

Religious freedom in Indonesia

A survey

Thomas Schirrmacher¹

Abstract

As a secular democracy Indonesia guarantees religious freedom. The vast majority of the quarter of a billion Indonesians lives in relative freedom. But a certain wahhabization of the country assures, that extremist groups fight Ahmaddiyyas, Christians, Shiites and other Muslim and non-Muslim groups. The government on the one side actively fight the idea of a Muslim state, but as one Islamist party is a coalition party, often does not act to protect minorities.

Keywords Indonesia, Southeast Asia, Saudi Arabia, Islamism, extremism, freedom of religion, Christianity, Islam, Ahmadiyya.

The 240 million inhabitants of the largest Islamic country in the world, Indonesia², are spread out among 750 people groups living on 6 000 islands scattered over 9.5 million square kilometers of ocean. The country is divided into 33 provinces ruled by elected governors.

After the colonial rule of the Portuguese (1511-1605), the Dutch (1605-1942, 1945-1949), the British (1807-1815), and the Japanese (1942-1945), there were dictatorships under President Sukarno (1945-1965) and General Suharto (1965-1998). The transformation into a democracy largely occurred in a peaceful manner, and likewise there were largely peaceful and free elections in 2004 and 2009 which resulted in a majority for a secular nationalistic government with the participation of Muslim parties.

¹ Thomas Schirrmacher (* 1960) is an international human rights expert and chair of the International Council of the International Society for Human Rights, spokesman for human rights of the World Evangelical Alliance and director of the International Institute for Religious Freedom (Bonn, Cape Town, Colombo). He is professor of the sociology of religion at the State University of the West in Timisoara in Romania and Distinguished Professor of Global Ethics and International Development at William Carey University in Shillong (Meghalaya, India). Schirrmacher earned four doctorates in Theology (Dr. theol., 1985, Netherlands), in Cultural Anthropology (PhD, 1989, USA), in Ethics (ThD, 1996, USA), and in Sociology of Religions (Dr. phil., 2007, Germany) and received two honorary doctorates in Theology (DD, 1997, USA) and International Development (DD, 2006, India). Article received: 13 Aug. 2013; Accepted: 13. Dec. 2013. Contact: Friedrichstr. 38, 53111 Bonn, Germany, Tel. +49 2289650381, Fax +49 2289650389, Email: DrThSchirrmacher@me.com.

² The author toured Indonesia for the first time in 1979 for a period of three months. Most recently he visited the country in October 2011 in order to personally hear reports by the Governor of North Sulawesi, among others, as to how he succeeded in bringing calm to the unrest in the province of South Sulawesi and in ending religious persecution there, and in October 2013 to listen to reports by non-Muslim members of the government, for example, the vice-governor of Jakarta. The author testified on religious freedom in Indonesia in 2013 in the EU parliament at the invitation of the Indonesian government.

Since the founding of Indonesia, the military has simultaneously exercised police powers (*dwifungsi* = dual function). It is very difficult to bring military personnel before a court, and when martial law is swiftly declared, it is completely forbidden to do so. The military administration encompasses every village and often functions better than civilian administration. 7.5% of all parliamentary seats (a reduction from a previous 15%) are automatically reserved for the military. In the process, the military is only 30% financed by the national budget and generates the remainder itself, through ownership stakes in companies and through personnel leasing, but also through illegal lumber exports, racketeering, extortion, and corruption.

Corruption is arguably the strongest threat to Indonesia's democracy³ and plays a very large role with respect to the actual situation faced locally by religious minorities. According to Transparency International, Indonesia is one of the countries with the highest rate of corruption in the world, and this enormous level of corruption plays into the hands of Islamists. It is no coincidence that the Governor of North Sulawesi, Sinyo Harry Sarundajang, who is a Roman-Catholic and was installed by the central government as an emergency measure, is regarded as one of the few completely corruption-free politicians. In 2002 he was able to pacify the civil war in Sulawesi.

1. Indonesia's religions

Hinduism was the reigning religion on the islands of Indonesia in the 1st century A.D. Beginning in about 1300, Islam slowly began to spread. From 1525 onwards, the Hindu kingdom collapsed in the interior of Java and became Islamic. By the 18th century all of Indonesia had become Islamic, with the exception of the interior of Bali, Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, and Irian.

There are 10 million Hindus, which most notably account for 90% of Bali. Some 20 million inhabitants, above all on Java, Kalimantan, and Papua, belong to tribal religions or animistic systems of belief. However, almost all of them have been registered under one of the six official religions.

2. Christianity in Indonesia⁴

The first Christians in Indonesia were Nestorians who emigrated from Persia in the 10th and 11th centuries A.D. The Portuguese came as the first Europeans in

³ Cf. Bettina David. "Machtverschiebungen zwischen Indonesiens Zentrum und Peripherie" in *Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 62 (2012) 11-12: 23-30.

⁴ Cf. on the history Thomas Schirmacher. "Indonesian Christianity" in: George Thomas Kurian (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Christian Civilization*. Chicester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011, pp. 1197-1199. Regarding the Indonesian churches see Heuken, Adolf. *Ensiklopedi gereja*. 9 vols. Jakarta: Yayasan Cipta Loka Caraka, 2004-2006 and on the Catholic Church by the same author. *200 tahun Gereja Katolik di Jakarta*. Jakarta: Yayasan Cipta Loka Caraka, 2007.

1511 and conquered the island of Matalaya and then the Maluku Islands. Catholic missionary work began in 1534. After that the Catholic Church was oppressed by the Dutch, but in 1806 Holland granted them religious freedom. This led to strong growth, primarily on Flores and East Timor. It also led to massive conversions back from Protestantism.

In 1605 and 1617 the Dutch founded the city of Jakarta. Over the course of the next 300 years bit by bit the Dutch acquired control everywhere. This was mostly accomplished without military action. The ruling East India Company had a hostile stance against missions and allowed Dutch pastors to care only for the Dutch. In 1799 the state took over the trading company and conceded religious freedom in 1806. After that, large Reformed churches developed up to 1950 through the efforts of Dutch missionaries, and large Lutheran churches were formed through the efforts of German missionaries.⁵ Most well-known among them was the Batak Protestant Christian Church. Among the six Nias peoples (3.8% of the entire population of Indonesia), 70% on Sumatra are Christians. It was not until after 1950 that the entire range of Protestant diversity came about, above all via Anglo-Saxon missionaries. What is unusual for an Asian country is the high percentage of Lutheran and Reformed churches. Of the inhabitants of the East Nusa Tenggara Province, 55% are Catholics, while 58% of the Papua province inhabitants are Protestants. The Maluku Islands and North Sulawesi have additional concentrations of Christians.

The Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs estimates that there are 19 million Protestants and 8 million Catholics in Indonesia. The Christian handbook *Operation World* comes to the following breakdown on the basis of statements by religious communities and leading local experts:⁶ 11% or 26.3 million Protestants (approximately half of them Evangelicals), 3% or 7.1 million Catholics, for a total of 33.4 million.

Christianity grew strongly and exerted a great amount of influence in the 1950s and 1960s.⁷ In the 1970s, the climate between Islam and Christianity began to change, in view of the fact that radical Muslim organizations called for the end of

⁵ Catholic: Raja Oloan Tumanggor. "Adat und christlicher Glaube: Eine missionswissenschaftliche Studie zur Inkulturation des christlichen Glaubens unter den Toba-Batak (Indonesien)". Diss.: Univ. Münster, 2006, Protestant: Lothar Schreiner. *Adat und Evangelium*. Gütersloh: Mohn, 1972; Paul B. Pedersen. *Batak blood and Protestant soul: the development of national Batak churches in North Sumatra*. Grand Rapids (MI): Eerdmans, 1970.

⁶ Jason Mandryk. *Operation World*. Secunderabad (Indien): Biblica, 2010, 446-463.

⁷ Cf. for instance on the situation prior to 1978 Rolf Italiander. *Indonesiens verantwortliche Gesellschaft*. Erlangen: VELM, 1976; Theodor Müller-Krüger. *Der Protestantismus in Indonesien*. Stuttgart: Evangelisches Verlagswerk, 1968 or my report "Religion ist Pflicht in Indonesien." *Idea* 80/81/8.10.1981/S. II-III; *Idea-Spektrum* Nr.56-57/21.10.1981: 25.

the Pancasila with its five to six approved religions.⁸ This occurred for the benefit of Islam as the state religion. In 1978 the government began to limit the exercise of mission work by all religions. The state started to control the foreign relations maintained by churches and to increasingly interfere in the internal affairs of churches. In 1985, the so-called Ormas Law committed all religions to the Pancasila; otherwise, their organizations would be dissolved. In 1992, it was ordered that all government positions were to be allocated according to official proportional representation (87% Muslim, 6% Protestant, 4% Catholic, etc.), also in areas where there was a Christian majority. As a result, the public influence of Christians was completely lost in areas where they had their primary concentrations of inhabitants. In 1993 all Christian government ministers were replaced by Muslim ministers.⁹

3. Wahhabization of the country

The country as it was in 1979 differs noticeably from the Indonesia of today. Similar to what has occurred in India, the traditionally tolerant line of thought towards other religions has suddenly been covered over by fundamentalist perpetrators of violence. Far more than 200 million inhabitants are worried that the Arabization of Islam could lead to ever increasing tensions, and it is embarrassing to them that their country has so often been present in the international media due to Islamist violence: “Fundamentalist Muslims are still trying to replace Indonesian-Javanese culture with an Arab embossed culture of intolerance.”¹⁰

In light of the tremendous diversity of the country and the diverging colonial history and history of independence of numerous islands, it is almost impossible to make sweeping statements about the entire country. As it relates to our topic, the conservative Islamic island of Aceh, where the sharia applies as the penal code, has little in common with the predominantly Hindu island of Bali or the Catholic areas in Sulawesi. What applies universally is that acts of violence against non-Muslims do not come from the majority of the population, which traditionally coexists peacefully with other religions. It also does not come from the government. Rather, it comes from a small percentage of Islamists, who orient themselves towards Arab

⁸ Pancasila has been a central part of the Indonesian constitution since 1945. Its five principles are explained in different orders but include “the belief in one God, just and civilized humanity, Indonesian unity, democracy under the wise guidance of representative consultations, and social justice for all the peoples of Indonesia.” <http://tiny.cc/pancasila> (19.02.2013)

⁹ Dieter Becker. *Die Kirchen und der Pancasila-Staat: Indonesische Christen zwischen Konsens und Konflikt*. Erlangen, 1996 and my comment in this regard in the “Mitarbeiterbrief der Vereinigten Evangelischen Mission“ (VEM) 4/1998: 26.

¹⁰ Pebri and Christian Gossweiler. “Christen und Muslime in Indonesien.“ *Märtyrer 2010*. VKW: Bonn, 2010, 209-212, here 209.

Islam and in particular Saudi Arabia. Practically all the leaders of parties, organizations and volunteer corps who turn against the Ahmadiyya community and Christians have been educated in Saudi Arabia or in institutions in Indonesia which are sponsored by Saudi Arabia – supported by large amounts of money coming from the Arab world. That represents a creeping Islamization, indeed, a Wahhabization of the country due to a situation where other parties have to consider their demands when it comes to elections.

This creeping Wahhabization of Indonesia has begun to attack the long-standing tradition of religious tolerance and religious freedom in Indonesia. What used to rule, a mystical form of Islam (“Abangan”) as well as the fusion of Islam with pre-Islamic animistic elements and Javanese *Kejawen and Kebatinan* mysticism,¹¹ still defines the large majority of the inhabitants, but it has recognizably lost influence in politics, legislation, matters of education, and with respect to social work. Pressure from fundamentalists on the tolerant majority of the population is increasing. Extremism has little support in Indonesia, but it is having major effects.

The starting point of Islamization and the badgering of religious minorities is Saudi Wahhabism.¹² Under the cloak of Islamic solidarity and brotherhood, Saudi Arabia invests enormous sums in Indonesia for the construction of mosques, the building of Islamic schools, and for activities of Da’wa organizations which propagate Islam. The Institute for the Study of Islam and Arabic (LIPIA), which was founded in Jakarta in 1980 and is supported by Saudi Arabia, has been very influential. Ja’far Umar Thalib (born 1961), the founder of the notorious 300-member terror group known as Laskar Jihad,¹³ studied at LIPIA, together with other leaders of the armies of terror. In addition, he studied at the Islamic Mawdudi Institute in Lahore, Pakistan.¹⁴ The most prominent of the violence prone groups in Indonesia is the Front Pembela Islam

¹¹ Thomas Schirrmacher, “Javanische Mystik.” *Factum* 10/1987: 3-6.

¹² Noorhaidi Hasan, Professor at the Sunan Kalijaga Islamic University in Yogyakarta (Indonesia) is the best expert on the Islamist influence of Wahhabism in Indonesia; see the list of publications at <http://tiny.cc/Hasan> (March 15, 2012). Especially worthy of note are: Noorhaidi Hasan, “The Failure of the Wahhabi Campaign: Transnational Islam and the Salafi Madrasa in Post 9/11 Indonesia,” *South East Asia Research* 18 (2010): 675-705; Noorhaidi Hasan, “The Drama of Jihad: The Emergence of Salafi Youth in Indonesia,” 49-62 in: Linda Herrera, Asef Bayat (eds.), *Being young and Muslim: New cultural politics in the Global South and North*, Oxford: OUP, 2010; Noorhaidi Hasan, “Islamist Party, electoral politics, and Da’wa mobilization among youth: The Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) in Indonesia,” RSIS Working Paper 184, Singapore: Rajaratnam School of International Studies, 2009; Noorhaidi Hasan, “Saudi expansion, Wahhabi campaign and Arabised Islam in Indonesia,” 263-281 in: Madawi al-Rasheed (ed.), *Kingdom without borders, Saudi political, religious and media*. London: Hurst, 2008.

¹³ Noorhaidi Hasan. *Laskar Jihad: Islam, militancy and the quest for identity in Post-New Order Indonesia*. Leiden: ISIM, 2005.

¹⁴ Noorhaidi Hasan, “Transnational Islam in Indonesia,” op. cit. 124. Cf. Frauke-Katrin Kandale, *Der Islam in Indonesien nach 1998 am Beispiel der Partai Keadilan Sejahtera*, Berlin: Regiospectra, 2008.

(Islamic Defenders Front), or FPI. It is no coincidence that it was founded in 1998 by Muhammad Riziew Syihab, who was trained in Saudi Arabia.

In Aceh, non-Muslims normally are not under the control of the sharia. In actuality, sharia police spare practically no one (after the models of Saudi Arabia and Iran).¹⁵ In a report dated 1 December 2010, Human Rights Watch collected examples of how the sharia police badger, threaten, and abuse Muslims as well as non-Muslims.¹⁶

The Indonesian fatwa council, *Majelis Ulama Indonesia* (Indonesian Council of Ulema) or MUI, plays a disastrous role since its fatwas directed against religious minorities are actually not legally binding and yet are increasingly used by the government and cast into law. The current President, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, makes no secret of the fact that he supports the decisions of the MUI. "What also belongs to the new culture of intolerance is that the Council of Islamic Scholars of Indonesia declared in a fatwa (Islamic legal opinion) in 2005 that pluralism, secularism, and liberalism are not compatible with Islam. Furthermore, Muslims were forbidden from wishing Christians Merry Christmas or from receiving well wishes from Christians for the Islamic holiday of Idul Fitri – which is still common practice in Indonesia."¹⁷

One of the best German authorities on Indonesia has written: "Islamic fundamentalist parties are gaining increasing influence through shrewd tactics. Indeed the Islamic parties only received about one quarter of the votes (five years earlier it was approximately 37%). However, after the non-Islamic parties were not at all prepared to form a coalition with the popular President Yudoyono, or only found themselves prepared to do so very late, he was quasi forced to form a coalition with the Islamic parties. Thus the Islamic parties finally received 11 of the 27 available ministerial posts. Among them were, for example, the Justice Minister Patrialis Akbar, who sees no contradiction between the introduction of Islamic sharia law and the Constitution of Indonesia. But even the Interior Minister, Gamawan Fauzi, who has no party affiliation, issued many laws based upon Islam (e.g. a mandatory head scarf for all female civil servants and students, regardless of religion) in his earlier position as Governor of West Sumatra."¹⁸

The Wahhabization is also expressed in the increasingly Arab oriented viewpoint towards understanding the sharia on the part of many citizens. "For a few years observers have noticed that the relationships between the Muslim Sunnite mainstream and adherents of religious minorities as well as non-orthodox Muslims has deteriorat-

¹⁵ Kristina Großmann et al., "Aceh nach Konflikt und Tsunami," *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 62 (2012) 11-12: 37-43.

¹⁶ <http://tiny.cc/shariainaceh>, the detailed report "Policing morality: Abuses in the application of Sharia in Aceh, Indonesia," at <http://tiny.cc/policingmorality> (15.3.2012).

¹⁷ Pebri and Christian Gossweiler, "Christen und Muslime in Indonesien," op. cit. 210.

¹⁸ Pebri and Christian Gossweiler, "Christen und Muslime in Indonesien," op. cit. 210.

ed. The opinion research institute LSI (Lembaga Survei Indonesia) has, for example, shown in a study in 2007 that 33% of those asked support measures which typically count as the goals of Islamist organizations. Thus 43% were for stoning in the case of adultery, 25% for the mandatory wearing of a head scarf, 34% for the cutting off of the hand for theft, 39% for a prohibition on interest, and 22% were of the opinion that a woman should not be allowed to hold the office of president. The 2010 Muslim Youth Survey, which was conducted by the LSI in cooperation with the Goethe Institute and the Friedrich-Naumann Foundation, came to quite comparable results.”¹⁹

4. Religion is a duty in Indonesia: Pancasila

Since the time of independence, monotheism has been one of the five pillars of the state ideology anchored in the Constitution of Indonesia as the Pancasila. It was adopted into democracy unchanged from the time of the dictators.²⁰ Among the monotheistic religions fulfilling the requirement, there are six recognized religions, whereby Christianity in its Catholic and its Protestant forms are counted separately.

Whoever does not belong to one of the six religions, for instance animists (if they do not have themselves registered in another religion) or the Baha'i, have difficulties with the authorities when it comes to the registration of births or marriage. That religion in Indonesia is mandatory, naturally and automatically leads to problems for the few atheists in the country. Government employee Alexander Aan (31) was beaten up by a mob on 24 January 2012 and arrested by the police because he expressed his lack of faith in God on Facebook through critical questions, above all “How can God allow that?” The police chief invoked the scholarly council known as the “Indonesian Council of Ulema” with respect to his course of action.

5. The Ahmadiyya Movement

In 2005 and 2007 the MUI issued fierce fatwas against the approximately 300 000 Ahmadiyyas living in the country and belonging to an Islamic “sect,” which was developed out of Islam by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad in 1889. It recognizes prophets after Mohammed and for that reason the majority of Islam regards it as “apostasy.” In 2008 the government, instead of moving against the statement by the MUI, issued a joint decree from a number of ministries freezing the activities of Ahmadiyyas. Ahmadiyyas are not permitted to proselytize Indonesians, an activity which counts as blasphemy and is punishable with up to 5 years of imprisonment. However, Ahmadiyyas may continue to hold their worship services. Nevertheless, it was not sur-

¹⁹ Andreas Ufen, “Politischer Islam in Indonesien seit 1998,” in *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 62 (2012) 11-12: 30-36, p. 31.

²⁰ Thomas Schirmacher, “Religion ist Pflicht in Indonesien,” *Idea* 80/81/October 8, 1981/pp. II-III; *Idea-Spektrum* Nr.56-57/October 21, 1981: 25.

prising that individual government agencies and many Islamist institutions called for a complete prohibition. And it is also not surprising that in certain cases the police and the army did not intervene or did so much too late when mobs beat up or murdered Ahmadiyyas or destroyed their places of worship. Since 2006, but above all since 2009, Ahmadiyyas have been continually driven from their destroyed homes and live in refugee camps. A worldwide sensation was caused in February 2011 in the case of the public murders of three Ahmadiyyas in front of their homes by a large mob. Some 30 police stood there and did nothing as the murders occurred. The 12 murderers received a symbolic punishment of between three and six months.

As in Pakistan, where the apostasy laws were at first directed against Ahmadiyyas and only later employed against Christians, the religiously legitimized state force against Ahmadiyyas also appears to be having a negative impact on the tolerance exhibited toward Christians. Thus the murder of the three Ahmadiyyas on 6 February 2011 in the province of Central Java and the burning down of three churches in the province of West Java on 8 February 2011 are arguably connected with each other.

6. The most significant cases of persecution of Christians since 1990

The main island of Sulawesi (earlier called Celebes) stretches over 1 300 kilometers. Of the 16.8 million inhabitants, 20% are Christians, and about 90% of them are Protestants. They belong to the best educated and wealthiest inhabitants of Indonesia. The Islamist Jihad armies have turned against long-established Christians there, where they have been most numerous. In the 1990s and after 2000 so far there have been over 1 000 Christians (and a significantly lower number of Muslims) who have died. It was overwhelmingly Christians who were among the 500 000 directly affected by the events on the Maluks and Central Sulawesi. Many of them have not returned to the life they had before the wave of violence.

The percentage of Christians among the 2.2 million inhabitants spread over the 1 000 islands comprising the two Maluku provinces amounts to 29.5%, and Protestants account for 90% of them. The Maluku church, which has existed since 1605, is the oldest Protestant church in Asia. The brutal violence in 1999 and 2000 changed the provinces forever. A maze of ethnic and economic questions, efforts to secede, and political demands exploded as thousands of heavily armed Islamist fighters fell upon the island and Christians started to defend themselves. Four hundred churches and mosques were destroyed. The majority of Christians fled the islands of Ambon, Seram, Ternate, Tidore, and parts of Halmahera. Over 20 000 died, and 500 000 became refugees.

After the serious unrest in Ambon from 1999 to 2002, peace held for almost a decade. In September 2011, the accidental death of a taxi driver, which was mis-

takenly reported in the social media as a case of torture and murder by Christians, led to unrest in which 100 houses were destroyed by fire, leaving 4 000 homeless. Fortunately, the central government immediately sent in the commander-in-chief, the head of the police, and the security minister and sealed off the island to Mujahedin wishing to enter. Twenty-eight potential terrorists were arrested with some 105 weapons. Taking a serious approach to this situation led to a real though fragile calm, a good example that the state, when called upon and when it so wishes, can bring about good results.²¹ Additionally, a large role is played by an unbelievably successful civil law institution, “peace provocateurs.” These are dozens of Christians and Muslims, who together in conversations, restaurants, and the social media rejected false rumors and made it clear that in the case of a renewed civil war, everyone would be a loser.

The percentage of Christians on Irian Jaya is 68%. Irian Jaya is the western part of Papua and has 2.5 million inhabitants. Catholics account for one quarter of the Christians, who are spread out among 238 Melanesian people groups with 274 languages. From among them, only the Ekagi have more than 100 000 adherents. Here the discrimination against Christians takes on completely different features. On the one hand, Christians are predominantly members of the many tribes in the forests and as such are not even seen as humans by Javanese settlers. They are harassed and their property is taken from them, and they are treated brutally by the army. On the other hand, at the time of the dictators the government began a large program of forced resettlement which continues today (*transmigrasi*), bringing 5 000 Javanese to Papua every week, of whom large numbers are Muslims who fill government positions.

7. Compilation of attacks against Christians and other minorities

Organizations as various as the Society for Threatened Peoples, the Islamic Wahid Institute, the Indonesian human rights organization Setara Institute for Democracy and Peace, and the papal council on dialogue, have all determined that there is an increase in violent actions against Christians. The *Jakarta Globe* also called the year 2011 “A Bad Year for Religious Rights.”²²

The best reporting on our topic stems from Muslim and academic research institutes in the country and not from the churches or religions affected.²³ In ad-

²¹ International Crisis Group, “Indonesia: Trouble again in Ambon,” *Update Brief, Asia Briefing* No. 128, Jakarta & Brussels, October 4, 2011, <http://tiny.cc/ambon> (15.03.2012).

²² “Indonesia: A bad year for religious rights,” *The Jakarta Globe*, December 26, 2011, <http://tiny.cc/jakartaglobe> (15.03.2012).

²³ Most important are: the monthly report of the Islamic Wahid Institute: <http://www.wahidinstitute.org/Documents>; the corresponding annual report, most recently for 2010: <http://tiny.cc/report2010>; the

dition to that, there are reports by international human rights organizations full of depictions of individual cases.²⁴

The Wahid Institute, an Islamic organization which promotes tolerance,²⁵ counted 198 severe attacks against religious minorities in 2010 and 276 in 2011. Furthermore, the institute registered 36 laws or restrictions at a local or provincial level which allegedly place non-Islamic practices under penalty.

The Setara Institute for Democracy and Peace in Jakarta and the International Institute for Religious Freedom investigated how many of the 198 violent attacks against religious freedom in 2010 involved government entities. The police were involved in 56 of them, while in 19 cases, district chiefs, and in 17, sub-district chiefs were involved.²⁶

The US Department of State counted 50 significant violent attacks against Ahmadiyyas and 75 such attacks against Christians in 2010.²⁷

The most frequent activity inimical to Christians in Indonesia is the destruction of churches or their closing, together involving 43 churches in 2011. An investigation by the International Institute for Religious Freedom has looked at the development of average yearly destruction of churches over the decades and has revealed an unambiguous development up to the year 2000; since that time the numbers have leveled off at some 50 per year:²⁸ 1945-54, no churches; 1955-64, 0.2 churches; 1965-74, 5 churches; 1975-84, 9 churches; 1985-94, 13 churches; 1995-2000, 84 churches (all per year).

Additionally, it is not only that churches are destroyed. Rather, they are obstructed from the onset. According to an inter-ministerial restriction dating from 2006, a congregation needs 90 members for the construction of a church, 60 signatures from non-Christians who live in the neighborhood, and a letter of recommendation from the local Interfaith Communication Forum (FKUB). The same thing applies to

annual report of the Setara Institute for Democracy and Peace (<http://www.setara-institute.org/>) is normally only available in Indonesian; the 2008 and 2012 annual reports were translated into English, 2012 "Leadership without initiative: The condition of freedom of religious belief in Indonesia 2012, <http://tiny.cc/report2012> (31.12.2013).

²⁴ For instance the 2010 blasphemy report for Indonesia: <http://tiny.cc/blasphemy>; confirmed by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees at <http://tiny.cc/unhcr> (15.03.2012).

²⁵ English: www.wahidinstitute.org/?lang=en.

²⁶ Fernando Perez, "Why religious violence has grown in Indonesia," February 18, 2011. www.iirf.eu, then click "Indonesia" under countries.

²⁷ <http://tiny.cc/state2010>, prior years at <http://tiny.cc/stateprior>; cf. also the recommendations of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom at <http://tiny.cc/uscirf> (15.03.2012). The newest report by the US Department list further examples, but does not quantify them, <http://tiny.cc/statelatest> (31.12.2013). See especially p. 27-46

²⁸ Vishal Arora, "Why Is Islamic extremism is growing in Indonesia?" (12.10.2011) www.iirf.eu, then click "Indonesia" under countries.

mosques. However, mosques receive the letter of recommendation automatically, and in practice mosques spring up here and there, with even the wildest construction tolerated. In most locations, however, the FKUB – almost always chaired by a Muslim – almost never issues a recommendation with the justification that the building of a church could lead to unrest.

Finally, the use of existing churches is prohibited. A congregation of the long-standing Gereja Kristen Indonesia (GKI) in Bogor, the province of West Java, experienced what Batak churches have mentioned in the past. Although the Supreme Court allowed the congregation on 9 December 2010 to again use their closed church, the province's governor decided – contrary to law – against it and did not follow the ruling. Subsequent to that, the congregation wanted to celebrate a worship service in front of the building. The governor likewise prohibited it and sought to prevent it on October 2011 by means of police force. The congregation filed a complaint about the police violence and charged the police with attacking them. The outcome is still pending. The case also clearly shows that the central government lacks determination or assertiveness to enforce the law fairly.

8. Outlook²⁹

On the one hand, the main cause of the increase in the persecution of Christians as well as the overall restrictions on religious freedom is found in the fundamentalist movements. On the other hand, there is an increasing religious nationalism that equates nationalism with affiliation with a majority religion.³⁰ In Indonesia, an inseparable mixture of both movements presents itself as the main problem behind the declining tolerance with respect to religious minorities.³¹

The main problem is that most often the central government and the governors combat violence on the part of private Muslim extremists against religious minorities much too late and without resolve. Furthermore, they suspend criminal prosecution or protract the legal process against extremists. The governors frequently act on their own authority and worsen the line of approach taken by the federal government.

In Indonesia, the fight regarding the orientation of the state most essentially rages around conduct towards religious minorities and has surely not been lost.³²

²⁹ After this article had already been edited for print, Christian Solidarity Worldwide and Stefanus Alliance published a new detailed report on the situation of all religious groups "Indonesia: Pluralism in peril: The rise of religious intolerance across the Archipelago", that could not be incorporated in the article, www.csw.org.uk/2014-indonesia-report.

³⁰ Thomas Schirmacher, "Aktuelle Entwicklungen der Christenverfolgung weltweit," 59-82 in Kuno Kallnbach, Helmut Matthies (eds.), *Bedrängt, verfolgt, getötet*, Gießen: Brunnen, 2012.

³¹ Cf. Jacques Bertrand, *Nationalism and ethnic conflict in Indonesia*, Cambridge: CUP, 2004.

³² Andreas Ufen, "Politischer Islam in Indonesien seit 1998" in *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 62 (2012)

This is demonstrated by the fact that Muslim leaders and human rights organizations are calling upon the president at the top of their voices to dismiss the Religious Affairs Minister Suryadharma Ali. They are doing so despite the fact that as the chairman of the co-governing Muslim United Development Party (PPP) he appears to be untouchable. He has especially made himself conspicuous through his negative statements about Shiites and Ahmadiyyas.³³

Also, there is a shining example of what the state can do in Indonesia. Sinyo Harry Sarundajang was elected as governor of North Sulawesi in 2005 and 2010. He was sent by the central government in 2004 to be the emergency acting governor in South Sulawesi and the province of Maluka, which was in unrest. The terrorist army of Laskar Jihad had killed hundreds of Christians in the province of Maluka. Between the tendencies towards secession on the part of Christians and the brutal violence of the Wahhabi insurgents, life had become impossible. Sarundajang, himself a Christian, without bodyguards, personally sought out the commander of the insurgents, Ja'far Umar Thalib, and negotiated the withdrawal of the jihad army and the suspension of secession plans on the part of Christians. The result was that a governor was again able to be elected in 2005. Thalib witnessed to the fact that it was due to the Christian politician that peace was achieved and that the killing was ended.³⁴

The resolution from the European Parliament in 2011 regarding the persecution of religious minorities in Indonesia³⁵ very well expressed the fact that the situation, in face of the long history of tolerance, has become oppressive. However, it also expressed the fact that all the preconditions are present for establishing complete religious freedom in Indonesia. According to the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs,¹ there are 60,200 Protestant and 11,000 Catholic churches in Indonesia and the number grew from 1997 to 2012 by 284 percent. The Ministry counts 23.5 mio. Christians, thus there is a church building for every 300 Christians. The vast majority of these churches live in freedom and peace with their neighbours. All other world religions also have their buildings scattered through the whole country. Given this relation to the named cases of churches and religious groups in peril, it is obvious, that Indonesia still has all strength to assure, that the great tradition of religious harmony stays the mark of Indonesia in the future.

11-12: 30-36, p. 31, see the sources for the investigations there: <http://tiny.cc/bpd> (March 15, 2012).

³³ "Controversial Religious Affairs Minister must go," *The Jakarta Post* dated January 28, 2012, <http://tiny.cc/jpminister> (15.03.2012).

³⁴ All sources are in Indonesian except for the book by H.M. Attamimy. *Sinyo Harry Sarundajang*, 82. Jakarta/Manado: o. V., 2010. There is a report by Thalib therein, 7-19.

³⁵ "European Parliament Resolution of 7 July 2011 on Indonesia, including Attacks on Minorities," <http://tiny.cc/europarl2011>.