

Editorial

This June 1, the Islamic Defenders Command (KLI), an umbrella group comprising three Islamist organizations, attacked a peaceful rally held by the Alliance for the Freedom of Religion and Faith (AKKBB) at Jakarta's National Monument, or Monas. The event was held to commemorate the birthday of the state's foundation ideology, but this year, the Pancasila celebrations were cancelled before they began when the KLI attacked the AKKBB. Since then, calls for the FPI's disbandment have intensified. At the time this report went to press, 58 FPI members had been arrested by the police for involvement in the attack (4/6/08).

The Monas tragedy is the main focus of the 10th edition of our Monthly Report. However, before Monas, the FPI's South Sulawesi chapter had committed other violent acts and these are also detailed. This report will also discuss the Pangkep regency case in which the local government is seeking assistance from radical cleric Abu Bakar Ba'asyir on how to institute sharia law.

The Wahid Institute believes that regional autonomy as it is currently being practiced is a double-edged sword. On one hand, autonomy can reduce the authoritarianism of central government and give local people an important voice; one that is essential to the functioning of a modern democracy. However, unchecked autonomy can also increase the danger that local governments are hijacked by anti-democratic forces, especially in the form of fundamentalist religious groups. Cooperation between regional governments and fundamentalists is currently occurring in many places in the country. Normally this fundamentalist advocacy for public morality results in repressive new sharia-style bylaws.

This kind of advocacy has recently begun to bear fruit in Pangkep, South Sulawesi, with the local regent threatening to ban all musical performances he judges are erotic and therefore immoral. The regent made this announcement while standing alongside Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, the Supreme Leader of the radical Indonesia Mujahidin Council (MMI), whose members are actively encouraging regional governments to adopt severe forms of Islamic sharia. This trend, if it is allowed to continue, will see more regional governments become the hostages of fundamentalists and their intolerant teachings.

Apart from the two issues, the report will also discuss the distribution of VCDs in Padang, West Sumatra, and the expulsion of a Salafi leader in West Lombok over accusations he taught a deviant form of Islam.

The Ahmadiyah sect also continues to be a focus of interest. The joint ministerial decree (SKB) on the sect, which was recommended by Bakor Pakem, the quasi-governmental body that polices religious mysticism and cults, has yet to be issued. It indicates that the government is unsure how to interpret or make policy about the Ahmadiyah. Even so, pressure against the Ahmadiyah continues and a number of followers are seeking asylum overseas and are visiting consulates in Bali to seek assistance. ■

Waiting For the Demise of the FPI

1. The Monas Tragedy

At least 70 activists from the National Alliance for Freedom of Religion were seriously injured when they were attacked by the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) and Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) – under the banner of the Islamic Defenders Command (KLI) – during Pancasila celebrations at Monas earlier this month.

Wahid Institute Executive Director Ahmad Suaedy said there was evidence that the KLI's attack on AKKBB was planned. "The plan for the attack was arranged at the Istiqlal Mosque. I have men there who knew that they were planning to attack us," he said during a press conference at the Wahid Institute offices in Jakarta shortly after the event (2/06/2008).

AKKBB legal advisor Asfinawati agreed, saying that KLI leader Munarman had publically stated that the attack was revenge for a media advertisement by AKKBB. He noted that one victim suffered from an eye irritation that may have been caused by a prepared substance that was thrown at him during the attack.

According to the director of the Jakarta Legal Aid Foundation (LBH Jakarta), AKBB had found flyers proving that the forum had planned to hold a demonstration at eight that morning but delayed their action until 1pm so their demonstration would coincide with AKKBB's.

Witnesses said police did little to break up the conflict, although chief of police intelligence Saleh Saaf said police had

BOARD OF EDITORS

Expertises: Yenny Zannuba Wahid and Ahmad Suaedy | Editor-in-Chief: Rumadi | Managing Editors: Gamal Ferdhi, Nurul H. Ma'arif | Editors: M. Subhi Azhari, Dandy Kosawaraputra, Arif Hakim Budiawan (Translator).

Graphic Design: Widhi Cahya

ADDRESS:

The Wahid Institute
Jln Taman Amir Hamzah 8,
Jakarta - 10320

Website: www.wahidinstitute.org

Email: info@wahidinstitute.org

ASSOCIATE AND CONTRIBUTORS:

Akhdiansyah (West Nusa Tenggara), Suhendy (West Java), Nur Kholik Ridwan (Central Java and Jogjakarta Special Region) Alamsyah M. Dja'far (Jakarta), Zainul Hamdi (East Java), Syamsul Rijal (South Sulawesi) in cooperation with TIFA Foundation.

predicted a clash and had told the different supporters to stick to their schedules.

The clash was roundly condemned and in the days following it many organizations called for the immediate disbandment of FPI.

Calls for a ban on the FPI

THE Speaker of the House of Representatives Agung Laksono told reporters the attack was “against the Pancasila” ideology. National Awakening Party (KB) leader Effendy Choirie said the attack violated the Constitution and called for the arrest of those responsible, sentiments echoed by many other political factions and religious groups. Nahdlatul Ulama senior cleric KH. Masdar F. Mas’udi condemned violence carried out in the name of religion and demanded that the perpetrators be punished.

“Delaying actions against the perpetrators ... will undermine the nation,” he said.

The NU and all its units, consisting of GP Ansor, DKN Garda Bangsa, PP Ikatan Pencak Silat Pagar Nusa, PP Lakpesdam, PB PMII, PP IPPNU, PP Fatayat NU, P3M, and the Wahid Institute, all called for a ban.

Speaking at a press conference at NU headquarters, GP Ansor secretary general A Malik Haramain said the group had submitted a petition to the crimes division of the National Police.

“If the government is not firm, we will carry out the disbandment ourselves,” he added (2/6/2008).

In some regions, an impatient opposition has moved to dissolve the errant organisation themselves.

FPI’s Jember chapter in East Java disbanded under duress after being surrounded by Gus Dur supporters. The end of the group was announced in a stamped letter dated June

Chronology of the “Monas Tragedy,” June 1, 2008

- 12.45** AKKBB activists arrive at a location near Jakarta’s Gambir railway station, mixing with PDI-P supporters. Three or four direct traffic so PDI-P supporters can leave the area
- 12.55** AKKBB members gather in Monas square
- 13.10** AKKBB activists at Gambir station move to Monas to join other groups and allow PDI-P supporters to leave the area.
One non-uniformed and two uniformed police officers are stationed at the scene.
- 13.20** Some 500 FPI members march from the northern side of Monas
- 13.25** The FPI mob approach AKKBB activists preparing for Pancasila celebrations and attack them, shouting: “Al-lahu Akbar. You are Ahmadiyah, aren’t you?”
Security personnel do not act to prevent the attack.
FPI line up its paramilitary four rows deep. The last line wear black clothes, their heads covered with masks. They carry swords and sharpened wooden sticks.
- 13.30** The first wave of FPI members disperse but then a second wave attack.
A police officer arrives at the scene in a car but he is chased away by FPI members. Some AKKBB activists ask the police officers to act but they also flee.
FPI members approach the AKKBB activists, shouting:
“Go away. I know you’re Ahmadiyah followers. You will die.”
- 13.35** AKKBB activists are dispersed. A number of police officers arrive at the scene to prevent the FPI from conducting further violence, but fail to do so.
FPI members riot, damaging cars and burning loudspeakers while the police stand back.
- 14.00** A number of AKKBB are still afraid to leave. They mingle with Monas visitors until the FPI are dispersed.
- 14.15** FPI members march toward the presidential palace to join a Hizbut Tahrir protest.
- 14.28** AKKBB hold a press conference at the National Gallery.
Police warn AKBB not to stay long because the FPI might chase them.
- 15.00** AKKBB activists disperse from the National Gallery.
- 16.00** FPI members on eight motorcycles stop at the National Gallery but a only few AKKBB remain.

3, and was signed by chapter chief Habib Abu Bakar in front of the secretary general of PKB Jember, H. Ayub Junaedi Mukhson. Mukhson said that personally, he regretted the tragedy at Monas.

In Pasuruan, some 200 PKB supporters flocked to the Pasuruan District Court calling for FPI disbandment and in Mojokerto, GP Ansor members threatened to detain and forcibly search FPI members.

In Surabaya, the NU sent a letter to President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono urging him to disband the group. The letter was signed by the leadership of East Java PMII, GP Ansor Surabaya, Pagar Nusa Jatim, IPNU East Java, and the Legal and Human Rights Advisory Foundation (Lakumham).

“We will disband the FPI if we do not receive a positive response within 11 days,” chief coordinator of Garda Bangsa in East Java Ahmad Arizal said (3/06/2008).

In Banyumas, Central Java, a number of organizations came to the regency council building to demand the FPI’s disbandment and dozens of people grouped under Banyumas Independent Organization (Libas) conducted a sweep of FPI houses. In Yogyakarta, some 100 people attacked FPI headquarters.

Fifty-nine arrested in police response

FOLLOWING the Monas attack police arrested 59 KLI activists. They are now in detention of the Jakarta Police. Police confiscated two blades, dozens of bamboo sticks, iron batons, mobile phones, loud speakers and flyers, some of which read: “crush SBY-JK” (Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono-Jusuf Kalla). The FPI, meanwhile, hired 30 lawyers to provide its members legal assistance.

At the time of writing, the police were hunting down KLI commander Munarman, his whereabouts unknown, according to a spokesperson for the Jakarta Police, Ketut Untung Yoga.

Of the 59 arrested KLI activists, eight were declared suspects, including FPI leader Rizieq Shihab.

“Investigators have identified around 20 suspects,” National Police spokesman Abubakar Nataprawira said at the Jakarta Police Headquarters, adding that the number of suspects might increase as the interrogation proceeded.

“There will be no forgiveness for the FPI”, he said (4/6/2008). ■

2. FPI threatens violence in South Sulawesi

The FPI in South Sulawesi threatened to deploy 2000 troops to force the provincial legislative council to take action against the Ahmadiyah in mid-May.

Since the chapter’s establishment on April 28 of this year, local leader al-Hamid has vowed to uphold sharia and take action against those deemed to be undermining it.

At the chapter’s first meeting, al-Hamid quoted from Ahmadiyah religious texts and shouted: “A sect of this kind must be annihilated!” to a whipped-up crowd.

After al-Hamid’s speech, the crowd tried to attack an Ahmadiyah mosque in Jl Anuang Makassar but a number of police stood guard around it.

The FPI’s actions drew strong criticism from a number of non-governmental organizations concerned with pluralism, Lapar, Lakpesdam NU, LKPMP, Gardan, and the Interfaith Dialogue, which held a joint press conference. Together they declared that any organization religious could exist in Makassar, provided they respected diversity.

The statement was backed by a number of religious figures, including Muslim intellectual Prof. Dr. Qasim Mathar; chief of Makassar’s NU chapter, Dr. KH. Kadir Ahmad; cultural luminaries Dr. Halilintar Latief and Ishaq Ngeljaratan and the head of al-Urwatul Wutsqa Islamic school, KH. Imran Muin Yusuf. ■

3. Pangkep regent bans an erotic dance

The regent of Pangkep in South Sulawesi, Syafrudin Nur, has banned musical groups from performing the *candoleng-doleng*, an erotic dance usually held at Sulawesi wedding receptions.

"We will list all the musical groups from outside of Pangkep. Those who bring in erotic performers will be banned and their equipment will be destroyed," Nur said during a religious lecture in Baruga, Pangkep, on May 21.

Radical Muslim cleric Abu Bakar Ba'asyir attended the lecture and gave a speech praising the regency for applying sharia law, which he said was the solution to all its problems. He said those who did not believe in and obey sharia would go to hell, including the regions' leaders. (www.fajar.co.id, Friday, 23 May 2008).



All female civil servants in Pangkep must wear the veil and alcohol and gambling have been banned. Recently, the regency declared Friday solely as a prayer day and discouraged all other activity. Traditionally, it was also a day for cleaning up the neighborhood. ■

4. Provocative VCDs distributed in Padang

A 58-year-old resident of Kemayoran, Central Jakarta, was arrested late last May in Padang for distributing compact discs that claimed to know the "real truth" about the Prophet Muhammad.

The woman - who claimed to be a former official from the Rohmawati Oktaria Tobing (ROT) religious sect - was arrested after a security guard caught her inserting VCDs into clothes that were displayed for sale. The security guard played one of the VCDs in the Store Manager's office and then took the woman to Padang Police headquarters.

Police investigators said she bought fifteen of the offending VCDs from a seller from Atrum Senen in Central Jakarta. She made another 30 copies and distributed them in Padang and Mentawai.

Padang Police chief Bambang Ramelan said the suspect was arrested on charges of spreading hatred and insulting religion.

"The VCDs discredit religion. We have charged the suspect with the violation of articles 156 and 156a of the Criminal Code regarding the insult of a religion. She could face up to five years imprisonment, if found

guilty," Bambang said.

Police were still investigating those involved in the production and distribution of the VCDs. Bambang called on religious followers not to be provoked and to avoid religious conflict.

The local head of the Indonesian Council of Ulema (MUI) in Gusrizal Gazahar, West Sumatra, said the VCD was an insult to Islam and called on believers not to respond with violence.

"Let the authorities take action against it," he said.

A Protestant Church leader in West Sumatra concurred, saying those involved in the production and distribution of the VCD should be punished.

Habib Ali Makhrus at-Tamimi

IN the 1:11.53s VCD, a bearded man named Habib Ali Makhrus at-Tamimi proclaims that the Prophet Muhammad died after being poisoned by his 17th wife.

"At the age of 61, the prophet could not detect the poisonous substances that came

through his body because they were provided by his own wife,” he says. According to Ali Makhrus, the substances made the prophet effectively undead – “neither living, nor dying.”

“That’s why we are told to recite the Surat Yasin to a dying man. “He will die quickly or recover quickly if the Surat Yasin is recited,” he said in the video. Makhrus also claimed Muhammad had 22 wives.

According to *www.padangmedia.com*, Ali

Makhrus was formerly a member of the FPI, in East Java in 1994, and once worked as the host of the *Lativi* program *Pemburu Hantu* (“Ghostbusters”). He claimed to be a direct decendent of Prophet Muhammad through Bani Tamin, to have studied in Mecca and to be a close friend of Laskar Jihad leader Ja’far Umar Thalib. He sometimes went by the aliases Markus Margiyanto or Muhammad Paulus bin Ali Makhrus at-Tamimi. ■

5. Salafi figures expelled from Lombok for insulting religion

Two teachers of the fundamentalist Salafi brand of Islam were recently run out of the village of Mesanggok, Desa Gapuk, West Lombok, after residents attacked their homes.

At the time, one of victims, a teacher, H. Muhamad Muhamad Musfihad, was instructing 26 students from a neighborhood in Kebon Talo, East Sekotong. Shortly after classes, dozens of people gathered outside the house and threw stones. The house belonged to H. Mukti, the other victim. There were no injuries and only minor damage to the house.

Gerung Police chief AKP H Ahmad sent 90 officers to the scene and took the two men and the students into police custody. The following morning the students were sent home while H. Musfihad and H. Mukti were held at the station.

A meeting was held between religious leaders and government officials to settle the case, mediated by the police chief. It was decided that the two men should suspend their activities and they were asked to forgive their attackers.

The residents were not satisfied with the outcome of the meeting and demanded that the two men be expelled from the village. Another meeting was held with the two men absent, but represented by their daughters.

The attack in Mesanggok was not the first against Salafi members in Lombok. Other attacks occurred in the Gerung and Gunung Sari villages in West Lombok in 2006. A year later, a Salafi mosque in Masgabek, East Lombok, was torn down by residents angry at the narrow, fundamentalist brand of Islam preached by the sect. ■

6. Padangpanjang applies zakat ordinance

The city of Padangpanjang introduced an ordinance regulating the payment of Islamic tithes, or the zakat, in May, but it had yet to be implemented by the city’s tithes agency (BAZ) at the time the report was written.

Head of the local zakat agency, Dr H. Hamdi Djamil, said he would ensure the swift implementation of the ordinance. Agency officials planned to renovate the city’s public

hospital with the money collected.

Deputy Mayor Adirozal hoped BAZ would implement the ordinance soon.

“If possible, we will implement it in June and not wait until the following months,” he said. He also hoped the zakat for civil servants would not be counted in lieu, because they had paid it voluntarily.

The Padangpanjang city government’s efforts to collect money for the poor led to the

recent introduction of zakat ordinance.

Enacted on March 17 this year, it was followed by two implementing regulations on zakat from the council and on the establishment of the zakat agency (BAZ).

The ordinance was introduced after bureaucratic delays following the mayor's H. Suir Syam's submission of a draft ordinance to the city council for approval.

Head of the city's legal affairs Hartati said

that, in accordance with the ordinance, the zakat would be handled by a collection unit based on income calculations provided by the payers.

The method was based on decree D/291, issued by the Directorate General of Islamic Affairs and the Hajj at the Religious Affairs Ministry in 2000 to serve as a guideline for zakat implementation (www.padangekspres.co.id, May 26 2008). ■

7. US national prevents religious activities at mosque

A United States national was deported after entering a mosque early one morning in Pekanbaru, Riau, and demanding that the congregation cease their activities and turn off the mosque's loudspeakers.

Ustadz Budi Setiaji, an alumni of the Susqa Islamic institute, said the man entered the mosque speaking only in English.

"I supposed he was angry with us," Ustadz Budi Setiaji said.

The incident occurred as Ustadz Budi, Ustadz Zakaria and Ustadz Husein held morning classes (subuh) at the al-Muhsin mosque. Subuh start every Sunday morning at 5.45am and consist of Quran recital, prayer and speech training.

The man disrupted classes for five minutes. After delivering his protest he left and instruction resumed, but the man returned 10 minutes later to demand that classes stop. Ustadz Husain explained to the man in English that the morning prayer was common in

Pekanbaru. Many mosques in the city held quranic recitals through loudspeakers every Sunday morning. (www.detik.com, Wednesday, 28/5/2008).

The man was deported by the Pekanbaru immigration office, according to media reports. The deportation was based on a request from the city's police after residents complained about his behavior.

"We have sent him back to the US via Jakarta," the Pekanbaru immigration office's head, Yuke Permana said (2/6/2008).

Yuke said one day earlier he had received a telephone call from the Pekanbaru Police asking for the man to be deported.

"It was related to his act at the al-Muhsin mosque where he complained at morning prayers. The deportation was carried out for the sake of maintaining security," he said.

The man's visa was valid until 14 June 2008 but he was deported after residents protested. ■

8. MUI condemns controversial teen-flick "ML"

The Indonesian Council of Ulema (MUI) has asked people not to watch *Mau Lagi* (once more/ML), a 90 minute-long-film starring Ratu Felisha, Nadia Ernesta, Hardi Fadhilah, VJ Marissa, Olga Syahputra, Feery Irawan, Gusti Randa, and the group Five V.

"I call on people not to see it, even if the

film passes the censor," said MUI head H. Amidhan in a press conference at the Istiqlal Mosque, Central Jakarta (13/5/2008).

Amidhan said he had seen the film but had not read the novel by Moamar MK, on which the film was based.

"His conclusion is that the film which was

produced by Indika Entertainment and directed by Thomas Nawilis was not educational, was pornographic and demeaning to woman.

"In the film, women are bid over in a lottery, and the film's main element, food, is likened to sex while even the movie's title has a double meaning. In English, 'ML' means making love," he said.

Amidhan said that film makers must take morality into account.

"I appealed to the producer to make a film that can improve the morality of the nation," he said. (www.detik.hot, 13/5/2008).

MUI had called on the government to ban the film, sending a letter to the Tourism and Culture Department requesting the film to be banned but their petition was unsuccessful.

Some 500 people under the Youth Alliance for Saving the Nation, also called for the government to ban the film, which was scheduled to broadcast in theatres on May 15.

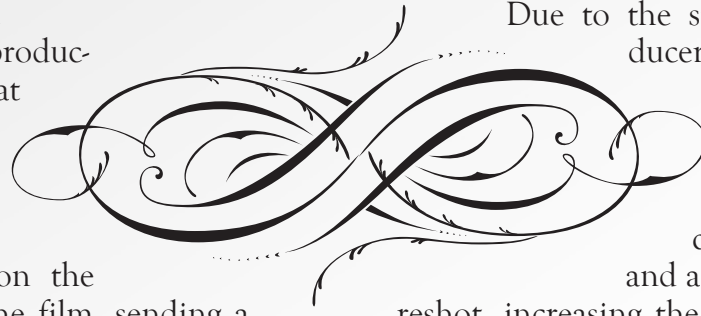
The alliance, consisting of The Anti Porn

Society, the Indonesian Youth Forum (FIM), the Alliance for Saving Indonesian Children (ASA Indonesia) and Education Management Indonesia (LMPI), also called on the government to take action against the producer and film director. In their statement, the alliance said the film was undermining the nation's character (www.okezone.com, Wednesday, 14 May 2008).

Due to the strong protest the producer canceled the distribution of the film. A number of kissing acts were cut and the film's title was changed to Mau Lagi and a number of scenes were reshot, increasing the cost of production by billions of Rupiah (www.detik.hot, Wednesday, 14/05/2008).

Producer ML Thomas Nawilis expressed strong disappointment about MUI's reaction.

"I followed the rules. A kiss should not be more than 10 seconds. No vital organ should be shown. No SARA (sensitive religious and racial issues)." ■



9. Failure to establish interfaith forum reprimanded by Home Ministry

The Home Ministry has reprimanded the National Unity and Society Protection Agency (Kesbanglinmas) of Cilegon, Banten for its failure to establish an Interfaith Forum (FKUB).

The reprimand was signed by the Director General of Kesbangpol Dr. Ir. Sudarsono. It was issued following the introduction of joint ministerial decrees No. 9/2006 and 8/2006 regarding the duty and authority of regional governments in maintaining religious harmony, the empowerment of interfaith forums and the establishment of worshiping places. The decree requires the establishment of a forum in a regency/city two years after the decree's enactment.

Kesbanglinmas Cilegon secretary Sandjaya said in response to the letter that a forum would soon be established (16/5/2008).

Muslims had not yet agreed on how the forum should be made up and that was the reason for the delay. He refused to comment on whether other religious faiths had been included in discussions.

"Muslim representatives have not asked for time to discuss the issue and therefore we can not establish FKUB at this time," he said.

Chief Kesbanglinmas Rahmat added that after five meetings, involved parties had yet to reach agreement. "We are still discussing the issue with the related parties. But we are running out of time right now as we have to establish FKUB as soon possible," he said.

Regency secretary Syamsul Rizal said the forum would be established in June and that the regency was planning to hold a sixth meeting. He believed a compromise could be reached but did not say why Muslim groups had not

10. Ahmadiyah followers seek asylum

Ahmadiyah followers are seeking asylum status in foreign countries following the issuance of a recommendation by the Interfaith Coordination Agency (Bakor Pakem).

In early May, six JAI members visited the Australian consulate in Bali to seek asylum status. They claimed to represent 195 JAI members in Mataram-Lombok, including 138 staying at refugee camp in Mataram and another 57 members from central Lombok.

JAI coordinator in Transito Mataram, Sahid, said they sought asylum because their lives were threatened. "The joint decree that will be issued has frightened us. That is why we ask for refugee status," he said.

He said Bali had been chosen because they want their fate be heard by the international community, but the asylum seekers were advised by the consulate to go directly to Australian embassy in Jakarta.

The head of public advocacy at the Indonesian Legal Foundation (LBH) Balo, Negan Jimat, accompanied the JAI members, along with a member from the alliance of Freedom and Tolerance. "In essence they rejected us," he said.

Rejected by the Australian consulate, the

group moved to the German consulate where they received the same treatment. Jimat said they would continue to seek asylum status at other consulates.

JAI spokesman Syamsir Ali accused the Indonesian government of prevent foreign countries from giving asylum status to Ahmadiyah members. "The government pressure [them] not to provide asylum status because it fears losing face in the international arena." He claimed many countries had offered asylum, including the USA and Canada.

In response to the government plan to issue a joint decree on Ahmadiyah, a number of NU based boarding schools called on the government to protect its people, including Ahmadiyah followers.

"We hope the government would not disband any faith," said the head of An Nur Islamic boarding school in Wonocolo Surabaya, KH Imam Ghazali said during a meeting with House speaker (DPR) Agung Laksono in Jakarta on Wednesday (7/4/2008).

Present at the meeting, which was facilitated by The Wahid Institute, were Abdul Aziz Medan (Sampang Madura); KH. Nuruddin Amin (head of Jepara); KH. Maman Imanulhaq Fakhri (Pesantren al-Mizan Majalengka); KH. Abdul Hafidz (Pesantren at-Taqwa Surabaya), KH. Qody Syafi'i (Pesantren Tarbiyatul Aulad Surabaya); KH. Abdul Tawwab (Pesantren Darus Sa'adah Surabaya) and K. Imam Nakha'i (PP Salafiyah Syafi'iyah Situbondo). They also met with head of the constitutional court, Jimly Ashsiddiqi. Those present at the meeting agreed that the decree would trigger violence. If a joint decree was introduced it should be the one that protected Ahmadiyah, not undermine them. Banning a faith violated the constitution.

Not everyone agrees

THE East Java chapter of NU reprimanded the deputy Syuriah of NU in Surabaya, KH. Imam Ghazali Said, for his rejection of the call for disbandment because NU viewed Ahmadiyah as a heretical sect. The chapter sent a letter to the NU in Surabaya ordering PCNU



to reprimand Ghazali Said. “It hereby ordered that he be reprimanded to consistently follow those stated in the Islamic world and the NU,” the letter said.

The head of PCNU in Jember KH. Muhyiddin Abdusshomad support PWNu East Java. The reprimand is necessary to avoid confusion for common people regarding NU’s stance in the Ahmadiyah case. “NU has clear stance. Ahmadiyah is not Islam. He should follow

NU’s direction,” said the head of Pondok Pesantren Nurul Islam Jember (13/5/2008).

Meanwhile, Religious Affairs Minister M. Maftuh Basyuni asked non-Muslims not to get involved in the Ahmadiyah issue. “The issue of the Muslims will be handled by the Muslims themselves,” he said while opening the working meeting the provincial chapter of the ministry in Jakarta (27/5/2008). ■

11. NII Members accused of treason

Thirty members of the Indonesian Islamic State (NII) group have been accused of treason, for attempting to establish a state within a state.

They were arrested while performing the Hijrah ritual, which is associated with the desire for an Islamic state in mid-May. During the raid, police confiscated a number of documents, including the NII constitution, a proclamation text, a copy of the Criminal Code and government regulations (www.republika.com, 13/05/2008).

Seventeen were declared suspects and the remainder witnesses. West Java police chief Iren Pol Susno Duadji, said the suspects held positions in NII such as governor, regent, and village leader. Previously they were charged with racketeering, but the status was increased to subversion, which was punishable with up to 15 years imprisonment. According to Susno, NII was divided to two parts: A westside, which consisted of Java, West Nusa Tenggara and East Nusa Tenggara, and an eastside, consisting of Kalimantan, East Irian, Timor Leste, and Malaysia.

The arrest is not the first that has police have made. Last August police raided a house in Pondok Gede, Bekasi, that allegedly was used as a base for NII activists. 10 suspects were arrested and documents confiscated as well as a laptop containing their activities and a proclamation text. (www.metrotvnews.com, 18/08/07).

A number of groups are actively investigating NII’s activities. In West Java, there is the Investigation Team of Defiant Sects (TIAS), headed by Athian Ali, who is also head of the Islamic Ulema Forum (FUUI); and in Jakarta,

there is the Islamic Research Institute (LPPI), headed by Amin Jamaludin, who is also a significant figure in MUI.

LPPI researcher, Taufiq Hidayat said recent case hark back to similar cases in 1990s and early 2000s. At that time, many students famous universities joined the NII. (GATRA, 4 June 2008, h. 124).

NII is facing uncertainty after the death of its founder, Kartosuwiryo. NII was established by Kartosuwiryo on 9 August 1949. NII. In 1962, NII was crushed by the military, led by Gen. AH. Nasution, and the movement still faced official pressure from the current government. Despite the death of its leader, die-hard supporters continue their underground struggle. The organization is split into two groups. An article in a blog entitling “The Memoir of NII KW9” said that the first group is lead by Tahmid Kartosoewiryo and the second. By Komandemen Wilayah. The second is said to permit robbery and murder and their members are believed to be skilled at recruiting new members.

The Head of the later faction NII KW IX is often connected with the head of the biggest Islamic boarding school in West Java, which is said to serve as the organization’s headquarters. The suspicion has not been proven, although literature mentioning Ma’had Al-Zaytun was discovered by police during the recent arrests.

TIAS said that, as of September 2001, the group had 160,000 members across Indonesia. They were actively recruiting new members from secular campuses, malls and book stores. Previously, they targeted Islamic schools only.

Long before the case surfaced, H. Abdul

Fathah Wiranangapati, former Daarul Islam/Tentara Islam Indonesia (DI/TII), rejected the belief that NII-KW IX was connected to NII Kartosuwiryo. "NII Kartosuwiryo ended in 1962, and now there is no group like that," said the man sworn head of DI/TII Aceh,

Daud Bereuh, six years ago. A former spokesman for the West Java Military and the Home Ministry, Herman Ibrahim, said in 2002 that current members of NII were collaborating with state intelligence agents to destroy NII from within. ■

12. NU Ready to Facilitate establishment of Religious Place for Non Muslims

Indonesia's largest Islamic organization Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) has expressed its readiness to facilitate the establishment of religious places for non-Muslims.

"If you find obstacles, please inform our NU chapters in your neighborhood, we will help you," NU chairman KH. Hasyim Muzadi said during a meeting with 40 Catholic priests at NU headquarters in Jalan Kramat Raya, Jakarta.

He said the commitment was part of NU's effort to create religious harmony. The dele-

gation, led by head of Unio Indonesia, Romo S. Ferry Sutrisna Wijaya Pr, wants to share ideas with NU and discuss national religious issues.

Father Romo Marcel Bria from Atambua said that overall the relations between religious followers were good but complained about the arduous requirements involved in establishing a church. "We want to establish a church but it is very difficult. Only after many, many years can we establish a church," he said. ■

Analysis

1. The call for the FPI's banishment is from the people. The FPI is responsible for a great deal of religious violence. The call for their disbandment is not solely due to the Monas tragedy but because of their record of violence. It is true that the right of association is guaranteed by the state, but that right is not absolute. The FPI's banishment is justifiable given its violent track record.
2. Cooperation between regional governments and fundamentalists is an effect of regional autonomy that was not predicted. Regional autonomy is not merely a process of decentralization, it also causes the rise of elements that may threaten the unity of the nation and democracy. In democracy, such aspirations must be accepted but allowing them to fester freely can result in democracy being held hostage by anti-democratic forces. What happened in Pangkep and Makassar, South Sulawesi, is not in line with the democratic spirit of the nation. Meanwhile, the forced expulsion of Salafi followers in Lombok shows that terror has become a means of communication.
3. Relations among religions have not been satisfactory. However, in this edition, we have noted an interesting development in which NU has agreed to facilitate the establishment of non-Islamic religious centers. This is not just lip service but a serious shift towards religious tolerance. However, there are still people who continue to spread hatred and violence about other faiths. The distribution of provocative VCDs in Padang, although the maker has regretted her act, is an obstacle in the path to developing trust between religions. Provocative statements undermining other religions should not be used as a way to spread a religion. A religious convert is usually asked to produce a testimony which undermines his old religion and supports his new religion. This practice may affect inter-religious relations.
4. The arrest of NII members in Bandung can not be seen merely from a political and legal aspect. The ideology of establishing an Islamic state was successfully suppressed but the movement and their ideology is still alive. ■

Recommendation

1. The government, particularly the police, must prove that the rule of law still exists in the country. It should not be taken hostage. Regarding the Monas tragedy, those involved should be tried for their violence, FPI leaders must be punished and the legality of the organization reviewed.
The FPI must be banned if it does not change its violent orientation.
2. The central government and all elements that care about the fate of the nation should be very concerned about the increasing influence of fundamentalist groups in regional governments.
If not anticipated, this fundamentalism will only grow stronger. Fundamentalists have already infiltrated regional governments and there are strong indications that they will attempt to influence regional policies.
3. Interfaith problems must be taken into account very seriously. Efforts to counter provocation by groups that provoke hatred must be pursued.
Religious leaders have a vital role in this effort. Unfortunately, they too are easily provoked.
Communicating religious teachings peacefully is the way forward.
4. Although Islamists are scattered in many splintered groups, any efforts aimed at the slow “Islamification” of the state through legitimate means must be watched closely. ■