

## Indonesia: Implications of the Ahmadiyah Decree

### I. OVERVIEW

On 9 June 2008, the Indonesian government announced a joint ministerial decree “freezing” activities of the Ahmadiyah sect, an offshoot of Islam whose members venerate the founder, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. For months hardline Islamic groups had been ratcheting up the pressure for a full ban, while civil rights groups and many public figures argued that any state-imposed restrictions violated the constitutional guarantee of freedom of religion. The decree demonstrates how radical elements, which lack strong political support in Indonesia, have been able to develop contacts in the bureaucracy and use classic civil society advocacy techniques to influence government policy.

Some senior ministers said publicly that the decree allows Ahmadiyah members to practice their faith, as long as they do not try to disseminate it to anyone else, but this compromise pleases no one. The hardliners want Ahmadiyah either dissolved or forced to declare itself non-Muslim. For them the decree does not go far enough, is worded ambiguously and does not have the force of law. It is also not clear how it will be enforced. They intend to monitor Ahmadiyah themselves and stop any activity not in keeping with their own interpretation of Islamic orthodoxy. For many other Indonesians, the decree is an unnecessary and dangerous capitulation to radical demands that are now bound to increase.

The question no one has answered satisfactorily is about timing. Ahmadiyah members have been living more or less peacefully in Indonesia since 1925 or 1935, depending on whose history one reads. Despite *fatwas* (religious opinions) on the sect from the Indonesia Ulama Council (Majelis Ulama Indonesia, MUI) in 1980, warning that it was dangerous, and in 2005, recommending its banning, there was no action by the government until June 2008. Why now?

At least four factors are responsible:

- ❑ the systematic lobbying over the last five years of the bureaucracy, particularly the religious affairs ministry, for action against Ahmadiyah;

- ❑ the search by hardline groups, including Hizb ut-Tahrir (Hizbut Tahrir is the Indonesian form of the international organisation’s name), for issues that would gain them sympathy and help expand membership;
- ❑ the unthinking support given by the Yudhoyono administration to institutions such as the MUI and Bakorpakem, a body set up under the attorney general’s office at the height of Soeharto’s New Order to monitor beliefs and sects; and
- ❑ political manoeuvring related to national and local elections.

In the week leading up to the issuance of the decree, two other factors came into play. One was the government’s fear of violence. On 1 June 2008 a thug-dominated Muslim militia attacked a group of the decree’s opponents, sending twelve of them to the hospital and ten militia members to court. Officials were worried that any further delays in ruling on the Ahmadiyah issue could fuel more violence. Another concern was that the government would lose face if, after promising repeatedly to issue the decree, it failed yet again to deliver.

The result was a decree which is a setback for both Indonesia’s image as a country that can stand up to Islamic radicalism and President Yudhoyono’s image as a strong leader. The outcome suggests a government that has no clear vision of basic principles itself but rather seeks compromise between those who speak loudest.

### II. THE DECREE AND ITS HISTORY<sup>1</sup>

After a preamble that affirms freedom of religion as a basic human right, the five-point decree:<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For related reporting, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°10, *Indonesia: Violence and Radical Muslims*, 10 October 2001.

<sup>2</sup> Keputusan Bersama Menteri Agama, Jaksa Agung dan Menteri Dalam Negeri Republik Indonesia No.3.2008, KEP-033/A/JA/6/2008, 199 Tahun 2008 (the numbers are for each ministry respectively) tentang Peringatan dan Perintah

1. warns and orders all citizens not to speak about, endorse or seek public support for an interpretation of a religion followed in Indonesia, or undertake religious activities that resemble the activities of such a religion, in a way that deviates from the central tenets of that religion;
2. warns and orders followers, members and/or leaders of the Indonesian Ahmadiyah Congregation (Jemaat Ahmadiyah Indonesia, JAI), as long as they claim to be Muslims, to stop dissemination of interpretations that deviate from the main teachings of Islam, that is, spreading the understanding that there was a prophet after the Prophet Mohammed;
3. warns that the followers, members and or leaders of JAI who do not heed the warnings and instructions mentioned above may face legal sanctions in accordance with laws and regulations;
4. warns and orders members of the public to safeguard and protect religious harmony as well as public order and not undertake actions and/or behaviour that violate the law against followers, members and or leaders of JAI; and
5. notes that members of the public who do not heed the warnings outlined in the first and fourth points above can face legal sanctions.

In citing JAI, the decree referred to only one group of Ahmadiyah members. Sometimes called Ahmadiyah Qadiyani, it is based in Parung, Bogor, south of Jakarta, and its members regard Mirza Ghulam Ahmad as a prophet. It claims some 400,000 members across Indonesia, but government figures are much lower.<sup>3</sup> A second, much smaller group called the Indonesian Ahmadiyah Movement (Gerakan Ahmadiyah Indonesia, GAI), also known as Ahmadiyah Lahore, is based in Yogyakarta and sees the founder only as a religious

reformer. It has also faced discrimination but to a much lesser extent than JAI.

## A. MOVING TOWARD A BAN

The long, slow gestation of the decree began in 2005. On 18 January, a unit of the attorney general's office responsible for monitoring religion and beliefs called a meeting to discuss three issues of concern: Confucianism; Falun Gong, the Chinese sect; and Ahmadiyah. In attendance were representatives from the police, military, National Intelligence Agency (Badan Intelijen Nasional, BIN) and several ministries. Two men from MUI were also present, including Amin Djamaluddin, a respected but conservative Islamic scholar and a long-time campaigner for a ban on Ahmadiyah.

Each had their own reasons for considering Ahmadiyah a problem. The police had to step in every time there was a clash between Ahmadiyah members and community groups opposed to their presence. The BIN official was worried about Ahmadiyah being an international movement. A foreign ministry delegate noted how Indonesian embassies were the targets of demonstrations by Ahmadiyah members concerned about persecution. Amin Djamaluddin spoke at length about the sect's heretical beliefs. In the end, everyone agreed that Ahmadiyah should be banned, and a small team was set up to draft a formal recommendation to the president.<sup>4</sup>

On 12 May 2005, the result was released to the press. It consisted of a ten-page analysis and a one-sentence recommendation:

Based on the above analysis, we recommend to the government and president of the Republic of Indonesia that the organisations, activities, teachings and books of Jemaat Ahmadiyah Indonesia (Ahmadiyah Qadiyan) and Gerakan Ahmadiyah Indonesia (Ahmadiyah Lahore) be banned in all areas of Indonesia through a presidential regulation.<sup>5</sup>

One striking aspect of the analysis is how much it referenced the positions of hardline non-governmental organisations.<sup>6</sup> One of them, the Institute for Research

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Kepada Penganut, Anggota, dan/atau Anggota Pengurus Jemaat Ahmadiyah Indonesia (JAI) dan Warga Masyarakat [on Warning and Instruction to Followers, Members and/or Leaders of the Indonesia Ahmadiyah Community and the General Public].

<sup>3</sup> An internal 2008 document from the ministry of religious affairs gives a figure of 50,000 to 80,000 based on visits to some JAI communities and requests for information from others. It notes that in West Java, there are some 5,000 in Sukabumi, 3,000 in Kuningan, 2,000 in Garut, 243 in Bandung, 40 in Cimahi, 74 in Cicalengka, 80 in Majalaya and 200 in the town of Tasikmalaya. Outside Java, there are some 3,000 in Medan, North Sumatra; 500 in Makassar, South Sulawesi; 500 in Padang, West Sumatra; 32 in Tanjung Pinang, Riau; and 23 in Banjarmasin, South Kalimantan. The document gives no figures for Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, where some of the most systematic persecution has taken place.

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<sup>4</sup> M. Amin Djamaluddin, *Ahmadiyah Menodai Islam* (Jakarta, 2007), pp. 104-111. The book contains Djamaluddin's notes of the meeting, but there is no mention of what the group concluded about Falun Gong. Confucianism was eventually accepted as a legitimate religion.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p. 125.

<sup>6</sup> The organisations mentioned are Forum Ukhuwah Islamiyah Indonesia; Dewan Dakwah Islam Indonesia (DDII), Syarikat

and Study of Islam (Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengkajian Islam, LPPI), was and continues to be led by Amin Djamaluddin and focuses on purging Islam of deviant sects. With Djamaluddin included on the drafting team, the influence of the hardliners was assured. This is not to say that mainstream Islamic organisations are comfortable with Ahmadiyah. Virtually all regard JAI teachings as heretical, but they have preferred persuasion and guidance to legal measures. The recommendation was a victory for the conservatives.

On 3 July 2005 a meeting took place in Bandung of a coalition called Forum Ulama Umat Indonesia (FUUI), best known for having issued a death *fatwa* against a liberal scholar, Ulil Abshar Abdullah in 2002.<sup>7</sup> Attended by well-known conservative Muslim leaders from West Java and Jakarta, it issued a *fatwa* on “Upholding Islamic Law and Attitudes and Actions toward Efforts to Spread Deviancy, Blasphemy and Apostasy”. The *fatwa* recommended that strategic, political and legal steps be taken against such efforts, with other measures to be considered if those proved ineffective.

A week later, on 9 July, FUUI members, joined by youths representing the Islamic Defenders Front (Front Pembela Islam, FPI) and Djamaluddin’s LPPI led an attack on an Ahmadiyah annual meeting in Parung, Bogor. Eight people were wounded by sticks or stones before the Bogor police eventually arrived on the scene. Muslim conservatives blamed the attack on the Ahmadiyah community – it had been “getting more aggressive”, one MUI member recalled.<sup>8</sup>

Then, on 26-29 July 2005, at its Seventh National Congress, opened by President Yudhoyono, the MUI issued a *fatwa* declaring Ahmadiyah to be “outside Islam” and its members apostates. It urged followers to return to the true teachings and said the government was obliged to ban the dissemination of Ahma-

dyah teachings and stop its activities.<sup>9</sup> It also issued a *fatwa* against pluralism, secularism and liberalism. A week later on August 5, declaring support for the two MUI *fatwas*, the Forum Umat Islam (FUI) was established, a coalition dominated by hardliners, with the FPI and Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia as two of its largest components.<sup>10</sup>

The anti-Ahmadiyah *fatwa*, with support from the president and the clash in Bogor as a backdrop, gave new life to an old body, the Coordinating Agency to Oversee People’s Beliefs (Badan Koordinasi Penguasaan Aliran Kepercayaan Masyarakat, known by its acronym, Bakorpakem). It had been established in 1984, at the height of Soeharto-era repression, and was basically an intelligence body to monitor the innumerable sects Indonesia seems to produce, determine if they constituted a threat to the government and ban them if they did. Its legal basis was a 1965 presidential decree on blasphemy, issued by Indonesia’s first president, Sukarno, just before he fell from power, and incorporated into a new security law by his successor, Soeharto, in 1969.<sup>11</sup>

With the fall of the Soeharto government in May 1998, Bakorpakem had become moribund, although a monitoring unit within the attorney general’s office continued to operate. A 2004 law gave that office the authority to “monitor beliefs that can endanger the state and society” and “prevent the misuse of religion and blasphemy”, but there was no mention of Bakor-

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Islam, Ittihadul Muballighin, Muhammadiyah, Persatuan Umat Islam, Al Irsyad, Institute Tarbiyah al Qur’an Jakarta, Persatuan Islam (PERSIS), Persatuan Tarbiyah Islamiyah and LPPI. Of these only Muhammadiyah and perhaps Persatuan Tarbiyah Islamiyah can be considered mainstream.

<sup>7</sup> The leader of FUUI, K.H. Athian Ali, is a leading member of Dewan Dakwah Islam Indonesia and Persatuan Islam (Persis). For more on these organisations, see below.

<sup>8</sup> Crisis Group interview, MUI official, Jakarta, 24 June 2008. Dr Atho Mudzar of the religious affairs ministry dated the increased visibility of Ahmadiyah to the visit of its international leader, Khalifah al-Masih, to Indonesia in 2000, when he was received by then President Abdurrahman Wahid. Upon his return to London, he said he was convinced that Indonesia would have the largest Ahmadiyah community in the world by the end of the new century. Crisis Group interview, 1 July 2008.

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<sup>9</sup> Keputusan Fatwa Majelis Ulama Indonesia No. 11/Munas VII/MUI/15/2005 tentang Aliran Ahmadiyah, 29 July 2005. It was signed by the head of the *fatwa* committee, K.H. Ma’ruf Amin.

<sup>10</sup> Among those present were members of the MUI, Komite Islam untuk Solidaritas Dunia Islam (KISDI), Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia (DDII), Badan Kerjasama Pondok Pesantren Indonesia (BBKSPPI), Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia (HTI), Muhammadiyah, Nahdhatul Ulama (NU), Hidayatullah, Ikatan Da’i Indonesia (IKADI), Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia (ICMI), Al-Irsyad Al-Islamiyah, Yayasan Pesantren Islam (YPI) Al-Azhar, Front Pembela Islam (FPI), Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI), Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (PKS), Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (PPP), Partai Bulan Bintang (PBB), and Partai Bintang Reformasi (PBR). See “31 Ormas Gelar Tabligh Akbar”, [http://swaramuslim.com/foto/more.php?id=A2028\\_0\\_10\\_0\\_M](http://swaramuslim.com/foto/more.php?id=A2028_0_10_0_M).

<sup>11</sup> “Protectors of the Pristine”, *Tempo* [English language edition], 12 May 2008. The original decree, UU No.1/PNPS/1965, became part of Law No.5/1969. See also “Bakorpakem: Ancaman bagi Kebebasan Agama di Indonesia”, press release, Imparsial, 21 April 2008. [www.berpolitik.com/static/myposting/2008/04/myposting\\_11906.html](http://www.berpolitik.com/static/myposting/2008/04/myposting_11906.html).

pakem per se.<sup>12</sup> With the 2005 *fatwa*, the agencies that met in January 2005 to discuss Ahmadiyah began meeting more regularly, chaired in theory by the attorney general and in practice by his deputy for intelligence.

Pressure on JAI continued to grow. Throughout 2006, mob actions picked up against Ahmadiyah and other sects, as well as against Protestant “house churches” deemed to have been established illegally. Often, those arrested were the alleged deviants, not the vigilantes.<sup>13</sup>

## B. THE RADICALS CHANGE TACK

By early 2006, however, better tools than anti-Ahmadiyah activity were at hand for a mobilise-the-masses campaign: first the Danish cartoon controversy, then the draft anti-pornography law. The latter had more staying power. Dear to the heart of conservative moralists, the draft law was so broadly worded that it would have condemned as pornographic everything from standard tourist garb on Bali to the costumes of Javanese court dancers and severely restricted freedom of expression. It was scheduled to be debated by the Indonesian parliament in 2005, but opposition from various women’s groups, rights activists, religious minorities and elements of the business community, including the tourist industry, began building.

By March-April 2006, it was becoming a cause celebre for hardline groups, backed in full by the MUI and fuelled by the announcement that an Indonesian

version of *Playboy* was going to be published.<sup>14</sup> Hard-line opposition peaked on 21 May with what was billed as the “Million Muslim March” (Aksi Sejuta Umat) in support of the legislation, but which in fact drew far fewer. Those opposed to the draft law were no less active; it was the first time since Soeharto’s fall that hardliners faced organised, vocal public opposition. In the end the moderates won, with the parliament agreeing to revise the law and remove the most offensive clauses before bringing it back for debate. It is scheduled to be debated again in July 2008.

In the course of the struggle, however, an incident occurred which was to have ramifications for the Ahmadiyah decree. Former President Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur, as he is more popularly called), a leader of Indonesia’s largest Islamic organisation, Nahdlatul Ulama, and known for his commitment to pluralism, was an outspoken opponent of the proposed law as drafted. He had joked that by the standards of the draft, even the Koran would be considered pornography.

On 23 May 2006, he was invited to Purwakarta, West Java, to take part in a public interfaith dialogue, with hardline groups such as FPI and Hizb ut-Tahrir in the audience. Gus Dur criticised the bill again and said that some participants in the Million Muslim March had been paid to take part by unnamed generals. The head of the local FPI chapter stood up and demanded that he either apologise or leave Purwakarta. He left, amid a hail of rude insults, with the national media reporting that he had been forced out by emotional supporters of the draft, including FPI.

In the aftermath of the Purwakarta incident, clashes took place between FPI and Garda Bangsa, a militia loyal to Gus Dur, in Jember, East Java, and a few other areas. On 15 June, Garda Bangsa prevented FPI head Habib Rizieq Shihab from speaking at a *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) in Demak, Central Java, threatening to burn the school if he showed up. Banners appeared near the Nahdlatul Ulama headquarters calling for the dissolution of FPI. On 26 June, several dozen young men from Garda Bangsa claimed they were going to march to FPI headquarters in Jakarta, and FPI members, backed by two other hardline groups, readied themselves for defence. Police diverted Gus Dur’s supporters, and no violence took place. Serious bad blood between FPI and Garda Bangsa remained, however, and two years later, the government’s fear

<sup>12</sup> Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 16 Tahun 2004 Tentang Kejaksaan Republik Indonesia, articles 30(3) and (4). [www.pu.go.id/ITJEN/HUKUM/uu16-04.htm](http://www.pu.go.id/ITJEN/HUKUM/uu16-04.htm).

<sup>13</sup> Some examples: On 6 January 2006 a mob attacked an Ahmadiyah mosque in Bogor used by about 70 families. Five people were arrested and charged with vandalism. See “Lima Perusak Masjid Ahmadiyah Jadi Tersangka”, *Koran Tempo*, 9 January 2006. On 29 January, a mob attacked the Ahmadiyah community in Lingsar, West Lombok. A spokesman for Nusa Tenggara Barat province said he hoped all the Ahmadiyahs would find asylum abroad, implying anything would be better than having them stay in Lombok. See “Terpojok di Negeri Sendiri”, *Koran Tempo*, 5 February 2006. On 17 February, an Ahmadiyah center was attacked by a mob in Bulukumba, South Sulawesi; the attackers included members of Laskar Jundullah, a group known for its use of violence in Makassar and Poso. See “Lagi Massa Serbu Markas Ahmadiyah”, *Indopos*, 18 February 2006. On 12 March, eight people from the Jemaah al-Qiyadah [Islamic Leadership] sect were arrested in Batam for spreading deviant teachings. See “Jemaah al-Qiyadah Ditangkap”, *Koran Tempo*, 13 March 2006.

<sup>14</sup> “Tarik Ulur Pasal Birahi”, *Sabili*, 30 June 2005, pp. 60-61; “Sosok di Balik Kelinci Putih”, *Sabili*, 9 February 2006; “Sahkan RUU Anti-Pornografi”, *Sabili*, 9 February 2006, pp. 29-31.

of violence erupting between them was to affect the timing of the joint decree.

One other issue is worth noting. On 21 March 2006, a controversial joint regulation from the ministries of religious affairs and home affairs was enacted on preserving religious harmony and establishing places of worship.<sup>15</sup> It replaced a 1969 decree from the two ministries that had required community approval before a mosque or church could be built. Under the new regulation, the identity cards of 90 proposed users of a house of worship had to be submitted to and confirmed by the village head, together with the written support of at least 60 other members of the community.

Construction of a new place of worship also needed the written approval of a new body set up under the regulation, the Forum for Religious Harmony, which was to be established at the provincial and district levels, with at least 21 and seventeen members respectively. They were to include at least one person from each religion in the area, with remaining members determined on the basis of proportional representation.<sup>16</sup>

The regulation was an improvement on the more restrictive 1969 law, but it still meant that minority religious communities would face difficulties in securing approval, whether for churches in West Java, mosques in West Papua or Ahmadiyah communities anywhere in Indonesia. Hardline groups, particularly in West Java but elsewhere as well, decided that if the government was not going to enforce the rules on approval, they would, and attacks on “unauthorised” religious activities picked up.<sup>17</sup>

### C. BACK TO AHMADIYAH

In the midst of this, the 2005 recommendation to President Yudhoyono to ban Ahmadiyah went unheeded, and the then attorney general Abdurrahman Saleh recommended that there first be a dialogue with

Ahmadiyah leaders.<sup>18</sup> It took a while, but in early September 2007, the first of seven talks were held, led by a senior religious affairs ministry official and attended by top Ahmadiyah (JAI) leaders. The participation of other officials varied but usually included representatives from home affairs, police intelligence and the attorney general’s office.<sup>19</sup>

The JAI leaders were told they had several options, including dissolution by the government, dissolution by the courts, categorisation as non-Muslims and acceptance as one stream of Islam within the broader Muslim community. They not surprisingly chose the latter and were told they would have to submit a written position paper on their beliefs to show that they deserved to be considered Muslims.

On 14 January 2008, JAI accordingly submitted a twelve-point statement to the religious affairs ministry, copied to the MUI. The key points included:

- ❑ we recite the declaration of faith that there is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is his Prophet;
- ❑ we believe that Mohammed was the final prophet;
- ❑ we believe Mirza Ghulam Ahmad to be a teacher and mentor, who inspired his followers to strengthen the teachings of Islam as brought by the Prophet Mohammed;
- ❑ in the induction oath of Ahmadiyah we use the word “Mohammed” before “Prophet of Allah”;
- ❑ we do not believe that divine revelation of Islamic law took place after the Holy Koran was revealed to Mohammed; and we follow the teachings of the Koran and the Prophet Mohammed; and
- ❑ the Tadzkirah is not the holy book of Ahmadiyah but a series of notes on the spiritual experience of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad that were compiled in 1935, 27 years after his death.

The next day, the deputy attorney general for intelligence convened a meeting of Bakorpakem to discuss the twelve points. It was attended by representatives of the ministries of religious affairs, home affairs, and education; and BIN, police intelligence and the attorney general’s office. The participants decided to monitor and evaluate JAI’s implementation of its own twelve

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<sup>15</sup> Puslitbang Kehidupan Keagamaan, Badan Litbang dan Diklat Departemen Agama, “Peraturan Bersama Menteri Agama dan Menteri Dalam Negeri Nomor 9 2006 dan Nomor 8 2006 tentang Pedoman Pelaksanaan Tugas Kepala Daerah/Wakil Kepala Daerah dalam Pemeliharaan Kerukunan Umat Beragama, Pemberdayaan Forum Kerukunan Beragama dan Pendirian Rumah Ibadat”, Jakarta 2006.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, Article 10 (2) and (3), p. 45.

<sup>17</sup> See “Data Tempat Ibadah Yang Ditutup, Dirusak dan Mengalami Kesulitan Untuk Melakukan Ibadah di Propinsi Jawa Barat Tahun 1996-2008” [a list of attacks and obstruction of church activity in West Java], FKKI-JABAR.

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<sup>18</sup> Prof. Dr H.M. Atho Mudzhar, “Penjelasan Kepala Badan Litbang Agama dan Diklat Departemen Agama Tentang Perkembangan dan Penanganan Masalah Ahmadiyah di Indonesia”, Jakarta, 20 February 2008.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p. 2.

points and in the meantime urged the public to refrain from “anarchic and destructive behaviour”.<sup>20</sup>

MUI official K.H. Ma’ruf Amin immediately issued a statement that JAI’s twelve points were open to multiple interpretations; he wanted a flat statement that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was not a prophet. At the same time, other conservative Muslim organisations, led by FUI and the LPPI, complained to the religious affairs ministry about the twelve points and urged that Ahmadiyah be dissolved.<sup>21</sup>

Faced with protests around the country, the religious affairs ministry issued a circular to all provincial offices and state Islamic universities announcing the formation of a team to evaluate JAI’s implementation of the twelve points and urging local offices to undertake similar monitoring to ensure that local Ahmadiyah groups were not deviating from orthodox Islamic teaching.<sup>22</sup> MUI, however, continued to demand a statement from JAI that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was not a prophet. On 23 January, Bakorpakem met again and gave the monitoring team a deadline of three months to finish its work. The team was formally constituted the next day, under the religious affairs ministry.

On 14 February, a *tabligh akbar* (mass public religious discussion) took place at a *pesantren* in Banjar, West Java, with Shobri Lubis from FPI, Muhammad Al-Khaththath from Hizb ut-Tahrir and Abu Bakar Ba’asyir, representing Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia. A video taken of the event and posted to YouTube shows all three railing against Ahmadiyah and Lubis shouting, “we must make war on Ahmadiyah, kill Ahmadiyah wherever they are, kill Ahmadiyah, kill Ahmadiyah!”<sup>23</sup>

On 16 April, Bakorpakem met again, this time with a full complement of representatives of the security forces.<sup>24</sup> At the conclusion of the meeting, it issued a statement that JAI had not implemented its own twelve points in a “consistent and responsible fashion” and had “engaged in activities and interpretations

that deviated from the key tenets of Islam as it was understood in Indonesia, and had generated frustration and opposition in the public to the point where it was endangering public order”. It recommended that a joint ministerial decree be issued, in accordance with the 1965 law on blasphemy, warning JAI to cease its actions, and if the warning was not heeded, that JAI be dissolved. It also urged religious leaders and Muslim organisations to uphold law and order and respect the “process for resolving the JAI problem”.<sup>25</sup>

## D. DRAFTING THE DECREE

Street demonstrations organised by the hardline groups resumed almost immediately. On 21 April 2008, a demonstration took place in front of the presidential palace in Jakarta, organised by the FUI, with Cholil Ridwan of the MUI; Habib Rizieq and Shobri Lubis of the FPI; and Ismail Yusanto and Muhammad Al-Khaththath of Hizb ut-Tahrir in attendance.

From the time the Bakorpakem statement was issued, it was a question of when, not if, a decree would be issued and how exactly JAI’s activities would be curbed. At no time did President Yudhoyono give a signal that a decree was not a useful step or affirm his own and the country’s commitment to protection of minorities.

His own advisory council (Dewan Pertimbangan Presiden, Wantimpres) was deeply divided. One member, KH Ma’ruf Amin, the MUI official, wanted Ahmadiyah banned altogether. Adnan Buyung Nasution, a constitutional lawyer, argued that any restrictions would be a violation of the constitutional protection of freedom of religion, and four others supported his position. Others were offended by Ahmadiyah teachings but uneasy about a ban, preferring “persuasive measures” to draw the group back into the mainstream.<sup>26</sup> The differences delayed the release of the decree, which the attorney general hinted would be ready in early May. On 12 May, journalists gathered for the release of the decree, only to be told by Home Affairs Minister Mardiyanto that it had been postponed again, as the government struggled to find the right policy.

By late May, it was clear that positions had shifted somewhat. Ahmadiyah leaders understood from sources close to the drafters that the decree would be focused

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p. 5.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, p. 6.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, pp.7-8.

<sup>23</sup> “Khotbah Yang Mencoreng Citra Islam”, <http://youtube.com/watch?v=U7RLCXNdKF4>.

<sup>24</sup> The meeting was chaired by the deputy attorney general for intelligence and attended by seven others from the attorney general’s office as well as representatives from the research and development directorate of the religious affairs ministry; the directorate for national unity in the ministry of home affairs; the directorate for culture in the education ministry; the assistant for territorial affairs in the armed forces; police intelligence; and the National Intelligence Agency (BIN).

<sup>25</sup> Rakorpakem, Aula Jaksa Agung Muda Intelijen, 16 April 2008.

<sup>26</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Jakarta, 18 June 2008. See also “Wantimpres Halangi SKB Membekukan Ahmadiyah”, *Indopos*, 23 April 2008.

on guidance to draw them back into the mainstream, which they could live with, not a formal ban, and a wide range of civil society groups had come out against any decree at all. On 10 May, a full-page advertisement had appeared in several Jakarta newspapers, in the name of the National Alliance for Freedom of Religion and Belief (Aliansi Kebangsaan Untuk Kebebasan Beragama dan Berkeyakinan, AKKBB). Among the signatories were Muslim intellectuals, journalists, members of parliament, government officials, former governmental officials, rights activists, Gus Dur and many others.

## E. THE 1 JUNE ASSAULT AND ITS AFTERMATH

On 1 June 2008, in the absence of a decree and in the hopes of forestalling one, AKKBB organised a rally on behalf of freedom of religion, intending to demonstrate support for tolerance and rejection of hardline views. Police, knowing there was to be a demonstration the same day led by Hizb ut-Tahrir to protest oil price hikes, asked the organisers to move from their original location around the National Monument (Monas), a large obelisk in central Jakarta, to a traffic circle not far away. The organisers agreed but decided to gather at Monas first. The demonstrators, including hundreds of Ahmadiyah families as well as many of the signers of the 10 May statement, were attacked by a stick-wielding Muslim militia shouting anti-Ahmadiyah slogans, who hurt dozens before they were dispersed by police. Among those injured was a Muslim scholar from Cirebon; the head of the Wahid Institute, a think tank associated with Gus Dur; and several other Muslim leaders known for their moderate views.

The assault caused national outrage, with the president for the first time weighing in and saying that violence would not be permitted – despite the fact that one of the main groups involved, the FPI, had been wielding violence since it was founded, with police and army support, in 1998. One of the field coordinators of the militia was Munarman, a former human rights lawyer from Palembang turned Muslim militant, who was shortly thereafter named a suspect by police.

For one week, the country was riveted by the police search for Munarman. On 5 June, over 1,000 police were deployed to the area around FPI headquarters, as a team went in and arrested 53 members, including the leader, Habib Rizieq Shihab. Munarman was not there, and speculation increased that he had left Java, left the country or been killed. But on the same day, he released a video from his hiding place, saying that

he would turn himself in if and when the government banned Ahmadiyah.

On the morning of 9 June, a massive demonstration took place in front of the presidential palace, calling for a ban on Ahmadiyah. The decree drafting team was hastily called to the religious affairs ministry for an emergency meeting, and the decree was released that afternoon. While it stopped short of a full ban, and the intent of the drafters was that Ahmadiyah be allowed to continue to worship as long as it did not try to draw in anyone else, the appearance was of capitulation to the hardliners in the street.<sup>27</sup> According to a participant, one of the key factors driving the release of the decree that afternoon was the fear that violent clashes would take place between Gus Dur's supporters and the FPI. "The odd thing is that they're both from Nahdlatul Ulama backgrounds", said an NU leader. "It's a question of secular NU vs radical NU".<sup>28</sup>

The decree satisfied no one except a few members of the parliament. Many Indonesians, including the head of the human rights directorate at the justice ministry, believed it was a setback to democracy and human rights, giving the state the authority to determine "correct" interpretations of religion.<sup>29</sup> Hardliners felt it did not go far enough and, scenting victory, pressed for more. Munarman, now a hero of the Islamists, turned himself in on the evening of 9 June, implying the government had acceded at least in part to his demands.

Organised through SMS messages, some 10,000 marchers, this time calling for the president to dissolve Ahmadiyah by decree and demanding the release of Munarman and Habib Rizieq, took to the streets of central Jakarta on 18 June, and protests look set to continue.

## F. INVITATION TO VIGILANTISM

Despite its warning to members of the public not to engage in criminal actions against JAI and the insistence of government officials that enforcement would

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<sup>27</sup> According to Dr Atho Mudzkar of the religious affairs ministry, "they [Ahmadiyah] are not banned from performing other religious activities. They can still conduct daily prayers, visit their mosques, organise blood drives and so on". See "Ahmadiyah decree 'bans propagation, not private prayer'", *Jakarta Post*, 14 June 2008.

<sup>28</sup> Crisis Group interview, Jakarta, 24 June 2008.

<sup>29</sup> Harkristuti Harkrisnowo, director general for human rights at the justice and human rights ministry, criticized the decree and encouraged Ahmadiyah members to file a petition for judicial review. See "Ahmadiyah can worship, Kalla says", *Jakarta Post*, 11 June 2008.

be strictly within the law, the decree increases the likelihood of religious vigilantism. In a popular television show, “Today’s Dialogue”, on 18 June, a religious affairs ministry spokesman said the public could monitor implementation and report to the police if it saw anything amiss. He made the same point in an earlier press statement:

We’ll let the public act as the watchdog. They can file reports to law enforcers whenever they see JAI followers violate the decree. Whether or not the latter are guilty of violations will be decided by the courts.<sup>30</sup>

Ma’ruf Amin told the television audience, and later reiterated in an interview, that MUI was putting together a monitoring team to determine whether Ahmadiyah was obeying the decree. The team would be organised by MUI branches at province, district and sub-district levels, and mass Islamic organisations would be invited to participate. It is a foregone conclusion that the team will find Ahmadiyah in violation.<sup>31</sup> In the meantime, mass actions against Ahmadiyah property and followers continue:

- ❑ 11 June: police used watercannons to turn back a mob marching on an Ahmadiyah mosque in Palembang;<sup>32</sup>
- ❑ 18 June: six Ahmadiyah mosques in Cianjur, West Java, were sealed off by about 100 people calling their group Ahlussunnah Waljamaah, as police stood by and watched to ensure that no “anarchistic action” took place;<sup>33</sup>
- ❑ 20 June: a local FPI contingent shut down Ahmadiyah headquarters in Makassar, South Sulawesi, mobs sealed off two more mosques in Cianjur, and dozens of youths tried to blockade an Ahmadiyah mosque in Tangerang, West Java; and
- ❑ 26 June: the al-Ghofur Mosque used by Ahmadiyah families in Cianjur, West Java, was sealed off

and its sign torn down by a mob of about 500, who then clashed with police. Two days earlier a crowd prevented Ahmadiyah members from visiting the district council in Cianjur to express concerns over recent developments.<sup>34</sup>

### III. HARDLINE GROUPS BEHIND THE PROTESTS

The success of pressure on the government cannot be explained without reference to the increasing influence that President Yudhoyono has allowed the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI). Leading members of the MUI in turn represent hardline organisations, meaning there is a direct line to policy-makers.

#### A. THE GROWING INFLUENCE OF THE MUI

Nine months into his presidency, Yudhoyono accepted an invitation to open the 7th National Congress of the MUI on 26 July 2005. He told the participants:

We open our hearts and minds to receiving the thoughts, recommendations and *fatwas* from the MUI and *ulama* [Islamic scholars] at any time, either directly to me or the minister of religious affairs or to other branches of government. We want to place MUI in a central role in matters regarding the Islamic faith, so that it becomes clear what the difference is between areas that are the preserve of the state and areas where the government or state should heed the *fatwa* from the MUI and *ulama*.<sup>35</sup>

It is not clear whether the president appreciated how conservative a body the MUI had become.

Established in 1975 by Soeharto, the MUI was originally intended as an instrument for co-opting top Muslim leaders and giving an aura of religious legitimacy to New Order policies. Its founding mission was to uphold national security and help the virulently anti-communist government fight atheism. Its original members included 26 scholars, one from each province; ten representing national Islamic organisations with head offices in Jakarta, several of them little more than fronts for the then ruling party, Golkar; four chaplains from the security forces (army, navy, air force and police); and thirteen men serving in their

<sup>30</sup> See “Ahmadiyah decree ‘bans propagation, not private prayer’”, *Jakarta Post*, 14 June 2008.

<sup>31</sup> Crisis Group interview, Jakarta, 24 June 2008. Ma’ruf Amin said he had no problem if Ahmadiyah members formed a new religion, instead of calling themselves Muslims. But when asked if they could still worship in a mosque, he said, “of course not – they cannot adopt any attributes of Islam, like calling their house of worship a mosque or praying five times a day – because this would be slandering Islam”.

<sup>32</sup> “Penentang Ahmadiyah Kembali Beraksi”, *Koran Tempo*, 12 June 2008.

<sup>33</sup> “Warga Segel Enam Masjid Ahmadiyah”, *Koran Tempo*, 19 June 2008.

<sup>34</sup> “Masjid Ahmadiyah Disegel Lagi”, *Koran Tempo*, 28 June.

<sup>35</sup> [www.presidenri.go.id/index.php/pidato/2005/07/26/370](http://www.presidenri.go.id/index.php/pidato/2005/07/26/370).html.



private capacity.<sup>36</sup> Today it has a structure down to the sub-district level. It is financed in part through the national government budget, although like the National Commission on Human Rights, it is officially an independent body.

In the mid-1980s, it took on the lucrative task of giving *halal* (permissible-under-Islamic law) labels to foods, cosmetics and medicines; many companies were willing to pay well for the MUI's seal of approval.<sup>37</sup> In the 1990s, another even more lucrative role came its way with the advent of Islamic banking; individual MUI members sat on the governing council of Bank Mu'amalat, the country's first Sharia (Islamic law) bank, and others that followed, receiving generous payment for their services through the National Sharia Council (Dewan Syariah Nasional). These two "technical" functions turned the MUI into a much more powerful body than it had ever been before.<sup>38</sup>

The power was accompanied by a growing conservatism that was evident at the 2005 Congress with its *fatwa* against liberalism, pluralism and secularism.<sup>39</sup>

The head of the *fatwa* committee was KH Ma'ruf Amin, later included in the president's advisory council.<sup>40</sup>

In November 2007, President Yudhoyono reinforced his first endorsement of the MUI with a second appearance, this time before a national MUI meeting. At the time, the country was riveted by discoveries of several new sects. A month earlier, the MUI had issued a *fatwa* against the al-Qiyadah [Leadership] sect, whose founder, Ahmad Mosshadeq, had declared himself to be a prophet. At the MUI meeting, the president gave his support to the *fatwa* and told the group:

In accordance with its regulations, the MUI issues *fatwas*. The president cannot issue a *fatwa*. But after a *fatwa* is issued, the tools of the state can do their duty. Hopefully our cooperation will deepen in the future....We must all take strict measures against deviant beliefs.<sup>41</sup>

At the conclusion of the meeting, the MUI issued ten guidelines for determining deviancy.<sup>42</sup> It also urged the government to immediately make Bakorpakem more active at both central and local government levels.<sup>43</sup> At the same time, it asked the government to increase its budget so it could handle the increased workload of monitoring compliance with the guidelines.

<sup>36</sup> "20 Tahun Majelis Ulama Indonesia", Majelis Ulama Indonesia, Jakarta, 1995, p.13.

<sup>37</sup> "Masyarakat pun Bertindak Sendiri", The Wahid Institute, monthly report on religious issues, November 2007. In March 2005, a spokesman for MUI denied rumours that the Singapore bakery company, BreadTalk, was being asked Rp.25 million (\$2,500) for the halal label. See "MUI Bantah Tarifkan Sertifikasi Halal BreadTalk Rp.25 Juta", www.detik.com, 8 March 2005. A draft law submitted to parliament in early 2008 on guaranteeing halal products threatened to give the authority to grant the halal label to the religious affairs ministry; MUI strongly objected. See "MUI: Sertifikasi Halal Harus Wewenang Kita", www.detik.com, 27 February 2008.

<sup>38</sup> It also worked closely with Soeharto's trans-migration program, sending 1,667 preachers to trans-migration areas. "Masyarakat pun Bertindak Sendiri", op. cit, p. 33.

<sup>39</sup> A concept paper outlining MUI's mission for the coming five years (2005-2010) reads in part: "Today the Indonesian Muslim community is faced with heavy global challenges. These include the ideology of capitalism-liberalism that piggybacks on secularism in a political and economic system that is often forced on other countries; rapid advances in science and technology that can erode our ethical and moral foundations; and a global culture dominated by the West and characterised by glorification of individualism, materialism, and base instincts that has the potential to dilute the role of religion in the daily life of the ummat". "Himpunan Keputusan Musyawarah Nasional VII Majelis Ulama Indonesia Tahun 2005", Majelis Ulama Indonesia, Jakarta, 2005, p.19.

<sup>40</sup> A conservative from Banten, West Java, Ma'ruf Amin preceded Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) as head of the Dewan Syuro, the highest body in Nahdlatul Ulama. From 1971 to 1982 he served in the Jakarta legislature, from 1973 onwards as a member of the United Development Party faction (PPP). From 1997 to 2001 he was a member of the Indonesian parliament for the PKB party.

<sup>41</sup> "Kiai Sahal: Fatwa MUI tentang al-Qiyadah agar umat tak terperdaya", 5 November 2007, www.nu.or.id/page.php?lang=id&menu=news\_view&news\_id=10690.

<sup>42</sup> They were 1) violating one of the six pillars of the faith; 2) following an understanding of the faith not in accordance with the Koran and prophetic traditions (*hadith*); 3) acknowledging receiving revelations subsequent to the Koran; 4) challenging the authenticity or truth of the Koran; 5) interpreting the Koran in a way not based on correct principles of interpretation; 6) not recognizing the *hadith* as a source of Islamic teaching; 7) insulting or demeaning the prophets; 8) not recognizing the Prophet Mohammed as the last prophet; 9) changing, adding to or subtracting from the principles of worship as outlined in Islamic law, such as making the haj to places other than the Baitullah [in Mecca] or not praying five times a day and 10) declaring Muslims to be *kafir* (infidel) without clear proof according to Islamic law, for example, declaring people to be *kafir* only because they are not members of a certain group.

<sup>43</sup> "Rakernas Majelis Ulama Indonesia 2007: Menjawab Permasalahan Umat ke Depan", *Suara Islam*, 23 November-6 December 2007.

Under the Yudhoyono government, then, the MUI has taken on a more influential policy-making role than it ever had in the past, with at least some of its *fatwas* used as the basis for law enforcement through the attorney general's office or other ministries. The direct link to government policy was acknowledged by the religious affairs ministry, when it noted with respect to Ahmadiyah that the MUI, not the government, had the authority to determine whether a particular sect was deviant, but it was then up to the government to take action in accordance with existing laws.<sup>44</sup>

The interesting connection, however, is between the MUI's institutional role and its ties to street protests, and here Cholil Ridwan and Muhammed Al-Khaththath are key. Cholil, who went on the executive board of MUI in July 2005, is a member of Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia (DDII) and head of a conservative *pesantren* coalition that was a founding member of FUI in August 2005.<sup>45</sup> He is also deputy head of the Indonesian Committee for Solidarity with the Muslim World, KISDI, a group that in 1998 was closely associated with Soeharto's son-in-law and senior military commander, Prabowo. Cholil has been present at every major anti-Ahmadiyah demonstration before and after the joint decree was issued, usually as one of the orators. In January 2008, he was head of the *fatwa* commission of Forum Ulama Ummat Indonesia (FUUI), the Bandung-based organisation involved in the 2005 attack on Ahmadiyah headquarters.<sup>46</sup> Al-Khaththath, former chairman of Hizb ut-Tahrir and secretary general of FUI, is deputy secretary of MUI's *dawaa* (religious outreach, *dakwah* in Indonesian spelling) committee.<sup>47</sup>

When the MUI says that it intends to use mass-based Islamic organisations to assess how Ahmadiyah is obeying the terms of the decree, it is likely they will be the same ones that have been agitating for a ban, like the ones Cholil and Al-Khaththath are involved with. Some of these are described below.

## B. FORUM UMAT ISLAM (FUI)

FUI was set up in August 2005, dedicated to upholding the MUI *fatwas* against pluralism and Ahmadi-

yah.<sup>48</sup> Mashadi, an elder statesman of the Islamist movement in Indonesia, was named head.<sup>49</sup> Some 30 Islamic organisations were represented in the founding meeting, including some of the country's most militant, but the brains and the brawn respectively were Hizb ut-Tahrir and FPI.<sup>50</sup> After the founding meeting, some of the more thuggish members marched on the offices of the Liberal Islam Network (Jaringan Islam Liberal), a group of progressive scholars, threatening violence.

By 2007 it was clear that Hizb ut-Tahrir was running FUI, not surprisingly, given Al-Khaththath's role. The

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<sup>48</sup> Forum Umat Islam is not to be confused with another conservative Indonesian organization with the same initials, Forum Ukhuwiyah Islam.

<sup>49</sup> Mashadi had been the personal assistant of Mohammed Roem, one of Indonesia's great nationalist figures and deputy prime minister in the mid-1950s from the Masjumi Party. A member of Pelajar Islam Indonesia, he worked briefly for a newspaper funded by the World Islamic League in Pakistan. A longtime member of Dewan Dakwah Islam Indonesia, he was a founding member of Partai Keadilan, later to become Partai Keadilan Sejahtera, the Islamist party modeled after the Muslim Brotherhood. Known for his militancy, he was a natural choice to head FUI. See "Mashadi, Penggalang Kekuatan Umat yang Sederhana", [www.pks-anz.org/modules.php?op=modload&name=News&file=article&sid=665](http://www.pks-anz.org/modules.php?op=modload&name=News&file=article&sid=665), 25 August 2005.

<sup>50</sup> The initial members included Komite Islam untuk Solidaritas Dunia Islam (KISDI); Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia (DDII); Badan Kerjasama Pondok Pesantren Indonesia (BKSPPI), headed by Cholil Ridwan; Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia (HTI); Syarikat Islam (SI); Dewan Masjid Indonesia (DMI); PERSIS; BKPRMI; Al Irsyad Al Islamiyyah; Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia (ICMI); Badan Kontak Majelis Ta'lim (BKMT); YPI Al Azhar; Front Pembela Islam (FPI); Al Ittihadiyah; Hidayatullah; Al Washliyyah; PERTI; IKADI; Majelis Tafsir Al Quran (MTA); Ittihad Mubalighin; Front Perjuangan Islam Solo (FPIS); and Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI), as well as representatives of four political parties: Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (PPP), Partai Bulan Bintang (PBB), Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (PKS) and Partai Bintang Reformasi (PBR). Individuals representing the conservative wings of Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah were also present. By late 2007 the list had grown to include Tim Pembela Muslim (TPM), Muslimah Peduli Umat (MPU), MER-C, Gerakan Persaudaraan Muslim Indonesia (GPMI), Forum Tokoh Peduli Syariah (ForToPS), Taruna Muslim, Persatuan Islam Tionghoa Indonesia (PITI), Koalisi Anti Utang, PPMI, PUI, JATMI, PII, BMOIWI, Wanita Islam, GeMa Pembebasan, and Missi Islam. See "31 Ormas Islam Gelar Tabligh Akbar", [http://swaramuslim.com/foto/more.php?id=A2028\\_0\\_10\\_0\\_M](http://swaramuslim.com/foto/more.php?id=A2028_0_10_0_M), 5 August 2005 and "Forum Umat Islam Tolak Keras Asas Tunggal", [www.syabab.com/index.php?view=article&catid=23%3Aakhbar-muslimin&id=124%3Aforum](http://www.syabab.com/index.php?view=article&catid=23%3Aakhbar-muslimin&id=124%3Aforum), 4 December 2007.

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<sup>44</sup> "Penjelasan Kepala Badan Litbang dan Diklat Departemen Agama", op. cit.

<sup>45</sup> The coalition is Badan Kerjasama Pondok Pesantren se-Indonesia (BKSPPI).

<sup>46</sup> See <http://fuui.wordpress.com/2008/01/16/fatwa-mengenai-penghinaan-terhadap-islam/>.

<sup>47</sup> The HTI spokesman, Ismail Yusanto, is deputy head of the MUI research committee.

tactic of creating a coalition of mass-based organisations and then taking it over as the less active, and sometimes less well-funded moderates drop out is common among extremist groups in Indonesia. In Semarang, Central Java, the Forum Aktivis Islam Semarang (Forkis) was set up in 2002 by a number of groups and political parties to work for the adoption of Islamic law. Within a year, it had been taken over by Jemaah Islamiyah, the jihadi organisation.<sup>51</sup> A similar process took place in Central Sulawesi with the Forum Silaturahmi Perjuangan Umat Islam Poso (Poso Muslim Struggle Forum).

In this case, however, Hizb ut-Tahrir dominated from the outset. FUI's biweekly newspaper, *Suara Islam*, has Al-Khaththath as general manager; Ismail Yusanto, the Hizb ut-Tahrir spokesman, as senior editor; and Munarman as senior editor and legal counsel.<sup>52</sup> But it also includes notable Islamists who are not members of Hizb ut-Tahrir, including Mashadi as editor-in-chief and Ma'ruf Amin and Cholil Ridwan as key members of the editorial board (among about a dozen others).

Some of FUI's actions over the last two years include:

- ❑ May 2006: the "Million Muslim March" in support of the anti-pornography bill was coordinated by Al-Khaththath in his FUI capacity. Ma'ruf Amin, as head of the Team to Safeguard the Anti-Pornography Bill, was a prominent participant. Similar actions outside Jakarta, for example in Lampung, were coordinated by Hizb ut-Tahrir;<sup>53</sup>
- ❑ October 2007: a joint statement with Hizb ut-Tahrir in reaction to the discovery of the al-Qiyadah organisation, calling on the government to ban all deviant sects;
- ❑ December 2007: statement rejecting a return to Pancasila, the set of principles elevated to a state ideology by Soeharto, and sometimes promoted by secular nationalists as an alternative to radical Islam;
- ❑ 12 January 2008: statement from FUI South Kalimantan on how foreign capitalist investors are keep-

ing Indonesians poor, "destroying our forests and throwing their dangerous waste in our rivers and seas";

- ❑ 10 February 2008: statement from FUI and Islamic organisations in Bogor (posted on a Hizb ut-Tahrir website) in support of banning Ahmadiyah and rejecting the construction of churches;<sup>54</sup>
- ❑ 20 February 2008: protest with Hizb ut-Tahrir in front of Danish embassy to protest reprinting of the offensive cartoons;
- ❑ 20 April 2008: "rally of a million faithful to support dissolution of Ahmadiyah" in Jakarta, in the wake of the Bakorpakem recommendation;
- ❑ 25 May 2008: issuing of five demands: cancel the oil price hikes; lower the prices of basic food-stuffs; nationalise assets controlled by foreigners; dissolve Ahmadiyah and declare it a banned organisation; expel Namru (U.S. Naval Medical Research Unit, a Jakarta-based laboratory), expel all American military personnel working at Namru and purge the cabinet of American lackeys;<sup>55</sup> and
- ❑ 14 and 17 June 2008: anti-Ahmadiyah actions by FUI branches in North Sumatra and West Kalimantan respectively.

From these and other actions, it is clear that FUI has a broad national reach; that it relies heavily on Hizb ut-Tahrir for intellectual input and organisation (the five demands on 25 May were a pure Hizb ut-Tahrir agenda); and that it has the capacity to change the subject from economic concerns (oil prices) to social-religious issues (deviant sects) to political tirades (opposition to U.S. hegemony), depending on what moves the crowd. The objective is mass action and more recruits to the notion that Islamic governance is the only solution.

### C. HIZB UT-TAHRIR INDONESIA (HTI)

Hizb ut-Tahrir ("Liberation Party" in Arabic) continues to grow in Indonesia, although its total membership is a closely guarded secret.<sup>56</sup> Founded in Jerusa-

<sup>51</sup> For a description of how Forkis evolved, see testimony of Sri Pujimulyo Siswanto, 18 February 2006 in Badan Reserse Kriminal Polri, Detasemen Khusus 88 Anti Teror, case dossier of Dwi Widiyanto alias Wiwid alias Sigit Alias Bambang; Sri Pujimulyo was one of those arrested in connection with the second Bali bombing of 1 October 2005.

<sup>52</sup> Other senior editors include Ismail Yusanto, M. Luthfie Hakiem; HM Mursalin; Mahendratta of the Muslim Defence Team (Tim Pembela Muslim, TPM); Dr Jose Rizal Jurnal of MER-C; and Ummu Dhila.

<sup>53</sup> "Minggu, Aksi Sejuta Umat", *Kompas*, 20 May 2006.

<sup>54</sup> Pernyataan Forum Umat Islam Dan Ormas-Ormas Islam Se-Bogor Tentang Pembubaran Ahmadiyah dan Penolakan Pembangunan Gereja", <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/khilafah/message/2836>.

<sup>55</sup> "Lima Tuntutan Umat", Forum Umat Islam, [http://swaramuslim.com/siyasah/more.php?id=5963\\_0\\_6\\_0\\_m](http://swaramuslim.com/siyasah/more.php?id=5963_0_6_0_m).

<sup>56</sup> For a description of the organisation's growth in Papua, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°154, *Indonesia: Communal Tensions in Papua*, 16 June 2008. For an analysis of the organisation elsewhere, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°58,

lem in 1953, it began to operate clandestinely in Indonesia in the early 1980s but began openly using the name Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) only after Soeharto fell.<sup>57</sup> It considers itself a political party, working for the re-establishment of the caliphate as a system of Islamic governance and an end to hegemony by the capitalist and infidel West. While it often tacitly endorses violence by others, especially as a weapon of the weak against a superpower like the U.S., it has a strict policy of non-violence for its own members.<sup>58</sup> It seeks to transform the political landscape through systematic indoctrination in three phases: “cultivation” of Muslims who can disseminate the organisation’s ideas; “interaction” with the community to make Islam central to all aspects of political life; and, finally, taking power.<sup>59</sup>

Hizb ut-Tahrir takes its basic political line from its international headquarters, believed to be in Amman, and amends it to fit local circumstances.<sup>60</sup> It demands strict ideological adherence from its members and has an elaborate and lengthy period of recruitment, to ensure potential members fully understand its doctrine and objectives. Its members are usually university-educated: Al-Khaththath is an agricultural engineer, and one member of its Indonesian executive council has a PhD in physics from an American university and was recruited by a man who now holds a senior position in Hizb ut-Tahrir Pakistan. The leadership is politically savvy and aims at the middle class. A flyer circulated on 1 June 2008 offering several alternatives to oil price hikes is so detailed as to be incomprehensible to anyone less well-educated than the authors.

In Jakarta one example of cultivation may be the cooperation of Hizb ut-Tahrir with Indonesia’s controversial health minister, Siti Fadilah Supari. She published a book, *Saatnya Dunia Berubah* (Time for the World to Change), in early 2008 alleging a conspiracy of the U.S. and the World Health Organisation (WHO) to secure Indonesian samples of the avian flu virus in order to have a monopoly on vaccines; in it

she accused the U.S. of sending samples to a biological weapons laboratory in Los Alamos, New Mexico. A few months later, she accused Namru, the U.S. laboratory operating in Jakarta since 1970, of being run by intelligence operatives for secret biological warfare purposes. Hizb ut-Tahrir took up both issues. It sponsored book launchings for the minister, advertised the book on its website and helped fan the Namru issue among other Muslim organisations until by late June 2008, it looked as though the laboratory’s days were numbered.<sup>61</sup>

It took Hizb ut-Tahrir a while to bring the anti-Ahmadiyah issue to the boiling point, and in the meantime, it carefully kept the socio-economic issues on the agenda. In the end, though, the Ahmadiyah issue seemed to have at least as much, if not more traction. It was a simpler issue than fuel price hikes, it generated more emotion, and there appeared to be a clear solution – banning. The media were inadvertently helpful partners in generating awareness about the group’s teachings. By June 2008, people in the Jakarta streets who had never heard of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad and his followers six months earlier expressed anger that they could continue to operate in Indonesia.<sup>62</sup>

All this said, Hizb ut-Tahrir is hardly representative of Indonesian Islam. In a survey conducted by one of the country’s most reputable polling organisations in 2006, it had exactly the same approval rating as Ahmadiyah: 3.9 per cent.<sup>63</sup>

Munarman, the man who became the hero of the radical right for commanding the forces that attacked the freedom of religion advocates on 1 June 2008 and then issuing an ultimatum to the government on Ahmadiyah as he was being hunted by police, has been associated with Hizb ut-Tahrir for at least two years, although a senior HTI official said he was not a member, only a sympathiser. In early 2006, he attended a quick course (*pesantren kilat*) run by that organisation in a resort area south of Jakarta. On 22 March, while he was head of the Legal Aid Institute Foundation, one of Indonesia’s oldest and best-known human rights organisations, he appeared in a Hizb ut-Tahrir demonstration in front of the U.S. embassy to protest the war in Iraq.

On 28 March 2006, he was summoned to account for his activities to the foundation board. Its members had information that he was holding weekly Hizb ut-Tahrir meetings at the organisation’s office, and they

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*Radical Islam in Central Asia: Responding to Hizb ut-Tahrir*, 30 June 2003. The Indonesian form of this international organisation’s name is Hizbut Tahrir.

<sup>57</sup> Greg Fealy, “Hizbut Tahrir in Indonesia: Seeking a ‘Total’ Islamic Identity”, in Shahram Akbarzadeh and Fethi Mansouri (eds.), *Islam and Political Violence: Muslim Diaspora and Radicalism in the West* (London and New York, 2007), pp. 151-164.

<sup>58</sup> This has led to harsh criticism from those in the global jihadi movement that Hizb ut-Tahrir members are only talkers, not doers, and that anyone who waits for the re-emergence of the caliphate to wage jihad will be waiting a very long time.

<sup>59</sup> Fealy, op.cit.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> See <http://khilafah-centre.com/content/view/289/145/>.

<sup>62</sup> Crisis Group conversations in Jakarta, June 2008.

<sup>63</sup> “Survei LSI: Mujahidin Lebih Didukung daripada JIL”, *Koran Tempo*, 17 March 2006.

were also concerned about banners that had appeared in several places in Jakarta with Munarman's photograph on them, reading "Munarman: A Caliphate is the Answer to all Today's Problems: Now is the Time for the Caliphate to Lead the World".<sup>64</sup> Before he could be fired, Munarman resigned. He said at the time, "it's true that I have many friends in Hizb ut-Tahrir, but I've never been part of its work structure, let alone a leader or influential figure."<sup>65</sup>

His association with Hizb ut-Tahrir, however, continued. In November 2006, Munarman was one of the orators at a Hizb ut-Tahrir-organised demonstration in front of the U.S. embassy, protesting the visit of President Bush and accusing of him of protecting Jewish interests in the name of human rights and democracy.<sup>66</sup> From then on he has appeared regularly on the Hizb ut-Tahrir website, leading discussions or taking part in activities, sometimes as part of the "FUI Advocates Team". In that capacity, in February 2008, he participated in a Hizb ut-Tahrir-organised discussion on "Conspiracy behind the Legalisation of Ahmadiyah". In March 2008, he hosted a Hizb ut-Tahrir talkshow at the Jakarta Islamic Book Fair on "The Gas, Oil and Electricity Crisis: What is the Solution?" On 16 May, he appeared with the health minister to launch her book at a Hizb ut-Tahrir-sponsored event at the Jakarta Islamic Centre.

In terms of the 1 June 2008 assault, Munarman claims, and HTI officials confirm, that he was heading not the paramilitary wing of FPI, known as the Islamic Defenders Militia (Laskar Pembela Islam, LPI), although many youths wearing LPI jackets appear in videos of the incident, but rather simply the Islamic Militia (Laskar Islam), a coalition force including non-FPI members that was organised as the security detail for the nearby Hizb ut-Tahrir demonstration against fuel price hikes in front of the presidential palace.<sup>67</sup> Hearing that the freedom of religion supporters, including hundreds of Ahmadiyah families, were arriving at the National Monument, one group of the Laskar Islam, composed mostly of unemployed, uneducated FPI members from outside Jakarta, was diverted there,

with Munarman as their field commander. Inexperienced in such situations, he quickly lost control when the FPI youths encountered the new arrivals.<sup>68</sup>

From detention he gave an interview to the FUI's *Suara Islam*, in which he accused all those taking part in the freedom of religion demonstration of being handmaidens of the "American imperialists and Israeli Zionists", backed by "Freemasonry and the Illuminati", with the goal of "wiping religion from the earth".<sup>69</sup>

#### D. ISLAMIC DEFENDERS FRONT (FRONT PEMBELA ISLAM, FPI)

The FPI is basically an urban thug organisation led by Habib Rizieq Shihab, a Saudi-educated scholar of Arab descent, that has been running anti-vice campaigns since its founding in August 1998.<sup>70</sup> Its stated goal is the implementation of Islamic law in Indonesia and upholding the principle of "doing good and avoiding evil". One part of FPI focuses on religious outreach (*dawaa*) to the Muslim community, urging stricter adherence to Islamic tenets; the better known part, a kind of morality militia, attacks places it sees as emblematic of vice and decadence.<sup>71</sup> It has branches in most of Indonesia's provinces, some of which are less thuggish than the Jakarta headquarters. In Poso, for example, the FPI head is also the respected leader of al-Chairat, a broad-based, largely moderate organisation.

From the beginning FPI has been closely associated with individual police and military officers, including the presidential candidate and former armed forces commander, General Wiranto, and his ally, the former commander of the elite Kostrad forces, Lt. Gen. Djadja Suparman. As a Crisis Group report noted in 2000:

It is not suggested, however, that Wiranto and other military officers ... share the goals of FPI but only that they have found it useful to maintain contacts with Islamic organisations that have the capacity to mobilise supporters in the streets.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>64</sup> In Indonesian, "Munarman: Sistem Khilafah Menjadi Jawaban atas Seluruh Problematika yang Saat Ini Muncul. Saatnya Khilafah Memimpin Dunia". [www.inilah.com/berita/2008/06/05/31871/pergolakan-hidup-munarman/](http://www.inilah.com/berita/2008/06/05/31871/pergolakan-hidup-munarman/).

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> "Ribuan Massa HIT Awali Tolak Rencana Kunjungan Teroris Bush", [www.suara-islam.com](http://www.suara-islam.com), 5 November 2006.

<sup>67</sup> "Penawar Panas Pasca Insiden Monas", *Gatra*, 18 June 2008, p. 88; Crisis Group conversation with HTI official, 30 June 2008; and "Munarman: Pelaku di Monas Laskar Islam, Bukan FPI", [www.detiknews.com](http://www.detiknews.com), 2 June 2008.

<sup>68</sup> Crisis Group conversation with HTI official, 30 June 2008.

<sup>69</sup> "AKKBB Antek Zionis", *Suara Islam*, 20 June-2 July 2008, p. 10.

<sup>70</sup> For an earlier analysis of FPI and similar groups see Crisis Group Briefing, *Violence and Radical Muslims*, op. cit.

<sup>71</sup> Ian Douglas Wilson, "'As Long As It's Halal': Islamic Preman in Jakarta", in Greg Fealy and Sally White (eds.), *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia*, (Singapore, forthcoming), pp. 192-210.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

Another officer present at the creation of FPI in 1998 was the then Jakarta police commander, Nugroho Djayusman, and the police have had close ties with the group ever since. The FPI leadership acknowledges only that for the first two years, it coordinated all actions with the police.<sup>73</sup> But cooperation lasted well beyond two years, despite Habib Rizieq's arrest in October 2002 for incitement. In November 2002, the organisation was briefly dissolved, in part to avoid any association with terrorists who had carried out the Bali bombing on 12 October, in part because the bombing led to a temporary funding shortage for all organisations deemed radical (there was never any association between FPI and Jemaah Islamiyah, the organisation behind the Bali bombs).<sup>74</sup>

But in November 2006, police sponsored a speaking tour for Habib Rizieq around the Poso, an area hit by communal conflict and terrorist activity, hoping that his anti-vice message might attract young people susceptible to recruitment by terrorist organisations. In a speech in Luwuk on 29 November, he spoke of how the FPI and the police were "like husband and wife", both committed to upholding public order.<sup>75</sup> It was an ironic message, given that FPI is largely associated with violence, both organised raids on nightclubs, karaoke bars and other dens of iniquity as well as on "unauthorised" churches and Ahmadiyah property.<sup>76</sup> It is not surprising, then, that in a coalition with Hizb ut-Tahrir, FPI members would be the enforcers.

It was more surprising, but encouraging, that following a decade of FPI's ability to commit crimes against property and sometimes individuals with near-total impunity, the public outcry against it subsequent to 1 June 2008 was so strong. President Yudhoyono, after silence in the face of earlier FPI attacks, said that such violence would not be tolerated. The coordinating minister for political, legal and security affairs said he was looking into whether FPI as an organisation could be banned under the 1985 law on mass organisations.<sup>77</sup> On 5 June, as noted above, police arrested 59 men at FPI headquarters, including Habib Rizieq,

who, after questioning, was officially declared a suspect along with nine others.

FPI has been able to last as long as it has not just because of official toleration and its targeted use of extortion, but also because the public up until now has been willing to distinguish between what many see as the admirable goal of protecting morality and the deplorable means used to achieve it. Anger at the images of a vicious assault on clearly peaceful civilians was high, however, and a survey in the country's largest daily newspaper showed 86 per cent of those polled were concerned about the "militarism" of mass organisations.<sup>78</sup>

## E. LEMBAGA PENELITIAN DAN PENGKAJIAN ISLAM (LPPI)

LPPI is a small, Saudi-funded think tank devoted to exposing and dismantling deviant sects. As noted above, it is headed by Amin Djamaluddin, a member of the conservative West Java-based salafi organisation, Persatuan Islam (Persis), and has pursued Ahmadiyah since 1988 and with particular intensity since 2003.<sup>79</sup> It is the only one of the radical groups that has systematically targeted the bureaucracy – the attorney general's office and the ministry of religion in particular. LPPI activists were present at the assault in Bogor that sparked the 2005 MUI *fatwa*, and the institute has been listed regularly as a member of FUI.<sup>80</sup>

In his account of his ministry's handling of the Ahmadiyah issue, Dr Atho Mudzar specifically cites the lobbying efforts of LPPI and Amin Djamaluddin after JAI came up with its twelve points in January 2008.<sup>81</sup> LPPI was small, but it was persistent and focused and seems to have had some impact on the ministry's thinking – if only to give it confidence that no matter what

<sup>73</sup> Syahrul Efendi and Yudi Pramuko, *Rahasia Sukses Dakwah: Habib-FPI Gempur Playboy*, (Jakarta, 2006) p. 52.

<sup>74</sup> Wilson, op. cit., p. 9.

<sup>75</sup> Crisis Group notes from Palu visit, 1 December 2006.

<sup>76</sup> Examples, among many, include attacks and forced closure of discotheques in Jakarta, March 2002; efforts to break up a transvestite beauty contest in June 2005; destruction of the *Playboy* office, April 2006; and the attack on the Gereja Sidang Jemaat Allah church in Katapang, Soreang, West Java, June 2007.

<sup>77</sup> "Pemerintah Kaji Pembekuan FPI", *Koran Tempo*, 3 June 2008.

<sup>78</sup> *Kompas* poll taken 4-5 June 2008, cited in *Reformasi Weekly Review*, 13 June 2008. The review noted that the survey was conducted by telephone, meaning the respondents were overwhelmingly members of the urban middle class.

<sup>79</sup> Crisis Group interview, LPPI member, Jakarta, 15 June 2007; Amin Djamaluddin, op. cit., p.3; and John Olle, "The Campaign against 'Heresy': State and Society in Negotiation in Indonesia", paper presented to the 16th Biennial Conference of the Asian Studies Association of Australia in Wollongong 26-29 June 2006. <http://coombs.anu.edu.au/SpecialProj/ASAA/biennial-conference/2006/Olle-John-ASAA2006.pdf>.

<sup>80</sup> "Dua Kelompok Massa Bentrok", 9 July 2005, *Liputan 6.com*, [www.geocities.com/hoelaliejoe/sctv110705.htm](http://www.geocities.com/hoelaliejoe/sctv110705.htm).

<sup>81</sup> "Penjelasan Kepala Badan Litbang dan Diklat Departemen Agama", op. cit.

action the government took against Ahmadiyah, it would seem moderate compared to LPPI's demands.

## F. FORUM UMAT ULAMA ISLAM (FUUI)

FUUI is a Bandung-based organisation that has actively campaigned for the imposition of Islamic law in Indonesia. Its leaders are almost all from Persis, DDII or both. They include the founder, K.H. Athian Ali Da'i, KH Abdul Kadir, and Yusuf Amir Faisal, a former parliament member from the Crescent and Star Party. FUUI was involved in the attack on Ahmadiyah in 2005 that set the train of events in motion leading to the June decree.

The organisation began in the 1980s as an informal network of Persis and DDII *kyais* (Muslim leaders), who would get together to discuss issues of the day: the illicit nature of the national lottery or the dangers of tampering with the Islamic law on inheritance in order to give women a more equal share. In 2001 some 60 *kyais* gathered in Bandung and formally established the FUUI.<sup>82</sup> Its mission was to implement Islamic law, guide the Muslim community and ensure orthodoxy in terms of faith. It had a decidedly anti-liberal, anti-Christian streak.

One of its first acts was to establish a Team to Investigate Deviant Beliefs (Tim Investigasi Aliran Sesat, TIAS), of which Ahmadiyah was one. It also set up an anti-apostasy division backed by a militia called the Anti-Apostasy Front (Barisan Anti Pemurtadan, BAP), which went around closing "unauthorised churches", often violently. These were often Protestant groups meeting in homes because of failure to secure community approval for a church. In late November 2007, BAP showed up at four pentecostal and evangelical congregations in east Bandung and demanded that they cease operations. It was also the inspiration for a broader group, the Anti-Apostasy Alliance Movement (Gerakan Aliansi Anti-Pemurtadan), involving 27 organisations including Hizb ut-Tahrir and Persis.<sup>83</sup>

## G. INTERLOCKING DIRECTORATE

All these groups, together with Dewan Dakwah Islamiah Indonesia (DDII), form a kind of interlocking

directorates of radical movements in the metropolitan Jakarta area and beyond. They are highly visible, well-organised and almost certainly well-funded, but they have little political power, let alone direct representation in Indonesian political institutions like the national or provincial parliaments. They are far more extreme in their views than most Indonesians, judging from a range of public opinion surveys conducted by reputable organisations.<sup>84</sup> How then have they managed to have so much influence, to the point of securing the 9 June 2008 decree against Ahmadiyah? Part of the answer is that they have become very adept at one of the roles civil society is supposed to have in a democracy: building networks of non-governmental actors to press public officials to adopt or amend specific policies.

But they are also operating in a political climate that is unusually receptive to this pressure.

## IV. PRESIDENTIAL POLITICS AND THE 2009 ELECTIONS

A key factor in understanding why the government succumbed to pressure is President Yudhoyono's desire to maintain the coalition of Islamic parties that helped him get elected in 2004, especially as 2009 elections draw closer. Recent polls have shown him losing ground to his only major rival, former president Megawati Sukarnoputri. But other factors are likely involved as well: Yudhoyono's style of governance and the desire of his political opponents to show him as weak and vacillating.

President Yudhoyono was supported in 2004 by his new, small Democrat Party and a number of Islamic parties, including the PKS, PAN and PPP. To contest the elections in 2009, he must represent a party or coalition of parties that received a set percentage of the vote in the last election, likely to be between 10 and 20 per cent (a new election law is still being debated in parliament). In 2004, the Democrat Party received just over 7 per cent, with the PKS about the same. This means that in 2009 Yudhoyono will need coalition partners again.

But the Democrat Party, by all projections, will be in a much stronger position after five years, and support for Islamic parties has fallen. His coalition partners will thus need Yudhoyono far more than he will need

<sup>82</sup> The meeting took place at the al-Furqon Mosque on the campus of the Indonesian Education University (Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, UPI).

<sup>83</sup> AGAP is led by a former BAP commander, Mohammed Mu'min, an ethnic Batak born in Cimahi, West Java, who converted to Islam from Catholicism.

<sup>84</sup> See "Trend Dukungan Nilai Islamis versus Nilai Sekular di Indonesia", Lembaga Survei Indonesia, 5 October 2007, [www.lsi.or.id/riset/310/trend-dukungan-nilai-islam-is-versus-nilai-sekular](http://www.lsi.or.id/riset/310/trend-dukungan-nilai-islam-is-versus-nilai-sekular).

them. Even if he were to take a potentially unpopular stance – upholding freedom of religion in a way that included JAI – it would still be in their interest to keep the informal alliance intact. (The PKS decision on 24 June 2008 to break ranks with the government on the fuel price issue does not necessarily mean a lasting political split.) That said, the secretary general of PPP, after visiting Habib Rizieq in prison, said the FPI leader would be on his party's candidate list in 2009.<sup>85</sup>

The respected *Reformasi Weekly Review* called the anti-Ahmadiyah decree a major political blunder for President Yudhoyono, not only because it was unnecessary to appease the Muslim parties, but also because Megawati and her PDIP party can now come across as more open and tolerant.<sup>86</sup>

As always in an election environment, rumours abound as to who is funding the hardliners, particularly the street demonstrations for which transport, food and water are sometimes provided. Since Megawati and PDIP have nothing to gain from association with radical Islam, suspicion falls on other political opponents. The objective would be to make Yudhoyono look weak, showing that he is unable to secure the streets of Jakarta; dithers too long before taking action; or lets himself be influenced by pro-Western elements. (After the 1 June assault, hardliners circulated text messages that the AKKBB had been funded by Yudhoyono allies to divert attention from fuel price hikes, and Hizb ut-Tahrir suggested that it had been financed by the U.S., as evidenced by the fact that a senior embassy official visited one of the injured in hospital, and the American attorney general made a brief stopover in Jakarta on the day the demonstration took place.) No evidence about outside funding has come to light, however.

A more important question is how local elections may be fuelling the campaign against Ahmadiyah. Direct elections for local officials have been taking place in Indonesia since 2005. In some parts of West Java, candidates have used the Ahmadiyah issue to try to attract votes. In December 2007, the deputy district head of Kuningan, West Java, signed a decree to seal off four Ahmadiyah mosques in his jurisdiction. He is now a candidate for district head, and his support of anti-Ahmadiyah actions has helped boost his profile.

## V. CONCLUSION

The joint ministerial decree of 9 June 2008 against Ahmadiyah is not a sign that Indonesia is turning into a new Saudi Arabia. Extremist groups have little support among the public. It is all the more perplexing why the government would issue a decree which so clearly violates a fundamental civil right and which gives it the right to intervene in matters of interpretation of religious doctrine. The explanation is threefold:

- ❑ skilful use of civil society tools by radical Islamic groups, which have more carefully thought through strategies, better networking abilities and stronger lobbying skills than most other advocacy groups in Indonesia. The Ahmadiyah issue resonates far beyond the radical fringe, but it is that fringe which has stoked it until the president thought he had no choice but to act;
- ❑ a president who has systematically ceded power and influence to the MUI and who is too fearful of public reaction to stand up and articulate a clear set of principles; and
- ❑ pre-election manoeuvring in which narrow political interests of individuals and parties trump any interest in broader national goals.

Many Muslim leaders who do have widespread public support, such as the leaders of the large Muslim social organisations NU and Muhammadiyah, academics at the major Islamic universities and elected politicians have no problem condemning violence or affirming their commitment to universal human rights. But they are far less effective in challenging radical positions or mobilising the masses in a way that has visible political impact. Most have better things to do than turn out on the streets for weekly shows of force. The problem is that visibility of the radicals, together with the implicit threat of force, is one key to their success. Captured by television cameras, it makes them seem more influential than they are, to the point that even the president bows to pressure.

The Yudhoyono administration ceded critical ground by allowing the revival of Bakorpakem as a government partner of the MUI. Other concessions could follow, as the parliament considers laws that are subject to radical lobbying, unless those who believe in protection of minorities and the Indonesian constitution spend more time shoring up their defences. They need to understand radical strategies and develop networks for countering them.

Too many analysts measure the influence of extremist groups in Indonesia by their success or lack thereof at

<sup>85</sup>“Habib Rizieq dilamar PPP Jadi Calon DPR”, *www.detik.com*, 12 June 2008.

<sup>86</sup>*Reformasi Weekly News*, Jakarta, 8 June 2008.



the ballot box. While that is one measure, it is not the only one. It puts too much weight on the role of Islamist parties, particularly PKS, and not enough on groups that operate wholly outside the political system but have the capacity to manipulate those within, through effective advocacy strategies.

The decree on Ahmadiyah is a step backward for Indonesia, but if it galvanises pro-democracy activists and constitutional defenders into action, there may yet be some positive outcome.

**Jakarta/Brussels, 7 July 2008**

## APPENDIX A

## MAP OF INDONESIA



## APPENDIX B

### ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP

The International Crisis Group (Crisis Group) is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organisation, with some 135 staff members on five continents, working through field-based analysis and high-level advocacy to prevent and resolve deadly conflict.

Crisis Group's approach is grounded in field research. Teams of political analysts are located within or close by countries at risk of outbreak, escalation or recurrence of violent conflict. Based on information and assessments from the field, it produces analytical reports containing practical recommendations targeted at key international decision-takers. Crisis Group also publishes *CrisisWatch*, a twelve-page monthly bulletin, providing a succinct regular update on the state of play in all the most significant situations of conflict or potential conflict around the world.

Crisis Group's reports and briefing papers are distributed widely by email and printed copy to officials in foreign ministries and international organisations and made available simultaneously on the website, [www.crisisgroup.org](http://www.crisisgroup.org). Crisis Group works closely with governments and those who influence them, including the media, to highlight its crisis analyses and to generate support for its policy prescriptions.

The Crisis Group Board – which includes prominent figures from the fields of politics, diplomacy, business and the media – is directly involved in helping to bring the reports and recommendations to the attention of senior policy-makers around the world. Crisis Group is co-chaired by the former European Commissioner for External Relations Christopher Patten and former U.S. Ambassador Thomas Pickering. Its President and Chief Executive since January 2000 has been former Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans.

Crisis Group's international headquarters are in Brussels, with advocacy offices in Washington DC (where it is based as a legal entity), New York, London and Moscow. The organisation currently operates eleven regional offices (in Bishkek, Bogotá, Cairo, Dakar, Islamabad, Istanbul, Jakarta, Nairobi, Pristina, Seoul and Tbilisi) and has local field representation in sixteen additional locations (Abuja, Baku, Bangkok, Beirut, Belgrade, Colombo, Damascus, Dili, Dushanbe, Jerusalem, Kabul, Kathmandu, Kinshasa, Port-au-Prince, Pretoria and Tehran). Crisis Group currently covers some 60 areas of actual or potential conflict across four continents. In Africa, this includes Burundi,

Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Uganda and Zimbabwe; in Asia, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Kashmir, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Myanmar/Burma, Nepal, North Korea, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan; in Europe, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Georgia, Kosovo, Serbia and Turkey; in the Middle East, the whole region from North Africa to Iran; and in Latin America, Colombia, the rest of the Andean region and Haiti.

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**July 2008**



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