



## Armed Conflicts Report

### Indonesia - Kalimantan (1996 - first combat deaths)

Update: November 2002

#### Summary

#### Type of Conflict

#### Parties to the Conflict

#### Status of the Fighting

#### Number of Deaths

#### Political Developments

#### Background

#### Arms Sources

#### Economic Factors

#### Summary:

**2003** *There were no reports of fatal clashes between the Dayak and Madurese communities for a second consecutive year.*

**2002** The conflict reached a stand-still as most Madurese fled conflict areas to seek refuge in make-shift camps in Central and West Kalimantan, or with family in East Java and Madura Island. Some analysts expressed fear of future reprisal attacks by returning Madurese.

**2001** In February and March brutal violence erupted between the Dayak and Madurese ethnic groups on the large Indonesian island of Borneo. There were some 500 deaths with the Indonesian security forces unable to contain the worst of the violence.

#### Type of Conflict:

Failed state

#### Parties to the Conflict:

1) Government of Indonesia:

led by President Megawati Sukarnoputri.

2) Dayak – indigenous to Kalimantan.

3) Madurese – settled in Kalimantan from 1930's.

#### Status of Fighting:

**2003** *There were no reports of confrontations between Dayak and Madurese communities which resulted in deaths for a second consecutive year. However, inter-ethnic tensions remained high throughout the province.*

"Ethnic violence has broken out again in West Kalimantan province... Reports said the violence in West Kalimantan erupted on Monday (30/6/03) in Karimunting village, Sambas district, when a migrant from East Java's Madura island stabbed a member of the local Malay community due to a 'misunderstanding'. Angry Malay villagers retaliated by torching three houses of Madurese, prompting 200 Madurese to flee their homes."  
[*Laksamana.Net*, July 3, 2003]

**2002** There were no reported violent confrontations between Dayak and Madurese communities.

**2001** Brutal violence erupted in February between rival gangs of Dayak and Madurese. There were reports of atrocities, with government security forces unable to stop the fighting.

"Rival gangs of Dayak and Madurese used spears and machetes in fierce battles on the streets of Sampit, some 800 kilometers northeast of Jakarta in the province of Central Kalimantan. Police fired rubber bullets to try to disperse the mobs, but with little effect." [CBC, February 22, 2001]

"Two battalions of police and soldiers were sent in to boost security around Sampit, where rioting has raged all week and gang members have reportedly paraded around town with severed heads." [The Boston Globe, February 23, 2001]

### Number of Deaths:

**Total:** At least 1,000 have died in the conflict since 1996. In December 1996 more than 300 people died in three weeks of fighting, according to government sources. Some Christian groups in the area of the fighting reported the actual number to be in the thousands. In 1999 and again in 2001 hundreds more were killed, possibly thousands.

"In 1996-97, Dayak waged a 'ritual war' against Madurese communities, following a fight in Sanggau Ledo, West Kalimantan, between Madurese and Dayak youths during which two Dayak were stabbed. The Dayak burned houses and killed their inhabitants. In some cases, they severed the heads of their victims and ate their livers, in a revival of a traditional Dayak method of revenge. *Human Rights Watch* reports that around 500 people, Mostly Madurese, were killed and about 20,000 were displaced..."

"After the fall of the Suharto regime in 1999 violence broke out again, this time in the area of Sambas, West Kalimantan. During 1999-2000, this area witnessed some of Indonesia's most vicious ethnic killings. There were 186 reported killed, although unofficial estimates are much higher, during clashes between Dayak and Madurese, causing the Madurese community to flee. By the year 2000, the number of Madurese refugees in West Kalimantan exceeded 50,000." [PreventConflict, February 18, 2001]

"The war against the Madurese in Borneo has raged intermittently since 1997 and has claimed hundreds of lives, possibly thousands." [The Economist, April 21, 2001]

**2003** There were no reported deaths this year.

**2002** There were no reported deaths this year.

**2001** According to media reports at least 500 people were killed in ethnic violence in March 2001.

"Ethnic violence on Borneo Island, which has left at least 500 dead since it first erupted six weeks ago, claimed another five lives, the police said." [The Globe and Mail, April 2, 2001]

### Political Developments:

**2003** There were no significant political developments related to the Kalimantan conflict this year.

**2002** The Indonesian government did not redress 2001 Dayak violence likely because the conflict was not seen to represent a threat to national unity. Some reports suggested the Dayaks may launch a separatist movement in the future.

[Source: [www.preventconflict.org](http://www.preventconflict.org)]

**2001** The Indonesian government and security forces were criticized for not doing enough to stop the violence. Some reports claimed police stood by and did nothing as atrocities were committed against Madurese settlers.

"Indonesia's central government has been criticized for doing too little to stop the latest round of ethnic violence. There have been numerous reports involving police and soldiers who stood by as Dayak beheaded or hacked the Madurese settlers to death. There is further criticism that instead of battling the Dayak, the security forces arranged a mass evacuation of the Madurese by boat." [CNN, March 1, 2001]

### Background:

The conflict in Kalimantan has arisen from rivalries between the dominant indigenous group, the Dayaks, who are Christian, and the newly arrived Madures, who are Muslim. During the 1930's the Dutch colonial powers initiated a 'transmigration plan' to move people from heavily populated islands such as Java, to the less populated islands of Irian Jaya and Kalimantan. The program was expanded by the Indonesian government in the 1960's with the Government granting the Madurese deforestation rights to clear lands for palm oil cultivation. This conflicted with the local Dayak tribes' traditional way of life, and destroyed a large portion of the rain forest. As the rainforest was

cut down and replaced by palm oil and coconut plantations, the indigenous tribes found themselves at the bottom of a complex hierarchy of different groups, unable to continue their traditional patterns of agriculture and slow to adapt to new types of employment. The Dayak feel that the Madurese have taken their land. The cultural conflict between the two groups has also been a source of unrest as have Dayak demands for greater land rights and representation in government. The burning of three plantations in recent years is evidence of the Dayak's growing resentment of the government's appropriation of traditional land, and the forced selling of Dayak land at below market price. The tensions between the two ethnic groups resulted in major eruptions of violence in 1996, 1999 and 2001.

[Source: *The Inventory of Conflict and Environment*, Dianne Linder]

### **Arms Sources:**

Indonesia's recent military suppliers include the United Kingdom, USA, Germany, France, Russia, the Netherlands, South Korea, Slovakia, and Singapore. Indonesia also draws on domestic arms production. The US and the EU suspended arms transfers in 1999 due to the horrific human rights record of the Indonesian military. The EU did not renew the arms embargo when it expired on January 17, 2000. Although the US suspension is still in effect, the US is considering reestablishing military ties with Indonesia if the government can demonstrate that the human rights record of the military has improved. However, the murders of Presidium Chairman Theys Eluay in 2001, and of two American teachers in 2002, both which were allegedly committed by Indonesian security forces, have served as obstacles to the immediate resumption of military relations. In spite of its continuing arms embargo, in August 2002 the US offered a US \$50 million anti-terrorism package to Indonesia that includes police training, exchanges for high-level military personnel, and the establishment of an anti-terrorism unit.

Both the Dayaks and Madurese have resorted to home made swords, knives, axes, spears and bows and arrows. The majority of the those killed have died from these home-made weapons.

[Sources: SIPRI Yearbook 2002; *The Military Balance 2000-2001*; *International Crisis Group*, September 13, 2002]

"During Indonesian President Megawati Sukarnoputri's visit to Moscow in April 2003, the two countries signed a \$193m contract under which Russia will supply Indonesia with two Su-27SK and two Su-30MK aircraft and two Mi-35 helicopters." [*The Military Balance 2003-2004*, p. 298]

"The US Congress has again blocked military aid to Indonesia despite the Bush Administration wanting to draw the Indonesian Army into the 'war on terror'. The US Senate unanimously approved a measure to cut \$US400,000 (\$570,000) in military training assistance next year in an effort to force the Indonesian Government to fully co-operate in the investigation into the murder of two American teachers in Indonesia's eastern-most province, Papua, last year." [*Sydney Morning Herald*, October 31, 2003]

### **Economic Factors:**

The Dayaks blame the Madurese for dominating the local economy, and robbing them of their land and jobs.

[Source: [www.preventconflict.org](http://www.preventconflict.org) <http://www.preventconflict.org> 2001]

Project Ploughshares  
57 Erb Street West  
Waterloo, Ontario, Canada N2L 6C2  
tel (519) 888-6541 fax (519) 888-0018 Email: [plough@ploughshares.ca](mailto:plough@ploughshares.ca)