

## Shifting focus - Jemaah Islamiyah's long-term agenda towards Islamism

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- There is evidence that low-level sectarian violence in Sulawesi and Maluku provinces is being stoked by Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) Islamist militants supportive of the group and its objectives.
- JI may view communal conflicts as a means of broadening its support base and attracting new recruits to an organisation weakened by sustained Indonesian pressure.
- Most of those carrying out the attacks are local residents, although authorities suspect the co-ordinators of the violence are experienced JI operatives from other provinces.

**Sectarian violence is not a new phenomenon in [Indonesia](#), but is definitely on the rise. Zachary Abuza examines the main methods employed by the different groups in their campaign to establish Islamic law in the Muslim areas.**

Since the Bali bombings of 12 October 2002, the Indonesian government has launched a sustained and successful campaign against the regional terrorist group Jemaah Islamiyah (JI). More than 400 members have been arrested, most recently Indonesia's second most wanted man Abu Dujana on 9 June, and [Indonesia](#) alone has prosecuted over 250 militants, including many top leaders and operatives; its regional system of cells (mantiqis) has been damaged, and overall command and control has considerably broken down. JI currently consists of semi-autonomous cells, organised horizontally, whose capabilities have been significantly degraded.

Nonetheless, JI remains a remarkably resilient organisation, and one with a very long-term agenda. It has sought to regroup through a combined campaign of overt social welfare and proselytising (dawah) activities, while establishing a rear base area in the southern [Philippines](#) through alliances with the [Abu Sayyaf Group \(ASG\)](#). The organisation is also involved in small-arms training in Java, according to two members arrested in a late March 2007 raid that led to the capture of eight militants and netted two large caches of explosives, including 730 kg of explosive materials, 45 kg of TNT, 200 detonators, circuitry, and small-arms and ammunition.

Less understood has been JI's role in fomenting sectarian violence in Central Sulawesi and Maluku. There has been an alarming increase of attacks in these provinces, including bombings, targeted assassinations, and raids on military/police facilities. This recrudescence of violence has been far less of a priority for Jakarta, which has tended to be largely reactive in dealing with the problem.

### **Before Bali**

While Indonesia is the world's largest Muslim country and over 80 per cent of its 225 million people are Muslim, nearly two thirds of that population is concentrated on the islands of Java and Sumatra. The outer islands of the 3,000-mile long archipelago have sizeable, and often majority, populations of the country's ethnic and religious minorities (mainly Hindu and Christian). Between 1965 and 1985 the ethnic balance in the outer islands was upset by President Suharto's policy of transmigrasi (forced relocation of Muslims) mainly from the over-populated islands of Java and Madura to the less-populated outer islands. Over time, Christian and Hindu dominance of local politics and economy was eroded, causing tensions. The fall of Suharto in May 1998 and subsequent collapse of military control of civilian politics resulted in an eruption of sectarian violence across Indonesia's outer islands.

JI did not start these conflicts, but they were very quick to take advantage of them. While JI was founded in 1992/93, it did not engage in any terrorist activities until 2000. In that time, it developed a network of madrassahs and cells, dispatched members to [Pakistan](#), [Afghanistan](#) and Mindanao for training, established front companies and recruited new members. Much of its leadership, as well as alleged [Al-Qaeda](#) advisors, such as Omar al-Faruq, who were based in either [Malaysia](#) or the southern [Philippines](#), returned to [Indonesia](#) following Suharto's fall.

JI formed two paramilitary groups to participate in the sectarian bloodletting: Laskar Mujahidin in the Maluku islands, and Laskar Jundullah in Sulawesi. While some groups such as [Laskar Jihad](#), with some 3,000 white-robed members, attracted more media attention, they had no military skills, minimal training and were armed with only bladed weapons. By contrast, JI operatives were able to procure small-arms, automatic rifles and bomb-making material from colleagues in the southern [Philippines](#). JI militants, fresh out of training in Mindanao, changed the tide of the conflict in the Maluku islands. Abdulrahman Iqbal, better known as Abu Jibril, JI's alleged second in command, headed the Laskar Mujahidin. His lieutenant on the ground was Fadillah Haris, a leading JI member in the region, whose daughter became Omar al-Faruq's wife. Jibril was arrested in June 2001 in [Malaysia](#) for his militant activities, before being released in August 2003 and deported to [Indonesia](#) in May 2004. Agus Dwikarna founded Laskar Jundullah as the armed wing of his Preparatory Committee to Implement Sharia in South Sulawesi (Komite Persiapan Penegakan Syariat Islam: KPPSI), a JI front organisation operating openly. The 1998 to 2001 period was known by JI as the 'uhud project' in which JI sought to establish a secure base area (qoidah aminah) governed by sharia (Islamic law) where they could train and from where they could spread their activities. JI used these paramilitaries to recruit new members, to inculcate a Manichean worldview and give them the opportunity to defend their religion. JI used the paramilitaries to discredit the Indonesian state, which in their eyes was not coming to the defence of fellow Muslims. JI had established a military training camp in the jungle outside the troubled town of Poso. It also allowed them to forge a common cause with overt Islamist organisations in society, such as Dewan Dakwah Islam Indonesia (DDII), the Ulama's Council of Indonesia (Majlis Ulama Indonesia: MUI), Mujahidin Council of Indonesia (Majlis Mujahidin Indonesia: MMI) and other organisations that have endorsed the sectarian conflicts and encouraged militants to defend Muslim interests and defeat Christian secessionist aspirations, in particular the Republic of the South Maluccas Movement, which was emboldened by East Timor's successful campaign for independence.

While JI's paramilitary groups were small in number probably no more than 500 men their military training, discipline and aggressiveness changed the nature of the conflict.

The Indonesian government was finally able to quell the violence by early 2002. On 13 February 2002, some 70 representatives of Christian and Muslim militias signed the Second Malino Accord; notably absent were representatives of the JI-linked groups. Among other things, the 11-point accord called for the disarming of all militias and the expulsion of outside forces from the region.

A tenuous peace held until mid-2004. Reeling from a string of arrests following bombings in 2002 (Bali), 2003 (the JW Marriott hotel, Jakarta) and 2004 (the Australian Embassy, Jakarta) many in JI began to question the efficacy of the violent strategy, which brought foreign pressure on the Indonesian government to crack down on the organisation (although JI has yet to be proscribed by the government). They instead stressed the importance of the local agenda, incorporating involvement in sectarian conflict as a means of motivation for Muslims to take up arms in defence of Islam.

At the same time, those JI members favouring continued engagement in urban terrorist attacks on Western targets also saw the tactical use of sectarian violence to facilitate the recruitment of a new generation of members. The death of JI's chief bomb maker, Dr Azahari bin Husin, and the capture of his cache of explosives in November 2005 was clearly a setback for JI, which in 2006 was unable to perpetrate a major terrorist attack for the first time since 2002. While the seizure of explosives in caches in March demonstrate that JI has not abandoned its bombing campaign, sectarian violence has clearly taken on growing importance.

### **Undermining Malino**

Since the first Malino accord was signed in December 2001, there have been more than 60 bombings in the Maluku islands and Sulawesi, and the tempo has increased since October 2004. There have been at least 28 successful bomb attacks, resulting in the deaths of 48 people since then. More than 21 people, including five police officers, and several Christian pastors have been gunned down in close-quarter assassinations. While not amounting to a dramatic surge in violence, attacks have continued at a steady rate that effectively undermines stability in these two regions. Attacks can be divided into four distinct categories: bombings, assassinations, raids on police or army posts, and arson attacks/pogroms.

### **Bombings**

The death toll from bombings has been quite small, with two incidents responsible for half of all bomb-

related fatalities. The most lethal attacks were the bombing of a Poso market that killed six and wounded several others in November 2004; and simultaneous blasts in Tentena that killed 22 and injured more than 30 in May 2005. Both Poso and Tentena are in Central Sulawesi. However, most bombings, such as the August 2005 explosion in a crowded market in Ambon, the capital of Maluku province, that injured nine, have not caused fatalities.

Churches and Hindu temples have been singled out for attack and since October 2004 six places of worship have been bombed. In October 2004, 15 improvised explosive devices (IEDs) were planted in a Christian church in Ambon but were discovered before they could be detonated. On 30 September 2006, a bomb was placed outside of a church in Poso. Most recently, on 23 January 2007 police in Central Sulawesi removed a bomb from an Adventist Church amid fears that the region was entering a new phase of religious strife. Another target of small bombings have been Christians who have returned to their homes following the Malino Accords. On 5 February 2006, for example, police found three bombs in a refugee centre in Ambon that was resettling Christians who had fled between 1998 and 2001.

Some 260 IEDs have been recovered, including a cache of 123 discovered in a cemetery near Poso in October 2004; and 95 recovered during a raid on a safe-house used by Islamist militants in Ambon on 28 March 2005. In November 2005, another cache was seized in Central Sulawesi.

IEDs used in the Maluku islands and Central Sulawesi have been generally small and unsophisticated. The majority have been small pipe-bombs, approximately 15 cm long, 3 cm wide and relying on black powder. Nails and bolts have often been packed around the devices to increase the shrapnel effect. On several occasions, militants have used mortar rounds boosted with ball bearings. Devices based on ammonium nitrate have been increasingly deployed, but have remained small. In January 2006, one bomb consisted of potassium chlorate, sulphur and aluminum. Most of the detonators have been blasting caps affixed to simple timing devices. On no occasion have more sophisticated triggering mechanisms, such as mobile telephones, been used. On 10 February 2006, a militant was arrested in Kalimantan smuggling 3,000 Indian-manufactured detonators and more than 1,700 metres of fuse from Malaysia's Sarawak state. His arrest led authorities to a woman in Pare-Pare, South Sulawesi, who was found with 19 sacks of ammonium nitrate, 597 detonators and eight kg of potassium chlorate.

### **Targeted killings**

Most of those killed in sectarian bloodletting have been gunned down indiscriminately, but other victims have been carefully targeted with a view to provoke a backlash from the government and Christian community. On 5 August 2005, two men, both prosecution witnesses in an upcoming trial over the ongoing violence in Poso, were shot dead. Militants also killed a human rights lawyer, Ferry Silalahi on 26 May 2004. On 16 October 2006, an outspoken Christian pastor, Rev Irianto Kongkoli, who led demonstrations against the government's execution of three Christian militia leaders, was gunned down in Palu, Central Sulawesi, pushing tension in the province to new levels. The evidence against the three was at best weak and hardly warranted the death sentence, but the sentence was widely seen as a government attempt to balance the execution of the three Bali bombers, whose sentence has been delayed since August 2006. The execution of the three provoked widespread protests across Sulawesi. Two Muslims were killed the following day in mob violence. Soon after, a female pastor, Susianti Tinulele, was also assassinated.

Raids in March 2007 on three safe-houses on Java netted three M-16 rifles, revolvers and thousands of rounds of ammunition. According to the head of Indonesia's counterterrorism efforts, General Ansyad Mbai, documentary evidence recovered indicated [JI](#) had established a team of assassins, approximately 100-strong, known as Sariyah (the Armed Group). Although detailed organisation charts of Sariyah were found, it remains unclear whether the term refers to a new geographical division within [JI](#), or a new military or special forces unit. However, the chart did indicate that Sariyah was headed by Abu Dujana, who was arrested on 9 June. Four territorial commanders operated under his command, although two were also recently captured. The last two, the heads of the Jakarta and Central Java regions, remain at large. One operative arrested in March, Ayyasy, confirmed that small arms training for the group had been conducted in several remote areas of Central Java beginning in mid-2006.

There have also been some shocking attacks in Central Sulawesi, such as the beheadings of three schoolgirls on 29 October 2005, and two women killed by machete-wielding assailants on 19 November 2005.

The same month, two schoolgirls from Poso were shot in the face at close range. These attacks are simply meant to terrorise the community.

### **Raids on police and army posts**

There have been a number of maritime assaults, such as the February 2005 attack in which gunmen in motorboats attacked a beachside café in Ambon, killing two. These attacks were seen as practice runs for a number of more sophisticated attacks on police and army posts. On 16 May 2005, six to eight militants raided a paramilitary police (Brimob) post on Seram Island in the Maluku islands, killing five police officers and three civilians.

The attackers arrived in speedboats and killed the police officers with shots to the head, suggesting a degree of training.

The Maluku police chief says: "I have long stated that the incidents were the work of well-trained people and I was right. They are civilians with extraordinary capabilities. But they also use local people in carrying out their missions."

### **Sectarian cleansing**

The final category of attack involving arson and pogroms against Christians has been widespread across Sulawesi. For example, on 24 April 2005, a gang of Muslim 'kommandos' torched houses in a Christian community in Mamasa, West Sulawesi, killing six people. The regency of Mamasa has been plagued by sectarian-fueled arson attacks since the government divided the regency of Polewali Mamasa into two, leaving three Muslim districts within the majority-Christian regency of Mamasa. On 25 May 2005, clashes erupted in West Tenggara Regency in the Maluku islands, killing three people and injuring more than 50 others.

### **Who is behind the attacks?**

While this level of violence is not exceptionally high, it is troubling because [JI](#) and several splinter groups are behind much of it, and are using sectarian conflict to regroup. [JI](#) has always encouraged members to establish their own regional organisations with varying degrees of covertness. A number of [JI](#) affiliates are active, of which the most important is Mujahidin Action Committee for Crisis Response (Komite Aksi Penanggulangan Akibat Krisis: KOMPAK).

Mujahidin KOMPAK emerged in 1999 in response to the sectarian bloodletting that erupted following the fall of Suharto. Although being formed by previous members of KOMPAK, a legitimate humanitarian charity, Mujahidin KOMPAK operates entirely separately.

Mujahidin KOMPAK's affiliate in Poso is Mujahidin Kayamanya, which is sometimes referred to as Tanah Runtuh (Tanah Runtuh refers to an area of Poso besides a radicalised madrassah). Groups such as Mujahidin Kayamanya have become distinct Islamist paramilitary groups in their own right. While engaging in charitable work to recruit locals, they then moved from the provision of aid to the provision of security for Muslim communities.

In May 2006, there were a string of arrests of Mujahidin Kayamanya's leaders, including the Mindanao veteran Hasanuddin, a leading bomb maker Taufik Bulaga, and Haris, a top operative. These arrests led to several other members, and by mid-2006 the police were confident that they were gaining the upper hand. On 22 October 2006, however, there was a clash between some 700 Brimob troops and militants in Poso.

In November 2006, the police announced the arrest of 15 members of Mujahidin Kayamanya. It is thought to have roughly 100 members, and the police are actively searching for 14 known leaders and members. In addition, there is the residual presence of [JI's](#) original paramilitary groups, Laskar Jundullah, its umbrella group, the KPPSI, and the Laskar Mujahidin, which is now overtly involved in humanitarian welfare. These groups are committed to [JI's](#) ends of establishing an Islamic state in [Indonesia](#), governed fully by sharia. They have focused more on [JI's](#) original strategy of fomenting sectarian violence. While many of the militants involved in the attacks are local, most of the leaders, such as Hasanuddin and current leaders, Ustadz Yahya and Mas Toto, come from Java and other regions. Gen Mbai, the national counter-terrorism co-ordinator, asserts that a leading [JI](#) member who was a key participant in the Bali bombing "played an important role" in the October 2003 attacks in Poso that killed 10 people and coincided with the anniversary of the Bali bombing. Similarly, on 2 May 2005, Indonesian police arrested three suspects in a small village outside of Poso, wanted in conjunction with the August 2003 bombing of the JW Marriott hotel in Jakarta. All three, Suryadi (32), Saifullah (38) and Sucipto (37), as well as a

fourth who escaped, were involved in not only the sectarian bloodletting in Ambon in 1999 and 2000, but also in the 24 April attacks in Mamasa.

In late May 2005, both Vice-President Jusuf Kalla and the Indonesian National Police announced that the group responsible for the 28 May Tentana bombings had clear links to a large JJ cell in Solo, Java. Basri, the ringleader of the group that beheaded the three school girls in November 2005 admitted to having been trained by JJ instructors, starting in 2003, and to taking an oath of loyalty, after their weekly indoctrination lessons. In March 2006, five fundraising militants for JJ were arrested in Poso. Enceng Kurnia, a leader of KOMPAK, was sentenced to six years' imprisonment in late 2006 for supplying weapons to JJ paramilitaries, as well as for protecting fugitive leader Noordin Mohammad Top. On 7 May 2006, the elite counter-terrorism force Densus 88 arrested five men in the Central Sulawesi town of Tolitoli, suspected of being close colleagues of Noordin Mohammad Top. The flow is not one way: in February 2007 police were searching for a senior militant trained by Dr Azahari and Noordin in Blitar, East Java, who was then sent to Poso, and had returned to Java to take over a JJ cell. Mukhlas, a JJ leader sentenced to death for his role in the 2002 Bali bombing, is still encouraging jihad in Sulawesi through taped sermons.

### **An adequate response?**

The security presence in the Maluku islands and Sulawesi has not proven strong enough to stop murders, bombings, and intimidation, and few refugees have returned to their pre-conflict homes. Following provocative attacks, the government tends to dispatch large numbers of army and Brimob forces to restore order, and then quickly withdraw them when a semblance of order is restored, which invariably leads to more violence. For example, 1,000 additional security forces were dispatched to Central Sulawesi following the November 2005 beheadings, but quickly withdrawn. Days after Indonesian authorities announced that they were withdrawing more than two battalions from the Maluku islands because of the "improved security situation," a bomb ripped through a crowded market in Ambon on 25 August 2006; the explosion injured nine but killed no one. President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono ordered senior police officials to the region in October 2006 to oversee operations. Soon after, Co-ordinating Minister for Politics and Security Admiral Widodo issued a report in November 2006 that called for a permanent Brimob unit to be based in the region, so they would have a deterrent role and better human intelligence than an outside group deployed when conflicts erupted.

Despite the arrests of many of its leaders in 2006, Mujahidin Kayamanya has proved to be well entrenched in the community. Security forces are improving their intelligence picture and gaining valuable operational experience and expertise, especially within the elite police counter-terrorism unit, Densus 88. On 11 January 2007, for example, two Densus 88 rapid reaction units (24 men) raided Tanah Runtu, capturing four men on their most wanted list.

On 22 January 2007, government forces responded to reports on a large number of armed militants massing near Poso. The raid triggered a gun battle in which 15 suspected fighters and one officer were killed. In all, 17 suspected terrorists were killed in January in clashes with the police. Over 50 people were arrested, yet more than 50 suspected militants were able to escape. Following the shootout, the government dispatched an additional 100 police officers to the province, but had pledged to withdraw them by February. A police spokesman explained that "the situation is improving... and the [current] security system is no longer needed."

In spite of these assertions, tensions in the Maluku islands and Sulawesi remain high, and local authorities fear that more serious conflict is a possibility should the violence continue. Brig. Gen. Oegroseno, the police chief in Central Sulawesi province said "the terror motive in Palu is apparent. They want people to feel insecure".

The government's will to intervene has repeatedly been called into question, and it remains to be seen whether politicians will be willing to provoke a backlash from Islamists by appearing to take the side of Christians in the remote provinces.

Moreover, there have been plenty of incidents provoked by Christian groups such as the riots that erupted following the execution of three Christians in September 2006. Some 20 Christians were arrested for murdering two Muslims and attacking a police station during the protests - attacks that have only fed the cycle of sectarian violence.

Part of the problem is that the government has downplayed the conflict, asserting that it is localised and

that a more robust response would therefore be counter-productive. As Kalla recently explained: "What we have in Poso is terrorism, not (sectarian) conflict. A conflict is between two communities. What we have there is remnants of the past that have been radicalised to the point of terror." Nevertheless, while these are small groups, they are clearly capable of causing fear in communities already traumatised by years of violence. The concern is that [JI](#) may be seizing the opportunity to stoke the conflict in order to broaden its support as a 'protector' of the local Muslim communities, and in so doing replenish the ranks of its organisation.