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## **INDONESIA : Religious freedom issues raised at the UN in Geneva**

### **Religious freedom issues raised at the UN in Geneva**

HRWF (15.11.2022) – On 9 November, Indonesia’s human rights report was reviewed in the framework of the UN Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in Geneva. The issue of religious freedom was particularly raised by Christian Solidarity Worldwide in a submission filed ahead of the UPR process. Here is an excerpt of it:

## ***Rising religious intolerance***

23. While Indonesia's tradition of religious pluralism does have limitations which should be addressed, including the lack of protection for adherents of religions outside the six religions recognised by the constitution and for those of other beliefs, it was designed to protect pluralism in a Muslim-majority nation.

24. Rising religious intolerance, however, threatens to destroy these achievements and poses a threat not only to the country's religious minorities, but to all Indonesians who value democracy, human rights, peace and stability.

25. There has also been a decline in state-sponsored violations of FoRB. However, there continues to be growing religious intolerance in society, as evidenced by the instrumentalization of religion in the 2019 elections.

## ***Attacks on religious minorities***

26. Incidents of violence against religious minorities, particularly Christians, Ahmadiyyas, Shi'as and adherents of religions or beliefs not recognised by the state, including indigenous traditional beliefs, continue periodically within a climate of impunity.

27. In September 2020, UCA News reported that Reverend Yeremia Zanambani, a Protestant pastor and Bible translator, had been shot dead in Indonesia's restive Papua region.<sup>4</sup> There was some dispute over whether he had been killed by the Indonesian military or by members of a local separatist group, however in October 2020 Indonesia's human rights commission (Komnas HAM) reported that a fact-finding team believed Pastor Zanambani had been tortured and killed by the military, who were hoping to extract information on stolen military weapons.<sup>5</sup>

28. On 30 November 2020, IS-linked Islamic militants carried out an attack on a Salvation Army outpost in Lemban Tongoa

village in Indonesia's Central Sulawesi province. Four people were killed, one of whom was beheaded, and several homes were burnt down, including a house used for prayers.

### ***Attacks on places of worship***

29. Various places of worship have been attacked during the reporting period, including Christian churches, Ahmadiyya mosques and Buddhist temples.

30. One of the darkest days for religious minorities in the country occurred on 13 May 2018 when three churches in Surabaya, Indonesia's second largest city, were attacked within minutes of each other by a family of suicide bombers. Three individuals received prison sentences for their suspected involvement in the bombing in March 2019.

31. On Palm Sunday, 28 March 2021, suicide bombers attacked a Catholic Church in Makassar, South Sulawesi, leaving at least 14 people injured. 6

32. In March 2020, 15 Indonesians filed a lawsuit with the Supreme Court arguing that the closure of thousands of places of worship was being done under a discriminatory law, the 2006 Religious Harmony regulation.7

### ***Ahmadiyya Muslim community***

33. The Ahmadiyya Muslim community has existed in Indonesia since 1925, and claims a population of approximately 500,000 across 330 branches throughout the country. The Ahmadiyya consider themselves to be Muslims but are regarded by some other Muslims as heretical.

34. Since 2005, the community has experienced serious violations of FoRB, including incidents of violence. A Joint Ministerial Decree introduced in 2008 by the Minister of Religious Affairs, the Attorney General and the Minister of Home Affairs prohibited promulgation of Ahmadiyya teachings.

In 2011, the then Minister of Religious Affairs repeatedly called for an outright ban on the Ahmadiyya, and in 2013 the governor of West Java said that there would be no violence against the Ahmadiyya if there were no Ahmadiyya teachings or practices, describing Ahmadiyya Islam as “a deviant belief.” The “problem,” he added, “will disappear if the belief disappears.”

35. Although there has been, according to Ahmadi representatives, “some improvement” under the government of President Joko Widodo, intimidation of the Ahmadiyya continues and Ahmadiyya activities continue to be restricted to date.

36. On 14 January 2022, UCA News reported that a district chief in Indonesia’s West Kalimantan province ordered the demolition of an Ahmadi mosque that had been damaged in a September 2021 attack by Muslim extremists.<sup>8</sup> The order was issued days after the perpetrators of the attack were jailed for four months.

#### Footnotes

4 UCANews, ‘Protestant Pastor shot dead in Indonesia, 21 September 2020 <https://www.ucanews.com/news/protestant-pastor-shot-dead-in-indonesia/89597>

5 CNN Indonesia, ‘Investigasi Tim Kemanusiaan: Pendeta Yeremia Ditembak TNI’, 30 October 2020 <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20201029125036-20-563926/investigasi-tim-kemanusiaan-pendeta-yeremia-ditembak-tni>

6 BBC, ‘Indonesia bombing: Worshippers wounded in Makassar church attack’, 28 March 2021, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-56553790>

7 Twitter, tweet by Andreas Harsono, 5 March 2020, <https://twitter.com/andreasharsono/status/1235707989459337216>

8 UCANews, ‘Indonesian district to demolish Ahmadi house of

worship', 14 January 2022  
<https://www.ucanews.com/news/indonesian-district-to-demolish-a-hmadi-house-of-worship/95731>

[Further reading about FORB in Indonesia on HRWF website](#)

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