Religious pluralism in Indonesia
Harmonious traditions face challenges

SUMMARY
A mosaic of cultures, languages and religions, Indonesia shares not only the EU's motto (Bhinneka Tunggal Ika, Unity in Diversity), but also many of its values, such as tolerance, pluralism and, since the 1998 downfall of former dictator Suharto, also democracy. With many other Muslim-majority states torn by conflicts and persecution of religious minorities, Indonesia stands out as an example of a country where different faiths are able to co-exist harmoniously.

Despite this globally positive picture, there are some concerns about religious freedoms in the country. It is true that the rights of the largest minorities, such as the Christians and Hindus, are enshrined in primary and secondary legislation. On the other hand, blasphemy laws have been used to repress smaller minorities, and some recently adopted legislation reflects Islamic values.

The wave of intercommunal violence which broke out after Suharto's downfall has since subsided, but occasional attacks continue against certain minorities such as Shia and Ahmadi Muslims. While the number of such incidents is very low for a country of Indonesia's size, they point to wider underlying intolerance.

Over the years, the Indonesian authorities have not done enough to promote religious pluralism, sometimes showing bias against minorities. New president Joko Widodo made tolerance one of his priorities, and since he took office in 2014 his government has made some encouraging gestures. However, there are as yet no signs of real change on the ground.

In this briefing:
- Indonesia's heterogeneous cultural mix
- Legislative framework for religious freedom
- Interreligious relations
- The threat of radicalisation
- Official responses to interreligious violence and intolerance
- Position of the European Parliament
- Main references
Indonesia's heterogeneous cultural mix

Indonesia's population of 237 million comprises 19 ethnic groups with a population of one million or more, speaking around 700 regional languages, scattered across over 6,000 inhabited islands.

Figure 1: Ethnic groups (% population) / Main languages (language used in daily life) / Main religions

Data: 2010 Indonesian census. The discrepancy between ethnic groups and languages is due to the fact that numerous Indonesians have switched from regional languages such as Javanese to Bahasa Indonesia, the national language, which is based on Malay.

Main religions of Indonesia

Islam was brought to Indonesia by Arab traders and missionaries in the 13th century; over the next 300 years, it displaced Hinduism as the dominant religion. However, pockets of Hinduism remain, particularly in Bali and some parts of Java. The majority of Indonesian Chinese are Buddhist, while Portuguese and Dutch colonial rule (16th-20th centuries) brought Protestantism to Papua and North Sulawesi, and Catholicism to Flores and Timor.

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<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Geographical spread</th>
<th>Number of believers (% of total population)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Islam</td>
<td>Throughout the country</td>
<td>207 million (87%)</td>
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<td>Within this dominant religion, the vast majority are Sunni Muslims.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shia Islam</td>
<td>Java, Madura, Sumatra</td>
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<td>Although Shites were some of the earliest Muslims to arrive in Indonesia, they are now only a small minority (estimated at between 1-3 million), and encounter significant discrimination.</td>
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<td>Ahmadi Islam</td>
<td>Java</td>
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<td>Ahmadi Islam originated in 19th century India, based on the belief that Punjab cleric Mirza Gulham Ahmad was Mohammed's successor. Around 400,000 Ahmads form one of the country's most persecuted minorities.</td>
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<td>Protestantism</td>
<td>Papua, North Sulawesi, Maluku</td>
<td>16.5 million (7.0%)</td>
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<td>Brought by Dutch and other European missionaries. Numerous denominations, including Reformed, Calvinist, Evangelical, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Catholicism</td>
<td>Flores, West Timor, Papua</td>
<td>6.9 million (2.9%)</td>
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<td>The first Catholic missionaries arrived in Indonesia from Portugal in the 15th century. Under Dutch colonial rule, Catholicism was suppressed until the early 19th century.</td>
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<td>Hinduism</td>
<td>Bali, Java, Kalimantan</td>
<td>4 million (1.7%)</td>
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<td>Displaced from the rest of the country by Islam, Hinduism remains strong in Bali. It is also practised by some minorities in Java.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Buddhism</td>
<td>Java, North Sumatra, West Kalimantan</td>
<td>1.7 million (0.7%)</td>
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<td>The vast majority of Indonesian Buddhists are Chinese (Indonesia's 3 million Chinese are split between the main religions as follows: 53% Buddhist, 35% Christian, 5.4% Muslim, 3.9% Confucian)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Confucianism</td>
<td>Bangka Belitung (Sumatra), West Kalimantan, Java</td>
<td>117,000 (0.05%)</td>
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<td>By far the smallest of the six officially recognised religions; again, most followers are Chinese.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indigenous religions</td>
<td>Java, Kalimantan, Papua</td>
<td>Estimates range from 10 to 20 million (4-8%)</td>
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<td>Many followers of indigenous belief systems, such as animism, combine them with other religions, such as Islam.</td>
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Data: 2010 Indonesian census.

Islam in Indonesia

Brought to south-east Asia by commerce (rather than military conquest, as in North Africa), Islam was able to co-exist peacefully with the Hindu practices and traditional animistic belief systems preceding it, and the Christian churches which arrived during the colonial period.
Two contrasting tendencies have emerged: on the one hand, a peculiarly Indonesian traditional syncretism combining Islam with elements from other religions, and on the other, since the late 19th century, a move to purify the religion from extraneous practices, partly driven by Middle Eastern influences.

*Traditional 'Archipelago Islam' combines elements from different religions*
In Muslim Java, performances of Hindu epics such as the Ramayana are central to the culture; many Javanese also combine their Islamic beliefs with animistic practices such as ancestor worship, shamanism and attachment to holy places such as Mount Bromo. Since 1926, followers of these syncretic Muslim traditions – sometimes referred to as Islam Nusantara, 'Archipelago Islam' – have been represented by the Nahdlatul Ulama movement, with 50 million members.

*Efforts to purify Islamic practices reflect Middle Eastern influences*
Not all Indonesian Muslims are in favour of this mixing of religious customs. In the late 19th century, Wahhabism and Salafism became increasingly influential in Indonesia, not least due to the growing number of pilgrims travelling to Mecca. Alongside the continuing popularity of the Haj (nearly 170,000 travelled in 2015, with thousands more on a waiting list), Middle Eastern influences are channelled through Saudi and Qatari funding for religious schools and militant groups.

Reflecting these influences, the Muhammadiyah movement was set up in 1912 to 'purify religious practices' that obviously violate the Islamic teachings in the forms of superstition or heresy; it now has 29 million members. Despite this emphasis on purity, Muhammadiyah does not advocate intolerance towards other religions, for example opening its school buildings in 2005 to Christians lacking their own venues to celebrate Christmas.

*A rising tide of piety among Indonesian Muslims*
Since democratisation following the end of President Suharto's authoritarian rule in 1998, orthodoxy has also spread to all areas of daily life. A growing number of Muslim women wear 'jilbabs' (headscarves) – formerly a personal choice, now virtually compulsory in certain situations. Demand for halal food is on the rise, and Islamic financial institutions grew twice as fast as the rest of the banking sector in 2014. New legislation also reflects Islamic values (see following section).

**The legislative framework for religious freedom**
Primary and secondary legislation guarantees freedom of worship for the country's main religions, but with an intrinsic bias towards the Muslim majority.

**The constitution enshrines religious diversity**
Indonesia is a non-sectarian, but not a secular state. Sukarno, the country's first president, wanted to include all Indonesians, and not only the Muslim majority. Accordingly, the 1945 Constitution and the official Pancasila ('Five Principles') state ideology enshrined in its preamble refer to 'belief in the One and Only God' (using the neutral term 'Ketuhanan' – deity, rather than the Muslim Allah) as the basis for Indonesian statehood. In addition, freedom of worship is guaranteed by Article 29 of the Constitution.

On the other hand, this emphasis on 'one God' excludes not only atheists but also non-monotheistic faiths; for example, in the 1950s Hindus were declared as being without religion and therefore in need of conversion to Islam. In order to gain recognition, Indonesian Hindus and Buddhists and animists have had to adapt by declaring their
belief in supreme beings, named **Sanghyang Acintya** (for Hindus) and **Sanghyang Adi Buddha** (for Buddhists); for their part, Dayak animists from Central Kalimantan (Borneo) affiliated themselves to Hinduism after it became an official religion, despite having little in common with its core beliefs.

**Secondary legislation protects official religions, but does not recognise other beliefs**

According to a presidential decree enacted in 1965, Indonesia has six official religions: Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism. Official status provides protection from 'abuse and defamation' as well as, since 2003, the right for children to receive religious education at school from members of their own religion. This means that even in Muslim-majority schools, Christian pupils learn about Christianity during two lessons per week from fellow Christians. Not only Islamic festivals, but also the main festivals of four other official religions, such as Christmas and Diwali, are public holidays throughout Indonesia.

While non-official religions are not forbidden, practitioners are required to identify themselves as belonging to one of the six official religions for administrative purposes, for example on documents such as birth and marriage certificates, as well as identity cards. Only since 2006 has it been possible to indicate other religions by way of a minus sign on identity cards, but very few have made use of this option (in the 2010 census, just 0.13% declared themselves as having another religion), and a recent proposal to drop religious affiliation from identity cards altogether has run into strong opposition. Membership of an official religion is still required in order to work in the civil service: after posting atheistic comments on Facebook in 2012, local government official **Alexander Aan** was sentenced to two and a half years in jail, among other things for falsely claiming to be a Muslim in order to get his job.

**Blasphemy laws occasionally used to repress non-official religious minorities**

The same presidential decree that established Indonesia’s six official religions prohibits public ‘interpretation and activities ... in deviation of the basic teachings' of a religion. Between 2005 and 2014, this and related laws were used in 39 cases to impose heavy fines and jail sentences of up to six years on over 100 individuals, for offences ranging from leading prayers in Indonesian rather than Arabic, disseminating heretical teachings, leading 'deviant' sects, proselytising for non-official religions, disrupting worship and making insulting remarks about Islam.

Blasphemy laws were mainly used in defence of Islam (37 out of 39 cases; of the two remaining, one was in relation to Catholicism, the other to Hinduism). In addition to members of a variety of (mostly Islamic) small sects, those convicted included two Baha’is, one Shiite cleric and one atheist.

Paradoxically, the number of blasphemy cases has grown since post-1998 democratisation: under former President Yudhoyono (2004-2014), ten times as many were sentenced as during the 33 years of Suharto’s repressive rule. However, this number is still very low in relation to Indonesia’s population of 237 million.

**New legislation inspired by Islamic values**

*Anti-pornography legislation potentially threatens minority traditions*

Democracy has also brought a wave of Islamic-inspired new legislation as politicians vie for the Muslim vote. An Islamic agenda is driven by parties across the board, not only by the four Islamic parties currently holding 31% of seats in the country’s parliament. At national level, this includes a **2008 law on pornography and porno-action**, which among
other things outlaws scanty dress and kissing in public, except in certain ill-defined situations.

The vague wording of this legislation means that it could potentially be used to restrict certain cultural practices, such as the low-cut dresses worn in Bali and parts of Java, near-nudity among some of the indigenous peoples of Papua, and sexually evocative traditional dances. It has therefore been criticised by representatives of Christian and Hindu minorities, such as the members of the Bali and North Sulawesi regional parliaments, as well as by Papuan church leaders and politicians. Other opponents include Muslim moderates defending pluralism, and women’s groups who argue that the new law restricts their rights.

**Sharia-inspired regional legislation**

Using the extensive powers devolved to them since 1999, provinces and districts have adopted their own 'perda syariah' (Sharia regulations). As many as 440 of these Sharia-inspired by-laws have been adopted, mostly in regions with large Muslim majorities and traditions of Islamist militancy, such as West Java, East Java and South Sulawesi.

Restrictions on alcohol sales, gambling and prostitution can be defended on the grounds of protecting public health and morality. However, some of these rules clearly promote specifically Muslim values, for example by requiring women (including non-Muslims) to wear headscarves, imposing compulsory donations to the poor (in line with the Islamic principle of giving, 'zakat'), or obliging local government officials to read the Koran every Friday. They have been criticised not only for discriminating against religious minorities, but also on constitutional grounds: firstly, religious matters have not been devolved to the regional or district level; secondly, the authors of Indonesia's 1945 Constitution dropped the words requiring Muslims to comply with Sharia law from a previous text, an argument for considering Sharia incompatible with the spirit of the Constitution.

**Sharia law in Aceh**

While some Indonesian regions have adopted Sharia-inspired laws, the only province to apply Sharia more broadly is Aceh in northern Sumatra, which was granted the right to do so as part of a 2005 agreement ending a 30-year separatist insurgency. Described as Indonesia’s 'Verandah of Mecca', the province was one of the first parts of the archipelago where Islam gained a foothold, and also has the highest percentage of Muslims (98.2%, compared to the national average of 87%). Its criminal code has introduced caning for gambling, gay sex and extra-marital sex (on the other hand, a proposal to stone adulterers was blocked by the provincial governor). The extent to which these rules apply to the province's 80 000 non-Muslim residents is unclear.

**Inter-religious relations**

In most parts of the country religious communities co-exist harmoniously. However, there was an upsurge in violence around the millennium in certain hotspots; since then the situation has calmed, with only isolated clashes but continuing tensions.
Figure 2: Intercommunal conflict and religious intolerance in Indonesia, 1996-2016

Data: Setara Institute.
Intercommunal violence breaks out after the downfall of Suharto’s regime

The fall of President Suharto’s authoritarian regime in 1998 unleashed a wave of violence across the country, lasting for several years. Anti-Chinese riots in the final weeks of Suharto’s rule left hundreds dead. In 2001, following earlier clashes in 1996, Dayak headhunters in Central Kalimantan (Borneo) massacred hundreds of Muslim migrants from Madura Island and drove tens of thousands from their homes. Even more deadly, intercommunal conflicts between Christians (mostly Protestant) and Muslims in the Maluku islands between 1999 and 2002 killed thousands and left many more homeless; violence flared up again in the same region in 2011, though on a much smaller scale.

Religious intolerance not necessarily the main cause of intercommunal violence

Even though each of these incidents pitted religious communities against one another, religious differences were probably not the main cause. Anti-Chinese riots targeted Chinese shops and homes rather than temples and churches, and violence appears to have been fuelled by resentment against the prosperity enjoyed by many Chinese at a time of economic crisis, deliberate provocation by the security forces, and long-standing suspicion of a minority until recently classified in Indonesian law as ‘non-native’.

In the Maluku islands, waves of mostly Muslim migrants, including under government-sponsored transmigration programmes, tipped the demographic balance away from the local Christians, the majority group until the 1990s. Violence appears to have been triggered by Christian resentment of Muslim migrants and fear of losing power and jobs to them. In Kalimantan (Indonesia’s part of the island of Borneo), once again migrants, many of whom had moved there as participants in transmigration programmes, were targeted by attacks.

Violence has subsided since the 2000s, but some tensions continue

Since the early 2000s, Indonesia’s economic and political situation has stabilised, and intercommunal violence has subsided. In 2015 the Indonesian NGO, Setara Institute, which monitors religious freedom in the country, recorded 197 cases of religious intolerance; these included 22 incidences of hate speech and 16 of discrimination; there were also four cases of violence, one case of arson involving a place of worship and 13 of vandalism. Very similar figures are reported by the Wahid Institute, another Indonesian NGO. Although both NGOs noted a substantial increase in intolerance in 2015, the numbers are still very small for a population of 237 million.

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Certain regions and minorities are disproportionately affected

While the overall number of incidents is very low, certain regions and communities are particularly affected. In 2015, the provinces with the highest concentration of intolerance were West Java in absolute terms (44 incidents for a population of 43 million) and Aceh in per capita terms (34 incidents for a population of 4.5 million). These figures correlate with a 2015 government survey measuring perceptions of interreligious harmony, which found that perceived levels of intolerance were higher in Muslim-majority regions such as Aceh, than in Muslim-minority regions such as Papua and Bali.

With regard to victims of intolerance, non-official religious minorities such as Shiites and Ahmadis are disproportionately affected. One recent hotspot was Madura Island, off the east coast of Java, where Shiite communities have come under repeated attack. In December 2011, a mob set fire to a Shiite boarding school on Madura Island, permanently displacing several hundred people from their homes. In August 2012, another mob attacked a Shiite school group from the same area, leaving two dead and five injured before setting fire to several houses.

Ahmadis are also frequent targets; 90 of them have lived in temporary accommodation since their village in Lombok was destroyed by rioters in 2005. In one particularly horrific incident in 2011, rioters in West Java stormed a house where Ahmadis were praying before bludgeoning and stoning three of them to death. While no killings were reported in 2015, the number of attacks remained high (31 and 13 against Shiites and Ahmadis respectively).

Christians are less frequently targeted by physical violence, but have suffered numerous attacks on churches (163 between 2007 and 2014). This trend continued in 2015 in Aceh, where a church was torched by Muslim hardliners. In Indonesia as a whole, 30 Christian places of worship were either destroyed during the year by rioters, demolished by the authorities over alleged construction permit irregularities, or closed down.

Other recent targets of violence include several thousand followers of the now disbanded Gafatar sect (which combined elements of Islam, Christianity and Judaism), who became homeless after a mob set fire to their settlement in January 2016.

The Islamic Defenders Front, a radical Islamic vigilante network

While most intercommunal violence is spontaneous rather than organised, the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) has played a prominent role in inciting intolerance. Most of its raids have targeted venues such as nightclubs, brothels and massage parlours, but it has also attacked religious minorities. For example, FPI activists vandalised an Ahmadi mosque in 2011, and have been involved in attacks on Christian congregations and their buildings (in 2012, they forced 19 churches to close down in just one week). In 2014 its members demonstrated against the appointment of a Christian governor of Jakarta, arguing that only a Muslim could lead the city. Altogether, the organisation was involved in 13 cases of religious intolerance in 2014, and again in 2015. Despite committing acts of violence, the organisation has been able to operate with impunity and enjoys widespread support both from public opinion and political leaders; allegedly, at one point it even received police funding.
Isolated incidents point to wider intolerance

In some parts of the country Christians see incidents such as those mentioned above as part of a pattern of growing persecution; some have even reported an atmosphere of fear, including among those not directly affected. Moreover, although intolerance is not often overtly expressed, it can shape underlying attitudes, as surveys have consistently shown. For example, nearly half the respondents to a 2009 poll carried out in Jakarta declared themselves in favour of outlawing Ahmadis; 34% and 68% of respondents respectively to a 2012 Center of Strategic and International Studies survey would object to neighbours and places of worship of other faiths in their neighbourhood; levels of intolerance remained high even among those with a university education. There is also little interest in learning about other religions, with 87% of religious education teachers opposed to interfaith studies.

Radicalisation: a long-standing threat, though still marginal

Indonesia has a long tradition of Islamic extremism.

In the 1940s and 1950s, Darul Islam declared an Islamic state in Indonesia and led an armed insurgency which for a while had control over large areas of Java, Sulawesi and Aceh. The Jemaah Islamiyah movement, which split off from Darul Islam in 1993 and had links to Al-Qaeda, was fuelled by the return of jihadists from Afghanistan, where they had fought alongside Mujahideen rebels; in 2002 it organised the Bali bombing, which claimed over 200 victims. More recently, ISIL/Da’esh has also gained a foothold in the region.

However, radicalisation has been successfully contained

After Bali, the execution or imprisonment of most of Jemaah Islamiyah’s leaders put the group out of action for several years, and effective counter-terrorism measures have mostly contained the terrorist threat since then. The January 2016 terrorist attack in Jakarta, for which ISIL/Da’esh claimed responsibility, was the first major incident since two suicide bombers targeted Jakarta hotels in 2009. Lacking effective coordination or sophisticated weaponry, the latter incident failed to deliver a bloodbath, with only four civilian casualties.

Only 400 Indonesian jihadists are fighting in Syria, around the same number as from Belgium, even though Indonesia's Muslim population is three hundred times larger. The country also scores reasonably well in the 2015 Global Terrorism Index produced by the Institute for Economics and Peace, its 33rd place putting it on a similar level to France and the United States, and ahead of the United Kingdom.

Some concerns about future attacks remain

The return of ISIL/Da’esh-affiliated jihadists from Syria could boost the group's presence in Indonesia. A more serious threat for the time being is newly resurgent Jemaah Islamiyah, estimated to have 2,000 members, though it has yet to strike. Indonesia's National Intelligence Agency is calling for a 60% staff increase and additional powers to help prevent future terrorist attacks.

Official responses to inter-religious violence and intolerance

Despite a declared commitment to promoting inter-religious dialogue, Indonesian governments have been less successful in tackling religious intolerance than the threat of radicalisation, and have often failed to stand up for minorities facing intolerance.
Government measures to promote inter-religious dialogue

Indonesia's Religious Affairs Ministry includes a Centre for Inter-religious Harmony with an annual budget of around €10 million. Most of this funding is used to promote moderate Islam through interfaith discussion events, educational programmes, publications and surveys.

In addition, since 2005 advisory Forums of Inter-religious Harmony comprising the representatives of the six main religions have been set up in nearly all of Indonesia's 34 provinces and 405 districts. Their main purpose is to facilitate dialogue, for example by issuing recommendations on regional by-laws with religious implications and, in urban areas, planning permission for new places of worship.

However, the effectiveness of these forums is often limited, as the majority religion in a given area also holds a majority of seats, making it harder for minorities to assert their interests. If anything, the forums have made it even harder to obtain building permits for minority places of worship – still a major bone of contention in Muslim-majority areas (see below). Nor have they improved the situation of non-official, and therefore non-represented, religious minorities.

National and regional governments side against non-official minorities

The Indonesian government is often reluctant to stand up for the rights of non-official religious minorities. For example, after 60 Ahmadi activists at a Jakarta rally were injured by Islamist militants in 2008, it responded by ordering Ahmadis to stop spreading 'deviant' beliefs. Four years later, then Religious Affairs Minister, Suryadharma Ali, suggested that Ahmadis and Shiites targeted by mob violence should convert to Sunni Islam to prevent future clashes.

Regional authorities are equally non-supportive of minorities. Rather than take effective action to prevent violence, officials in western Java have ignored a series of attacks on local Ahmadi communities. In February 2011, these culminated in a brutal massacre, during which policemen were seen watching helplessly as a mob bludgeoned three Ahmadis to death. Authorities responded to this with sentences of just a few months for ringleaders, while clamping down on Ahmadi activities. Meanwhile, a local government in Madura caved in to majority pressure by ruling that hundreds of Shiites driven from their homes would not be allowed to return to the area due to Sunni protests.

Local authorities reluctant to grant building permits for churches in Muslim-majority areas

Christians have also been affected by this bias, with local authorities in some parts of the country unwilling to upset Muslim majorities by issuing construction permits for churches. In the West Java city of Bogor, a Protestant congregation ended up having to worship on the pavement after the city council refused to issue a permit, despite a Supreme Court ruling in favour of the church. In Yogyakarta (adjacent to Central Java) a Pentecostal group without a church was attacked by Islamist militants, only for its pastor to end up in court, accused of violating a government ban on using private homes for religious worship. In Aceh, after a church was destroyed by a mob, the authorities responded by demolishing several more, citing a lack of building permits.

MUI: an advisory body which promotes intolerant policies

Official intolerance often reflects the influence of the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (Indonesian Ulama Council – MUI), a state-funded Muslim clerical body which is regularly consulted by the government on religious policy and legislation. For example
in 2016, after the MUI declared Gafatar incompatible with Islam, Religious Affairs Minister Lukman Hakim Saifuddin branded the sect as 'illegal' and a potential source of radicalism.

The MUI has consistently opposed religious pluralism and liberalism, which it condemned in a 2005 fatwa. At one point it even considered prohibiting Muslims from wishing Christian neighbours a merry Christmas. While it claims at national level to accept Shia as a legitimate form of Islam, Shiites are not represented in the organisation, and they have been branded by the MUI's East Java branch as heretics. The MUI is even tougher on the Ahmadi minority, issuing a fatwa against it in 2006.

The MUI's influence goes beyond its role in advising the government. It was involved in several of the blasphemy cases mentioned above, and though its fatwas are not legally binding, they help to fuel intolerance which in turn can lead to violence – for example, Shiite villagers on Madura were attacked just months after being denounced for blasphemy by the regional branch of the MUI. According to the NGO, Setara Institute, the MUI was involved in 12 cases of religious intolerance in 2015.

**Indonesia's new president makes encouraging gestures – but little real change**

* A promising start for the new government

After widespread criticism of former President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (2004-2014) for his failure to promote religious harmony, new President Joko Widodo (October 2014–), popularly known as 'Jokowi', has raised hopes for a new start. Tolerance was one of the priorities of his presidential election manifesto. It is encouraging that Jokowi's deputies in his previous roles as mayor of Solo and governor of Jakarta were from minorities (a Javanese Catholic and a Chinese Protestant respectively; the latter has since become the capital's first non-Muslim governor in 50 years).

Initial proposals by the new Religious Affairs Minister, Lukman Hakim Saifuddin, reflected this spirit of tolerance: a new law to protect groups such as Shiites and Ahmadis, among other things by making it easier for them to build new places of worship and defend existing ones from attack; official status for the Baha’i, followed by less than 0.1% of Indonesia’s population.  

**Government actions have not lived up to initial promise of tolerance**

However, little progress has been made since then. The proposal on Baha’is has not been taken up by Interior Minister Tjahjo Kumulo, while the bill on protecting religious minorities has been stuck at parliamentary committee level for several months; unless it can garner the support of the three Islamic parties in the governing coalition, it seems unlikely to succeed.

Despite his reputation for tolerance, recent statements by Lukman have tended towards Islamic orthodoxy. In mid-2015 he came down in opposition to interfaith
marriages, ruling out a more flexible interpretation of the law that would have allowed them.

The spread of Islamic-inspired legislation continues under the new government, with new restrictions on the sale of alcohol in small shops, and further laws banning drinking, gambling and prostitution under consideration.

No real improvement in the situation of religious minorities

Figures from the Setara Institute show that, compared to 2014, cases of intolerance increased by over 50% during 2015, the first full year of Jokowi's presidency (although they were still fewer than in most of the preceding years). Criminal prosecutions for blasphemy remained at a similar level to previous years – nine cases in 2015, compared to ten in 2014 and one in 2013.

Position of the European Parliament

The EP resolution of 7 July 2011 on Indonesia welcomed the Indonesian government's statement on upholding pluralism, expressed concerns about violence against Ahmadis and other groups, noted that violations of religious freedom undermine the rights guaranteed in the country's Constitution, pointed to potential abuse of legislation on blasphemy and heresy, and applauded the work of Indonesian civil society in defending religious harmony.

Main references


Muslim Democracy: Politics, Religion and Society in Indonesia, Turkey and the Islamic World, Schneider E., Routledge, 2016.


Endnotes

1 Unpublished figures, to be included in the Setara Institute's 2015 Freedom of Religion/Belief Report.
2 Also documented in the Setara Institute's 2014 Freedom of Religion/Belief Report.
3 Figures from Survei: Toleransi Beragama Orang Indonesia Rendah (Survey: Religious Tolerance Low in Indonesia), tempo.co.

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