



## RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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17 March 2010

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Indonesia: The population of Chinese Indonesians and Chinese Christians in the Sulawesi provinces and the cities of Medan and Banda Aceh; incidents of violence and state protection available (2006 to March 2010)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

### Population

In a chapter from the book *Ethnic Chinese in Contemporary Indonesia* regarding the demographics of Chinese Indonesians in Indonesia, the authors Aris Ananta, Evi Nurvidya Arifin and Bakhtiar note that there is no consensus on who constitute Chinese Indonesians, making it challenging to determine accurate statistics (Ananta et al 2008, 17). They provided data from the Indonesian Population Census of 2000, in which respondents self-identified as Chinese (ibid., 19, 27). The census indicates that there are 5,877 Chinese Indonesians (0.34 percent of the local population) in the province of Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam, [where Banda Aceh is located], and 353,525 Chinese Indonesians (3.07 percent of the local population) in the province of North Sumatra, [where Medan is located] (ibid., 27). The authors suggest that many of the ethnic Chinese in North Sumatra live in Medan (ibid., 26). The census also indicates that there are 3,117 Chinese Indonesians (0.16 percent of the local population) in North Sulawesi province, 11,468 Chinese Indonesians (0.57 percent) in Central Sulawesi province, 36,937 Chinese Indonesians (0.47 percent) in South Sulawesi province, and 2,192 Chinese Indonesians (0.12 percent) in Southeast Sulawesi province (ibid., 27).

Aimee Dawis, a lecturer at the University of Indonesia, also reports statistics from the 2000 Indonesian census in her book, *The Chinese of Indonesia and Their Search for Identity* (Dawis 2009, 84). In her study, she lists the population of ethnic Chinese by city: Banda Aceh has 3,167 Chinese Indonesians (2.05 percent of the 154,767 population); Medan has 202,839 Chinese Indonesians (10.65 percent of the 1,904,273 population) and Manado, in North Sulawesi, has 198 Chinese Indonesians (0.05 percent of the 372,887 population) (Dawis 2009, 84). In 12 March 2010 correspondence with the Research Directorate, a representative of the Indonesian Anti Discrimination Movement (Garakan Perjuangan Anti Diskriminasi, GANDI), an institution created by Chinese Indonesian businessmen to eliminate discriminatory laws and promote national unity (GANDI n.d.), stated that in the city of Medan, ethnic Chinese people account for approximately 10 to 15 percent of the city's population. *The Jakarta Post* reports that in the city of Makassar, South Sulawesi, there are approximately 30,000 Chinese Indonesians of a population of 1,200,000 people (15 May 2006).

Information on the number of Chinese Christians in these regions could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. However, according to the 2000 census, 35.09 percent of Chinese Indonesians throughout Indonesia are Christian (Ananta et al 2008, 30). Dawis reports that according to the 2000 census, there are 1,348 Christians in Banda Aceh, 400,312 Christians in Medan, and 249,274 Christians in Manado (Dawis 2009, 86).

### **Incidents of violence**

Information about incidents of violence in Banda Aceh, Medan and the Sulawesi provinces targeting Chinese Indonesians was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

The Representative of GANDI indicated that there have not been "any significant attacks" against Chinese Indonesians in Banda Aceh, Medan, South Sulawesi or other regions of Indonesia since 2006 (GANDI 12 Mar. 2010). In correspondence with the Research Directorate on 5 March 2010, an associate professor of Political Science at the University of Toronto, who specializes in ethnic politics in Indonesia, stated that Chinese Indonesians face resentment and occasional racism, but "are neither being systematically targeted nor particularly victimized in the current context." In a chapter from *Ethnic Chinese in Contemporary Indonesia* regarding anti-Chinese violence in Indonesia, the author Charles A. Coppel reports that there have been few incidents of anti-Chinese violence since 1999 (Coppel 2008, 126). Without providing details, Freedom House reports that ethnic Chinese in Indonesia "continue to face harassment and occasional violence" (2009).

Sources report that in 2006, students held "violent protests" against the Chinese Indonesian community in Makassar, South Sulawesi (*The Jakarta Post* 8 Aug. 2006; *ibid.* 15 May 2006; Coppel 2008, 127). One incident, which occurred in May 2006, was triggered by news that a Chinese Indonesian man had allegedly abused two of his female domestic workers, resulting in the death of one of the women (*ibid.*; *The Jakarta Post* 11 May 2006; *ibid.* 15 May 2006). According to *The Jakarta Post*, hundreds of students threatened to "launch a sweeping operation against Chinese-Indonesians in Makassar" if the police did not adequately investigate the crime; students caused traffic jams and pelted stores with stones (11 May 2006). *The Jakarta Post* reports that the case in May 2006 caused a week of violence during which shops and houses owned by Chinese Indonesians came under attack by youths (4 Aug. 2006). *The Jakarta Post* indicates that students held "violent protests" again in August 2006 after a Chinese Indonesian man allegedly attempted to rape his indigenous maid; students attempted to stop cars driven by ethnic Chinese and threatened to expel ethnic Chinese people from the city (8 Aug. 2006).

The United States (US) Department of State's *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2008* states that harassment and discrimination against ethnic Chinese in Indonesia has declined (US 25 Feb. 2009, Sec. 5). According to the Representative of GANDI, Chinese Indonesians are sometimes treated as foreigners by Indonesian society, but because of democratic and anti-discrimination initiatives, Chinese Indonesians are more accepted as a part of the Indonesian community than in the past (GANDI 12 Mar. 2010). The Representative indicated that ethnic Chinese in Medan do not face many problems because of the high percentage of ethnic Chinese in the city (*ibid.*). He noted that non-Muslims in Banda Aceh have limited civil liberties because of Sharia law (*ibid.*).

Information about incidents of violence in Banda Aceh, Medan and the Sulawesi provinces targeting Chinese Christians could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

## **State Protection**

Sources report that since 1999 several new laws have been enacted in Indonesia to offer greater protection to Chinese Indonesians (Associate Professor 5 Mar. 2010; *The Straits Times* 10 June 2009; MRG n.d.; Sidel Mar. 2007, 14; GANDI 12 Mar. 2010). The 2006 Citizenship Law has made it easier for Chinese Indonesians to become citizens of Indonesia (US 25 Feb. 2009, Sec. 5; MRG n.d.; *South China Morning Post* 13 June 2007). According to the Hong Kong newspaper *South China Morning Post*, prior to the new citizenship law, the Indonesian constitution distinguished between "'indigenous' and 'non-indigenous'" people and allotted them different rights (13 June 2007).

Chinese Indonesians have become more involved in Indonesian politics and some have been elected to political positions (GANDI 12 Mar. 2010; *The Straits Times* 10 June 2009). According to the Singapore newspaper *The Straits Times*, 12 ethnic Chinese politicians secured seats in the National Parliament in the April 2009 election (ibid.).

Media sources report on a cultural revival among Chinese Indonesians (*South China Morning Post* 13 June 2007; Reuters 14 June 2008). Chinese New Year has been recognized as an official holiday and is openly celebrated by Chinese Indonesians (MRG n.d.; Sidel Mar. 2007, 14; *South China Morning Post* 13 June 2007; Reuters 12 Feb. 2007). The Chinese language media are now available (MRG n.d.; Sidel Mar. 2007, 14; *South China Morning Post* 13 June 2007) and public signs can now be written in Chinese (MRG n.d). Confucianism has also been recognized as an official religion (MRG n.d.; Sidel Mar. 2007, 14; *South China Morning Post* 13 June 2007). However, *Country Reports 2008* and the Representative of GANDI indicate that some public servants continue to discriminate against Chinese Indonesians when issuing documents (US 25 Feb. 2009, Sec. 5; GANDI 12 Mar. 2010). *Country Reports 2008* also notes that there are still some articles in Indonesian laws which discriminate against ethnic Chinese people (US 25 Feb. 2009, Sec. 5).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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#### Additional Sources Consulted

**Oral Sources:** Attempts to reach representatives of the Chinese Indonesian Association and the Chinese Heritage Centre were unsuccessful within time constraints. Three academic sources were not able to provide information.

**Internet sources, including:** Amnesty International (AI), Chinese Heritage Centre, European Country of Origin Information Network (ecoi.net), Human Rights Watch, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies [Singapore], International Crisis Group, Office of the United Nations (UN) High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Refworld.

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