

Country Profile

Indonesia

Pradana Boy Zulian & Hasnan Bachtiar

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This Country Profile provides a brief overview of religious diversity and its governance in the above-named state. It is one of 23 such profiles produced by GREASE, an EU-funded research project investigating religious diversity, state-religion relations and religiously inspired radicalisation on four continents. More detailed assessments are available in our multi-part Country Reports and Country Cases.

Countries covered in this series:

Albania, Australia, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Egypt, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Lebanon, Lithuania, Malaysia, Morocco, Russia, Slovakia, Spain, Tunisia, Turkey and the United Kingdom.

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Total population: 2.7 million (2018)

Religious affiliation (percent)

Islam	87.18
Protestant	6.96
Catholic	2.91
Hinduism	1.69
Buddhism	0.72
Kong Hu Cu	0.05

Source: Badan Pusat Statistik, *Statistik Indonesia 2019* (Jakarta: BPS, 2019): 81; Badan Pusat Statistik, "Penduduk Menurut Wilayah dan Agama yang Dianut," www.bps.go.id 2010, <https://sp2010.bps.go.id/index.php/site/tabel?tid=321&wid=0> (Accessed in September 29, 2019).

Role of religion in state and government

In general, religion is one of the most important aspects of the state and ruling government in Indonesia. It has been considered a basis for moral values and a philosophical foundation inspiring the five state principles of "Pancasila": divinity, humanity, nationality, democracy and justice. These virtues are thought to be in line with religious values. The founding fathers of the state, who were representatives of inter-religious leaders, agreed that Indonesia is neither a secular nor religious state, but a state respecting essential values of religion.

Religion as moral inspiration is present at every level of state regulation, from the constitutional level (*Undang-Undang Dasar 1945*) and legal level (*Undang-Undang*) to other lower levels of regulation (*Peraturan Perundang-undangan Pengganti Undang-Undang, Peraturan Presiden, and Peraturan Menteri dan lainnya*).

Indonesia has a Ministry of Religious Affairs which is responsible for governing religious matters and concerns mainly in the public sphere. It aims at ensuring social order and harmony among inter-religious communities and people. The financial management of religious affairs (tithing, alms and donations), religious property (*waqf* and religious buildings), and management of the hajj (Islamic pilgrimage) are organised, supervised and controlled by the ministry. There is also the Islamic Court which mediates in civil law disputes among Muslims (divorce, inheritance, sharia economy, etc).

In terms of political parties, some have engaged with Islamic identities and ideologies, such as *Partai Keadilan Sejahtera* (PKS), *Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa* (PKB), *Partai Persatuan Pembangunan* (PPP), *Partai Amanat Nasional* (PAN) and *Partai Bulan Bintang* (PBB). In the 2014 and 2019 national elections, their significance was not stronger than nationalist parties such as *Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan* (PDIP), *Golongan Karya* (Golkar), *Partai Demokrat* and *Partai Gerakan Indonesia Raya* (Gerindra) which gained majority votes.

Freedom of religion

Freedom of religion or belief (FRB) is legally protected by the state. From the legal perspective, Indonesia ratified 8 of 9 international human rights instruments. FRB is a serious concern for the state and is promoted by relevant instruments. In other words, the state must protect, respect and fulfil its citizens' FRB.

There are several legal considerations when it comes to protecting FRB. First, Section XA of the State Constitution (*Undang-Undang Dasar 1945*) covers fundamental human rights. In this section, Article 28E (1) states that "Each person is free to worship and to practice the religion of his choice...". In Article 28I (1) we see that "The right...to adhere to a religion... [is among our] fundamental human rights that shall not be curtailed under any circumstance". Section XI (Religion) Article 29 (2) strongly states that "The state guarantees each and every citizen the freedom of religion and worship in accordance with his religion and belief."

Secondly, Section 5, Article 22 (1) of Law No. 39 (a 1999 law concerning Human Rights) states that "Everyone has the right to freedom to choose his religion and to worship according to the teachings of his religion and beliefs". Sub-article two of that same law declares that "The state guarantees everyone the freedom to choose and practice his religion and to worship according to his religion and beliefs".

Thirdly, Article 18 (1) of Law No. 12 (a 2005 law concerning ratification of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights) declares "Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching." Subsequent points (2-4) strengthen the previous point in more detail.

However, on a practical level implementation of FRB in the country has never been easy. Religious majoritarianism has become a problem for law enforcement. Agents of the state are often more interested in gaining political support from the majority. Accordingly, when there is a case of majority-minority conflict, the state apparatus tends to avoid implementing the laws of protection of FRB in order to achieve practical political goals. Human rights violation by omission have occurred due to the absence of the state. The majority in this case are Sunni Muslims while minorities are Shia believers, Ahmadiyya, Christians and others.

Nevertheless, in 1993 Indonesia established the National Human Rights Institution (Komnas HAM). It aims to advance the cause of protecting human rights along with marginalised and vulnerable groups. Komnas HAM is not alone. There are a lot of civil society organisations (and NGOs) that have a similar mission. Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, for instance, are the largest religious organisations which have promoted religious moderatism (*wasatiyyah*) and emphasised FRB.

Religiously inspired radicalisation

Although some have claimed that Indonesia is a most democratic and moderate Muslim country (“civil Islam” argument), during the post-authoritarianism era of Suharto (1998) and the post-9/11 War on Terror (2001), religiously inspired radicalisation has gained a foothold, becoming a highly sensitive national security problem in the country. There has been significant growth of radical Islamist movements mainly influenced by transnational jihadist networks.

The al-Qaeda branch of Southeast Asia, Jama’ah Islamiyah (JI), was led by Abu Bakar Ba’asyir, a radical ideologist and a leader of Pesantren Islam in Ngruki, Solo, Indonesia. In 2002, this group sought to destroy Kuta, Bali, through high-explosive bombs. According to an intellectual conspirator in the Bali Bombing, Imam Samudera, what they did was to kill their enemies. For them, enemies are non-Muslim infidels (*kafirun*) and especially foreigners.

A decade later, several terrorist attacks occurred and were claimed or encouraged by the same group. The smaller branches and networks of JI had spread across the country. To places such as Solo (Central Java Province), Lamongan (East Java), Poso and Ambon (Moluccas).

Some leading Islamists had experienced life at the centre of Jihadism in the Muslim world in places such as Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq. Their experience encouraged them to reaffirm the ideology of Wahhabism which tends to reject any religious understanding that is different (jihadism). In the country, the education centre of Wahhabism is the Islamic and Arabic College of Indonesia (LIPIA) as the Imam Muhammad ibn Saud University branch. Although Wahhabism is not a main factor of religious radicalisation, its ideological exclusivism makes it easier to urge Wahhabites to accept a jihadist understanding of the Islamic creed. This ideological acceptance, in turn, might facilitate Wahhabism followers to open the gate to enter Jihadism networks.

While Islamic State (ISIS) gained ground in Iraq, Syria and elsewhere and al-Qaeda and JI continued to flourish, jihadist actors in the country were motivated to establish Jamaah Anshar al-Tauhid (JAT) and Jamaah Anshar al-Daulah (JAD). Both JAT and JAD claimed to have orchestrated acts of terrorism during this period.

In 2016, while the state considered al-Qaeda, JI, ISIS, JAT and JAD as serious threats, other religious movements such as Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) were accused of committing subversive acts. HTI was not a violent movement, but it massively promoted the establishment of the Islamic state (*dar al-Islam*), the formalisation of Islamic law (*sharia*), the rejection of democracy and the refusal to live with non-Muslims – aims similar to those of jihadists but using non-violent means.

Religious diversity governance assessment

Although a large majority of Indonesians believe in Islam (87 %), religious diversity is seen as an essential factor for development. Indeed, Indonesia has the national motto of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (unity in diversity). Nonetheless, in governing diversity the state has faced the challenging reality of intra- and inter-religious conflicts. Among the many Islamic organisations and movements in Indonesia, NU and Muhammadiyah are the largest, claiming to have 80 and 40 million members respectively. Other Muslim organisations include Persatuan Islam, al-Irsyad, Jamaah al-Washliyyah, Nahdlatul Wathan and Sufi brotherhood movements. Generally, they affirm a religious ideology of moderatism (*washatiyya*). Their roles in the country are similar with the roles of civil society organisations that become state partners in dealing with the program of national development of the state.

More conservative Muslim organisations in the country tend to hamper national developments. These include Front Pembela Islam (FPI), Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI) and Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI). FPI does not have any orientation to establish an Islamic state, although their da'wa strategy permits the use of violence. Yet the government does not ban these organizations. In the case of FPI this is due to the fact that it is pro-democratic and supports nationalism.

Other than FPI, MMI acts as a jihadist wing of JI in certain regions in the country. The state has tried to control them due to their radicalisation activities or spreading of radical ideology especially among Wahhabites. MMI strongly rejects democracy and views the government as a near enemy (*aduw al-qarib*) that needs to be fought. MMI aims to formalise sharia at the state level and transform Indonesia to become an Islamic state. Both MMI and HTI are perceived as a threat by the government because they reject fundamental principles of the state (Pancasila) and the constitution of the republic.

In tackling religiously inspired radicalisation, the government has implemented two strategies: disengagement and de-radicalisation. The first strategy aims at engineering a certain social system in order to cut off individuals and groups from engaging with violent acts, while the second attempts at neutralising or moderating radical ideologies. As guardians of Islamic moderatism NU and Muhammadiyah are also protecting their fellow Muslims from radical religious understanding. However, both are fragmented and have a big task regarding this internal problem.

Two decades after political reformation, intra and inter-religious conflict can be observed in Indonesia. Christian-Muslim conflicts have surfaced in Jakarta, Ambon, Poso and Ternate. In addition, the conflicts between Sunni and Shia Muslims, between Sunni Muslims and Ahmadis, and between Sunni Muslims and believers of local religions and followers of new religious movements have occurred in various cities in Indonesia. The state is obliged to protect freedom of religion. And when conflicts have occurred, the government has applied the "harmony and pluralism" approach. They have facilitated intra- and inter-religious forums of harmony under the umbrella of *Forum Kerukunan Antar Umat Beragama* (FKUB).

About the GREASE project

Radicalisation, Secularism and the Governance of Religion: Bringing together European and Asian Perspectives (GREASE)

Involving researchers from Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Oceania, GREASE is investigating how religious diversity is governed in over 20 countries. Our work focuses on comparing norms, laws and practices that may (or may not) prove useful in preventing religious radicalisation. Our research also sheds light on how different societies cope with the challenge of integrating religious minorities and migrants. The aim is to deepen our understanding of how religious diversity can be governed successfully, with an emphasis on countering radicalisation trends.

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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to:

Professor Anna Triandafyllidou, anna.triandafyllidou@eui.eu

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