

INDONESIA 2018 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

The constitution guarantees freedom of religion and the right to worship according to one's own beliefs but states citizens must accept restrictions established by law to protect the rights of others and to satisfy "just demands based upon considerations of morality, religious values, security, and public order in a democratic society." In separate incidents, four persons received prison sentences ranging from 16 months to five years for violations of blasphemy laws. In Medan, a court sentenced an ethnic Chinese woman to 18 months in prison after she complained about the loudspeaker volume of a neighborhood mosque. In July the Constitutional Court dismissed a petition brought by members of the Ahmadi Muslim religious community to revoke the blasphemy law. In Aceh, authorities continued to carry out public canings for sharia violations, such as selling alcohol, gambling, and extramarital affairs. The governor issued a directive to end canings in public, over the strong objections of others in the government and society. The directive remained in effect, but no districts enforced it, due in part to the arrest and detention of the governor. Some local governments imposed local laws and regulations restricting religious freedom, such as local regulations banning Shia or Ahmadi Islamic practice. Ahmadi Muslims again reported incidents of forced conversion and discrimination. Media and human rights groups reported in December that Jakarta's Prosecution Office launched a smartphone app called Smart Pakem allowing citizens to file heresy or blasphemy reports against groups with what the government considers unofficial or unorthodox religious practices. Religious groups outside the six government-recognized religions (Catholicism, Protestantism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Islam, the latter widely interpreted by the government and society to mean Sunni Islam), reported issues with identifying their religion on their national identification cards (KTPs), although a 2017 Constitutional Court ruling allows for such a listing. There were again instances in which local governments and police acceded to the demands of groups, such as the Islam Defender's Front (FPI), Islamic Community Forum (FUI), Islamic Jihad Front (FJI), and the Indonesian Mujahideen Council (MMI), called "intolerant groups" in the media, to close houses of worship for permit violations or otherwise restrict the rights of minority religious groups. In September large protests erupted in Jambi, Sumatra, after officials there closed three Christian churches for not obtaining the appropriate permits. Both the central and local governments included elected and appointed officials from minority religious groups, and elected politicians from religious minorities served in majority Muslim districts. There was one Shia member of the national legislature.

In May a family of suicide bombers attacked three Christian churches in Surabaya within minutes of each other, killing 13 persons and injuring 40 others. In February a man with a machete attacked a Catholic congregation in Yogyakarta and injured four persons, including the church priest. Also in May a mob destroyed several houses and attempted to expel the Ahmadi community from a village in West Nusa Tenggara. In March an unknown group vandalized a Catholic church in Sumatra. Many prominent civil society representatives, including religious organizations from all faiths, worked to counter religious intolerance and promote pluralism and tolerance of minority religious groups.

The U.S. government advocated for religious freedom at the highest levels, with both government and civil society leaders, and spoke out publicly against discrimination and violence against minority religious communities. The Department of State Coordinator for Counterterrorism visited Jakarta in September and met with local religious leaders to discuss ways to combat violence against religious groups in the country. Embassy and consulate officials engaged government officials on specific issues, including actions against religious minorities; closures of places of worship and access for foreign religious organizations; convictions for blasphemy and defamation of religion; the importance of tolerance and rule of law; the application of sharia to non-Muslims; and religious identification requirements on national identification cards. The U.S.-Indonesia Council on Religion and Pluralism – endorsed by both governments and comprising religious and civil society leaders, academics, and experts from both countries – met with visiting U.S. government officials to discuss religious freedom issues. The embassy and consulates carried the message of respect for diversity and religious tolerance to tens of millions of people in the country through outreach efforts, including events, media interviews, social media initiatives, digital and public speaking engagements, youth exchanges, and educational programs.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 262.8 million (July 2018 estimate). According to the 2010 census, approximately 87 percent of the population is Muslim, 7 percent Protestant, 3 percent Roman Catholic, and 1.5 percent Hindu. Those identifying with other religious groups, including Buddhism, traditional indigenous religions, Confucianism, and other Christian denominations, and those who did not respond to the census question comprise approximately 1.3 percent of the population.

The Muslim population is overwhelmingly Sunni. An estimated one to three million Muslims are Shia. Many smaller Muslim groups exist; estimates put the total number of Ahmadi Muslims at 200,000 to 400,000.

Many religious groups incorporate elements of Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism, making it difficult to disaggregate the exact number of followers. An estimated 20 million people, primarily in Java, Kalimantan, and Papua, practice various traditional belief systems, often referred to collectively as *aliran kepercayaan*. There are approximately 400 different *aliran kepercayaan* communities throughout the archipelago.

There is a Sikh population estimated at between 10,000 and 15,000, with approximately 5,000 in Medan and the rest in Jakarta. There are very small Jewish communities in Jakarta, Manado, Jayapura, and elsewhere. The Baha'i Faith and Falun Dafa (or Falun Gong) communities report thousands of members, but independent estimates are not available. The number of atheists is also unknown, but the group Indonesian Atheists states it has more than 700 members.

The province of Bali is predominantly Hindu, and the provinces of Papua, West Papua, East Nusa Tenggara, and North Sulawesi are predominantly Christian.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

The constitution guarantees the right to practice the religion of one's choice and specifies that freedom of religion is a human right that may not be limited. The constitution states, "The nation is based upon belief in one supreme God," but it guarantees all persons the right to worship according to their own religion or belief. The law restricts citizens from exercising these rights in a way that impinges on the rights of others, oversteps common moral standards and religious values, or jeopardizes security or public order.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs (MRA) extends official recognition to six religious groups: Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Confucianism. The government maintains a longstanding practice of recognizing Sunni Islam as the official version of Islam of local Muslims, although the constitution has no such stipulation.

The blasphemy articles in the criminal code prohibit deliberate public statements or activities that insult or defame any of the six official religious groups, or have the intent of preventing an individual from adhering to an official religion. These articles also stipulate that in any case of defamation of the six officially recognized religions, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA), the MRA, and the Attorney General's Office must first warn the individual in question before bringing a defamation charge. The articles also forbid the dissemination of information designed to spread hatred or dissension among individuals and/or certain community groups based on ethnicity, religion, or race. Individuals may be subject to prosecution for blasphemous, atheistic, or heretical statements under either of these provisions or under the laws against defamation, and may face a maximum prison sentence of five years. A separate law forbids the electronic dissemination of the same types of information, with violations carrying a maximum four-year sentence.

The government defines a religion as having a prophet, holy book, and deity, as well as international recognition. The government deems the six officially recognized religions meet these requirements. Organizations representing one of the six recognized religions listed in the blasphemy law are not required to obtain a legal charter if they are established under a notary act and obtain approval from the Ministry of Law and Human Rights. Religious organizations other than the six recognized religions listed in the blasphemy law must obtain a legal charter as a civil society organization from the MOHA. Both ministries consult with the MRA before granting legal status to religious organizations. By law, all religious groups must officially register with the government. The laws requires all civil society organizations to uphold the national ideology of Pancasila, which encompasses the principles of belief in one God, justice, unity, democracy, and social justice, and they are prohibited from committing blasphemous acts or spreading religious hatred. Violations of the law may result in a loss of legal status, dissolution of the organization, and arrest of members under the blasphemy articles of the criminal code or other applicable laws. Indigenous religious groups must register with the Ministry of Education and Culture as *aliran kepercayaan* to obtain official, legal status.

A joint ministerial decree bans both proselytizing by the Ahmadi Muslim community and vigilantism against the group. Violations of the Ahmadi proselytizing ban carry a maximum five-year prison sentence on charges of blasphemy.

The government requires all officially registered religious groups to comply with directives from the MRA and other ministries on issues such as construction of houses of worship, foreign aid to domestic religious institutions, and propagation of religion.

According to a joint ministerial decree, religious groups may not hold services in private residences, and those seeking to build a house of worship are required to obtain the signatures of at least 90 members of the group and 60 persons of other religious groups in the community stating they support the construction. Local governments are in charge of implementing the decree, and local regulations, implementation, and enforcement vary widely. The decree also requires approval from the local interfaith council, the Religious Harmony Forum (FKUB). Government-established FKUBs exist at the city or district level and comprise religious leaders from the six official groups. They are responsible for mediating interreligious conflicts.

The law requires religious instruction in public schools. Students have the right to request religious instruction in any one of the six official religions, but teachers are not always available to teach the requested religion classes. Individuals may not opt out of religious education requirements.

Under the terms of a 2005 peace agreement that ended a separatist conflict, Aceh Province has unique authority to implement sharia regulations. The law allows for provincial implementation and regulation of sharia and extends the jurisdiction of religious courts to economic transactions and criminal cases. The Aceh government states sharia in Aceh only applies to Muslim residents of the province. Some Aceh Sharia Agency officials, however, state that sharia applies to all Muslims in Aceh, regardless of their official residency. Sharia does not apply to non-Muslims.

Aceh's provincial sharia regulations criminalize consensual same-sex activity, adultery, gambling, consumption of alcohol, and proximity to members of the opposite sex outside of marriage for Muslim residents of the province. An Aceh governor's decree forbids women from working in or visiting restaurants unaccompanied by their spouse or a male relative after 9 p.m. A Banda Aceh mayoral decree forbids women from working in coffee shops, internet cafes, or sports venues after 1 p.m. Sharia regulations prohibit female Muslim residents of Aceh from wearing tight pants in public, and they must wear headscarves. One district in Aceh prohibits women from sitting astride motorcycles when riding as passengers, but this reportedly is rarely enforced. The maximum penalties for

violations of sharia regulations include imprisonment and caning. There are regulations limiting the amount of force that authorities may exert during a caning.

Many local governments outside of Aceh have enacted regulations based on religious considerations; most of these are in majority Muslim areas. Many of these regulations relate to matters such as religious education and only apply to a specific religious group. Some religiously inspired local regulations in effect apply to all citizens. For instance, some local regulations require restaurants to close during Ramadan fasting hours, ban alcohol, or mandate the collection of *zakat* (Islamic alms). Other local regulations forbid or limit the religious activities of religious minorities, especially Shia and Ahmadi Muslims.

The marriage law does not explicitly forbid interfaith marriage, but it contains an article stipulating that parties must perform the marriage ceremony according to the rituals of a religion shared by both the bride and groom. A man and woman of different religions who seek to marry may have difficulties finding a religious official willing to perform a wedding ceremony. Some couples of different religions select the same religion on their KTPs in order to marry legally.

The law allows a Muslim man to have up to four wives, provided he is able to support each equally. For a man to take a second, third, or fourth wife, he must obtain court permission and the consent of the first wife. These conditions, however, are not always enforced.

Government regulations require Muslim male civil servants to receive permission from a government official and their first wives prior to marrying a second, third, or fourth wife, and prohibit female civil servants from becoming second, third, or fourth wives.

The law requires the leader of an *aliran kepercayaan* group to demonstrate group members live in at least three regencies, which are administrative designations one level below a province, before the leader may officiate legally at a wedding. This constraint effectively bars believers of some smaller groups without such geographic presence from receiving official marriage services from a member of their faith, although groups can aid each other and facilitate marriages by a group with a similar faith tradition and rituals.

Following a 2017 Constitutional Court ruling, citizens are allowed to select indigenous faiths as an option on their KTP cards. Previously, they were only

allowed to choose one of the six officially recognized religions or leave the column blank when applying for a KTP.

A joint ministerial decree requires domestic religious organizations to obtain approval from the MRA to receive funding from overseas donors and forbids dissemination of religious literature and pamphlets to members of other religious groups as well as going door to door for the purposes of converting others.

Foreign religious workers must obtain religious worker visas, and foreign religious organizations must obtain permission from the MRA to provide any type of assistance (in-kind, personnel, or financial) to local religious groups.

The country is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Government Practices

On May 13, a family of suicide bombers attacked three Christian churches in Surabaya within minutes of each other. The parents strapped explosives onto their daughters, ages six and eight, and their teenage sons. The blasts killed 13 persons and injured 40 others. President Joko Widodo ordered the National Police to thoroughly investigate the attacks and to identify and bring the guilty groups to justice.

Police and prosecutors said they used the provisions of a newly revised antiterrorism law to arrest more than 350 members of organizations supporting violence against individuals of different religious beliefs. Authorities had prosecuted approximately 150 of these cases. A court in August banned the militant group Jemaah Ansharut Daulah under the amended law.

Government and sharia officials stated non-Muslim residents of Aceh could choose punishment under sharia or civil court procedures, but Muslim residents of Aceh must receive punishment under sharia. Several non-Muslim residents of Aceh chose punishment under sharia, reportedly due to the expediency of punishment and the risk of prolonged trials and possible lengthy prison sentences.

In January a Christian man reportedly opted for punishment under sharia, receiving 36 lashes for selling alcohol, an offense under sharia. In February two Christians, residents of Aceh Province, received six lashes for gambling. All three canings took place outside a mosque after Friday prayers with numerous onlookers.

In September Aceh authorities publicly caned a man and a woman in Banda Aceh for having an extramarital affair. The couple received a sentence of 28 lashes, but had four of them suspended, as they had already been in jail four months. In Aceh, in April the governor adopted a new regulation forbidding individuals from recording canings and allowing only private witnessing of canings by journalists and adults inside prisons. Due in part to the subsequent arrest and detention of this governor, while the decree remained in effect, no districts enforced it. Moving canings away from public view triggered controversy among regional administration and provincial lawmakers and garnered the objection of the influential Dayah community. Dayah are traditional Islamic boarding schools for the study of the Quran, Hadith, and other Islamic texts.

In December media and human rights groups reported the government released a smartphone app called Smart Pakem allowing citizens to file heresy or blasphemy reports against groups with what the government considers unofficial or unorthodox religious practices. Jakarta's Prosecution Office launched the app, which it stated aimed to streamline the heresy and blasphemy reporting system. Nirwan Nawawi, a spokesman for the prosecutor's office said, "The objective...is to provide easier access to information about the spread of beliefs in Indonesia, to educate the public, and to prevent them from following doctrines from an individual or a group that are not in line with the regulations." Various human rights organizations criticized the app, saying it could undermine religious tolerance and freedom in the country. According to Human Rights Watch, the app identifies several religious groups and their leaders (including Ahmadi, Shia, and Gafatar), describes their "deviant teachings," and provides their local office addresses. In August Human Rights Watch reported the government prosecuted at least 22 individuals for blasphemy since the beginning of the Widodo administration in 2014.

On August 24, a Medan court sentenced Meiliana (one name only), an ethnic-Chinese Buddhist woman, to 18 months in prison for blasphemy against Islam. Reportedly, in 2016 she privately asked the local mosque caretaker's daughter that the mosque lower its loudspeaker volume. The press reported that rumors spread that she was demanding that mosques in her hometown of Tanjung Balai stop calls to prayer altogether. In ensuing riots, Muslim local residents ransacked and destroyed at least 14 area Buddhist temples. Human rights groups and some Muslim organizations throughout the country criticized both the prosecution of the case and the harshness of the verdict, as did Vice President Jusuf Kalla. The central government issued a regulation limiting the volume of mosques' speakers shortly after the verdict. A higher court in October upheld the sentence, and

Meiliana's attorney said he planned an appeal to the Supreme Court. According to news reports, Muslims who attacked Chinese businesses and Buddhist temples in Tanjung Balai in anger over Meiliana's alleged action were sentenced to a maximum of two months behind bars.

On September 26, the Medan District Court in North Sumatra sentenced a police officer to 16 months in prison for shredding and dumping copies of the Quran into the gutter. The court found the officer, Tommy Daniel Patar Hutabarat, guilty of blasphemy.

On April 30, the Pandeglang District Court in Banten sentenced Alnoldy Bahari to five years in prison and ordered him to pay a 100 million rupiah (\$6,900) fine after finding him guilty of spreading hate speech. Officials brought charges against him after he posted on Facebook that those who had not seen God were "fake" Muslims. On May 7, the Tangerang District Court in Banten sentenced Abraham Ben Moses, also known as Saifuddin Ibrahim, 52, to four years in prison for religious defamation after a video appeared of him with a taxi driver in which he shared his Christian faith and engaged in a discussion concerning the Prophet Muhammad's teachings on marriage, stating Muhammad acted inconsistently with his own teachings. The court also ordered that Moses, who said he was a Christian cleric, pay a 50 million rupiah (\$3,500) fine or else spend an additional one month in prison. The court determined he intentionally spread information electronically with the intent to incite hatred against an individual, group, and society based on religion.

On July 25, a 21-year-old Christian student from North Sumatra received a four-year sentence for a Facebook post that likened the Prophet Muhammad to a pig. His lawyer said the student did not challenge the verdict due to fear of intimidation by members of the Muslim group who reported him. The lawyer also described his client's trial as "full of intimidation" and said the accused became a target of verbal insults by members of the FPI outside the courtroom.

On July 23, the Constitutional Court dismissed a petition brought by members of the Ahmadi religious community to revoke the blasphemy articles within the criminal code. This case marked the third failed attempt to repeal the blasphemy articles since 2010.

In November Grace Natalie, an ethnic Chinese Protestant member of the Indonesian Solidarity Party, pledged the party would not support discriminatory local laws based on "the Bible or sharia" and called for an end to the forced closure

of places of worship. Eggi Sudjana, a member of the rival National Mandate Party, reported her comments as potentially blasphemous. Police summoned her for seven hours of questioning. Authorities had not filed charges by year's end.

Authorities had not charged any Ahmadi Muslims with blasphemy as of year's end, but Ahmadi sources said provincial and local regulations based on these articles placed tighter restrictions on Ahmadis than on the six officially recognized religions.

The MRA maintained its authority at both the national and local level to conduct the "development" of religious groups and believers, including efforts to convert minority religious groups to Sunni Islam. In several West Java regencies, local governments continued efforts to force or encourage conversion of Ahmadi Muslims with a requirement that Ahmadis sign forms renouncing their beliefs in order to register their marriages or participate in the Hajj. According to the local Ahmadiyya community in Cianjur and Cirebon, local MRA offices obliged Ahmadis to sign forms stating they denounced Ahmadiyya teachings. This practice has continued since 2014.

The Setara Institute, a domestic nongovernmental organization (NGO) that conducts advocacy and research on religious and political freedom, again stated the central government made efforts to reaffirm constitutional provisions for religious freedom, promote tolerance, and prevent religiously motivated violence. It also stated, however, that the central government did little to intervene at the local level or resolve past religious conflicts through its mandate to enforce court rulings, override unconstitutional local regulations, or otherwise uphold the constitutional and legal protections afforded to minority religious groups. The institute noted local governments selectively enforced blasphemy laws, regulations on permits, and other local regulations in ways that affected various religious groups.

According to religious groups and NGOs, government officials and police sometimes failed to prevent "intolerant groups" from infringing on others' religious freedom and committing other acts of intimidation, such as damaging or destroying houses of worship and homes. These groups included the FPI, FUI, FJI, and MMI. Police did not always actively investigate and prosecute crimes by members of "intolerant groups." During the year, police again worked with human rights activists and NGOs to provide tolerance-training sessions to religious leaders and local police.

The Setara Institute reported 40 cases of government abuses of religious freedom between January and June compared with 24 cases in the first 11 months of 2017. Abuses cited included discrimination, intolerance, and prohibitions on the wearing of hijabs in public school. Setara attributed the increase to three factors: the manipulation of the population's religious sentiments by politicians and other societal actors in the period preceding the 2019 national elections; a rise in the role of community groups instigating intolerant actions; and increased use of social media to disseminate discriminatory messages.

More than 338 Shia Muslims from Madura remained displaced on the outskirts of Surabaya, East Java, after communal violence forced them from their homes in 2012. Approximately 200 Ahmadi Muslims remained internally displaced in cramped apartments in Mataram, the capital of West Nusa Tenggara, after a mob expelled them from their Lombok village in 2006.

Across the country, minority religious groups, including Muslim groups in non-Muslim majority areas, continued to state the official requirement for a specific number of supporters to build or renovate a house of worship served as a barrier to construction. Governments did not issue permits when the worshippers obtained the requisite numbers or when opponents of the construction pressured neighbors not to approve. In many cases, a few vocal opponents from the local majority religious affiliation were reportedly sufficient to stop construction approvals. State-recognized religious leaders in government-supported interfaith forums reportedly found ways to block *aliran kepercayaan* believers from constructing places of worship, largely through stringent house of worship permit requirements. *Aliran kepercayaan* adherents said they were fearful of atheism accusations were they to contest this treatment in court. Christian leaders reported that local officials indefinitely delayed permit approval for requests to build new churches because these officials feared construction would incite protests. Ahmadi and Shia Muslims and Christians said they also faced problems when seeking approval to move to temporary facilities while a primary place of worship underwent renovation.

Local governments, police, and religious organizations reportedly tried to close religious minority groups' houses of worship for permit violations, often after protests from "intolerant groups," even if the minority groups had a proper permit. Many congregations could not obtain the requisite number of nonmember signatures supporting construction of a house of worship and often faced protest from "intolerant groups" during the application process, making permits nearly impossible to obtain. Even when authorities issued permits, they closed or forced

construction to halt on some houses of worship after facing legal challenges and public protests. Protestant and Catholic churches also reported that “intolerant groups” forced them to pay protection money to continue operating without a permit. Some houses of worship established before the joint ministerial decree on house of worship construction came into effect reportedly were still obligated to meet the requirements or face closure. Many houses of worship operated without permits in office buildings, malls, private homes, and shops.

On September 29, local authorities in Jambi closed three churches: the Indonesian Methodist Church (Gereja Methodist Indonesia), Indonesia Christian Huria (Huria Kristen Indonesia), and Assemblies of God Church (Gereja Sidang Jemaat Allah). According to the Indonesia Communion of Churches, several Muslim groups such as FPI had sent a letter to the city complaining the churches had created public disturbances. This resulted in a meeting with city officials and the FPI, Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), FKUB, and Malay Culture Institute (Lembaga Adat Melayu); however, there were no representatives from the affected churches. A few days later, government agencies, police, and local chapters of the MUI and KUB decided to close the churches, citing “administrative issues.” Protests by hundreds of the churches’ worshippers followed the closures. Church leaders said they had been trying to apply for the appropriate permits from the city administration since 2003, but the city authorities had not granted them due to lack of support from neighborhood authorities and communities. Jambi city spokesman Abu Bakar said the churches could reopen after the congregations obtained the permits. Another Jambi official noted that 70 churches in the city had yet to receive building permits.

The Congregation of Churches in Jayapura, Papua, a Christian-majority province, publicly called for terminating the construction of a local mosque following pressure from the neighboring Christian community. The group said the mosque’s minarets would be taller than the surrounding churches and other structures and questioned the building’s permit status. The incident generated intense debate among Christian and Muslim communities, leading to the formation by the government of a mediation team to manage tensions between the two communities, largely divided between the area’s ethnic Papuans, who are majority Christian, and migrants from other parts of the country, who are predominantly Muslim. The interfaith mediation team agreed in April to establish a mutually acceptable height limit of the minarets under construction, conduct an interfaith dialogue, and reaffirm the local government’s policy to enable religious faiths to establish houses of worship in the district.

Construction moved forward on the Santa Clara Catholic Church in Bekasi, West Java. In December police reportedly sent personnel to safeguard the church, which was used as one of the venues in the region to celebrate Christmas. The congregation had waited more than 15 years for the approval of its construction permit before receiving it in 2015, and “intolerant groups” regularly targeted the construction site for protests. Following a 2017 protest, the Bekasi mayor assured the congregation it would be able to finish construction by December 2017, but construction still was not complete at the end of September.

Aliran kepercayaan followers continued to say teachers pressured them to send their children to a religious education class of one of the six officially recognized religions. Minority religious groups not among the six recognized religions said schools often allowed their children to spend religious education time in study hall, but school officials required parents to sign documents stating their children received religious education. Ahmadi Muslim students reported religion classes for Islam focused only on Sunni teachings. A member of the indigenous belief community from Cirebon (belonging to the Sunda Wiwitan group) stated the teachers of their school demanded that students choose a formal education on one of the six officially recognized religions. Most of the students chose Islam.

Civil servants who openly professed an adherence to an indigenous belief system continued to say they had difficulty obtaining promotions.

Although the government generally allowed citizens to leave the religion column blank on their KTPs, individuals continued to report difficulties accessing government services (such as procuring marriage licenses or receiving health care) and experiencing other forms of discrimination if they did so. Many local officials reportedly were unaware of the option to leave the religion section blank and refused to issue such KTPs. The lack of a KTP led to issues ranging from an inability to register for health insurance to problems applying for mortgages. Faced with this problem, many religious minority members reportedly chose to identify as a member of an officially recognized religion close to their beliefs or reflecting the locally dominant religion. According to researchers, this practice obscured the real number of adherents to any particular religious group in government statistics. As of year’s end, observers said it was unclear whether all registry offices throughout the country had the application systems that would allow indigenous believers to state beliefs other than the six recognized religions on their KTPs, in accordance with the 2017 Constitutional Court ruling. In October MRA officials said there were plans to identify indigenous faiths on KTPs

cards; however, this would first require the legislature to revise the registration law, according to the ministry.

NGOs and religious advocacy groups continued to urge the government to remove the religion field from KTPs. Religious minorities reported they sometimes faced discrimination after others saw their religious affiliation on their KTPs. Members of the Jewish community said they felt uncomfortable stating their religion in public and often chose to state they were Christians or Muslims depending on the dominant religion where they lived, due to concern that local communities did not understand their religion.

Minority Muslim groups, including Ahmadis and Shia, also continued to report resistance when they tried to apply for KTPs as Muslims, effectively denying them access to public services if they could not secure KTPs.

Police Spokesperson Dedi Prasetyo stated police would optimize prevention measures to eradicate radicalism by persuasive engagement and by tracking and profiling of religious leaders. Police expected this engagement would help religious leaders lessen exposure to radicalism among their followers.

Both the central and local governments included elected and appointed officials from minority groups. For example, the Governor of West Kalimantan and the Mayor of Solo were Catholic, and a leading Shia figure held a seat in the House of Representatives, elected from a majority Sunni district in Bandung, West Java. As of October President Widodo's 34-member cabinet included six members of minority faiths.

Foreign religious workers from many religious groups continued to state they found it relatively easy to obtain visas. Despite laws restricting proselytizing, some foreign religious groups reported little government interference with preaching or religious conversions.

Police provided special protection to some churches in major cities during Sunday services and Christian holidays.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

On February 11, a man with a machete attacked a congregation during Sunday Mass at the St. Lidwina Church in Sleman, Yogyakarta. The attacker, whom police identified as university student Suliono, reportedly injured four persons,

including the church's priest, Father Karl Edmund Prier. Suliono also destroyed statues in the Church of Jesus and the Virgin Mary. At year's end, police were still investigating the case and the motive behind the attack. On February 12, the president stated he instructed police to enforce the constitutional guarantees of religious freedom and said there was no place for religious intolerance in the country.

On May 19, unidentified attackers destroyed several houses and attempted to expel the Ahmadi community from Grepek Tanak Eat hamlet in Greneng Village, West Nusa Tenggara. The violence forced 24 persons from seven families to seek shelter at the East Lombok police headquarters. Ahmadi Indonesia Congregation secretary Yendra Budiana said the incident followed a series of previous attacks on the Ahmadi community in another residential area in March and on May 9.

The MUI (an independent clerical body funded by the government and charged with issuing fatwas) called upon all mosques to increase compassion, tolerance, and nationalism rather than spreading hatred, hate speech, and negative propaganda that could sharpen any ideological differences. "Intolerant groups," however, used MUI fatwas to justify actions against religious minorities and other vulnerable groups, even though the fatwas lacked legal standing. Individuals affiliated at the local level with the MUI used rhetoric considered intolerant by religious minorities, including fatwas declaring Shia and Ahmadi Muslims as deviant sects. Shia and Ahmadi Muslims reported feeling under constant threat from "intolerant groups." Anti-Shia rhetoric was common in some online media outlets and on social media.

In November media reported the Indonesian State Intelligence Agency had surveyed 1,000 mosques in the country and stated imams at an estimated 41 places of worship in Jakarta were preaching "extremism" to worshippers, often to government workers. Intelligence officers found approximately 17 clerics expressed support or sympathy for ISIS and encouraged their congregations to fight for the jihadist group in Syria and Marawi, the southern Philippine city attacked by ISIS-linked fighters in 2017.

In March a group of persons vandalized a recently renovated Catholic church in South Sumatra. The South Sumatra Police in the same month arrested 10 suspects and planned to charge them with assault and arson. The police said those arrested committed the action due to hatred. As of year's end, there were no reports of a trial date in this case.

In August human rights group Wahid Foundation reported that it had recorded 213 cases of religious freedom violations in 2017, a 4 percent increase from 2016. Nonstate actors such as the FPI committed most violations. The highest number of violations was recorded in Jakarta (50 incidents), followed by West Java (44), East Java (27), and Central Java (15). Religious freedom violations were recorded in 27 of the country's 34 provinces. The foundation recorded an increase in efforts by the state and civil society to promote diversity, religious freedom, and tolerance. It identified 398 such initiatives in 2017, a 64 percent increase from 2016.

Christian leaders in Surabaya said they were encouraged by sympathy and support shown toward the affected Christians by the local Muslim community after the May 13 suicide bomber attack on three churches.

Many individuals in the government, media, civil society, and general population were vocal and active in protecting and promoting tolerance and pluralism. The largest and most influential religious groups and NGOs, including the two largest Islamic groups in the country – Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah, with approximately 40 and 30 million members, respectively – officially endorsed and advocated for tolerance, pluralism, and the protection of minority groups. For instance, in August NU launched the Said Aqil Siroj Institute, a civil society group designed to promote interreligious tolerance in a country where observers said religious and ethnic sentiments were on the rise ahead of the national elections in 2019.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy and Engagement

The U.S. Embassy in Jakarta, the Consulate General in Surabaya, and the Consulate in Medan regularly engaged with all levels of government on specific religious freedom issues, such as actions against religious minorities; closures of places of worship; convictions for blasphemy and defamation of religion; the undue influence of “intolerant groups” and the importance of the rule of law; the application of sharia to non-Muslims; religious registration requirements on KTPs; the importance of education and interfaith dialogue in promoting tolerance; the equal protection of all citizens regardless of their religion; and promotion of tolerance in international forums.

The U.S.-Indonesia Council on Religion and Pluralism, a civil-society-led entity endorsed by both governments, includes a diverse group of experts, academics, and religious and civil society leaders established to promote interfaith dialogue, pluralism, and tolerance. The Ambassador regularly engaged with members of the

council to discuss ways to augment the council's activity on issues affecting the country's religious communities. The embassy facilitated the council's engagement with visiting U.S. government officials.

In September the Department of State Coordinator for Counterterrorism met with council members to hear their approach to responding to religious extremist ideology in the country. He shared examples of international good practices and suggested areas of future collaboration, such as educator-religious leader collaboration in schools; strengthening law enforcement's role in engaging communities they serve; and religious leader youth mentorship.

In August the Ambassador met with U.S. members of the council attending the World Peace Forum to discuss efforts to augment joint collaboration between the two countries to combat violent extremism, promote religious freedom, and increase people-to-people engagement on human rights.

In January the then Acting Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs met with Islamic members of the council to discuss Indonesia's stated intention to encourage moderate Islam overseas. Local council members discussed efforts to prevent the politicization of Islam, promote interfaith dialogue, and develop a united response to extremist narratives. The Acting Assistant Secretary underscored the importance of promoting tolerance and pluralism in the country and commended the work of the council on engaging communities of all faiths.

During Ramadan, the embassy and consulates implemented an outreach strategy throughout the country to highlight values such as religious tolerance. This included a diverse set of public diplomacy tools, ranging from the Ambassador's appearance on two of the country's highest-rated television shows and a series of *buka puasas* (iftars) with target audiences, to placement of articles featuring Muslim life in the United States in key newspapers and social media blitzes using embassy-produced Ramadan and Eid videos. An important objective was to promote interfaith tolerance within the country by highlighting the inclusion of Muslims within American life.

The embassy implemented several professional exchange programs designed to foster and encourage religious tolerance. These included sponsoring the visit to the United States of eight (seven Muslim and one Christian) academics to examine religious pluralism and acquire tools to develop curricula at their home institutions. The embassy also sponsored the visits of six educators, administrators, and NGO leaders to the United States to see how religious and secular schools, as well as

faith-based and other civil society organizations, work together as a force for social harmony.

The embassy hosted a film festival in which it showed numerous movies throughout the year, several of which included themes of religious tolerance and diversity. The series was very well attended, and follow-on discussions hosted by embassy officials resulted in lively and forthright exchanges regarding religious and societal challenges facing Indonesia and the United States.

In September the Consul General in Surabaya hosted an interfaith event for Surabaya's religious community during which the consulate general conveyed the importance of religious pluralism and diversity in developing resilient and prosperous societies. Key guests included members of Muslim, Christian, and Buddhist groups along with followers of traditional beliefs. During Ramadan, the Consulate General hosted a Halal bi-Halal (a national Muslim observance showing respect for elders after Eid al-Fitr) for youth leaders of religious groups, and participants discussed their aspirations in promoting pluralism.

In January the Consulate in Medan organized a meeting between Muslim scholars from different provinces in Sumatra and the Ambassador to provide updates on religious dynamics in Sumatra. U.S. officials expressed their support for diversity and encouraged the scholars to continue their leadership in maintaining religious peace and harmony in the country.