the FPI, they were obliged to take action to ensure that the law was respected.

#### 4. Political Action

Muslim radical groups also occasionally launched political protests which sometimes involved intimidation and violence. In January 2000 the FPI had held a peaceful demonstration at the office of the National Commission on Human Rights to demand its dissolution for failing to deal with the violence in Maluku.<sup>40</sup> Five months later, following the release of what was deemed a biased report by an investigation commission into the shooting of Muslim demonstrators at Jakarta's port, Tanjung Priok, in 1984, the Human Rights Commission became the target of further protests.<sup>41</sup> In June 2000 the *Himpunan Mahasiswa Muslim Antar Kampus* (HAMMAS - Inter-University Muslim Students Association) smashed a few windows at the Commission's office, followed a few days later by a larger attack by the FPI which mobilised three truck-loads of protestors armed with sticks and stones. Apart from protesting about the Tanjung

<sup>30</sup> 'Jihad Force declares "war"', Jakarta Post, 23 December 2000.

<sup>31</sup> 'Nightspots vandalized for ignoring rules', Jakarta Post, 8 December 2000.

<sup>32</sup> Detikworld, 23 December 2000.

<sup>33</sup> 'FPI Rusak Kantor Komnas HAM dan Kafe Jibani', Kompas, 24 June 2000.

<sup>34</sup> 'Laskar Jihad "Sweeping" Dua Kafe di Solo', Kompas, 18 December 2000.

<sup>35</sup> 'Muslim activists condemn FPI's violent raids', Jakarta Post, 1 December 2000.

<sup>36</sup> 'Police must prevent attacks on entertainment centers', Jakarta Post, 2 December 2000.

<sup>37</sup> 'FPI to finally face action from police', Jakarta Post, 8 December 2000.

<sup>38</sup> 'Police fire at FPI truck after game centers attacked', Jakarta Post, 12 December 2000.

<sup>39</sup> 'Police to summon FPI leaders over brutal attack', Jakarta Post, 16 December 2000.

<sup>40</sup> 'FPI Minta Komnas HAM Dibubarkan', Kompas, 11 January 2000.

<sup>41</sup> This report is discussed in *Indonesia: Impunity versus Accountability for Gross Human Rights Violations*, ICG Asia Report No. 12, Jakarta/Brussels, 2 February 2001. p. 9.



Priok report, the FPI accused the Commission of being anti-Muslim because it had set up enquiries into human rights violations in East Timor where Christians were killed but had failed to do so in Maluku where, according to them, Muslims were the main victims. Although police had been sent to guard the building, they were outnumbered by the attackers.<sup>42</sup>

Radical Muslims continued to be concerned about a revival of communism in Indonesia, especially after President Abdurrahman Wahid proposed the lifting of the ban on communism early in 2000. In March 2000, the FPI held a rally in the centre of Jakarta in which banners were carried with slogans like 'We are ready to slay communists' and 'We are ready to behead communists'.<sup>43</sup> A year later, the *Aliansi Anti-Komunis* (AAK -Anti-Communist Alliance, consisting mainly of radical Islamic organisations but also the *Front Merah Putih* (Red and White Front) headed by the East Timorese militia leader, Eurico Guterres, embarked on a 'sweeping' campaign aiming to rid bookshops of 'communist' books.<sup>44</sup> After the books, the Alliance's leaders threatened to begin 'sweeping' people but the campaign quickly ran out of steam.

Radical Muslims also regularly demonstrated at the U.S. embassy in Jakarta and consulates elsewhere in protest against American policies, most often U.S. support for Israel. After a series of clashes between Israeli security forces and Palestinians in October 2000, the U.S. embassy was subjected to almost daily demonstrations by Islamic groups. In Solo, Central Java, an Islamic group calling itself *Laskar Islam Hizbullah*, went to various hotels in the city in search of American guests. They told hotel managers that Americans would be given 48 hours to leave the country.<sup>45</sup> As it happened, there were no Americans – or at least their presence was not revealed – in the hotels that the group visited. During that week the U.S. embassy in Jakarta closed its public service section and the following week closed the entire embassy for two days 'in response to a credible threat to the embassy' –

according to an embassy statement. Although the action in Surakarta did not lead to violence, it was understood to imply a threat of violence.

### C. COMMUNAL VIOLENCE

Apart from specific acts of violence carried out by radical Muslims, separatist and communal conflict has – as is hardly surprising in a country where 87 per cent of the population is Muslim – involved Muslims. The driving force in much of this conflict, however, is not directly religious although religious motivation is often closely entwined with ethnic, economic and cultural grievances.

It is common, for example, for the separatist struggle in Aceh – whose people describe their province as the 'Verandah of Mecca' – to be seen as motivated by religious extremism. In reality, however, GAM does not espouse a distinctive brand of radical Islam that is not shared by most other Acehnese. Rather, GAM is the current expression of long-standing resentment against rule from Jakarta that first appeared in the 1950s – long before the present international concern about fundamentalist Islam appeared. GAM's resistance to Jakarta rule is motivated more by Acehnese nationalism than by Islamic 'fundamentalism'.<sup>46</sup> Many Acehnese are angry because they received little benefit from the exploitation of their resource-rich province by Jakarta, they have suffered from the often brutal behaviour of the military and police, and believe that their culture is not sufficiently respected. Both the Habibie and Wahid governments tried to win the sympathy of the Acehnese by offering the right to implement *syariah* law but their offers were treated with contempt by GAM leaders and not much interest from local government leaders. It is possible that GAM receives some external support from Middle Eastern groups in the mistaken belief that GAM is essentially an Islamic movement and it seems that some GAM commanders received military training in Libya in the 1980s or in other Muslim countries more recently. But the goals of GAM are limited to Aceh and do not involve the 'Islamisation' of Indonesia, let alone participation in an Islamic struggle against the West. On the contrary, its

<sup>42</sup> 'FPI members attack rights commission headquarters', Jakarta Post, 24 June 2000; 'FPI Rusak Kantor Komnas HAM dan Kafe Jimbani', Kompas, 24 June 2000.

<sup>43</sup> 'FPI activists rally against communism', Jakarta Post, 19 March 2000.

<sup>44</sup> "'Sweeping" Buku Berbau Kiri Tetap Akan Berlanjut', Kompas, 8 May 2001.

<sup>45</sup> 'Men sweep hotels in Surakarta', Jakarta Post, 30 October 2000.

<sup>46</sup> See *Aceh: Why Military Force Won't Bring Lasting Peace*, ICG Asia Report No. 17, 12 June 2001, and *Aceh: Can Autonomy Stem the Conflict?*, ICG Asia Report No 18, 27 June 2001.

leaders have often expressed the hope that Western countries would intervene on their side.

Muslims have also been involved in 'religious' conflict in other parts of Indonesia during the last few years, most notably in Maluku and Poso district in Central Sulawesi. In these regions virtual 'wars' have taken place between relatively evenly balanced Muslim and Christian communities. In Maluku the initial conflict that broke out in January 1999 involved Christian Ambonese and Muslims from nearby Sulawesi who had migrated to Maluku – and other parts of Indonesia – in large numbers during the previous three decades. However the conflict was soon transformed into a battle between indigenous Christians and Muslims in circumstances where the capacity of the security forces to maintain public order had deteriorated drastically.<sup>47</sup> This conflict can only be understood in the context of entrenched rivalries between two communities in which both sides committed atrocities against each other. The Ambonese Muslims were not motivated by an especially 'fundamentalist' version of Islam – although this could not be said of an Islamic militia, the LJ, which went to Maluku from Java to fight alongside the local Muslims whom they believed were coming out worst in the fighting.

In Poso the vicious fighting that broke out between Muslims and Christians in 2000 took place in the context of large-scale migration of Muslims to what had previously been a predominantly Christian region. As the local Christians fell behind economically and lost their political predominance, the conflict broke out – again in circumstances where the national security forces were no longer capable of effective action.

In other major cases of communal violence involving Muslims in recent years, Muslim communities have been on the losing side. In both West and Central Kalimantan, Muslim Madurese have been driven from regions to which they had been migrating for several generations. But in these cases the conflicts were clearly motivated by ethnic rather than religious sentiments. Although the initial attacks on the Madurese minority in West Kalimantan in 1997 were launched by Christian and 'traditional' Dayaks, indigenous Muslim Malays soon joined the Dayak struggle

against the Muslim Madurese. In Central Kalimantan many of the Dayaks leading the campaign to force Muslim Madurese to flee from the province were themselves Muslim.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> See *Indonesia: Overcoming Murder and Chaos in Maluku*, ICG Asia Report No. 10, 19 December 2000.

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<sup>48</sup> See *Communal Violence in Indonesia: Lessons from Kalimantan*, ICG Asia Report No. 19, 27 June 2001.

## II. THE RADICAL MINORITY

Radical Islamist organisations have a long history in Indonesia although they have never been even remotely close to taking control of the government. Although 87 per cent of Indonesians are Muslim, the historical spread of Islam in Indonesia was far from even and, particularly in the pre-colonial kingdoms on Java, Islamic precepts often co-existed alongside traditional Javanese beliefs and practices. On the other hand, particularly along the northern coast of Java and in the outer islands, Islam was practised in a more orthodox form.<sup>49</sup> The varying commitment to orthodox 'Middle Eastern' Islam continued to influence Indonesian politics after independence and remains relevant today. Many Javanese continue to be suspicious of orthodox political Islam and together with the Christian and Hindu minorities have always supported 'nationalist' political parties opposed to identifying the state with Islam. In quite different ways, President Megawati Soekarnoputri and former President Soeharto, like Megawati's father, President Soekarno, have represented the 'nationalist' stream with roots in that part of the Javanese community that has combined adherence to Islam with acceptance of traditional Javanese religious values.

Orthodox Muslims can be divided, very broadly, into two streams – the traditionalists whose understandings of Islam rely on traditions handed down over the centuries, including traditions derived from Java itself, and the modernists who argue that the only true basis of Islam is the Koran and the example of the prophet Mohammad. The leading organisational expression of traditional Islam is the Nahdatul Ulama (NU) which is based in Java and was led for many years by former President Wahid. The largest organisation in the modernist stream is the Muhammadiyah which was previously led by Amien Rais, currently the speaker of the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR). (It is worth bearing in mind that in Indonesia Moslems labelled 'traditionalists' are generally regarded as more liberal and comfortable with a secular state, while 'modernists' are generally regarded as more conservative and in favour of a greater role for Islam in government.)

During the first decade of the Indonesian republic, the main political representative of modernist Islam was the Masyumi party. Although it won only 21 per cent of the votes in Indonesia's democratic election in 1955, the Masyumi was the second largest party and several coalition governments during the 1950s were headed by Masyumi leaders. The party, however, was banned by President Soekarno after the participation of some of its leaders in a revolt in Sumatra in the late 1950s. President Soeharto shared his predecessor's distrust of the assertive political Islam that the Masyumi propounded. Under Soeharto, the former leaders of the Masyumi were excluded from political influence and party supporters were sometimes imprisoned.

It was among modernist Muslims who felt persecuted during the New Order era that many of today's radical Islamic organisations have their origins. Forced to withdraw from the political arena, some of the Masyumi leaders formed the *Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia* (DDII - Indonesian Islamic Faith-Strengthening Board) in order to raise Islamic awareness in the community and provide a stronger foundation for an Islamic future in the long run. The DDII became a major support base for 'fundamentalist' thinking in Islamic circles. It aspired ultimately to a form of Islamic state in which pious Muslims would run the government according to Islamic norms and it called for constitutional recognition of the so-called Jakarta Charter which requires Muslims to observe the *syariah*. The DDII constantly warned against the efforts of missionaries to 'Christianise' Indonesians and they were always suspicious of the Chinese community and its domination of business. Internationally their chief concern was the Palestinian issue and what they perceived as Israel's illegal occupation of Palestinian land. Much of their anger was directed at the United States as Israel's chief international supporter.

In 1987 the DDII sponsored the *Komite Indonesia untuk Solidaritas dengan Dunia Islam* (KISDI - Indonesian Committee for Solidarity with the Islamic World) primarily to channel support to the Palestinian cause. During the 1990s, KISDI became an influential but fringe part of the political scene. As Yugoslavia broke up, KISDI campaigned for support to Muslims in Bosnia. It also supported the Muslims in Kashmir in their efforts to free themselves from India and the Muslims of Mindanao fighting for independence

<sup>49</sup> The classic study of this topic is Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java*, New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1960.

from the Philippines. Closer to home, KISDI showed no concern for the human-rights abuses perpetrated by the Soeharto regime in largely Catholic East Timor but protested when members of the immigrant Muslim minority, which supported the Indonesian military, became targets of the pro-independence movement. It also shows little sympathy for Muslim Acehnese fighting for independence from Indonesia.

Since the beginning of the 1990s President Soeharto had been attempting to win over modernist Islamic support – partly to balance the increasing independence of the military. As part of this endeavour, his son-in-law, the then Lt. Col. Prabowo Subianto, approached some of the Muslim radicals in KISDI. The KISDI leaders responded positively, seeing support for the regime as providing a channel for Islamic influence. When the Soeharto regime crushed Megawati's wing of the *Partai Demokrasi Indonesia* (PDI – Indonesian Democratic Party) in 1996, KISDI and the DDII echoed the military view that a communist revival stood behind the protests against the military attack on Megawati's supporters. During the economic and political crisis that led to President Soeharto's resignation in May 1998, KISDI leaders – with the blessings of Prabowo, now a Lieutenant-General in command of *Kostrad* (Army Strategic Reserve Command) – had been mobilising support to defend the regime against various Chinese, Jesuit and communist plots. The downfall of Prabowo, a few days after Soeharto's resignation in May 1998 deprived KISDI of a key patron in the military but it continued to support the new Habibie government and co-operated with elements in the military in mobilising tens of thousands of rural youths armed with bamboo spears to confront anti-Habibie and anti-military demonstrators at the MPR session in November 1998. Although KISDI itself does not have a mass membership, it continues to influence radical Islamic opinion through its association with the DDII and its publications. One of its leaders, Ahmad Sumargono, is now a prominent member of parliament representing the *Partai Bulan Bintang* (PBB – Crescent and Star Party).

One of the most prominent radical Islamic organisations today is the FPI which was formed in August 1998 and now claims branches in 22 provinces. Based in Jakarta, the FPI is led by Habib Muhammad Rizieq Syihab, a religious teacher of Betawi-Arab descent in his late 30s who

was educated in Saudi Arabia.<sup>50</sup> Like Habib Rizieq, many of the FPI's top leaders have Arab blood. The FPI's stated goal is the full implementation of Islamic law although it supports Indonesia's present constitution and avoids calling for an 'Islamic state.'<sup>51</sup> The FPI has a paramilitary wing called *Laskar Pembela Islam* whose members are drawn from rural religious schools and unemployed youth and organised along military lines.<sup>52</sup> The FPI is well-known, as noted above, for organised raids on bars, brothels and gambling centres. The FPI justifies these raids on the grounds that the police are not capable of upholding laws against prostitution and gambling, so it is the duty of Muslims to take their own action. They claim that they inform the police before the raids. Sceptical observers, however, believe that the police often turn a blind eye to FPI attacks which remind the operators of the bars, brothels and casinos of their vulnerability and therefore make them more willing to pay substantial sums of protection money to the police or sometimes the military. Some sceptics also believe that it is not impossible that some of this money finds its way back into FPI coffers. Since December 2000 when police began to take action against FPI raids, the organisation has concentrated on pulling down posters advertising alcoholic drinks and soap advertisements featuring a semi-naked Indonesian actress, thus avoiding the physical clashes that sometimes accompanied its earlier raids. It is the FPI that has taken the lead in threatening 'sweeping' actions to drive Americans out of Indonesia due to the U.S. attacks on Afghanistan.<sup>53</sup>

FPI leaders have maintained contact with Indonesia's political elite through the Habib community based at the Islamic Centre in Kwitang,

<sup>50</sup> The name 'Habib' indicates a direct descendant of the Prophet Mohamed. 'Betawi' refers to the indigenous inhabitants of Jakarta – known as Batavia during the colonial period.

<sup>51</sup> ICG interview with Habib Rizieq, October 2001.

<sup>52</sup> New recruits are also provided with special supernatural powers to protect them against injury.

<sup>53</sup> Habib Rizieq has lately been distancing himself from direct responsibility for possible attacks on foreigners. After meeting the Jakarta police chief, he said: 'FPI leaders are all intellectuals but I'm afraid FPI members at the grassroots level are not. What if they meet an American on the street and then beat and abduct him? That's what we want to prevent by carrying out these actions'. 'Gelbard seeks police protection for US citizens and facilities', Jakarta Post, 22 September 2001.

Jakarta. This year's commemoration of the Prophet Mohamed's birth in June was attended by the Speaker of the MPR, Amien Rais, the Speaker of the parliament, Akbar Tanjung (of Golkar) President Megawati's husband, Taufik Kiemas, and former Commander of the Armed Forces, General Wiranto. Of Wiranto's presence, Habib Rizieq told the press that 'Since the time that he had only one star, then two, then three, then four and was then dismissed, he has always attended this meeting'.<sup>54</sup> Another FPI associate, Habib Ali Baagil, claimed to be a close friend of General Wiranto and Wiranto's ally, the former Kostrad commander, Lt. Gen. Djadja Suparman.<sup>55</sup> It is not suggested, however, that Wiranto and other military officers – or other guests at the commemoration – share the goals of FPI but only that they have found it useful to maintain contacts with Islamic organisations that have the capacity to mobilise supporters in the streets.

The LJ is another radical Islamic group that has come to prominence since the fall of the New Order. The LJ is the paramilitary wing of the *Forum Komunikasi Ahlus Sunnah wal Jamaah* (Communication Forum of the Followers of the Sunnah) established in Yogyakarta, Central Java early in 1998. The LJ was formed on 30 January 2000 in response to religious violence in Maluku that broke out in January 1999 and had intensified in the last weeks of December 1999 and January 2000. Believing that the Muslim side was getting the worst of the fighting in Maluku, the LJ arranged for military training to be given to volunteers at a training camp near Bogor, not far from Jakarta. Although President Wahid ordered that their camp be closed and that the militia be prevented from going to Maluku, the LJ sent several thousand men to Maluku during the months after April 2000. The arrival of the well-armed LJ in Ambon resulted in renewed fighting and a sharp increase in casualties, especially among Christians.

The conclusion is unavoidable that the LJ received the backing of elements in the military and police. It was obviously military officers who provided them with military training and neither the military nor the police made any serious effort to carry out the president's order preventing them from going to Maluku. And, once in Maluku, they often

obtained standard military arms and on several occasions were openly backed by military personnel and indeed units.<sup>56</sup>

It has never been revealed exactly who in the military provided the necessary support. Speculation has centred on retired senior officers and serving officers who, it was believed, wanted to create conditions that would lead to the overthrow of President Wahid. Other officers may have just preferred to avoid confrontation with an Islamic group fighting for a cause that attracted much sympathy from Muslims throughout Indonesia. In Maluku itself there was no shortage of both military and police officers willing to fight for the Muslim cause against Christians in a conflict in which, in early 2000, at least a thousand and possibly several thousand Muslims had been killed and tens of thousands were forced to flee the province.

Like the FPI, the leaders of the LJ often had Arabic forebears. The LJ commander, Ustaz Ja'far Umar Thalib is of Madurese-Arab descent and had studied in Saudi Arabia and Pakistan before joining the Islamic resistance forces in Afghanistan in the late 1980s. The LJ also called for the implementation of Islamic law and in March 2001 Ustaz Ja'far officiated at the stoning to death of an adulterer in Ambon. Although arrested after this incident, he was soon released by the police who perhaps feared retaliatory violence from his followers if he had been charged in court.

Unlike Muslim activists who carry pictures of Osama bin Laden in demonstrations, the LJ leader, Ja'far Umar, is openly dismissive of bin Laden whom he labels as '*khawarij*' – a reference to a group which split away from the main body of Muslims after the death of Mohammad.<sup>57</sup> Ja'far Umar claims that he once met bin Laden in Pakistan in the 1980s but found him lacking in sound Islamic knowledge. The LJ leader said that he rejected an offer of funds from an associate of bin Laden.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>54</sup> 'Kita Tetap Tegs, Tolak Presiden Perempuan', Koran Tempo, 23 June 2001.

<sup>55</sup> 'Baagil di Balik Bom?', Tempo, 1 October 2000. p. 26.

<sup>56</sup> See *Indonesia: Overcoming Murder and Chaos in Maluku*, ICG Asia Report No. 10, 19 December 2000.

<sup>57</sup> For Muslims '*khawarij*' has the sort of connotations that the epithet 'Trotskyite' once had for orthodox communists.

<sup>58</sup> 'Yang Menant Berkah Osama', Tempo, 30 September 2001, p.25.

KISDI, FPI and LJ are only three of the most prominent radical Islamic organisations. Others include the university-student organisations, HAMMAS and *Kesatuan Aksi Mahasiswa Muslim Indonesia* (KAMMI – Indonesian Muslim Students Action Front), and the youth organisation, *Gerakan Pemuda Islam* (GPI – Islamic Youth Movement). Several radical movements are associated with political parties such as *Gerakan Pemuda Ka'bah* (GPK – Ka'bah Youth Movement) linked to the *Partai Persatuan Pembangunan* (PPP – United Development Party) and *Pemuda Bulan Bintang* (Crescent and Star Youth) linked to the PBB. Many 'laskar' groups, however, are limited to particular towns or regions. For example, it was reported that about 40 such organisations have appeared in the city of Yogyakarta, in Central Java, alone.<sup>59</sup> In Solo there are at least sixteen organisations.<sup>60</sup>

In common with 'fundamentalist' groups in all religions, the Muslim radicals have never been united in a single organisation and are often sharply divided over doctrinal and other issues that outsiders would regard as insignificant. Nevertheless, there are common themes that are regularly taken up by the radicals. Ultimately they aim to establish some kind of 'Islamic State' in Indonesia or at least achieve constitutional recognition of the 'Jakarta Charter' that requires all Muslims to practise their religion according to the *syariah* including the implementation of Islamic criminal law. They are extremely suspicious of Christian churches and very sensitive to Christian proselytising which they believe is financed by foreign interests bent on 'Christianising' Indonesia and weakening Islam internationally. Other international concerns are opposition to Israel – which leads to anti-Americanism – and communism. (Banners carried in demonstrations are sometimes targeted at a bizarre Christian, Communist and Zionist alliance). The U.S. is also often seen as locked in an international struggle with Islam. Within Indonesia their focus has been on the crushing of vice in the form of prostitution, gambling and the drinking of alcohol. On two political issues they were fully united: opposition to the presidency of Abdurrahman Wahid whom they considered to have sold out to secularism and

opposition to the presidency of Megawati because she is a woman.

It should be remembered, however, that these radical organisations are not especially large although, in the current state of weak enforcement of law and order, they have the potential to cause considerable disturbances. As we will note below, the Muslim political parties that also raise these types of issues have not been able to mobilise widespread electoral support and, in any case, many of their leaders often disapprove of the methods used by the radicals.

It is openly admitted by radical organisations that they maintain links and receive some funding from foreign, especially Middle Eastern, Muslim organisations. Many leaders and supporters of radical Indonesian organisations have visited other Muslim countries and in some cases obtained 'training' abroad. Much of this training, however, has been concerned primarily with religious studies. It is possible of course that some have received training in 'terrorist' methods although it is instructive to note that the group that exploded a bomb at the Jakarta Stock Exchange did not seek the assistance of foreign-trained terrorists but simply recruited three members of the Indonesian military. Dani, the Malaysian who had returned from Pakistan and carried the bomb that exploded at the Atrium shopping mall, admitted that he had been to Maluku but explained that his main job had been to teach children whose school had been wrecked in the communal violence.<sup>61</sup> This is not to say that foreign-trained terrorists have not entered Indonesia but their role in recent violence has not been obvious.

It is also necessary to point out that it is not only Muslim radicals who have formed 'militia-type' organisations. In the past the Golkar (and the military) fostered similar organisations such as *Pemuda Pancasila* and *Pemuda Panca Marga* while PDI-P has what it calls *Satgas* to combat its opponents in the streets. And the moderate Muslim organisation, NU, maintains *Banser* to confront its enemies.

<sup>59</sup> 'Many "revolutionary" bodies have their home base in Yogya', Jakarta Post, 25 June 2001.

<sup>60</sup> 'Ormas Islam Solo Serukan Boikot Produk AS', Kompas, 6 November 2001.

<sup>61</sup> 'Menunggu Perintah Abbas', Gatra, 22 September 2001.

### III. THE MODERATE MUSLIM MAINSTREAM

The moderate Muslim mainstream is represented by Indonesia's two largest Muslim organisations, the traditionalist NU and the modernist Muhammadiyah, both of which boast memberships in the tens of millions. The NU has never been a cohesive organisation and rests on a network of *pesantren* (Islamic schools) spread through the rural areas of Java and other regions. The *kyai* who head these *pesantren* are largely independent of the organisation but tied together by their traditional way of life and their traditional way of interpreting Islam. The NU's approach is generally pragmatic, tolerant and pluralist. On the other hand, the Muhammadiyah is a more modern and urban organisation which also runs a network of schools, hospitals and other welfare institutions. The Muhammadiyah is now well represented in the bureaucracy and the professions. Although some elements in the youth wing of Muhammadiyah sometimes tend to adopt radical positions, the organisation is usually quite pragmatic in its approach to politics. Members of the two organisations can be found in various political parties although there is a concentration of NU members in the PKB and to some extent PPP while Muhammadiyah members are spread between Golkar, PPP, PAN and *Partai Keadilan* (PK – Justice Party).

The political strength of moderate Islam is reflected in the poor electoral performance of the parties that identified with radical approaches in the 1999 election – the first free election since 1955. Neither of the two leading parties – the PDI-P led by Megawati Soekarnoputri and Golkar, the government party of the New Order – are explicitly identified with Islam and both accommodate Christians and other non-Muslims in their ranks although naturally most of their leaders and members are Muslims. These parties, which won 34 and 23 per cent of the votes respectively, together make up a clear majority in the national legislative institutions. Former President Wahid's moderate PKB, based on the NU, won 13 per cent. Amien Rais's PAN, which gained much of its support from the Muhammadiyah, also included non-Muslims in its leadership and won 7 per cent. The three main exclusively Islamic parties – PPP, PBB and PK – whose support base included the

radical constituency, together won only 14 per cent.

The predominance of moderate Islam can be seen in the revived debate over the so-called Jakarta Charter, the original preamble to the constitution that was prepared before Indonesia's proclamation of independence in 1945. At the last moment seven words were removed from the preamble and thus excluded from the constitution. The seven words required Muslims to observe the *syariah*. During the last half-century the Islamic-based parties have been attempting periodically to have the seven words reinstated but without success. Under Soeharto support for the Jakarta Charter was considered subversive and could be punished with years of imprisonment.

Since the fall of Soeharto the debate over the Jakarta Charter has been revived but it has been very one-sided. The NU, still under the guidance of former President Wahid, is committed to a policy of religious pluralism and opposes the identification of the state with Islam while the Muhammadiyah's chairman, Ahmad Syafi'i Ma'arif, has said that 'Implementing the Jakarta Charter will only add more burden to the country which is now on the brink of collapse.'<sup>62</sup> Rather than attempting to reinstate the Jakarta Charter as the preamble to the constitution, the PPP, PBB and PK with the possible support of some members of PAN are now proposing to amend the constitution by including the 'seven words' in Article 29 on religion. But the PDI-P and Golkar, as well as the military representatives in the MPR, are firmly opposed, as is the traditionalist PKB. Rejected by more than three-quarters of the MPR, there is no possibility that such an amendment could be passed and therefore no possibility that Indonesia will become an Islamic state.

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<sup>62</sup> 'Syafii declares stance on Islamic law', Jakarta Post, 6 September 2001.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Radical Islam continues to represent a small minority of Indonesians but it has the capacity to mobilise people in the streets on specific Islamic issues. Like other groups, some of the radicals have also expressed their sympathy for the thousands of people killed in the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington – although they are often inclined to believe that the terrorists were not Arabs but possibly Americans (an Oklahoma City bombing scenario) or, according to one popular theory, Israeli intelligence agents.

The American campaign in Afghanistan has given the radicals the opportunity to take the lead in expressing the concerns not only of their own followers but also of moderate Muslims and other Indonesians who, while supporting international measures directed specifically against terrorists, are opposed to their country siding with the military invasion of a Muslim country, especially when this is accompanied by civilian casualties.

Reflecting this sentiment before the U.S. campaign, the semi-official MUI issued a joint statement together with 32 Islamic organisations – both moderate and radical – calling on Muslims throughout the world to prepare for *jihad* if Afghanistan was attacked. However, the MUI leaders explained that they were using the term '*jihad*' in the normal broad sense of spiritual struggle and not in the limited sense of 'holy war'. The MUI statement also opposed the 'sweeping' plans of the radicals.<sup>63</sup>

Meanwhile several radical organisations are registering youths to be sent to fight in Afghanistan. Several thousands have already been signed up but these organisations do not seem to have the financial and administrative capacity to actually put trained forces in the field. When a similar registration of volunteers for Bosnia was carried out by the GPI in 1994, only eight eventually reached the battle-field.<sup>64</sup> On the other hand, moderates are calling on Muslims to express their *jihad* in the form of money and medicine for the growing number of refugees in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The future behaviour of the Indonesian Muslim community will depend on how the U.S. and its Western partners deal with the Afghan problem. If the U.S. can limit its response to measures that enable it to capture those responsible for the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington without causing devastation among civilian non-combatants, the Indonesian Muslim reaction is likely to be manageable.<sup>65</sup> But the more civilian casualties there are in Afghanistan and other countries accused of 'harbouring' terrorists, the more difficult it will be to guarantee that violence will not take place.

President Megawati will be hoping that the American response is limited. Having just completed a successful visit to the U.S. and received promises of economic assistance and a relaxation of restrictions on military ties, she wants potential foreign investors to regard Indonesia once again as a safe and profitable place to put their money. Nothing could be more harmful to that goal than massive Islamic demonstrations against the West, attacks on Western property and, worst of all, physical violence against Westerners in Indonesia.

Nevertheless, even in the worst case, there is no likelihood that the present crisis will result in the emergence of a radical Islamic regime in Jakarta.

**Jakarta/Brussels. 10 October 2001.**

<sup>63</sup> 'MUI: Umat Islam Jangan Lakukan Penganiayaan', Kompas, 26 September 2001.

<sup>64</sup> 'Jaringan Alumni Afghanistan', Tempo, 7 October 2001.

<sup>65</sup> According to a military intelligence officer, the security forces are less concerned about direct Muslim violence than with the possibility that disturbed conditions might provide opportunities for criminal elements to instigate rioting and looting. ICG interview. October 2001.



## **ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP**

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The International Crisis Group (ICG) is a private, multinational organisation committed to strengthening the capacity of the international community to anticipate, understand and act to prevent and contain conflict.

ICG's approach is grounded in field research. Teams of political analysts, based on the ground in countries at risk of conflict, gather information from a wide range of sources, assess local conditions and produce regular analytical reports containing practical recommendations targeted at key international decision-takers.

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October 2001

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