

Indonesia Visit report

May 2019

CSW everyone
free to believe



CSW is an advocacy organisation specialising in freedom of religion or belief (FoRB), and works on over 20 countries across Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East. Based in London, CSW has offices in Brussels, Washington DC and Nigeria, and holds United Nations accreditation.

Executive summary

'Indonesia is in a deep crisis of intolerance. Many insist that it is fringe groups that protest the construction of a temple or church. But if they're just on the fringe, why are they allowed to stop people from worshipping, time and again, in a country founded on acceptance of diversity?... Crystal clear signs from the national leadership are needed to unequivocally show what is needed to improve the national project that is Indonesia.'

Jakarta Post

'I always remind my students that we can't build this country based on one religion. We have to be together with other religions and ethnicities, to build Indonesia together. That is why it is so important to maintain harmony. At the core of every religion is the teaching to love each other and treat each other better.'

an Islamic leader in Tangerang, Banten Province, Java

'We want harmony in practice. Harmony without justice is nothing, so we have to work at this every day.'

Ibu Prima, sub-district leader, Panongan sub-district, Tangerang, Banten Province

On 17 April 2019 Indonesia, the world's third largest democracy, held elections in which over 190 million people cast their votes for the presidency and the national, regional and local legislatures, in one of the world's biggest and most complex democratic exercises in recent times. Indonesia is the world's fourth most populous nation, with a population of 262 million people,¹ and the world's largest archipelago, with an estimated 17,508 islands stretching across the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Furthermore, it is the largest economy in South-East Asia, the world's sixteenth largest economy, and predicted to be the seventh largest in the next 20 years. Indonesia is also the world's largest Muslim-majority nation, in which an estimated 13% of the world's Muslim population resides.

The election followed what almost all observers and participants acknowledge was the most divisive presidential campaign in the country's recent history. Election day itself was calm, peaceful and orderly, and there was no violence or turmoil following the initial 'quick count' results which consistently gave the incumbent president Joko Widodo victory with 55% of the vote over his rival, former General Prabowo Subianto, who received approximately 45%. However, when the official results were announced on 21 May, confirming the victory of President Widodo, violent riots erupted in Jakarta and elsewhere, resulting in the deaths of at least six people.² Moreover, the campaign itself featured religion, religious intolerance and identity politics as much more prominent themes than in any previous campaign, and threatened to further tear at Indonesia's proud tradition of religious pluralism.

Furthermore, even before voting concluded, Prabowo Subianto declared victory, claiming to have won with 62% of the votes.³ Two days after the election he held mass prayers in front of his house to celebrate his 'victory', even though the 'quick count' gave President Widodo a ten point lead.⁴ A month later, he still claimed to have won, but with 54.24%.⁵ Prabowo threatened to reject the official results if they did not confirm his victory, and to mobilise a 'people's power movement', thereby being complicit in sparking the riots in May 2019. A man who supported Prabowo and threatened in an online video to behead President Widodo was arrested in May 2019, a month after the election.⁶

CSW visited the country from 8-29 April, specifically in order to follow the election in the final week of the campaign, election day itself, and the immediate period after the election, and to research the situation

1 CIA, The World Factbook 2018 www.cia.gov/library/publications/resources/the-world-factbook/geos/id.html

2 BBC, 'Indonesia post-election protests leave six dead in Jakarta', 22 May 2019 www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-48361782

3 Jakarta Post, "'We have already won,' Prabowo claims,' 17 April 2019 www.thejakartapost.com/news/2019/04/17/we-have-already-won-prabowo-claims.html

4 Jakarta Post, 'Prabowo holds mass prayers in celebration of claimed victory', 19 April 2019 www.thejakartapost.com/news/2019/04/19/prabowo-holds-mass-prayers-in-celebration-of-claimed-victory.html

5 Coconuts Jakarta, 'Prabowo's Campaign Alters Election Victory Claim, Now Says He Actually Won by 54.24% Instead of 62%', 15 May 2019 <https://coconuts.co/jakarta/news/prabowos-campaign-alters-election-victory-claim-now-says-he-actually-won-by-54-24-instead-of-62/>

6 Jakarta Post, 'Man threatening to behead Jokowi in viral video reported to police,' 12 May 2019 www.thejakartapost.com/news/2019/05/12/man-threatening-to-behead-jokowi-in-viral-video-reported-to-police.html

of freedom of religion or belief in the current political context. CSW had meetings with religious leaders, government advisors and civil society in the capital, Jakarta, and visited Medan in North Sumatra, Surabaya in East Java, and Pontianak in West Kalimantan where we met with religious and civil society actors.

CSW concluded the visit with a profoundly mixed assessment of the situation in Indonesia. On the one hand, CSW is deeply concerned that the rise of religious intolerance, identity politics and violations of freedom of religion or belief, which we have been documenting and reporting for more than two decades, has been further exacerbated by an election campaign which played on people's fears, spread false information particularly via social media, and watered already existing seeds of prejudice and division. CSW believes the priority for President Widodo in his second term must be to counter religious intolerance and extremism, strengthen and promote Indonesia's tradition of religious pluralism based on the country's founding state ideology known as 'Pancasila', and protect the rights of religious minorities.

On the other hand, CSW is encouraged that despite such a divisive campaign, and despite the post-election violence, the election itself was conducted smoothly, peacefully, credibly, legitimately and fairly, which is a tribute to the sustainability of Indonesia's democracy after only two decades of transition from dictatorship. CSW is encouraged also that despite the use of religion in the campaign, the majority of Indonesians voted for a candidate who clearly championed Indonesia's diversity, against a candidate who, whatever his own personal beliefs, had built a coalition of supporters that included radical Islamist and ultra-conservative Muslim organisations that would have threatened Indonesia's tradition of pluralism. Furthermore, CSW is also encouraged by the initiatives being taken, nationally and at a local grassroots level, to promote inter-faith harmony. These initiatives are detailed in this report.

For the past decade or more, Indonesia has been at a crossroads between a moderate, multi-religious, pluralistic Muslim-majority democratic society and a more extreme Islamist and intolerant society, as previous CSW reports have shown. The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), in its most recent Annual Report 2019, confirms this, noting that 'in 2018, the overall religious freedom conditions in Indonesia trended negative'. USCIRF observes that 'although the number of religious freedom violations committed by state actors decreased in 2018, the Indonesian government continued to enforce several laws and policies that imposed significant obstacles to religious freedom, such as draconian blasphemy laws and an arduous approval process for the construction of new houses of worship. The national government frequently does not intervene when provincial and local

governments enact unconstitutional regulations or policies that exacerbate religious divisions. For example, in late 2018, the [Attorney-General of Jakarta] released a mobile phone application that provides citizens the ability to report on "deviant" religious practices, creating panic among Indonesia's religious minorities and underscoring the risks of acceding to pressure from hardliners and other intolerant groups. Moreover, there has been little effort to rein in hardliners and other intolerant groups that commit acts of discrimination and violence against members of certain faiths. There were increased signs of radicalization in 2018, particularly in Indonesia's education system...In 2019, USCIRF again places Indonesia on its Tier 2, where it has been since 2004, for engaging in or tolerating religious freedom violations that meet at least one of the elements of the "systematic, ongoing and egregious" standard for designation as a "country of particular concern", or CPC, under the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA).⁷

As a result of this election, Indonesia is now even more at that crossroads, and faces a critical decision as to which direction it will pursue. President Widodo has an opportunity, in his second term, to begin the work required to heal the divisions and return Indonesia to the path of pluralism, moderation, inter-religious harmony and the defence of freedom of religion or belief, and CSW urges him and his administration to do exactly that. If he uses his mandate to strengthen Indonesia's pluralistic tradition and counter religious intolerance, and if the international community engages with Indonesia at all levels to support the initiatives of religious and civil society leaders in defending freedom of religion or belief and promoting inter-religious harmony, then Indonesia has the potential and the opportunity to return to being a role model of a moderate Muslim-majority nation in which the rights of people of all faiths are respected and protected. If not, then Indonesia will descend further on the path of intolerance towards extremism, and the world will have lost an important potential force for good in the Muslim-majority world.

7 US Commission on International Freedom Annual Report 2019 www.uscifr.gov/sites/default/files/2019USCIRFAnnualReport.pdf

Recommendations

To the government of Indonesia

- Make it a priority for President Widodo's second term to promote, at every level, the values of religious pluralism and 'unity in diversity' encapsulated in the Pancasila, to defend freedom of religion or belief for all Indonesians of all faiths and none, and to counter religious intolerance and support initiatives to promote inter-religious harmony.
- Protect and promote the rule of law and the rights of minorities.
- Immediately review the blasphemy laws and work towards their reform or repeal.
- Immediately review the 2008 anti-Ahmadiyya decree and work towards its repeal.
- Initiate programmes in schools and universities to promote religious pluralism and the importance of human rights and freedom of religion or belief, and to counter religious intolerance and extremism.
- Extend human rights education, including principles of freedom of religion or belief, in the security forces.
- Invite the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief to visit the country with unhindered access.

To the international community

- Stop describing Indonesia as a role model of tolerance and, while celebrating Indonesia's tradition of pluralism, speak out more clearly about the threats to freedom of religion or belief.
- Invest further in initiatives to protect and promote the principles of freedom of religion or belief and the Pancasila.
- Invest further in initiatives to promote interfaith harmony and dialogue.
- Urge the government of Indonesia to protect and promote the rule of law and the rights of minorities.
- Urge the government of Indonesia to immediately review the blasphemy laws and work towards their repeal.
- Urge the government of Indonesia to immediately review the 2008 anti-Ahmadiyya decree and work towards its repeal.
- Urge the government of Indonesia to introduce programmes in schools and universities to promote religious pluralism and the importance of human rights and freedom of religion or belief, and to counter religious intolerance and extremism.

- Urge the government of Indonesia to extend human rights education, including principles of freedom of religion or belief, in the security forces.
- Urge the government of Indonesia to invite the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief to visit the country with unhindered access.

Purpose of the visit

CSW travelled to Jakarta, Medan, Surabaya and Pontianak, over the course of three weeks in April 2019, for the following purposes:

- To obtain up-to-date, first-hand information and evidence of the situation of freedom of religion or belief.
- To consult religious communities and civil society for the purposes of informing international advocacy.
- To express solidarity with vulnerable religious minorities.
- To observe the final week of the election campaign, election day, and a twelve-day period following the elections.

CSW celebrated Easter with Santa Maria Tak Bercela Catholic church in Surabaya, one of three churches which was attacked by a family of suicide bombers on Sunday 13 May 2018.

Background to CSW

CSW is a human rights organisation specialising in freedom of religion or belief around the world. CSW promotes and defends the right of freedom of religion or belief for all, as set out in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. CSW has worked on Indonesia for almost 20 years, and works actively with and for vulnerable Protestant, Catholic, Ahmadiyya, Shi'a, Buddhist, Confucianist and indigenous traditional belief communities, and with defenders of freedom of religion or belief and interfaith harmony of all religious traditions and none. The organisation's primary work is research and advocacy, but it also engages in capacity building through training workshops. CSW is based in London with offices in Brussels and Washington, DC, and engages regularly at the United Nations in New York and Geneva.

Background to Indonesia

With 262 million people, Indonesia is the world's fourth most populous nation and the world's largest Muslim majority population. A demographic study by the Pew Research Center's Religion and Public Life Project in 2012 concluded that 13% of the world's Muslims live in Indonesia.⁸ An estimated 87.2% of the population is Muslim, while 7% is Protestant, 2.9% Catholic and 1.7% Hindu; 1.3% belong to 'other' or 'unspecified' religions, which include Buddhism, Confucianism and traditional indigenous beliefs.⁹

Prior to attaining independence in the early 20th century, there was a split among Indonesian Muslims over whether to ground the Indonesian constitution in Islamic law or pluralism.¹⁰ President Sukarno, Indonesia's founding father, maintained that religious minorities must have a stake in Indonesia's future. He proposed 'Pancasila' as Indonesia's foundational pluralistic philosophy. It consists of five points:

- Belief in the one and only God
- Just and civilised humanity
- The unity of Indonesia
- Democracy led by the wisdom of deliberations among representatives
- Social justice for the whole of the people of Indonesia.

The first principle was a compromise – a recognition that religion has a central place in Indonesian society, but a rejection of an explicitly Islamic state. It was an attempt to satisfy both religious conservatives and secularists. While in some respects it is restrictive, prescribing a belief in a theistic religion and thereby inherently discriminatory towards nontheistic or atheistic beliefs, its intention was to resist the imposition of Islamic law and protect religious pluralism. As the government explains, 'belief in the one and only God' means that 'every Indonesian citizen, no matter which religious denomination or faith they follow, should respect each other's belief for the sake of the harmony and peace of mankind. This Principle contains the precepts of religious tolerance and freedom of all to adhere to the religion or faith of his or her choice.'¹¹

Pancasila has historically ensured peaceful coexistence between Indonesia's religious groups, and it formed the basis of the 1945 constitution, which enshrines freedom of religion in Article 28(e):

Each person is free to worship and to practice the religion of his choice, to choose education and schooling, his occupation, his nationality, his residency in the territory of the country that he shall be able to leave and to which he shall have the right to return.

Each person has the right to be free in his convictions, to assert his thoughts and tenets, in accordance with his conscience.

Each person has the right to freely associate, assemble, and express his opinions.¹²

Freedom of religion or belief

In recent years Indonesia's strong and proud pluralistic tradition, rooted in the heart of the constitution, has come under threat. CSW has documented increasing violations of freedom of religion or belief in recent years, most recently in our 2018 visit report.¹³ Our 2014 report *Indonesia: Pluralism in Peril – The rise of religious intolerance across the archipelago* provides detailed background on the situation of freedom of religion or belief and increasing violations over the past decade.¹⁴ It examines the record of the previous president, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, particularly several speeches in which he made remarks which could be interpreted as encouraging radical Islamists; and legislative initiatives which set the framework for the rise of religious intolerance, namely the 2006 Joint Regulation on Houses of Worship and the 2008 anti-Ahmadiyya Joint Decree.

The report also examines abuses of the blasphemy laws set out in Articles 156 and 156(a) of the criminal code and in the 1965 Presidential Decree (No. 1/ PNPS/1965) on the Prevention of Blasphemy and Abuse of Religions. Furthermore, the report details incidents of violence, abuse, discrimination and restrictions faced by Christians, Ahmadiyya, Shi'a, Buddhists, adherents of traditional indigenous beliefs and others. It concludes that 'Indonesia is at a crossroads, and if responsible actors both within the country and in the international community do not respond to these challenges effectively, Indonesia's pluralism will be in peril.'

Developments since 2014

Since 2014 the situation has continued to deteriorate, although it is important to note that incidents of severe violence against minorities, particularly the Ahmadiyya, appear to have declined. President Joko Widodo's government should also be commended for

8 Pew Research Center, The Global Religious Landscape: Muslims, 18 December 2012 www.pewforum.org/2012/12/18/global-religious-landscape-muslim/

9 CIA World Factbook, Indonesia www.cia.gov/library/publications/resources/the-world-factbook/index.html

10 CSW, 2014:25-26

11 CSW, 2014:26-27

12 Asian Human Rights Commission, The Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia of 1945 www.humanrights.asia/indonesian-constitution-1945-consolidated

13 CSW, 2018

14 CSW, 2014

a change in tone, attitude and approach compared with the administration of former president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. President Widodo has distanced the government from radical Islamists, attempted to remove some of the previous government's apparent complicity with intolerant groups, and banned the activities of the Islamist group Hizb-ut-Tahrir and established a presidential unit to strengthen and protect the Pancasila.¹⁵

Nevertheless, continued use of the blasphemy laws and the Constitutional Court's decision to reject a petition challenging the constitutionality of blasphemy laws, as well as the legislature's consideration of a Religious Rights Protection Bill which could include further measures to entrench blasphemy and impact religious conversion, are deeply concerning.¹⁶ Furthermore, incidents such as the stabbing of a Catholic priest and three others during Sunday Mass and the desecration of statues of Jesus and the Virgin Mary at St Lidwina Church in Yogyakarta, the closure of three churches in West Kenali village in Jambi province on 27 September 2018,¹⁷ the desecration of crosses in Yogyakarta,¹⁸ and the protests against the construction of a Hindu temple in Bekasi, West Java,¹⁹ are yet more examples of rising intolerance.

In August 2018, Rev Gomar Gultom, General Secretary of the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (PGI), told CSW that there is increasing emphasis on religious identity in society, and in particular in politics, since Ahok's case and especially in local elections in 2018 and ahead of forthcoming presidential elections in 2019. Although there are fewer forcible closures of churches now, there has been 'no justice for old cases', he said. Rev Gultom believes the 'big tension' is now in the politicisation of religion and the rise of identity politics. 'The instrumentalisation of religion in politics is much more intense now,' he explained. In the regional elections in 2018 this was seen in many provinces, and was successful in Medan, North Sumatra and West Kalimantan, where the winning candidates were those who used religion very actively. 'They made us worried,' Rev Gultom said.²⁰ In April 2019, Rev Gultom expressed continuing concern about identity politics.

In an analysis published by the Lowy Institute one week before the elections in Indonesia, Ben Bland argues that on President Widodo's 'watch', human rights, the rule of

law, and the protection of minorities have all weakened. 'A bitter form of religion-based identity politics seems to be embedded in the system.' He argues that 'as Indonesia faces growing challenges, its future will be defined by how the next generation of leaders use [sic] the powerful mandate of electoral victory to overcome those who are seeking to stymie much-needed reforms and undermine democratic norms.'²¹ Religion-based identity politics poses 'some of the biggest challenges to democracy in Indonesia today,' argues Bland. An Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict (IPAC) report published before the election reaches a similar conclusion: 'The worst legacy of the Islamists from the anti-Ahok campaign and the 2019 presidential race is the rise in identity politics, making race and religion more important than citizenship. In addition to building roads and bridges, this is what Jokowi must challenge in his second term.'²²

State vs non-state violations

Although under President Widodo's first administration there was a decline in state-led violations of freedom of religion or belief, as CSW reported in August 2018, there has been a continuing rise in religious intolerance in the country, particularly instigated by non-state actors. According to the Wahid Foundation's most recent annual report, released in August 2018, while there has been a significant decrease in state-sponsored violations of freedom of religion or belief, there has been a marked increase in violations perpetrated by non-state actors. The Wahid Foundation reported 170 incidents of religious intolerance and violations of freedom of religion or belief perpetrated by non-state actors in 2017, compared with 95 incidents for which the state was responsible. Acts of intolerance perpetrated by non-state actors mostly involve hate speech, prohibition of religious activities, intimidation and threats. The state is responsible for incidents such as criminalisation based on religion, discrimination, restrictions on or closure of places of worship. Following the case of the former governor of Jakarta, Ahok, Jakarta is now ranked the worst for religious intolerance, according to the Wahid Foundation, with West Java second worst. The Setara Institute's report, also cited in CSW's August 2018 report, found similar trends.

Furthermore, in addition to violations of freedom of religion or belief, it is important to be vigilant in response

15 *Jakarta Post*, 'Jokowi inaugurates chief, advisors of Pancasila working unit,' 7 June 2017 www.thejakartapost.com/news/2017/06/07/jokowi-inaugurates-chief-advisors-of-pancasila-working-unit.html

16 USCIRF Annual Report 2019

17 *ibid.*

18 *Jakarta Post*, 'Yogyakarta in spotlight as more crosses desecrated', 8 April 2019 www.thejakartapost.com/news/2019/04/08/yogyakarta-intolerance-spotlight-christian-grave-crosses-desecrated.html

19 *Jakarta Post*, 'Protests held to block first Hindu temple plan in Bekasi', 8 May 2019 www.thejakartapost.com/news/2019/05/08/protests-held-block-first-hindu-temple-plan-bekasi-pura-sukatani.html

20 CSW, 2018

21 Lowy Institute, 'Politics in Indonesia: Resilient Elections, Defective Democracy', 10 April 2019 www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/politics-indonesia-resilient-elections-defective-democracy

22 IPAC, 'Anti-Ahok to Anti-Jokowi: Islamist Influence on Indonesia's 2019 Election Campaign', 15 March 2019 www.understandingconflict.org/en/conflict/read/80/Anti-Ahok-To-Anti-Jokowi-Islamist-Influence-on-Indonesias-2019-Election-Campaign

to the potential terrorist threat. As the IPAC puts it in its most recent report, *The Ongoing Problem of Pro-Isis Cells in Indonesia*, ‘it remains important to continually assess how pro-ISIS groups in Indonesia are evolving and what local, regional and international drivers are at play.’²³ The report observes ‘a constant process of regrouping and realignment, so the disappearance of one cell is quickly followed by the emergence of another.’ It concludes: ‘The existence of small cells also means that sooner or later, one of them is likely to think of copying the kind of attack that has taken place elsewhere but that to date has not been tried in Indonesia: a truck attack; a random stabbing of a foreigner; a mall shooting. It is easy to dismiss the competence of Indonesian terrorists, but as long as they continue to subscribe to ISIS ideology, they remain a serious threat.’ CSW agrees.

The present report focuses entirely on the findings from CSW’s recent visit to Indonesia. For background information please see CSW’s previous reports, in particular *Indonesia: Pluralism in Peril*.

Election Day

In one of the most complex elections in the world, across one of the world’s largest electorates, after one of the most divisive campaigns, it was an impressive achievement to complete the 2019 elections with little violence or instability, despite the post-election results riots in May 2019. There were, according to the Lowy Institute’s Ben Bland, more than 245,000 candidates contesting over 20,000 seats ‘in what may be the most complicated single-day election the world has ever seen.’²⁴

On 17 April, CSW visited two polling stations in Jakarta, one in an area dominated by the hardline vigilante group known as the Islamic Defenders Front, or Front Pembela Islam (FPI), and one area which was a stronghold for Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), the largest Muslim mass organisation in Indonesia, which has a tradition of moderation and defence of pluralism.

The atmosphere in both locations was calm, orderly and friendly. CSW spoke with one member of FPI outside the FPI headquarters and the Jakarta home of their leader, the hardline Muslim cleric Habib Rizieq, who is himself in exile in Saudi Arabia after fleeing two years ago following pornography charges. FPI is a movement well-known for attacking Christians, Ahmadiyyas and other minorities and forcing places of worship to close. CSW has documented their abuses many times over the past decade, and met former members, but this was the first time CSW has spoken with a serving FPI member – indeed, one who belongs to the associated Islamic Defenders Army.



Headquarters of the Front Pembela Islam (FPI)

CSW asked about FPI’s vision for Indonesia. ‘Indonesia is a Muslim-majority country. We want Islamic teachings to be implemented in full in every area of life,’ he said. ‘Those who do not implement them, we give them a warning, and then we send in our Islamic Defenders Army.’ As to why FPI was supporting Prabowo Subianto for president, he said: ‘Because he has promised us he will implement our vision.’

Outside the polling station in the same area, other voters indicated the importance of religion. When asked about her criteria for voting, one elderly woman in a black hijab said: ‘It is important that the candidate I support has the same religion as me.’ And 79-year-old Mohammad Thohir expressed disappointment with President Widodo for giving too many jobs to Chinese people. ‘He only got elected because of the Chinese and the Christians,’ he said. ‘I want that to change now. That’s why I choose Prabowo.’



Polling station in Jakarta

²³ IPAC, ‘The Ongoing Problem of Pro-ISIS Cells in Indonesia’, 29 April 2019 www.understandingconflict.org/en/conflict/read/81/The-Ongoing-Problem-of-Pro-ISIS-Cells-in-Indonesia

²⁴ Lowy Institute, ‘Politics in Indonesia: Resilient Elections, Defective Democracy’

The situation in Medan, North Sumatra

CSW visited Medan, the capital of North Sumatra, for two days, from 12 to 14 April. CSW met with Ahmadiyya and Shi'a representatives, and visited St Joseph's Church, a Catholic church which was the target of an attempted terrorist attack by a suicide bomber on Sunday 29 August 2016. CSW had previously visited the church in May 2017, nine months after the attack, and detailed the incident in our report at the time.²⁵

CSW tried unsuccessfully to visit Meiliana, an ethnic Chinese Buddhist woman from Tanjung Balai, who was serving a prison sentence for blasphemy simply because she requested that the volume be lowered on a loudspeaker on a nearby mosque. On 27 March 2019 the Supreme Court of Indonesia upheld the blasphemy verdict and rejected her appeal.²⁶ However, on 23 May, according to Al Jazeera, she was freed.²⁷

On this visit, despite the use of religion during the election campaign and even though North Sumatra was a stronghold of Prabowo Subianto, CSW was encouraged by the examples of inter-faith harmony and the resilience of the congregation of St Joseph's Church.



St Joseph's Church in Medan

According to the leader of the Ahmadiyya community, there have been no serious violations of freedom of religion or belief affecting them for the past five years in Medan. He believes this is a direct result of President Widodo's clear emphasis on protection of the rights of minorities and law enforcement. 'Our leaders instruct us that if we face any problems, we should go to the police and report them. During the first term of President Widodo, the police do [sic] their job well. In the past, during the time of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, the police would side with the majority, and would put pressure on our community, to close down the mosque,

stop activities. Now, the police defend our rights. Two or three months ago, for example, there was a seminar in Bandung, West Java, and a mob of over 100 people came to disrupt it. They forced us to stop the seminar. But the police came and chased them out, so the seminar could go on. We have never heard President Widodo speak about the Ahmadiyya, but he shows his values by his actions.'



Ahmadiyya mosque in Medan

The Ahmadiyya in Medan say they have built good relationships with their neighbours. 'In the past, there was a stigma around us. But that was because people had wrong information about the Ahmadiyya. Now we have a good relationship, because they understand us better. That is because we have engaged in social and community activities. For example, during Ramadan we share collections with our neighbours. During Eid, when we slaughter animals, we share the meat with them. We give the *azan*, the call to prayer, for Friday prayers, and some other Muslims come to our mosque to pray because they realise that our *azan* is the same as theirs. They come to our Friday prayers and they realise that we pray the same way they do. And we have launched inter-faith community action activities, for example to clean the streets or donate blood, every three months, and they engage with that and we get to know each other better.'

Another encouraging initiative is the Abu Thalib Foundation, which is a Sunni-Shi'a foundation established in 2006 to introduce the major schools of Islam, from Sunni and Shi'a, and to counter misunderstandings about Shi'a Islam. The organisation has held an international dialogue between Islamic scholars of different Muslim traditions. 'In Medan, under this foundation, Sunni and Shi'a sat together,' the Foundation's Director said.

In 2017, in Si Kampa, a village in North Sumatra ten hours by car from Medan, where there were two Shi'a families, there was the potential for conflict. Local police wanted to force the Shi'a to convert to Sunni Islam. However,

25 CSW, Indonesia: visit report, 31 July 2017 www.csw.org.uk/2017/07/31/report/3648/article.htm

26 Jakarta Post, 'Supreme Court rejects Buddhist woman's appeal of blasphemy verdict', 8 April 2019 www.thejakartapost.com/news/2019/04/08/supreme-court-rejects-buddhist-womans-appeal-of-blasphemy-verdict.html

27 Al Jazeera, 'Indonesia frees ethnic Chinese woman jailed for blasphemy', 23 May 2019 www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/05/indonesia-frees-ethnic-chinese-woman-jailed-blasphemy-190523020705974.html

through the intervention of the Abu Thalib Foundation in Medan, who visited the village, and through dialogue with the local Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI), the council of Islamic clerics, and the police, army and local authorities, and through national-level advocacy by the National Human Rights Commission (Komnas Ham), the situation was resolved. It was pointed out that the MUI has never issued a fatwa describing the Shi'a as 'deviant' (although a fatwa urging caution in regard to Shi'a doctrines was issued in 1984), and as such they cannot be regarded as 'deviant' under the law. 'The case was resolved through dialogue, rather than a litigation process, and about a month ago I was invited to speak in the village,' said the Director of the Abu Thalib Foundation.

Inter-faith dialogue in Tangerang

In Panongan sub-district of Tangerang, in Banten province, just outside Jakarta, a remarkable inter-faith relationship has developed at the initiative of a Catholic priest, Fr Felix Supranto. Despite encountering some hostility a few years ago, Fr Felix decided to work to develop better relationships with the local Muslim population, and they now meet on a regular basis, both in formal meetings and informal conversations. Fr Felix invited CSW to visit and arranged a meeting of about 20 local and regional Muslim leaders, the head of the sub-district local government, other local officials, and representatives of the police and military. As one Islamic cleric and head of a pesantren (Islamic boarding school) told CSW: 'I always remind my students that we can't build this country based on one religion. We have to be together with other religions and ethnicities, to build Indonesia together. That is why it is so important to maintain harmony. At the core of every religion is the teaching to love each other and treat each other better.' Another Islamic cleric emphasised the importance of the Pancasila, saying: 'If we follow the Pancasila, we will have harmony.'

They have declared Panongan a 'harmony village' and a 'unity in diversity zone'. They told CSW, 'We implement these principles here. We may belong to different ethnic and religious groups, but we are human beings. Diversity is a blessing of God, so there is no reason to be separated.' The sub-district leader, Ibu Prima, who is responsible for an area comprised of eight villages, told CSW that her priorities are good governance, development and social harmony, and she emphasised the importance of the Pancasila in creating religious harmony as well as law enforcement to ensure the protection of rights for every person. They have developed a 'harmony garden' to promote the different religions represented in the village, and provide inclusive social development programmes, such as a handicraft centre displaying handicrafts made by different religious communities. 'We want harmony in practice,' said Ibu Prima. 'Harmony without justice is nothing, so we have to work at this every day.'

Visit to Surabaya

CSW spent the Easter Triduum (Holy Thursday, Good Friday and the Easter Vigil) with Santa Maria Tak Bercela Catholic Church, one of the three churches which on Sunday 13 May 2018 was attacked by a family of suicide bombers. Two teenage men drove their motorcycles laden with explosives into the gates of the church compound, shortly before the second Mass of the day. More than 30 people were injured and six killed, among them two little boys, Evan and Nathan, aged 8 and 12. The church's Muslim security guard lost both eyes and legs in the blast, and later told the priest: 'Please forgive me because I was not able to protect the church and the people, and am unable to work again.' Two other churches were attacked minutes later. The mother of the two teenagers, and her two daughters aged six and eight, with explosives strapped to them, detonated their bombs at a Protestant church, and then their father drove his bomb-filled car into a Pentecostal church.

CSW had visited the three churches in August 2018, three months after the attack, and heard an inspiring message of forgiveness from clergy and victims. Fr Aloysius Widyawan told us that the consistent response from all his parishioners was: 'We must love others; we forgive the attackers; we do not want revenge.' Even the mother of young Evan and Nathan said just two days after their deaths: 'I have already forgiven the bombers. I don't want to cry anymore. I know that our Mother Mary also lost her son, Jesus. I forgive.' As Fr Aloysius said, 'For the Church, we must forgive – this is our doctrine. But for an individual, like the mother of these two boys, the ability to forgive is about "faith", not doctrine. None of the victims ever asked "Why has this happened to me?" They just said "Ok, we forgive them, and we pray for the victims." There was no anger, no criticism of other religions, only forgiveness. It's not about religion, it's about humanity, relationship. Of course they had not conferred with each other. It came from their heart.'

At Easter 2019, Santa Maria Tak Bercela Church was packed with thousands of worshippers, overflowing into the church compound and even into the street outside. Up to 5,000 people attended the church, and at the Easter Vigil 76 people were baptised. A church that a year ago was a scene of terror and trauma was this year a place teeming with faith and life.

The situation in Pontianak, West Kalimantan

While the elections were dominated by religion and identity politics throughout Indonesia, this appeared to result in particular tensions in West Kalimantan. CSW visited Pontianak one week after the elections, and met with ethnic Dayak, Madurese, Chinese and Malay communities and with Muslims and Christians. It is important to note that CSW has kept the sources in West Kalimantan anonymous, due to the tension and fear of conflict that exists in the province.

Without exception, everyone expressed concern about the divisions that had been opened up by the election campaign. 'There is high tension,' one young journalist claimed. 'After the polls closed, the streets were empty. There were many rumours on Facebook and WhatsApp, and many people in Pontianak trust social media. But people only share what they like, and it is not always the truth. People don't check the real news, and they don't trust the mainstream media. They're only concerned with what social media shows.'

Prabowo Subianto deployed religion as a particular card in his campaign. One Muslim journalist told CSW, 'Many people think Muslims have to vote for Prabowo because he had so many Muslim leaders on his side. People did not pay attention to his policies, his character, whether he was "clean". They based their decisions solely on religion. And for some people it was taken to an extreme. People said if Muslims did not vote for Prabowo, they were betraying their religion. That message was spread throughout West Kalimantan.'

Several people cited the presence of radical groups such as FPI and Hizb-ut-Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) in West Kalimantan as a source of increasing religious tension. One person claimed that 70% of academics in the universities in the province were affiliated to radical organisations.

Although there have not yet been any incidents of violence, there were rumours of threats to churches. 'Churches received messages, trying to create fear,' one person told CSW. 'In 2011 there was almost chaos here between Muslims and Christians because one Dayak dormitory, where the students were mainly Christians, refused to allow a poster of FPI leader Habib Rizieq to be displayed, which angered FPI. But at the same time, people realise that if there are attacks on religious symbols or communities, it is very dangerous.'

There were echoes of this last year in the election in West Kalimantan for governor, in a race between the Muslim

Malay former mayor of Pontianak Sutarmidji and Karolin Natasa, the Christian Dayak daughter of the incumbent governor. According to the IPAC, 'West Kalimantan voters voted overwhelmingly along religious lines in an echo of the Jakarta governor's race in 2016-17. The reliance on identity politics does not bode well for communal harmony in the future.'²⁸

USCIRF confirms this, noting that 'in the June 2018 regional elections, gubernatorial candidates in West Kalimantan and North Sumatra provinces won by using religious appeals, and voting split largely along religious lines.'²⁹ IPAC analyst Deka Anwar said that 'while Sutarmidji had the better track record, the fact is that only identity mattered.'³⁰ He received 80% of the Muslim vote, and according to IPAC, 'his supporters downplayed ethnicity and played up religion, whereas Karolin highlighted Dayak ethnicity, hoping to get the Muslim Dayak vote.' Violence was prevented following last year's local elections due, partly, to the work of a Hoax Crisis Centre led by NGOs and journalists committed to clarifying and where necessary rebutting social media news. USCIRF concurs, noting that 'religious tensions in West Kalimantan did not erupt into serious violence in part because a group of civil society organisations and journalists worked to collect, investigate and clarify provocative information relating to religion that appeared online or in text messaging.'³¹ Tensions were also 'defused', according to IPAC, 'by the loser's gracious acceptance of the results.'³² The loser in the 2019 presidential election has so far not been so gracious and disputes the results, which may fuel tensions.

West Kalimantan has, of course, a bitter history of ethnic violence. Between 1997-2001, more than 6,500 Madurese were beheaded in Kalimantan, especially in Saggau Ledo, Sambas and Sampit, according to Human Rights Watch's Indonesia researcher Andreas Harsono in his new book, *Race, Religion and Power: Ethnic and Religious Violence in Post-Suharto Indonesia*. The Madurese are still unable to return to Sambas, two decades after the violence. Although there has been no further ethnic violence in the past 20 years, one Madurese activist told CSW that 'ethnic conflict is still latent – it is like a fire in the grass. It can get bigger if the wind blows.' There has, he claimed, been no serious attempt at reconciliation, and no data about the number of deaths, properties destroyed, assets lost. 'The government is not serious about taking care of this issue,' he argued.

According to Dayak representatives, there continues to be 'segregation' along ethnic lines. One Dayak leader agreed that the government has not sought any solution, and there has been no attempt to seek justice

28 IPAC, Update on Local Election Results in West Kalimantan and Papua, 16 August 2018 www.understandingconflict.org/en/conflict/read/74/Update-on-Local-Election-Results-in-West-Kalimantan-and-Papua

29 USCIRF Annual Report 2019

30 IPAC, Update on Local Election Results in West Kalimantan and Papua

31 USCIRF Annual Report, 2019

32 IPAC, Update on Local Election Results in West Kalimantan and Papua

or accountability for past crimes. 'When we discuss it, it reawakens memories and reopens old wounds,' he said. A petition, known as 'Servan Pontianak', to urge the government to identify the perpetrators of crimes and bring them to justice, has been ignored.

There are, however, two initiatives which offer some hope.

Firstly, the Gusdurian Network and some other inter-faith groups have increased their efforts to pursue inter-faith dialogue. According to Gusdurian Network representatives, they have a regular programme of visits to mosques, churches and Buddhist 'viharas' (monasteries), and prior to the election they held an open public meeting which was attended by many people, both young and elderly. 'We try to provide a platform so that people can communicate, and through this become more tolerant. We bring together people of different ethnicities and religions,' said one Gusdurian activist. 'But we cannot avoid the fact that there is a big division that has been opened up by the two presidential campaigns, and we hope the tension will decrease.' They urged President Widodo to use his second term to prioritise the theme of 'unity in diversity' and strengthen the Pancasila. 'We hope he will support groups working on inter-faith harmony, work with religious communities to influence and educate them, launch initiatives in schools to teach tolerance and address attitudes among teachers who spread prejudice.'

Secondly, according to a senior Dayak leader, about a year before the election leaders of 17 different ethnic groups in West Kalimantan held a consultation and began to hold regular meetings to promote and protect peace. 'The main idea was that "unity in diversity" is core. This initiative had a big impact – it helped to decrease the effect of hoax news on social media and reduce tensions,' he claimed. 'Based on our history, the Indonesian government said that West Kalimantan is the number one high risk area for potential conflict in the elections for governor last year, but in fact there was no violence. There was high tension but overall it was peaceful and democratic. As a result of the regular meetings of the 17 ethnic groups, we always communicate with each other and we seek to promote and strengthen the Pancasila. The Pancasila is the strength of this country. If we don't uphold Pancasila, then there is a danger that religion could replace ethnicity as a cause of conflict and segregation in West Kalimantan. But the leaders of the 17 tribes have worked together to decrease the tension, and prevent chaos.'

National initiatives to counter religious intolerance and extremism

One week before the election, a gathering of prominent Indonesian religious leaders, clerics, scholars and activists met at a conference in Jakarta initiated and hosted by the Wahid Foundation, the Gusdurian Network, the Maarif Institute and the Nurcholish Madjid Society, to promote 'Human Fraternity, Living in Peace, and Coexistence'. It was an initiative to begin to build on the Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together, signed by His Holiness Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Ahmed el-Tayeb in Abu Dhabi in February 2019, and to explore the implementation of the principles in the Indonesian context.³³ This meeting was attended by prominent Muslim leaders, as well as the Catholic Archbishop of Jakarta, the General Secretary of the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (PGI), Buddhist monks and other representatives of different faith communities. CSW was privileged to attend and observe the meeting, and is encouraged that such an initiative is being taken.

CSW had meetings with two advisers to the president of Indonesia, on human rights and freedom of religion or belief, and they confirmed that President Widodo does intend to prioritise freedom of religion or belief, inter-religious harmony, Indonesia's tradition of pluralism, and the 'unity in diversity' encapsulated in the Pancasila. CSW welcomes these assurances and looks forward to engaging constructively at all levels of the Indonesian government, where possible and appropriate, to support such initiatives.

CSW also had a meeting with the General Secretary of the Supreme Council of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Yahya Cholil Staquf. NU is the largest Muslim organisation not only in Indonesia, but in the world, and has always had a tradition of defending pluralism and promoting moderate, peaceful Islam. We also met with the leadership of Gerakan Pemuda Ansor, the NU's youth movement. Yahya Cholil Staquf, together with other NU leaders and Ansor's leaders, expressed their desire to work actively to counter extremism and hatred and to promote inter-religious harmony and defend freedom of religion or belief and pluralism. They cited several key texts and initiatives with which they have been involved, notably the Nusantara Manifesto adopted by Gerakan Pemuda Ansor and Bayt Ar-Rahmah in Yogyakarta on 25 October 2018, the Gerakan Pemuda Ansor Central Board and Bayt Ar-Rahmah Board of Directors Joint Resolution and Decree issued in Yogyakarta alongside the Nusantara Manifesto on 25 October 2018, the Gerakan Pemuda Ansor Declaration on Humanitarian Islam adopted at the International Gathering of Ulama in Jombang, East Java, on 21-22 May 2017, the International Summit of Moderate Islamic Leaders' Nahdlatul Ulama Declaration

33 Vatican News, 'Document on Human Fraternity for world peace and living together: Full text', 4 February 2019 www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2019-02/pope-francis-uae-declaration-with-al-azhar-grand-imam.html

signed at a Global Unity Forum in Jakarta on 12 May 2016, and other documents.

CSW encourages international engagement with these key documents, and welcomes the key words of the Nusantara Statement which summarise the key message in these words: 'We call upon people of goodwill of every faith and nation to join in building a global consensus to prevent the political weaponisation of Islam, whether by Muslims or non-Muslims, and to curtail the spread of communal hatred by fostering the emergence of a truly just and harmonious world order, founded upon respect for the equal rights and dignity of every human being.'

Conclusions

'Building a democracy in a vast, multi-ethnic, multi-religious nation is not a linear process that can be assessed by a simple measure of progress verses regression,' argues Ben Bland. 'It is important...to see recent trends in the context of Indonesia's history and the difficulties of moving from authoritarianism to democracy.'³⁴ He is correct. He continues: 'Indonesia's transition to democracy has been far more successful than neighbouring Myanmar...However, it is no longer the beacon of democracy and tolerance that many world leaders proclaim it to be.'

It is clear that Indonesia remains at a crossroads and that religious intolerance, which has been rising over the past decade or more, is an even greater threat to Indonesia's tradition of pluralism than ever, stoked by dangerous identity politics deployed in the election campaign. Indeed, the *Jakarta Post*, in an editorial, concludes that: 'Indonesia is in a deep crisis of intolerance. Many insist that it is fringe groups that protest the construction of a temple or church. But if they're just on the fringe, why are they allowed to stop people from worshiping, time and again, in a country founded on acceptance of diversity?... Crystal clear signs from the national leadership are needed to unequivocally show what it takes to improve the national project that is Indonesia. We have repeatedly reported on the tendency of higher religiosity among the young, indicated by more young people signing up for haj and the popular hijrah trend of shifting from a secular lifestyle to a more religious one. These should be positive signs of deeper spirituality. Instead we are seeing bullies given consistent impunity to loudly trample on Indonesia's constitutional protection of all its citizens anytime they please, including during Ramadan.'³⁵

Nevertheless, the re-election of Joko Widodo, and various initiatives at a national, regional, local and grassroots level to promote inter-religious dialogue, harmony and relationships, defend human rights, freedom of religion or belief and religious pluralism, and

strengthen democracy and the rule of law, provide an opportunity for Indonesia to pull back from the brink, to reassert its values of religious pluralism, freedom of religion or belief and equal rights for all encapsulated in the spirit of the Pancasila and the constitution, and develop as a multi-religious democracy. CSW urges the government of Indonesia to make this goal a priority, and encourages the international community to engage with government, civil society and religious leaders in Indonesia and to support those actors in the country who are leading initiatives to counter religious intolerance. CSW hopes that Indonesia will be able to build on the spirit and principles of the Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together, which states in its Introduction that:

Faith leads a believer to see in the other a brother or sister to be supported and loved. Through faith in God, who has created the universe, creatures and all human beings (equal on account of his mercy), believers are called to express this human fraternity by safeguarding creation and the entire universe and supporting all persons, especially the poorest and those most in need.

This transcendental value served as the starting point for several meetings characterized by a friendly and fraternal atmosphere where we shared the joys, sorrows and problems of our contemporary world. We did this by considering scientific and technical progress, therapeutic achievements, the digital era, the mass media and communications. We reflected also on the level of poverty, conflict and suffering of so many brothers and sisters in different parts of the world as a consequence of the arms race, social injustice, corruption, inequality, moral decline, terrorism, discrimination, extremism and many other causes.

From our fraternal and open discussions, and from the meeting that expressed profound hope in a bright future for all human beings, the idea of this Document on Human Fraternity was conceived. It is a text that has been given honest and serious thought so as to be a joint declaration of good and heartfelt aspirations. It is a document that invites all persons who have faith in God and faith in human fraternity to unite and work together so that it may serve as a guide for future generations to advance a culture of mutual respect in the awareness of the great divine grace that makes all human beings brothers and sisters.

³⁴ Lowy Institute, 'Politics in Indonesia: Resilient Elections, Defective Democracy'

³⁵ *Jakarta Post*, 'Intolerance Crisis', 11 May 2019 www.thejakartapost.com/academia/2019/05/11/intolerance-crisis.html

CSW especially hopes that every person in Indonesia will be able to enjoy freedom of religion or belief, because, in the words of the Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together:

Freedom is a right of every person: each individual enjoys the freedom of belief, thought, expression and action. The pluralism and the diversity of religions, colour, sex, race and language are willed by God in His wisdom, through which He created human beings. This divine wisdom is the source from which the right to freedom of belief and the freedom to be different derives. Therefore, the fact that people are forced to adhere to a certain religion or culture must be rejected, as too the imposition of a cultural way of life that others do not accept; Justice based on mercy is the path to follow in order to achieve a dignified life to which every human being has a right; Dialogue, understanding and the widespread promotion of a culture of tolerance, acceptance of others and of living together peacefully would contribute significantly to reducing many economic, social, political and environmental problems that weigh so heavily on a large part of humanity...The concept of citizenship is based on the equality of rights and duties, under which all enjoy justice. It is therefore crucial to establish in our societies the concept of full citizenship and reject the discriminatory use of the term minorities which engenders feelings of isolation and inferiority. Its misuse paves the way for hostility and discord; it undoes any successes and takes away the religious and civil rights of some citizens who are thus discriminated against... It is likewise important to reinforce the bond of fundamental human rights in order to help ensure a dignified life for all.

**CSW everyone
free to believe**

As Christians, we stand with everyone facing injustice because of their religion or belief.

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