

Refugee Review Tribunal

AUSTRALIA

RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

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This response was prepared by the Country Research Section of the Refugee Review Tribunal (RRT) after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the RRT within time constraints. This response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum.

Questions

- 1. Please provide relevant background on the circumstances of ethnic Chinese and Jehovah’s Witnesses in Aceh.**
- 2. Please provide information on the separatist movement in Aceh.**

Response

- 1. Please provide relevant background on the circumstances of ethnic Chinese and Jehovah’s Witnesses in Aceh.**

Ethnic Chinese in Aceh

A search of the sources indicated that there are no current reports on harassment of ethnic Chinese and Jehovah’s Witnesses in Indonesia. However, *Research Response IDN17775* of 7 February 2006 sourced a *Wall Street Journal* article that provided information on the Chinese community, which owns about 50 to 70 per cent of the private sector businesses and trade in essential goods like cooking oil, rice and coffee. The response also quoted an *Agence France-Presse* report that alleged that few ethnic Chinese who remained in Aceh after the 2004 Asian Tsunami had their property looted and were not given protection by the security forces. There were also rumours, circulated via mobile-telephone messaging, that ethnic Chinese who had been displaced from Aceh were suffering discrimination, and even physical attacks, in refugee centres. Credible ethnic Chinese sources found the messages to be largely untrue. Nevertheless, there was fear among ethnic Chinese following the arrival in Aceh of Islamist groups, such as Laksar Jihad and the Islamic Defenders Front, which in the past had a history of inciting sectarian violence. According to the Aceh-Eye website, Aceh’s religious demography is as follows: Islam (98.11%), Protestant (1.32%), Catholic (0.16%), Hinduism (0.02%), Buddhism (0.37%) and others (0.011%) (RRT Country Research Response 2006, *Research Response IDN17775*, 7 February – Attachment 1; for information on Chinese business ownership in Aceh, see: Solomon, J. 2005, ‘Chinese Self-Help Group Assists Refugees in Rebuilding Lives’, Aceh-Eye website, source: *Wall Street Journal*, 8 February http://www.aceh-eye.org/a-eye_news_files/a-

[eye_news_english/news_item.asp?NewsID=487](http://www.acheh-eye.org/data_files/english_format/general_info/general_info_gouvernement-eng/general-info_statistics_data-eng.html) – Accessed 1 February 2006 – Attachment 2; for demographic information on Aceh, see: ‘General Info About Aceh’ undated, Aceh-Eye website http://www.acheh-eye.org/data_files/english_format/general_info/general_info_gouvernement-eng/general-info_statistics_data-eng.html – Accessed 6 February 2006 – Attachment 3; for information on the impact of the tsunami on ethnic Chinese of Banda Aceh, see: ‘No feasts or fireworks in Indonesia’s Aceh as Chinese mark unhappy new year’ 2005, *Terradaily* website, source: *Agence France-Presse*, 8 February <http://www.terraily.com/2005/050208012312.gio3r4jf.html> – Accessed 1 February 2006 – Attachment 4; for information on the unchecked looting of ethnic Chinese businesses in the aftermath of the 2005 Asian Tsunami, see: ‘Ethnic Chinese ‘bullied and robbed’’ 2005, *China Morning Post*, 3 January – Attachment 5; and also: McCawley, T. 2005, ‘Ethnic Chinese key to Aceh fix-up’ *Christian Science Monitor* website, 18 February <http://www.csmonitor.com/2005/0218/p06s01-wosc.html> – Accessed 1 February 2006 – Attachment 6; and: Solomon, J. 2005, ‘Chinese Self-Help Group Assists Refugees in Rebuilding Lives’, Aceh-Eye website, source: *Wall Street Journal*, 8 February http://www.acheh-eye.org/a-eye_news_files/a-eye_news_english/news_item.asp?NewsID=487 – Accessed 1 February 2006 – Attachment 7; for information on the rumours of the mistreatment of Aceh’s displaced ethnic Chinese, and on the spurious nature of these rumours, see: ‘Rescue workers discriminate against ethnic Chinese tsunami victims’ 2005, *Asia News* website, 5 January <http://www.asianews.it/dos.php?l=en&dos=&art=2270> – Accessed 31 January 2006 – Attachment 8; see also: ‘Diversity in humanitarian activities’ 2005, Centre for Strategic and International Studies website, source: Fellowship of Indonesian Christians in America, 17 January http://www.csis.or.id/feature_view.asp?id=139&tab=0 – Accessed 31 January 2006 – Attachment 9; for information on the role of ethnic Chinese institutions in Banda Aceh’s rebuilding, see: Eaton, D. & Nathalia, T. 2005, ‘Aceh’s Chinese usher in sad New Year’, *swissinfo.com* website, source: *Reuters*, 9 February <http://www.swissinfo.org/sen/swissinfo.html?siteSect=143&sid=5525349> – Accessed 1 February 2006 – Attachment 10; for information on the acknowledged importance of the return of Aceh’s ethnic Chinese, see: McCawley, T. 2005, ‘Ethnic Chinese key to Aceh fix-up’ *Christian Science Monitor* website, 18 February <http://www.csmonitor.com/2005/0218/p06s01-wosc.html> – Accessed 1 February 2006 – Attachment 11; for information on the arrival of militant Islamist groups in Aceh, see: Perlez, J. 2005, ‘Islamic Militants Volunteer to Aid Muslims in Indonesia’, *New York Times*, 10 January <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/01/10/international/worldspecial4/10muslims.html?ex=1263099600&en=d8f4840dcf0f3f82&ei=5090&partner=rssuserland> – Accessed 6 February 2006 – Attachment 12; and also: Vltchek, A. 2005 ‘Aceh Goes To Heaven!’, *Z Net* website, 12 January <http://www.zmag.org/sustainers/content/2005-01/12vltchek.cfm> – Accessed 6 January 2006 – Attachment 13).

Research Response IDN31298 noted that little information was found on the situation of ethnic Chinese in Aceh. However, the response highlighted that the current information on Aceh focused on local elections and the re-integration of former *Gerakan Aceh Merdeka* (GAM) combatants into the Aceh community. These issues including recent political developments are addressed in Question 2 (RRT Country Research Response 2007, *Research Response IDN31298*, 8 February 2007 – Attachment 14).

Human Rights

The US Department of State report on human rights practices for 2006 stated that the Indonesian “government officially promotes racial and ethnic tolerance”. However in Aceh, “non-Muslims are effectively blocked from political office by a requirement that all candidates must demonstrate their ability to read the Koran in Arabic”. According to the US Department of State:

Ethnic Tolerance

The government officially promotes racial and ethnic tolerance. Ethnic Chinese accounted for approximately 3 percent of the population, by far the largest non indigenous minority group, and played a major role in the economy. Instances of discrimination and harassment of ethnic Chinese continued to decline compared with previous years. Recent reforms increased religious and cultural freedoms. However, some ethnic Chinese noted that public servants still discriminated against them when issuing marriage licenses and in other services and often demanded bribes for a citizenship certificate, although such certificates were no longer legally required. An attorney advocate for the rights of ethnic Chinese noted 50 articles of law, regulation, or decree that discriminated against ethnic Chinese citizens. During the year President Yudhoyono revoked a previous presidential decree that required special permits to engage in Chinese cultural and religious celebrations. The new citizenship law explicitly states that an Indonesian citizenship certificate, which ethnic Chinese often had a difficult time obtaining, is not required to establish citizenship. NGOs such as the Indonesia Anti Discrimination Movement urged the government to revoke the remaining discriminatory articles.

Restrictions on political participation in Aceh

With the exception of Aceh Province, where non-Muslims are effectively blocked from political office by a requirement that all candidates must demonstrate their ability to read the Koran in Arabic, there were no legal restrictions on the role of minorities in politics. There were no official statistics on the ethnic backgrounds of legislators in the DPR. President Yudhoyono’s cabinet consisted of a plurality of Javanese, with others being of Sundanese, Bugis, Batak, Acehnese, Papuan, Balinese, Arab, and Chinese heritage. (US Department of State 2007, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2006 – Indonesia*, March – Attachment 15).

According to a 2006 report by the Freedom House ethnic Chinese continue to suffer harassment and violence and have to show “a citizenship card to obtain a passport, credit card, or business licence or to enrol a child in school”. According to Freedom House:

Ethnic Chinese continue to face some harassment and violence, though far less than in the late 1990s, when violent attacks killed hundreds and destroyed many Chinese-owned shops and churches. Unlike other Indonesians, ethnic Chinese must show a citizenship card to obtain a passport, credit card, or business license or to enrol a child in school—a requirement that makes them vulnerable to extortion by bureaucrats. Ethnic Chinese make up less than 3 percent of the nation’s population, but are resented by some Indonesians for holding the lion’s share of private wealth. A few ethnic Chinese have amassed huge fortunes in business, though most are ordinary traders or merchants (‘INDONESIA: Freedom in the world country report 2006’ 2006, Freedom House, 20 June – Attachment 16).

Jehovah’s Witnesses

No recent information on incidents involving Jehovah's Witnesses in Aceh were found in the sources consulted. However, there are recent reports on attacks against Christians in Aceh and this is addressed under the heading: *Recent events involving Christians in Aceh*. According to the *Research Response IDN17034* of 20 October 2004, the situation for Jehovah's Witnesses (JW) in Indonesia has improved since the Indonesian government lifted the ban on the organisation on 1 June 2001. Despite this positive development, some provinces in Indonesia continue to ban religious organisations. In October 2005, "the regional representative office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs in West Nusa Tenggara issued a ban on thirteen religious sects, including Ahmadiyya, Jehovah's Witness, Hari Krishna, and nine forms of traditional beliefs (aliran kepercayaan), as being deviations of Islam, Christianity, and Hinduism" (RRT Country Research Response 2004, *Research Response IDN17034*, 20 October – Attachment 17; US Department of State 2006, *International Religious Freedom Report 2006 – Indonesia*, September – Attachment 18). Information regarding the treatment of Christians in Aceh follows below.

Recent events involving Christians in Aceh

In September 2006, a house used as a church was burned to the ground by an angry Muslim mob. "The reason given for the attack is that although construction of a 'proper' church had already been completed local Christians continued to use their temporary church, a house, for services. Additionally, something said by the pastor of the church was believed to have upset some people". According to Indonesia Matters:

The first report tells that a house used as a church in the village of Siopin, Suro district, Aceh Singkil, near the border with North Sumatera, was burned down on Friday, 1st September at around 10pm.

The reason given for the attack is that although construction of a "proper" church had already been completed local Christians continued to use their temporary church, a house, for services. Additionally, something said by the pastor of the church was believed to have upset some people.

The other report, from Compass Direct, which does not cite its sources, and which we are assuming is about the same event, says that the pastor of the church, Luther Saragih, had sent out a letter to several villages in Aceh Singkil inviting Christians to attend a revival service. A Muslim resident is said to have somehow received a copy of the letter and then proceeded to edit it, making it appear that Muslims were invited to the service. He then distributed his own version of the letter to 3,000 Muslims. According to one "local source", the police knew that this was happening but made no attempt to restrain the man.

500 Christians arrived to take part in the service, along with a large crowd of Muslims, apparently angered by the (fake) letter. The police arrived and local Muslim leaders argued for several minutes with police, and eventually Saragih was taken to the police station. There the police scolded the pastor for organizing the event and ordered him to cancel it and send people home.

The service was cancelled and people returned home. **Later that night, at 10pm, a convoy of two trucks and 50 motorcycles arrived outside the church, with over 100 litres of gasoline in tow. Witnesses said there were over 100 men present, many of them carrying swords. The mob poured gasoline over the building and set fire to it; they also attempted to burn a second building that was used as a church kindergarten.**

Saragih, who had that afternoon been allowed to go home by the police, and his pregnant wife Netty, fled into the jungle and took refuge among Christians in neighbouring North Sumatra province.

Despite Aceh being a place where Islamic law is gradually being introduced relations between the Muslim majority and the quite small Christian minority have generally been good and church burnings in Aceh, unlike on Java, have never taken place in recent times, until now perhaps ('House-Church Burning' 2006, Indonesia Matters, 9 September <http://www.indonesiamatters.com/679/house-church-burning/> – Accessed 3 May 2007 – Attachment 19).

In June 2005, Christian organisation Door of Hope International reported that three Christian workers were kidnapped by the Aceh separatists and held for ransom but managed to escape. According to Indonesia Matters:

Three days ago one of our local staff was kidnapped at gunpoint by Islamic separatist rebels in Aceh. After being held for 24 hours he was able to undo his ropes and escape into the night. Yesterday he spent the day with the police being de-briefed. It was people from GAM who were demanding money. We thank the Lord for this miraculous escape ('One of our local staff was kidnapped in Aceh' 2005, Door of Hope International website, 16 June http://www.dohi.org/view_article.asp?id=118&cat=12 – Accessed 3 May 2007 – Attachment 20).

Sharia laws

Sharia law was part of the special autonomy package by the former Indonesian President Habibie to Aceh in 2001 to end the long separatist insurgency. Nevertheless, on 23 April 2007, five hundred demonstrators representing universities, Islamic boarding schools and the Islam Freedom Front (FPI) marched from Baiturrahman Grand Mosque to the Aceh Regional Legislative Council (DPRD) building demanding that authorities fully enforce Sharia laws ('Hundreds of people here on Monday staged a rally demanding full enforcement of Islamic law in Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam (NAD) Province' 2007, *The Indonesian National News Agency*, 23 April – Attachment 21).

The Catholic Church in Aceh was initially alarmed by the proposal in 2002 to implement Sharia law in Aceh, but according to the *Catholic News* website, "the enforcement of Sharia has not affected the religious life of non-Muslims".

Christians in Aceh, Indonesia, are responding to the implementation of Shari'a – or Islamic law – in their province with joint prayers and measures that reinforce their religious identity.

Capuchin Fr Fernando Severi told the press that the imposition of Shari'a is a "challenge" for local Christians.

"They should take it as an opportunity to show their Christian identity not just with symbols, but in witnessing their faith in society," the Italian missionary said.

He observed that since the implementation of the Shari'a on 15 March, the Muslim New Year, the bond between Catholics and Protestants has become stronger, citing joint prayer services between the two groups.

So far, the enforcement of Shari'a has not affected the religious life of non-Muslims. "We still can attend services and other Church activities," he said. Currently, there are only 550 Catholics, about 75 of whom are ethnic Chinese, Fr Severi added ('Aceh Christians become

more united as Shari'a is implemented in Aceh' 2002, *Catholic News* website, 19 April <http://www.cathtelecom.com/news/204/111.php> – Accessed 3 May 2007 – Attachment 22).

Despite Aceh being the only province where Sharia law was officially legislated, there are reports from another Indonesian province of Sulawesi that indicate that Sharia inspired by laws have been implemented by the authorities and as a result it is affecting the lives of Christians. According to Reverend Marko Mahim, “Sharia inspired by-laws had an adverse impact on non-Muslims in South Kalimantan”. According to Indonesia Matters:

Reverend Marko Mahim of the Ecumenical Christian Church of Banjarmasin, Kalimantan, told participants that implementation of sharia-inspired by-laws has had an adverse impact on non-Muslims in South Kalimantan, especially on his congregation.

With the bylaws, our **church members see Islam as a coercive, terrifying, unfriendly religion. They see it as a threat to Christianity.**

Someone from a church in South Sulawesi said local by-laws had led some Christians to convert to Islam. **Moreover, their impact can be seen in the difficulty in getting permission to build churches, discriminatory treatment of non-Muslims in public services, social conflict, and the loss of local cultural roots and tradition due to Islamic-Arab cultural imperialism** (‘Sharia Complaints’ 2007, Indonesia Matters, 26 October <http://www.indonesiamatters.com/772/sharia-complaints/> – Accessed 3 May 2007 – Attachment 23).

2. Please provide information on the separatist movement in Aceh.

The Aceh Freedom Movement (GAM)

The Aceh Freedom Movement (GAM) originated in the 1970s and on 4 December 1976, GAM declared independence of Aceh from Indonesian rule. As a response, the Indonesian government sent in the security forces to crack down on the rebels, resulting in a guerrilla war that lasted from 1976 to 2005. According to David Webster of the University of Toronto “the organisation was grounded squarely in Acehenese ethnic nationalism”.

GAM returned in greater force in 1989, with some guerrillas having in the meantime undergone training in Libya...

...Nationalists were quick to seize the window of opportunity created with the fall of the New Order in 1998. A year later 1 million people (a quarter of the provincial population) rallied in Banda Aceh demanding a referendum like the one promised in East Timor. It was a solid show of strength by a vibrant civil society sector that had grown up in the space between the Indonesian state and the GAM (Webster, D. 2007, ‘From Sabang to Merauke: Nationalist secession movements in Indonesia’, *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, vol. 48, no. 1, pp. 90-91 – Attachment 24).

Helsinki Agreement

Following nearly twenty years of conflict, GAM and Indonesian government representatives met in Helsinki and signed a memorandum of understanding on 15 August 2005. According to John Roosa of the University of British Columbia, during the free Aceh campaign, the Indonesian army carried out counter insurgency operations against the GAM and “ a government sanctioned human rights investigation (Komisi Independen Pengusutan)

estimated that the army killed about 2000-4000 people from 1990 to 1998". Roosa argues that "the humanitarian crisis and the opening up of Aceh to foreigners, not the military offensive that began in May 2003, radically changed GAM's calculations." He continues:

...In the military mind, the years of counterinsurgency war in Aceh forced GAM to the negotiating table and can thus be considered a success story. Even the independent experts at the International Crisis Group (ICG) contend that 'an important factor by all accounts in the changed dynamics that led to the Helsinki talks was the impact of military operations on GAM' (International Crisis Group, 2005: 4). The argumentation of the ICG experts, however, is faulty. They correctly point out that GAM had suffered serious losses by early 2005; it had lost many commanders and been driven out of its former strongholds. But they did not show that those losses had any impact on the decision-making of the GAM leaders who signed the agreement. GAM had suffered many setbacks since 1976 and had always managed to regroup. Guerrilla armies never make strictly military calculations on whether to continue the struggle or not. (The East Timorese guerrilla army, Falintil, had realised in the early 1980s that it had no hope of ever evicting the Indonesian military by force, yet it persisted nonetheless.) Until the day the tsunami hit on 26 December 2004, GAM had not given any indications that its losses on the battlefield were forcing it to rethink its strategy. It was only after the tsunami that GAM announced that it was willing to drop its demand for independence (Aglionby, 2005). The humanitarian crisis and the opening up of Aceh to foreigners, not the military offensive that began in May 2003, radically changed GAM's calculations...

...The negotiations between GAM and the Indonesian government reached a breakthrough in early 2005 not just because of the post-tsunami humanitarian crisis but also because of the courage of President Yudhoyono and Vice President Kalla, who offered generous terms that had never been offered to GAM before. The two men, despite a general orthodox adherence to Suharto-era doctrines, summoned the political acumen to push through a new type of resolution to the Aceh conflict. President Megawati, lacking such acumen, had allowed her policy to be determined by hard-line, bull-headed generals such as Ryacudu. The memorandum of understanding signed on 15 August 2005 calls for the Indonesian government to rewrite its regulations on political parties. At present, all political parties must have chapters in over half of the country's 33 provinces. Parties with a membership limited to one province or region cannot contest elections, even local elections. In the Helsinki agreement, the government pledges to legalise regional political parties. The government also pledges to give Aceh 70% of the revenue from the province's natural resources and withdraw all soldiers and policemen who are not permanently based in Aceh (meaning, those outside the territorial structure). GAM leaders expect to be able to form an exclusively Acehese political party and lead a provincial government that controls a large budget. With greater provincial autonomy and a lessening of the military presence, the Acehese might become content with working in the framework of the Indonesian nation-state (Roosa, J. 2007, 'Finalising the nation: The Indonesian military as the guarantor', *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, vol. 48, no. 1, pp. 104-106 – Attachment 25).

Aceh – Recent Developments

Bomb Attacks

On 30 April 2007, a home made bomb exploded in Teupin Rueh village in East Aceh, killing "an elementary school student and seriously injuring two secondary school students."

According to the *Organisations of Asia Pacific News Agencies*:

A home-made bomb which exploded in Teupin Brueh village, Simpang Ulin subdistrict, East Aceh district, Aceh province, killed an elementary school student and seriously injured two

secondary school students on Monday. Spokesman for the Aceh provincial police Senior Commissioner Jodi Heriyadi said here Monday night the dead victim was identified as Faisal and the injured were Syarifuddin and Zulkifikar. Jodi said the incident was still under police investigation. The incident also caused a minor injury to a farmer identified as Abdullah (24), he said, adding that the three injured victims who are residents of Teupin Brueh village are now under medical treatment at a public hospital in Langsa town. It was also reported that on the previous day a grenade went off after it was hurled by an unidentified person at a house of spokesman for the Aceh Transition Committee, Sofyan Dawood, in Lhokseumawe but no fatality was reported in the incident ('Bomb kills one, injures two students in Aceh' 2007, *Organisation of Asia Pacific News Agencies*, 1 May – Attachment 26).

On 30 April, a grenade exploded at the residence of former GAM spokesman Sofyan Dawood in Muara Dua district. "No injuries were reported but the attack raises concern over a surge in violence in the province less than two years after the signing of a peace agreement between GAM and the Indonesian government". According to *The Jakarta Post*, another grenade attack took place on 24 April 2007, targeting "the headquarters of the police's Mobile Brigade in the provincial capital of Banda Aceh. A day earlier the residence of Lhokseumawe Deputy Mayor Suadi Yaha, a former GAM member, was targeted".

...Dawood, now a spokesman for the Aceh Culture Committee, was not at home at the time of the attack, about three in the morning.

The front windows of the house were shattered in the incident. Dawood's wife, Azirni, and his mother, Khatijah, were in the house when the attack occurred but were not injured.

The assailant or assailants threw the grenade into the front yard of the house. No major damage was caused by the explosion, but one wall did suffer some damage...

On April 24, a grenade was thrown at the headquarters of the police's elite Mobile Brigade in the provincial capital Banda Aceh. A day earlier the residence of Lhokseumawe Deputy Mayor Suadi Yahya, a former GAM member, was targeted.

A peace deal was signed by representatives of the Indonesian government and GAM in Helsinki, Finland, on Aug. 15, 2005, ending three decades of conflict in which some 15,000 people died.

Aceh Police spokesman Sr. Comr. Jodi Ariadi said earlier police had no clues to suggest who was behind the attacks or the type of grenade used.

Earlier this month, the North Aceh regency office received a package containing an active grenade. The Lhokseumawe mayoralty office received a package containing four bullets ('Grenade attack raises tensions in Aceh' 2007, *The Jakarta Post*, 30 April – Attachment 27).

Attacks by Indonesian Troops

On 28 April, *The Economist* reported that "Indonesian troops attacked villagers in Bireuen district in reprisal for assaults on two of their soldiers. It was disturbingly reminiscent of the military's harsh tactics during the insurgency, which raged on for three decades until the tsunami brought it to a halt." The report further highlighted that distrust still remained between former GAM rebels and the Indonesian authorities:

GAM has been reborn as the Aceh Transitional Committee and its rebels have demobilised and handed over their weapons. But much mistrust remains between it and the Indonesian authorities. For example, the rebel movement has not disclosed the true names of all its

members. Its leaders say their representatives came out into the open during earlier attempts to broker peace, only to be hunted down and shot after the talks broke down.

International peace monitors might help. But the European Union-led Aceh Monitoring Mission, which oversaw the early stages of the peace process, has now gone. A charitable organisation with experience in conflict resolution, Interpeace, is supposed to take on a similar role but is not yet fully ready and will not have the same resources. The top UN official in Banda Aceh, Satya Sundar Tripathi, says that what is needed is another big commitment of funds by the foreign donors—beyond that promised to help Aceh recover from the tsunami—to support and develop the peace. So far, however, that commitment has not come. And money does not buy trust, the commodity that is perhaps most needed ('An Uneasy Peace – Indonesia's Aceh Province, 2007, *The Economist*, 28 April – Attachment 28).

Aceh Elections

In December 2006, a former GAM leader, Irwandi Yusuf, an independent candidate, won the election and became the Governor of Aceh. According to Indonesia Matters website, the Islamic parties – the Reform Star Party (PBR), the United Party of the Association of Umat (PPNU) and the National Awakening Party (PKB) did not perform well at the polls. Other centrist Islamic parties such as National Mandate Party (PAN), Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) and the Crescent Moon and Star coalition (PPP) also failed to secure enough votes. According to the Indonesia Matters website:

The pair of Irwandi Yusuf and Muhammad Nazar had won 37.92%, as of the latest count he said, while candidates supported by Islamic parties had not done so well individually, such as Humam Hamid and Hasbi Abdullah (PPP & ex-GAM) with 16.73%, Azwar Abubakar and Nasir Jamil (PAN & PKS) with 11.03%, Iskandar Hosein and Saleh Manaf (PBB & seven small parties) with 6.42%, and Tamlicha Ali and Herman Nuriqman (PBR-PPNU-PKB) with just 3.87%. Add all those votes together, he said, and an Islamic candidate would have won, provided that all the Islam based parties had agreed to join forces for the election.

Forming coalitions in Aceh was especially important, he said, because Islamic law was already in place there making it difficult for Islamic parties to attract attention.

House (DPR) chairman of the Partai Keadilan Sejahtera, Welfare Party (PKS), Untung Wahono, agreed. One problem with Indonesian voters, he said, was that they were hopelessly pragmatis and tradisional, while only a few had the right rasional and ideologis approach. Voters needed to be educated by Islamic parties so that they became more rasional and ideologis [possibly "ideologis" here means something like "systematic" or "thorough"].

Aceh was a special case, he said, general rules should not be drawn from events there. In order for coalitions of Islamic parties to work elsewhere, he said, the theoretical values of Islam had to be translated into concrete examples so that people would view the rise of political Islam as a pragmatis thing. The law of Islam also had to be grounded in the social and cultural reality of Indonesia, political Islam was not intolerant and not hostile to Indonesian-ness, he said ('Islamic Political Unity' 2006, Indonesia Matters, 31 December <http://www.indonesiamatters.com/1028/islamic-political-unity/> – Accessed 3 May 2007 – Attachment 29).

According to the *New York Times*, Irwandi was "a separatist rebel who, quite unexpectedly, become the leader of the government he until recently had fought against". The same report further stated that:

Under a peace agreement signed in 2005, Mr. Irwandi renounced his separatist agenda. He ran for governor last December and won, taking almost 40 percent of the vote in a field of eight. The second-place finisher was also a former member of the separatist movement, bringing its total to more than 50 percent of the votes cast.

Mr. Irwandi took office at the start of February [2007] and is now guarded by the army that once hunted him in the jungle. He works with a police force that was known for its brutal treatment of his comrades. He travels to Jakarta to talk policy with President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, himself a former general.

He has no alternative but to leave the past behind, he said. Most of the people he works with are his former enemies.

Military intelligence still watches him, he said, as it did in the past, and he expects his most determined opponents to try to complicate his job with political manipulations. But the agreement that ended Aceh's 30-year separatist war, after the deaths of 15,000 people, is holding, and both sides seem to have embraced non violence.

Mr. Irwandi has inherited a wounded province of four million people here on the northern tip of the island of Sumatra. The traumas of its long, brutal conflict have been compounded by the devastation of the Asian tsunami that took 170,000 lives in Aceh in December 2004.

Along with economic revival he must deal with the reintegration of former rebel fighters, delicate relations with Jakarta, Islamist clerics and a local administration that is known for corruption and ineffectiveness ('The Governor of Aceh' 2007, *New York Times*, 14 April – Attachment 30).

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Catholic News www.cathtelecom.com

Door of Hope International www.dohi.org

Region Specific Links

Asia News website www.asianews.com

Centre for International and Strategic Studies www.cis.org.id

Topic Specific Links

Acheh-Eye website www.acheh-eye.com

Indonesia Matters website www.indonesiamatters.com

Search Engines

Google search engine <http://www.google.com.au/>

Databases:

FACTIVA (news database)

BACIS (DIMA Country Information database)

REFINFO (IRBDC (Canada) Country Information database)
ISYS (RRT Country Research database, including Amnesty International, Human Rights
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RRT Library Catalogue

List of Attachments

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