

# INDONESIA 2019 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, as noted in the constitution, to satisfy "just demands based upon considerations of morality, religious values, security, and public order in a democratic society." Individuals continued to be detained and received prison sentences of up to five years for violations of blasphemy laws. One man was detained for reading the Quran disrespectfully in an online video. In Aceh Province, authorities continued to carry out public canings for sharia violations, such as selling alcohol, gambling, and extramarital affairs, including one Buddhist man who accepted caning in lieu of imprisonment. Some local governments imposed local laws and regulations restricting religious observance, such as local regulations banning Shia or Ahmadi Islamic practice. In August authorities took action against two Pentecostal churches, revoking a permit for one and stopping worship activities for another. The Jakarta Prosecutor's Office continued to use a smartphone app called Smart Pakem allowing citizens to file heresy or blasphemy reports against groups with what the government considered 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), again reported problems with identifying their religion on their national identification cards (KTPs), although a 2017 Constitutional Court ruling allows for such a listing. Adherents of indigenous faiths cannot enter their specific names, however, because there are too many. Various jurisdictions agreed to use a common term, i.e., "Faith in One God." Three jurisdictions began issuing KTPs that could list "Faith in One God" as the faith category, but the practice was not widely implemented. There were again instances in which local governments and police acceded to the demands of groups, such as the Islamic Defenders' Front, Islamic Community Forum, Islamic Jihad Front, and the Indonesian Mujahideen Council, called "intolerant groups" in media, to close houses of worship for permit violations or otherwise restrict the rights of minority religious groups. Both the central and local governments included elected and appointed officials from minority religious groups. President Joko Widodo included six non-Muslims in his cabinet appointments announced on October 23, the same as during his previous administration.

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 May prominent leaders from all of Surabaya’s principal faith communities participated in commemorations of the May 2018 suicide bomber attack on three churches. Local Islamic youth groups in coordination with police provided extra security outside Surabaya churches in conjunction with the anniversary. In March unknown individuals vandalized Jewish graves in Jakarta, and in April unknown individuals damaged several wooden crosses at a Christian cemetery in Mrican, Yogyakarta.

The Ambassador and U.S. embassy and consulate officials advocated for religious freedom with the government, including at the highest levels. Embassy and consulate officials engaged government officials on specific issues, including actions against religious minorities, closures of places of worship, access for foreign religious organizations, convictions for blasphemy and defamation of religion, the importance of tolerance and rule of law, and the application of sharia to non-Muslims. Embassy and consulate officials also engaged civil society and religious leaders about tolerance and pluralism and spoke out publicly against discrimination and violence against minority religious communities. 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 the Ambassador to discuss religious freedom issues. The embassy and consulates conducted extensive outreach to promote the message of respect for diversity and religious tolerance through 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 264.9 million (midyear 2019 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, Gafatar, 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.

The Sikh population is estimated 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, with the total number of Jews estimated at 200. 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 1,700 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, saying the right to have a religion is a human right that shall not be discriminated against.

The constitution also says the state is based on the belief in one God, and the state is obliged to guarantee the freedom of worship. It states citizens must accept restrictions established by law to protect the rights of others and to satisfy, as noted in the constitution, "just demands based upon considerations of morality, religious values, security, and public order in a democratic society. 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 (MORA) extends official recognition to six religious groups: Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Confucianism. The government maintains a long-standing 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 officially recognized religions 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 MORA, 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 MORA before granting legal status to religious organizations. The law 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. By law, all religious groups must officially register with the government. Registration requirements for religious organizations include: (a) organizations may not contradict *Pancasila* and the constitution; (b) they must be voluntary, social, independent, nonprofit, and democratic; and (c) they must have a notarized articles of association (bylaws) and a specifically defined purpose. The organization then registers with the MORA. After MORA approval, the organization is announced publicly through the state gazette.

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. According to the criminal code, vigilantism carries a maximum five and one-half-year prison sentence.

A joint ministerial decree bans proselytizing and other activities by the Fajar Nusantara Movement, known as Gafatar. Violations of the ban carry a maximum five-year prison sentence on charges of blasphemy.

There is no joint ministerial decree that bans proselytizing by other groups. The Indonesian Council of Ulemas (MUI), a quasi-governmental Muslim organization, however, has issued fatwas that ban proselytizing by so called deviant groups such as Inkar al-Sunnah, Ahmadiyya, Islam Jama'ah, the Lia Eden Community, and al-Qiyadah al-Islamiyah.

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

A joint ministerial decree between the MORA and the MOHA states that 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 responsible for 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. Under the law, individuals may not opt out of religious education requirements. In practice, however, students of minority religious groups are often allowed to opt out and attend study hall instead.

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, although nonresident Muslims and adherents to other faiths may accept sharia in lieu of punishment under the criminal code.

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. The maximum penalties for violations of sharia regulations include imprisonment and caning. There are regulations intended to limit 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.

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 may aid each other and facilitate marriages by a group with a similar faith tradition and rituals.

A joint ministerial decree requires domestic religious organizations to obtain approval from the MORA 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. Most religious groups may, however, proselytize in their own places of worship, except for some groups such as the Ahmadi Muslims.

Foreign religious workers must obtain religious worker visas, and foreign religious organizations must obtain permission from the MORA 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**

In Aceh, authorities continued to carry out public canings for sharia violations, such as selling alcohol, gambling, and extramarital affairs, despite a 2018 ban on public canings announced by Aceh's governor. 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. According to media reports and human rights activists, several non-Muslim residents of Aceh chose punishment under sharia, reportedly due to the expediency of punishment and the risk of prolonged and expensive trials and possible lengthy prison sentences.

In August authorities in Aceh caned a Buddhist man and his Muslim girlfriend 27 times after the couple spent time in a Banda Aceh hotel room. According to a local reporter, the man accepted sharia punishment as an alternative to a prison sentence. He was the third Buddhist and eighth non-Muslim to choose punishment under sharia law since its introduction in 2014. Authorities also caned four unmarried Muslim couples between eight and 33 times each for extramarital sex, and they caned two unmarried couples 100 times each in the northern Aceh city of

Lhokseumawe after they were found guilty of premarital sex, while a third man received 160 lashes for having sex with a minor.

In March the Supreme Court rejected the appeal by Meliana, an ethnic Chinese Buddhist woman, who in 2018 was sentenced to 18 months in prison for blasphemy. The accusation came after she privately asked a local mosque caretaker's daughter that the mosque lower its loudspeaker volume. Vice President Jusuf Kalla and some senior members of Nahdlatul Ulama, the country's largest Muslim organization, said her remarks should not be considered blasphemy. In May she was released on parole after serving the mandatory two-thirds of her prison term.

In April the Special Criminal Police of Bangka Belitung investigated and detained Daud Rafles, a resident of Sekar Biru Village, Bangka Island, for blasphemy. Village residents identified Rafles in a viral video in which he allegedly read the Quran disrespectfully.

In June, according to Human Rights Watch, authorities arrested a Catholic woman, Suzethe Margaret, and charged her with blasphemy after taking a dog into a mosque. Witnesses stated she was looking for her husband and accused individuals at the mosque of converting him to Islam to marry another woman. She allegedly kicked a mosque guard when asked to leave. Doctors stated the woman needed psychiatric treatment and did not understand what she did. Reports stated the woman faced up to five years in prison if convicted. At year's end, prosecutors recommended the court sentence the woman to eight months in prison.

In April the Mayor of Malang, East Java, issued a circular urging non-Muslims not to "eat, drink, or smoke" in public places during Ramadan because it could hurt the feelings of fasting Muslims. The circular was posted on Malang's municipal government twitter account.

In April the press reported that a Catholic family was forced to leave Karet Village in Bantul, Yogyakarta, after staying one night in a house the family rented; local residents protested the family's presence and filed a report with Bantul regency officials. According to media reports, some villagers from Karet argued that under district law all newcomers must be Muslim. After mediation, the village chief and Bantul Regency government officials told the family they could stay in the village; press reports, however, stated the family chose to leave.

In March church leaders from the Christian church Gereja Bethel Indonesia in South Birombuli, Central Sulawesi, closed their place of worship due to objections from the local community. Media reported that church leaders, the head of the FKUB, local officials, and police met to discuss the fate of the church and that the church failed to receive approval from at least 60 members of the local community, as required by MORA regulation. Police told media that the land where the church was located was in dispute and the church did not have a building permit.

According to *The Jakarta Christian Post*, in August authorities revoked a recently issued permit for a Pentecostal church in Yogyakarta after protests and threats from Muslims in the area. The district chief stated he revoked the permit because the church did not meet requirements established by a ministerial decree regulating houses of worship, saying “a house of worship cannot be a home at the same time.”

In August according to media reports, the Indragiri Hilir District Civil Service Police Unit (Satpol PP) stopped worship activities at the Indonesian Pentecostal church Efata Church in Sari Agung Hamlet, Indragiri Hilir Regency, Riau. Worship activities had been proceeding there for five years. The head of Satpol PP said officials had to stop worship activities because they occurred at the pastor’s house and not in a house of worship. According to officials, the decision to stop services was made after the district government consulted with district leaders and the district FKUB, which included Christian representatives from Tembilahan, the district capital. A legal aid organization said the Sari Agung Hamlet pastor leading the congregation was not consulted during the process and therefore chose to continue to conduct religious services at a nearby tent. Local authorities identified an alternate worship site nine miles away from the pastor’s residence, but the congregation rejected this location due to its inaccessibility.

In September the regional secretary of Makassar Municipality in South Sulawesi released a government circular that stated, “Be wary of and not be influenced by Shia ideology and teachings.” The letter, issued on the day Ashura was observed, also asked persons to prevent dissemination of Shiism, calling it “deviant teaching.” Media reported the circular was based on an “illegal” circular issued by the South Sulawesi government in 2017. Dozens of human rights nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and activists in Makassar issued a statement a week later criticizing the circular and demanding that the provincial and municipal governments stop issuing what they termed intolerant circulars and prevent intolerant actions in the community.

In September the Regent of Gowa, South Sulawesi, issued a decree disbanding Tarekat Taj Al-Khalwaty Syech Yusuf, a Sufi religious group with 10,000 followers across Gowa and Takalar Regencies. The decision followed a 2016 heresy fatwa issued by the Gowa branch of MUI against the group. MUI Gowa reported the group and its leaders to the police for blasphemy and defamation against MUI Gowa and money laundering. In November Gowa police arrested the group's leader, Puang Lalang, on charges of financial fraud, embezzlement, and blasphemy for charging followers up to 50,000 Indonesian rupiah (\$4) for membership. MUI also issued heresy fatwas against the group in Sinjai Regency and Takalar Regency, South Sulawesi.

In September the speaker of the People's Consultative Assembly disallowed a non-Muslim female member from reading a prayer at the legislature's final session on September 27, which would have marked the first time a non-Muslim woman read the closing prayers.

The government continued to support a smartphone app called Smart Pakem allowing citizens to file heresy or blasphemy reports against individuals and groups with what the government considers unofficial or unorthodox religious practices. The Jakarta Prosecutor's Office launched the app in December 2018 with the expressed goal of streamlining the heresy and blasphemy reporting system. Various human rights organizations continued to criticize the app, saying it could undermine religious tolerance and freedom. 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.

The MORA 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 Tasikmalaya and Banjar, local MORA offices obliged Ahmadis to sign forms stating they denounced Ahmadiyya teachings. This practice began in 2014.

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 Islamic Defenders' Front (FPI), Islamic Community Forum, Islamic Jihad Front, and the Indonesian Mujahideen Council. For example, the FPI's registration as a religious organization expired in June. Sources stated the FPI is known for violence against minority religious groups and forcing the shutdown of bars and entertainment establishments it deems immoral. In May an online petition was created demanding the MOHA not renew the FPI's permit. As of year's end, the MOHA did not indicate that it would renew the permit, despite the MORA endorsing the renewal of the permit in December, and the group had no legal status.

In March Setara Institute reported there were 202 cases of religious freedom abuses in 2018 (72 cases committed by government and the rest by society), compared with 151 cases in 2017. Abuses cited included discrimination, intolerance, and prohibitions on wearing hijabs in public school.

In September civil society organization The Wahid Foundation reported 276 cases of religious persecution in 2018, as defined by the foundation, including 130 from government-related institutions. The foundation recorded 265 cases in 2017, including 95 from government-related institutions. The foundation's reported abuses included the issuance of sharia-based local regulations and prohibitions on building houses of worship.

In June the Pemalang police chief in Central Java conducted tolerance training for his police unit by having police officers and the public clean houses of worship of different faiths. In September NGO Madania conducted tolerance training called "Peace Initiative" for religious teachers.

In November FPI members intimidated the non-Muslim Regent of West Bangka, Bangka Belitung, to prevent his celebrating the Prophet Muhammad's birthday in his official residence.

More than 500 Shia Muslims from Madura remained displaced on the outskirts of Surabaya, East Java, after communal violence forced them from their homes in 2012. In Mataram, the capital of West Nusa Tenggara, 131 Ahmadi Muslims remained internally displaced in cramped apartments after a mob expelled them from their Lombok village in 2006.

Human rights organizations criticized a proposed bill, withdrawn after widespread protests, that would have revised the criminal code and expanded the 1965 blasphemy law. The bill proposed increasing the enumeration of "the elements of

crime” to include items such as defaming religious artifacts. A coalition of local civil society organizations said the law would discriminate against non-Muslims, non-Sunni Muslims, local religious minorities, as well as women and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons.

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. In May a group of Hindus wanted to build a temple in Bekasi, West Java. Persons in the surrounding area rejected the project by saying the number of Hindus in the neighborhood was too low.

Local governments did not issue permits even when the worshippers obtained the requisite numbers if 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 permit requirements. *Aliran kepercayaan* adherents said they were fearful of atheism accusations if they were 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. In July the Regent of Bantul, Yogyakarta, removed the building permit from a Pentecostal church in Sedayu, Bantul, following protests and pressure by the local community.

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.

In August local residents stopped the construction project of an Indonesian Baptist church in Tlogosari Wetan, Semarang, Central Java. They argued that the building permit owned by the group had expired, and they subsequently blocked access to the project site where the church was being built. The Semarang administration subsequently decided to review the building permit. Semarang Mayor Hendrar Prihadi said the church construction would be halted until he verified the permit's validity.

Church leaders in Jambi said they had been trying to obtain appropriate building permits from the city administration to build places of worship since 2003, but city authorities had not granted these due to opposition from community authorities. The head of the Jambi Municipal Civil Service Police Unit said three churches were shut down in 2018 because they violated regional regulations and did not have proper building permits. At year's end, the three churches remained closed. In 2018 an activist created a petition online urging the government to reopen these churches. As of December, approximately 3,900 people had signed the petition.

Construction was completed on the Santa Clara Catholic Church in Bekasi, West Java. 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. The church was formally opened by the Bekasi mayor on August 17.

*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.

In November media reported that a public school expelled two Jehovah's Witness students after they declined to recite the national anthem, salute the national flag, and attend religious classes, citing their beliefs. The decision to expel the students was made in coordination with the local MORA branch, the Batam Education

Authority, police, and the military. Following objections filed by a law firm representing the expelled students, the provincial Board of Education in Batam eventually ordered the cancelation of the expulsion letters. The two students returned to school after almost two months.

Although the government generally allowed citizens to leave the religion column blank on their KTPs, individuals continued to report difficulties accessing government services if they did so. Faced with this problem, many religious minority members, including those following indigenous beliefs, 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. Following a 2017 Constitutional Court ruling, citizens were allowed to select indigenous faiths as an option on their KTPs. In 2018 MORA officials said they were planning on implementing this law in order to identify indigenous faiths on KTPs. Early in the year, three jurisdictions began issuing KTPs that allowed the faith category “Faith in One God” in South Sulawesi, Bandung, and Cirebon (West Java).

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.

Men and women of different religions who sought to marry reportedly had difficulties finding a religious official willing to perform a wedding ceremony. Some couples of different religions selected the same religion on their KTPs in order to marry legally.

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

Both the central and local governments included elected and appointed officials from minority religious groups. For example, the Mayor of Solo was Catholic. After beginning a second term in October, President Widodo’s new 34-member

cabinet included six members of minority faiths, the same as during his previous administration.

Foreign religious workers from many religious groups continued to state they found it relatively easy to obtain visas, and some groups reported little government interference with their religious activities.

Police provided special protection to some Catholic churches in major cities during Sunday services and Christian holidays. Police also provided special protection to Buddhist and Hindu temples during religious celebrations.

According to the law, a marriage is legitimate if it has been performed according to the laws of the respective religions and beliefs of the parties concerned. Nevertheless, interreligious marriage was difficult unless the groom or bride was willing to be married according to the religious rituals of only one of the two religions. Many individuals who performed interreligious marriage preferred to go abroad for the marriage.

### **Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom**

According to an Ahmadiyya leader in Bandung, West Java, “intolerant groups” continued to use MUI fatwas to justify actions against religious minorities and other vulnerable groups, even though the fatwas lacked legal standing. For example, in January a group of individuals disbanded a book discussion organized by Ahmadiyya in Bandung, West Java, saying the book promoted Ahmadiyya messages.

Individuals affiliated at the local level with MUI used rhetoric considered intolerant by religious minorities, including fatwas declaring Shia and Ahmadi Muslims as deviant sects. In July 12 anti-Ahmadiyya groups protested against an Ahmadiyya annual event in Gowa, South Sulawesi, held by members to discuss their annual strategy. 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.

Throughout the year there were disputes between religious groups in the predominantly Christian province of Papua. Some religious leaders stated that many disputes between ethnic Papuans and migrants to Papua were based on ethnicity, economic competition, and political grievances rather than religion. In July a group called the Moral Guard Alliance Makassar forced the closure of two

food stalls that sold pork at a shopping mall in Makassar. The organization's leader told media the mall management closed the stalls in response to an alliance letter asking the mall to prohibit nonhalal food items. Mall management said it would try to find a more suitable location for the stalls. The two food stalls opened in January, and the mall management stated the stalls put up signs warning visitors that they sold nonhalal food.

In May prominent leaders from all of Surabaya's principal faith communities participated in commemorations of the anniversary of the May 2018 suicide bomber attack on three churches. Local Islamic youth groups in coordination with police provided extra security outside Surabaya churches in conjunction with the anniversary. Christian leaders in Surabaya said they were encouraged by sympathy and support shown toward the affected Christians by the local Muslim community.

In August Ustadz Abdul Somad, a Muslim cleric from Riau, was reported to district police for blasphemy when a video recorded three years earlier had gone viral. In the video, Somad said a Christian cross contained a *kafir* (infidel) genie (demon) in response to a question from a worshipper. Members of Horas Bangso Batak (a North Sumatra ethnic-based organization that is mostly Christian) filed a complaint with the district police in Metrojaya, Jakarta. Members of Brigade Meo, a Christian-based organization in East Nusa Tenggara, also reported him to the local police. At year's end, the case remained under police investigation.

In March German news broadcaster Deutsche Welle reported that several Jewish graves in a public cemetery in Jakarta were desecrated.

In October the inaugural report on anti-Semitism by UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief Ahmed Shaheed found that "over 57 percent of teachers and lecturers and 53.74 percent of students in Indonesia agreed with a survey statement claiming that 'Jews are the enemies of Islam.'" Additionally, the report stated that local Jewish community leaders reported it was common for the public to equate all Jews with Israel.

According to AsiaNews, in April unknown individuals damaged several wooden crosses at a Christian cemetery in Mrican, Yogyakarta.

MUI supported a Christian funeral service taking place in front of a mosque in Jakarta in September.

Many individuals in the government, media, civil society, and general population were vocal and active in protecting and promoting tolerance and pluralism. In November Vice President Ma'ruf Amin and Grand Imam of Istiqlal Mosque Nasaruddin Umar stated that religious tolerance would be an increasing focus in the country's education.

The largest and most influential religious groups and NGOs, including the two largest Islamic groups in the country – Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah – officially endorsed and advocated for tolerance, pluralism, and the protection of minority groups in many instances. For example, in February Haedar Nashir, Muhammadiyah chairman, called on all citizens to demonstrate tolerance and to live in peace with other religious communities. Said Aqil Siradj, Nahdlatul Ulama chairman, stated in August that tolerance was an important element of a proper attitude and a good personality.

#### **Section IV. U.S. Government Policy and Engagement**

The 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; access for foreign religious organizations; 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; 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. Specifically, the embassy met with legislators and other government officials to advocate against the expansion of blasphemy provisions in a bill to amend the criminal code.

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 from both countries established to promote interfaith dialogue, pluralism, and tolerance. The Ambassador engaged its leadership to discuss ways to augment the council's activity on issues affecting the country's religious communities. In particular, the Ambassador urged council members to engage in activities with U.S. members and to use the council as a vehicle for joint collaboration between the two countries to combat violent extremism and promote religious freedom.

During Ramadan, the embassy and consulates conducted extensive outreach throughout the country to highlight religious tolerance. The Ambassador promoted religious freedom and tolerance during his appearance on two of the country's highest-rated television shows. A social media campaign used embassy-produced Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr videos to promote interfaith tolerance within the country.

The embassy's annual "Ramadan in the U.S." campaign promoted democratic values including tolerance, volunteerism, and strength in diversity. As part of the campaign, 4,000 high school and university students heard directly from U.S. government-sponsored exchange program former participants about their firsthand experiences of religious tolerance and diversity during their time in the United States. By highlighting the experiences of Muslim travelers and Muslim communities in the United States, the campaign celebrated interfaith tolerance.

In March embassy officials met with Muslim and Christian leaders, as well as with members of the local FKUB, in Jayapura, Papua, to discuss efforts to resolve disputes between religious groups in the province.

In April the Ambassador met with prominent Muslim leaders in Padang, hosted an iftar in an Islamic boarding school for women in Padang Panjang in West Sumatra, and discussed tolerance and religious freedom.

In October the consulate in Medan invited Muslim scholars from the North Sumatra chapter of the Indonesian Cleric Coordination Body and Muslim academics from the North Sumatra Islamic State University De-Radicalization Research Center for dialogue on Islamic issues with visiting Washington-based officials.

The Ambassador met periodically with leaders of the country's two largest Muslim organizations, Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama, to discuss religious tolerance and pluralism and to further develop areas of cooperation.

The embassy implemented several professional exchange programs designed to foster and encourage religious tolerance. These included sponsoring a visit to the United States by eight influential imams (including the senior-most religious leader of the country and the imam of the largest mosque in Southeast Asia) to examine religious pluralism and promote tolerance. Other groups of civil society leaders, university officials, and the head of madrassah teacher training at the MORA attended programs focused on promoting pluralism and tolerance across religious divides and advancing interfaith relations.

The embassy created a new exchange program to expose emerging leaders within Islamic organizations to religious pluralism in the United States, in order to increase religious tolerance in Indonesia by showing how religious tolerance in the United States benefits the entire society.

The embassy sponsored four university students to participate in a Department of State-funded religious freedom program at Temple University. The embassy also sponsored the participation of five individuals in a program, which included a forum on “Tolerance and Coexistence” in November. During the forum, experts discussed topics such as “Interfaith Relations and Global Peace in the Digital Age” and “Making Sense of the New Information Space to Combat Divisions and Polarization.”

The embassy promoted participation in a parliamentary exchange program on religious tolerance and combating online hate speech. The program seeks to enhance the ability of members of parliament to utilize best legislative practices to combat hate speech and protect vulnerable groups against discrimination.

Embassy officials met regularly with counterparts from other embassies to discuss support for the freedom of religion and belief and to exchange information on areas of concern, programs being implemented, and possible areas of cooperation.