

INDONESIA 2021 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

The constitution provides a guarantee of freedom of religion and the right to worship according to one's own beliefs but states citizens must accept restrictions established by law to protect the rights of others and, as noted in the constitution, to satisfy "just demands based upon considerations of morality, religious values, security, and public order in a democratic society." Some local governments imposed local laws and regulations restricting religious observance, such as regulations banning Shia or Ahmadi Islamic practice. In Aceh Province, authorities continued to carry out public canings for sharia violations, such as selling alcohol, gambling, and extramarital affairs. Individuals continued to be detained and received prison sentences for violations of blasphemy laws. The Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation reported 67 blasphemy cases in 2020, the most recent year available, with 43 cases related to statements made on social media. On April 20, police named Joseph Paul Zhang as a blasphemy suspect for statements on his YouTube channel that he was the 26th prophet of Islam. On the same day, the Ministry of Communications and Information Technologies removed 20 videos uploaded by Zhang deemed to be potential blasphemy. On May 31, police summoned Desak Made Darmawati, a professor at a Jakarta college, for questioning as a blasphemy suspect after a coalition of Hindu organizations reported Darmawati for statements in a widely shared online video that were regarded as anti-Hindu. On August 25, police arrested Muhammad Kace in Bali for blasphemy related to statements made in a YouTube video critical of the Islamic religious curriculum used in the country and of the Prophet Muhammad. On August 22, Minister of Religious Affairs Yaqut Cholil Qoumas released a statement emphasizing that blasphemy remained a crime and that religious speech should focus on being educational and building national unity and religious tolerance. Local religious majorities continued to delay or deny the construction and renovation of houses of worship for local religious minorities. In June, the Bogor city government granted land to relocate the GKI Yasmin Church, which had its construction halted in 2007 because of vocal opposition from some local Muslim leaders. City and national government officials said the action had resolved the long-standing dispute, but members of the GKI Yasmin congregation publicly stated they had not been involved in the decision and they still sought construction of their church at its original location, as directed by a 2020 Supreme Court ruling. At the national level, government and religious leaders cooperated closely in developing restrictions to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic. In June, the leader of the banned Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), a group known for

violence and religious intolerance, was sentenced to four years in prison for spreading false information related to COVID-19. In January, two non-Muslim students refused to wear hijabs, which were mandated by the school. As a result of the controversy that followed, the government issued a joint ministerial decree in February to prevent schools from compelling female students to wear hijabs, a decision welcomed by religious freedom activists. The Supreme Court, however, annulled the decree in May saying it contravened four pre-existing laws. In January, President Joko Widodo nominated and the lower house of parliament unanimously approved General Listyo Sigit Prabowo, a Protestant, as the head of the Indonesian National Police. Prabowo became the first Christian to hold the position since the 1970s.

On May 11, four Christian farmers in Poso Regency, Central Sulawesi, were killed by the East Indonesia Mujahedeen terrorist group. On March 28, two suicide bombers, later identified as a married couple, attacked the Catholic Sacred Heart of Jesus Cathedral in Makassar, South Sulawesi Province, killing both assailants and injuring 20 bystanders. On May 28, police arrested 11 suspected members of the Jamaah Ansharut Daulah terrorist organization in Merauke, Papua, for an alleged plot to kill Catholic Archbishop of Merauke Petrus Canisius Mandagi and for planning attacks at several Christian churches in easternmost Papua Province. Shia and Ahmadi Muslims reported feeling under constant threat from “intolerant groups.” Anti-Shia rhetoric was common in some online media outlets and on social media. Individuals affiliated at the local level with the Indonesian Council of Ulemas (MUI), a national, quasi-governmental Muslim clerical body, used rhetoric considered intolerant by religious minorities, including Shia and Ahmadi Muslims. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) reported there were multiple reports of assaults on Shia Muslims at Shia events. In September, a mob of more than a hundred persons attacked an Ahmadi mosque in Sintang Regency (an administrative subdivision of a province), West Kalimantan, resulting in substantial damage to the mosque – local police present at the mosque did not stop the destruction. On September 27, religious leaders from different faiths attended the Dialogue of Religious Council Leaders in Jakarta, issuing the “Declaration of Religions for a Just and Peaceful Indonesia.”

The U.S. Ambassador and embassy and consulate officials advocated for religious freedom with the government, including at the highest levels. Issues raised included actions against religious minorities, closures of places of worship, access for foreign religious organizations, convictions for blasphemy and defamation of religion, the importance of tolerance and rule of law, and the application of sharia to non-Muslims. In December, the Ambassador delivered remarks on religious

freedom and tolerance at an event hosted by MUI to launch a human rights school for Muslim clerics. In February, the Charge d’Affaires delivered remarks highlighting religious freedom and tolerance at the 43rd anniversary of the National Istiqlal Mosque, an event that included participation from the Vice President, ministers, and other senior government officials. In February, the embassy began working with the National Istiqlal Mosque’s Voice of Istiqlal initiative, which seeks to encourage tolerance and diversity, interfaith dialogue, and gender equality in the country and internationally. During the month of Ramadan, the embassy launched an extensive outreach campaign highlighting values of religious tolerance and freedom, estimated to have reached 100 million persons. The embassy and consulates conducted extensive outreach to promote respect for diversity and religious tolerance through events, media interviews, social media initiatives, digital and public speaking engagements, youth exchanges, and educational programs.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 275.1 million (midyear 2021). According to the 2010 census, 87.2 percent of the population is Muslim, 7 percent Protestant, 2.9 percent Roman Catholic, and 1.7 percent Hindu. Those identifying with other religious groups, including Buddhism, traditional indigenous religions, Confucianism, Gafatar, other Christian denominations, and those who did not respond to the census question, comprise 1.3 percent of the population.

The Muslim population is overwhelmingly Sunni. An estimated one to five million Muslims are Shia. Many smaller Muslim groups exist; estimates put the total number of Ahmadi Muslims at 200,000 to 500,000.

Many religious groups incorporate elements of Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism, making it difficult to disaggregate the exact number of followers. An estimated 20 million persons, primarily in Java, Kalimantan, and Papua, practice various traditional belief systems, often referred to collectively as *aliran kepercayaan*. There are approximately 400 different *aliran kepercayaan* communities throughout the archipelago.

The Sikh population is estimated between 10,000 and 15,000, with approximately 5,000 in Medan and the rest in Jakarta. There are very small Jewish communities in Jakarta, Manado, Jayapura, and elsewhere, with the total number of Jews estimated at 200. The Baha’i Faith and Falun Dafa (or Falun Gong) communities report thousands of members, but independent estimates are not available. The

number of atheists is also unknown, but the group Indonesian Atheists states it has more than 1,700 members.

The province of Bali is predominantly Hindu, and the provinces of Papua, West Papua, East Nusa Tenggara, and North Sulawesi are predominantly Christian.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

The constitution guarantees the right to practice the religion of one's choice and specifies that freedom of religion is a human right that may not be limited. The constitution states, "The nation is based upon belief in one supreme God," but it guarantees all persons the right to worship according to their own religion or belief, saying the right to have a religion is a human right that shall not be discriminated against.

The constitution states citizens must accept restrictions established by law to protect the rights of others and to satisfy, as noted in the constitution, "just demands based upon considerations of morality, religious values, security, and public order in a democratic society." The law restricts citizens from exercising these rights in a way that impinges on the rights of others, oversteps common moral standards and religious values, or jeopardizes security or public order.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA) extends official recognition and support to six religious groups: Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Confucianism. The government maintains a longstanding practice of recognizing Sunni Islam as the official version of Islam of local Muslims, although the constitution has no such stipulation.

Blasphemy articles in the criminal code prohibit deliberate public statements or activities that insult or defame any of the six officially recognized religions or have the intent of preventing an individual from adhering to an official religion. These articles also stipulate that in any case of defamation of the six officially recognized religions, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA), the MORA, and the Attorney General's Office (AGO) must first warn the individual in question before bringing a defamation charge. The articles also forbid the dissemination of information designed to spread hatred or dissension among individuals and/or certain community groups based on ethnicity, religion, or race. Individuals may be subject to prosecution for blasphemous, atheistic, or heretical statements under either of

these provisions or under the laws against defamation and may face a maximum prison sentence of five years. The Electronic Information and Transaction (ITE) law forbids the electronic dissemination of the same types of information, with violations carrying a maximum six-year sentence.

The government defines a religion as having a prophet, holy book, and deity, as well as international recognition. The government deems the six officially recognized religions meet these requirements. Organizations representing one of the six recognized religions listed in the blasphemy law are not required to obtain a legal charter if they are established under a notary act and obtain approval from the Ministry of Law and Human Rights. Religious organizations other than the six recognized religions listed in the blasphemy law must obtain a legal charter as a civil society organization (CSO) from the MOHA. Both ministries consult with the MORA before granting legal status to religious organizations. The law requires all CSOs to uphold the national ideology of Pancasila, which encompasses the principles of belief in one God, justice, unity, democracy, and social justice, and they are prohibited from committing blasphemous acts or spreading religious hatred. By law, all religious groups must officially register with the government. Registration requirements for religious organizations include the following conditions: organizations may not contradict Pancasila and the constitution; they must be voluntary, social, independent, nonprofit, and democratic; and they must have notarized articles of association (bylaws) and a specifically defined purpose. The organization then registers with the MORA. After MORA approval, the organization is announced publicly through the state gazette. Violations of the law may result in a loss of legal status, dissolution of the organization, and arrest of members under the blasphemy articles of the criminal code or other applicable laws. Indigenous religious groups must register with the Ministry of Education and Culture as aliran kepercayaan to obtain official, legal status.

A joint ministerial decree by the MORA, MOHA, and AGO bans both proselytizing by the Ahmadi Muslim community and vigilantism against the group. Violations of the Ahmadi proselytizing ban carry a maximum five-year prison sentence on charges of blasphemy. According to the criminal code, vigilantism carries a maximum four-and-one-half-year prison sentence.

Another joint ministerial decree by the MORA, MOHA, and AGO bans the Fajar Nusantara Movement, known as Gafatar, from proselytizing, spreading its teachings publicly, or any other activities deemed to spread deviant interpretations of Islam. Violators of the ban may be charged with blasphemy and may receive a maximum five-year prison sentence on charges of blasphemy.

There is no joint ministerial decree that bans proselytizing by other groups. The MUI, however, has issued fatwas that ban proselytizing by what it calls deviant groups such as Inkar al-Sunnah, Ahmadiyya, Islam Jama'ah, the Lia Eden Community, and al-Qiyadah al-Islamiyah. While the MUI has not labelled Shia Islam as deviant, it has issued fatwas and guidance cautioning against the spread of Shia teachings.

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

A 2006 joint ministerial decree issued by the MORA and the MOHA states that religious groups may not hold services in private residences, and those seeking to build a house of worship are required to obtain the signatures of at least 90 members of the group and 60 persons of other religious groups in the community stating they support the construction. Local governments are responsible for implementing the decree, and local regulations, implementation, and enforcement vary widely. The decree also requires approval from the local interfaith council, the Religious Harmony Forum (FKUB). Government-established FKUBs exist at the provincial and district/city level and comprise religious leaders from the six official groups. They are responsible for mediating interreligious conflicts.

The law requires religious instruction in public schools. Students have the right to request religious instruction in any one of the six official religions, but teachers are not always available to teach the requested religion classes. Under the law, students may not opt out of religious education requirements.

Under the terms of a 2005 peace agreement that ended a separatist conflict, Aceh Province has unique authority to implement sharia regulations. The law allows for provincial implementation and regulation of sharia and extends the jurisdiction of religious courts to economic transactions and criminal cases. The Aceh government states sharia in Aceh only applies to Muslim residents of the province, although nonresident Muslims and adherents to other faiths may accept sharia in lieu of punishment under the criminal code.

Aceh's provincial sharia regulations criminalize consensual same-sex sexual conduct, adultery, gambling, consumption of alcohol, and proximity to members of the opposite sex outside of marriage for Muslim residents of the province. An

Aceh governor's decree forbids women from working in or visiting restaurants unaccompanied by their spouse or a male relative after 9 p.m. A Banda Aceh mayoral decree forbids women from working in coffee shops, internet cafes, or sports venues after 1 p.m. Sharia regulations prohibit female Muslim residents of Aceh from wearing tight clothes in public, and officials often recommended wearing headscarves. The regulation allows local officials to "remind" female Muslims of these regulations but does not allow women's detention for violating them. One district in Aceh prohibits women from sitting astride motorcycles when riding as passengers. The maximum penalties for violations of sharia regulations include imprisonment and caning. There are regulations intended to limit the amount of force that authorities may exert during a caning.

Many local governments outside of Aceh have enacted regulations based on religious considerations; most of these are in majority-Muslim areas. Many of these regulations relate to matters such as religious education and only apply to a specific religious group. Some religiously inspired local regulations in effect apply to all citizens. For instance, some local regulations require restaurants to close during Ramadan fasting hours, ban alcohol, or mandate the collection of *zakat* (Islamic alms). At least 30 local regulations, including in the Sintang Regency, forbid or limit the religious activities of religious minorities, especially Shia and Ahmadi Muslims.

The law contains vague provisions regarding interfaith marriage, which are sometimes interpreted to forbid certain interfaith marriages, despite a 1986 Supreme Court decision specifically allowing interfaith marriages. The law requires that parties must perform the marriage ceremony according to the rituals and teachings of the religion(s) of both the bride and groom. Since some religious teachings forbid interfaith marriage, some groups and government officials have held that there cannot be interfaith marriages if one of the religions specifically forbids interfaith marriages. Religious leaders, human rights activists, and journalists state that interreligious marriage is difficult unless the groom or bride is willing to marry according to the religious rituals of only one of the two religions.

The law requires the leader of an aliran kepercayaan group to demonstrate group members live in at least three regencies, which are administrative designations one level below a province, before the leader may officiate legally at a wedding. This constraint effectively bars members of some smaller groups without such geographic presence from receiving official marriage services from a member of their faith, although groups may aid each other and facilitate marriages by a group with similar faith traditions and rituals.

A joint ministerial decree by the MORA and the MOHA requires domestic religious organizations to obtain approval from the MORA to receive funding from overseas donors and forbids dissemination of religious literature and pamphlets to members of other religious groups, as well as door-to-door proselytizing. Religious groups, except for Ahmadi Muslims and Gafatar, are not forbidden from spreading their interpretations and teachings to other members of their religion in their own places of worship.

Foreign religious workers must obtain religious worker visas, and foreign religious organizations must obtain permission from the MORA to provide any type of assistance (in-kind, personnel, or financial) to local religious groups.

The country is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Government Practices

On August 16, former leaders of FPI announced the creation of The Islamic Brotherhood Front, which has the same acronym as the now outlawed organization. FPI's organization, symbols, and activities were officially banned in December 2020 after the government issued a proclamation declaring the FPI a "nonregistered" mass organization. Civil society and religious organizations long accused the FPI of being a hard-line Muslim group that engages in acts of violence, extortion, intimidation, and intolerance against other Muslims and religious and ethnic minority communities, and they said the renaming of the organization was an attempt to circumvent the government's ban.

On January 8, the National Commission on Human Rights (Komnas HAM) released its report on the December 2020 police shootings of six FPI members on the Jakarta-Cikampek toll road in West Java Province. The commission found that police had lawfully killed two of the FPI members but had unlawfully killed four others while they were in police custody. Komnas HAM labelled these four killings a human rights violation. In April, a police spokesperson reported that three police officials from the Mobile Reserve unit of the Greater Jakarta Metropolitan Regional Police had been named as suspects and were being investigated, noting that one of the three had died in an accident in January. On October 18, media reported that the trial of the two living suspects, Yusmin Ohorella and Fikri Ramadhan, had started in the South Jakarta District Court.

On June 24, the East Jakarta District Court sentenced Rizieq Shihab, a Muslim cleric and FPI leader, to four years in prison for spreading false information regarding the results of his COVID-19 diagnosis that “purposely caused confusion for the public.” In late November 2020, Shihab posted a video on social media that was widely rebroadcast by local media claiming he tested negative for COVID-19 despite being in a hospital outside of Jakarta undergoing treatment for the virus. Prior to his social media announcement, Shihab and his supporters held several large gatherings, including his daughter’s wedding, attended by thousands, which the government said resulted in a surge of COVID-19 cases. On May 27, the same court sentenced Shihab and five other FPI leaders to eight months in prison for violating health protocols during those gatherings. The government released the five other FPI leaders on October 6 for time served against their eight-month sentence, while Shihab remained in prison. Former FPI members and some CSOs criticized the cases against Shihab as being largely political in nature due to his outspoken criticism of the government.

In Aceh, authorities continued to carry out public canings for sharia violations such as selling alcohol, gambling, and extramarital affairs. Canings continued to occur in public spaces despite the Aceh governor’s 2018 order that they should be executed only in prison facilities. Media outlets broadcast recordings of the punishments, and observers of the punishment frequently photographed or recorded the proceedings. Government and sharia officials stated non-Muslim residents of Aceh could choose punishment under either sharia or civil court procedures, but Muslim residents of Aceh must receive punishment under sharia. According to media reports and human rights activists, several non-Muslim residents of Aceh chose punishment under sharia, reportedly due to its expediency and to avoid the risks of prolonged and expensive trials and possible lengthy prison sentences.

On February 8, three non-Muslims convicted of illegal possession of alcohol in Banda Aceh requested punishment under sharia and each received 40 lashes. One of those punished publicly stated he did so to avoid a lengthy prison sentence. On January 28, two men were caned 77 times each in Banda Aceh after being convicted of having sex with each other, violating restrictions on homosexual activities in the province. On August 25, a couple was caned 100 times each for sexual relations outside of marriage in Sabang. On August 20, a man was sentenced to four years in prison and 100 lashes for sexually abusing a child. On October 6, a 19-year-old woman fainted after being caned 100 times for sexual relations outside of marriage in Southwest Aceh Regency.

A September 9 Human Rights Watch report stated that more than 150 individuals, mostly from the nation's religious minorities, had been convicted under the blasphemy law since its enactment in 2004, and that the law was most commonly used against people deemed to have criticized Islam, including Muslims who criticize their own religion. The Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation reported 67 blasphemy cases in 2020, the most recent year available, with 43 of the cases related to statements made on social media. International Christian Concern, an international NGO that advocates for Christian communities it believes are persecuted, stated in a January press release that laws on blasphemy were applied disproportionately, with Christians frequently being prosecuted for "insulting Islam."

In late 2020, the Bandung District Court sentenced Apollinaris Darmawan, a 68-year-old retired civil servant, to five years in prison for blasphemy under the ITE law for a series of tweets and videos posted on Twitter and Instagram that, among other things, stated Islam was not a religion and should be expelled from the country. Authorities previously sentenced him to prison for four years in 2017 but released him early in 2020.

On April 20, police named Joseph Paul Zhang as a blasphemy suspect for statements on his YouTube channel that he was the 26th prophet of Islam. On the same day, the Ministry of Communications and Information Technologies removed 20 videos uploaded by Zhang deemed to be potential blasphemy. According to media reports, Zhang, a Protestant pastor, had renounced his citizenship and had been living in Germany since 2018, prompting police to send a red notice request to Interpol, which would notify legal authorities worldwide that a person is wanted for extradition. As of the end of the year, Interpol had not publicly responded to the red notice request.

On May 31, police summoned Desak Made Darmawati, a professor at a college in Jakarta, for questioning as a blasphemy suspect under the ITE law. A coalition of Hindu organizations in Bali told police that Darmawati made statements in a widely shared online video that Hinduism had many deities and Hindu cremation rituals were strange. Although Darmawati, a convert to Islam from Hinduism, publicly apologized for her statements on April 17, media reported in September that police investigators called in five individuals for questioning related to the allegations.

On July 19, the Singaraja District Court in Bali sentenced Lars Christensen, a Danish citizen, to two years in prison for blasphemy for a 2019 incident in which

he destroyed a Hindu shrine that was located in a house he had bought and was renovating. The incident was filmed by an ex-girlfriend, and the video was spread widely online. On September 21, the Denpasar High Court granted Christensen's appeal and reduced his sentence to seven months.

On August 25, police arrested Muhammad Kece in Bali for blasphemy under the ITE law related to statements made in a YouTube video critical of the Islamic religious curriculum used in the country and insulting the Prophet Muhammad. Among the charges, the authorities said Kace had changed the word "Allah" in the Islamic profession of faith (the *shahadah*) to "Jesus." Leaders of MUI, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), and Muhammadiyah, as well as Minister of Religious Affairs Qoumas, publicly stated their support for prosecuting Kece for blasphemy. Kece converted to Christianity from Islam in 2014. After his arrest, he was brought to a detention facility in Jakarta pending trial. On August 26, Kace filed a report stating that he had been beaten and covered with human excrement by fellow inmates in the Jakarta jail. Five individuals were named as suspects for this assault, including former police general Napoleon Bonaparte, who was serving a prison sentence for aiding the escape of a corruption suspect. In December, Kece's trial for blasphemy began and was underway at year's end.

On August 28, police arrested preacher Yahya Waloni in East Jakarta for blasphemy and hate speech under the ITE law for a sermon stating that the Bible was fiction and for statements made on social media that Jesus was a failed prophet and the Prophet Muhammad did not instruct people to pray. A group named the Community for Society that Loves Pluralism originally reported him to police in April. Waloni converted to Islam from Christianity in 2006. On September 27, during a pretrial hearing at the South Jakarta District Court, Yahya apologized to the Christian community for his statements. During his December trial, Waloni admitted guilt to the charges of blasphemy and the prosecutor recommended a sentence of seven months. As of year's end, Waloni had not been sentenced.

In December, Jakarta police arrested Joseph Suryadi, an employee of a property company, as a suspect for blasphemy and hate speech under the ITE law and criminal code. Suryadi had sent a message in a WhatsApp group reportedly insulting the Prophet Muhammad.

On August 22, Minister of Religious Affairs Qoumas released a statement emphasizing that blasphemy remained a crime and that religious speech should focus on being educational and building national unity and religious tolerance. On

August 26, Qoumas released a statement encouraging police to apply blasphemy laws equally and fairly against all offending parties regardless of their religion.

The MORA maintained its authority at the national and local levels to conduct the “development” of religious groups and believers, including efforts to convert minority religious groups to Sunni Islam. Beginning in 2014, Ahmadiyya communities in several West Java regencies reported that local governments were forcing or encouraging the conversion of Ahmadi Muslims, using a requirement that Ahmadi sign forms renouncing their beliefs in order to register their marriages or participate in the Hajj.

In November 2020, 274 Shia Muslims and their leader Tajul Muluk converted to Sunni Islam. Prior to the conversion, Muluk publicly stated that no one was forcing him and his followers to convert. Muluk’s community was displaced to the outskirts of Surabaya, East Java, in 2012 after anti-Shia groups used violence to force them from their homes in Sampang Regency, Madura. In January, after a member of Muluk’s community, Hatimah (one name only), died, the surrounding local Sunni communities refused to allow her burial in an Islamic cemetery due to their concerns that the former Shia Muslims had not fully converted. Local government officials mediated the dispute, leading to an agreement allowing for the burial of Hatimah in the local cemetery as long as the former Shia Muslims were mentored by Sunni clerics and attended religion classes.

On February 3, East Java Provincial Governor Khofifah Indar Parawansa appeared at a ceremony to give 230 land certificates to the former Shia Muslims who had converted with Muluk so they could gain permanent ownership of the land they had been living on since being driven out of Sampang Regency. In February, senior officials from the East Java Nahdlatul Ulama chapter visited the former Shia Muslim community to provide assistance packages including basic necessities, as well as to build the relationship with the community.

On July 30, nine Shia Muslims from the same displaced community, including their leader Mohammad Zaini, converted to Sunni Islam. Zaini publicly stated that the group had not been pressured to convert. On September 15, Presidential Chief of Staff Moeldoko (one name only) visited Sampang to convey his appreciation to the Sampang Regent Slamet Junaedi for resolving the religious-social conflict with Shia Muslims that had occurred in Sampang, including mention of the conversion of Muluk and his followers to Sunni Islam. On November 30, during a focus group discussion among community members on the resolution of the conflict,

Junaedi stated that he was ready to work with the community so that they could return and live in Sampang.

The government responded to the COVID-19 pandemic by implementing policies to prevent the spread of the virus through limiting public events, including religious gatherings. At the national level, government and religious leaders cooperated closely in developing these restrictions. On February 23, thousands of interfaith leaders came together at the National Istiqlal Mosque, the largest mosque in Southeast Asia, to receive COVID-19 vaccinations to demonstrate interfaith support to the country's public health efforts to combat the COVID-19 pandemic.

On July 30, the Indonesian Hinduism Society (PHDI) publicly revoked its recognition of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) as a form of Hinduism. This national declaration by PHDI followed the August 2020 declaration by its Bali chapter renouncing ISKCON. In April, the Customary Village Council in Denpasar, Bali, closed the Ashram Krishna Balaram, an ISKCON temple. The Bali Regional Assembly and the Bali Customary Village Assembly supported the decision, and the Indonesian chapter of ISKCON then filed a complaint with Komnas HAM against the Bali governor, Bali PHDI, Bali Customary Village Assembly, and several other local officials for violating ISKCON followers' freedom of religion. On August 27, Komnas HAM sent a letter to Governor of Bali Wayan Koster, other local government officials, and the police recommending they guarantee the freedom of religion for ISKCON followers and their ability to practice their faith in peace. On September 6, the Bali Customary Village Assembly rejected the KOMNAS HAM recommendation, stating that ISKCON tenets were very different from Hindu tenets and that ISKCON was trying to replace Bali's Hindu traditions.

According to religious groups and NGOs, government officials and police sometimes failed to prevent religious and religiously affiliated groups commonly labeled as "intolerant groups" from infringing on others' religious freedom and committing other acts of intimidation, such as damaging or destroying houses of worship and homes. Groups often identified as intolerant included the Islamic Community Forum, Islamic Jihad Front, Indonesian Mujahideen Council, and the now banned FPI.

In February, the MORA and Komnas HAM announced the creation of a joint help desk to respond expeditiously to reports of religious intolerance. Beka Ulung Hapsara, one of the Komnas HAM commissioners, said the desk would handle

complaints from all religious groups, including those from aliran kepercayaan and Ahmadi Muslims.

In March, the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission released regulations that required all preachers appearing on television programs during the month of Ramadan to be “appropriate,” meaning conforming with standards established by MUI, including them being competent, credible, and not linked to organizations prohibited by the government.

In September, the legislature added the revision of the penal code to its Priority Legislation List, indicating the government’s desire to pass a bill revising the code during the year. The legislature shelved a previous version of this bill in 2019 following mass public protests. CSOs expressed concerns that the legislation might expand the blasphemy laws and other criminal sections that could be used to restrict religious freedom in the updated version of this bill. The legislature continued drafting the proposed legislation at year’s end.

In February, the Setara Institute, an NGO that conducts research and advocacy on democracy, political freedom, and human rights, released the City Tolerance Index for 2020, which measures religious tolerance in 94 cities across the country. The index measures local government policies and actions, social regulations, and local religious demographics. The top five cities were Salatiga, Singkawang, Manado, Tomohon, and Kupang, while the bottom five cities were Pangkal Pinang, Makassar, Depok, Padang, and Banda Aceh. The index found an overall increase in tolerance across the country compared with the 2018 index.

In May, the Setara Institute released its annual report on the condition of freedom of religion in the country. According to the report, there were 424 actions infringing on freedom of religion in 2020, compared with 327 actions in 2019. State actors were responsible for 239 of these actions, including 71 cases of discrimination, 21 cases of arrest, and 16 cases of outlawing religious activities, with the remaining cases mostly related to use of blasphemy laws.

Across the country, minority religious groups, including Muslim groups in non-Muslim majority areas, continued to uphold the official requirement for 90 members of the religious community and 60 members of other religious communities in the area to support the building or renovating a house of worship was a barrier to construction. Members of the Jewish community stated that since their numbers nationwide were so few, it was impossible for them to build new synagogues.

NGOs reported that local governments did not issue permits for the construction of new places of worship even when congregations had the required number of members, since opponents of the construction sometimes pressured neighbors from other religious communities not to support the construction. In many cases, a few vocal opponents from the local majority religious affiliation were reportedly sufficient to stop construction approvals, giving majority religions a de facto veto over construction of houses of worship in some areas. State-recognized religious leaders in government-supported interfaith forums reportedly found ways to block aliran kepercayaan believers from constructing places of worship, largely through stringent permit requirements. Aliran kepercayaan adherents said they feared accusations of atheism if they contested such treatment in court. Christian leaders reported that local officials indefinitely delayed the approval of requests to build new churches because the officials feared construction would lead to protests. Ahmadi and Shia Muslims and Christians said they also faced problems when seeking approval to relocate to temporary facilities while a primary place of worship underwent renovation.

Local governments, police, and religious organizations reportedly tried to close religious minority groups' houses of worship on the grounds of permit violations, often after protests from "intolerant groups," even if the minority groups had been issued a proper permit.

Many congregations could not obtain the requisite number of nonmember signatures supporting construction of houses of worship and often faced protests from "intolerant groups" during the application process, making permits nearly impossible to obtain. Even when authorities issued permits, they halted construction on some houses of worship after facing legal challenges and public protests. Protestant and Catholic churches also reported that "intolerant groups" forced them to pay protection money if they continued operating without a permit. Some houses of worship established before the joint ministerial decree on house-of-worship construction came into effect in 2006 reportedly were still obligated to meet the requirements or face closure. Many houses of worship operated without permits in office buildings, malls, private homes, and shops.

Ahmadiyya congregations faced pressure from local officials to stop reconstruction and renovations on their houses of worship. On May 6, Garut Regent Rudy Guanwan issued a circular order forbidding Ahmadiyya activities in accordance with the Joint Ministerial on Ahmadiyya and halting the construction of an Ahmadi

mosque in the West Java Regency. On May 8, a coalition of 42 CSOs sent an open letter to the regent criticizing the order as a violation of freedom of religion.

On September 3, a mob of more than 100 people vandalized the Ahmadi Muslim Miftahul Huda mosque in Sintang Regency, West Kalimantan, and burned down a building adjacent to it. Media reported that police stood by as the attack happened. The mosque had been in operation since 2004. Following the attack, Minister of Religious Affairs Qoumas condemned the attack as unjustifiable and illegal. Prior to the attack, the local government issued a decree in April banning Ahmadiyya activities in the region. In August, government officials had sealed the Ahmadi mosque temporarily, following reported threats from a local anti-Ahmadi group, the Muslim Umma Alliance. On August 27, the local government issued a letter permanently closing the mosque. Police arrested 22 individuals in connection to the case, naming three of those arrested as potential masterminds of the attack. As of the end of the year, government officials were investigating the incident and the involvement of hard-line groups and the local government.

Following the attack on the mosque, the Nahdlatul Ulama Central Board Chairman Said Aqil Siradj told press that he strongly condemned any violence used against the Ahmadiyya. Additionally, MORA officials told the press they would begin reviewing the 2008 joint ministerial decree that had criminalized Ahmadi activities. As of September 8, police had arrested 26 suspects related to the incident and an investigation was underway. A September 13 editorial in the *Jakarta Post* newspaper called for the revocation of the joint decree, saying that it “only works to legitimize violent acts against the Ahmadiyah.”

In February, lawyers for Puji Hartono, the head of a *musala* (a small prayer hall) in South Halmahera Regency, North Maluku Province, sent legal challenges to the local government requesting he be allowed to resume religious services and the construction at the musala. According to his lawyers, religious study had been held at the musala since 1982, but in February 2020, local government officials stopped him from hosting religious study classes there and halted renovations. Additionally, media reported that the local officials drove Hartono out of the village, leaving behind his wife and 11 children. Hartono’s lawyers stated that the closing of the musala and the expulsion of Hartono from the village were done illegally.

In April, a media account regarding a Batak Christian Protestant church in Jombang Regency, East Java, attracted national attention during the year. In March 2020, the church officially opened, but soon after the government closed it

due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. However, when the church attempted to reopen in August 2020, the village government denied its request to reopen. Press reported that hostility from members of other faiths in the local community were the reason behind the government's decision to refuse the church's request to reopen. In November 2020, the village government officially issued an order closing the church for disturbing neighboring residents. During the church's closure, members of the church rented another location in a nearby city for their religious activities and ceremonies.

On May 23, the Indonesian Baptist Church in the Tlogosari Kulon area of Semarang, Central Java, was officially opened. The city government initially granted permission to build the church in 1998, but construction of the church experienced a series of delays caused by local community protests against the construction, government actions to suspend construction, and the congregation's lack of finances.

On June 13, Mayor Bima Arya of Bogor, West Java, provided a land grant to representatives of the Indonesian Christian Church (GKI) Pengadilan for construction of a new church building by its affiliate church, GKI Yasmin. Arya stated that this action resolved a longstanding dispute related to the construction of a new church that GKI Yasmin had begun in 2006 but that was halted a year later, after the city withdrew the original building permit due to what the media described as pressure from local Muslim groups. Following the withdrawal of the permit, the GKI Yasmin congregation filed a lawsuit against the city, resulting in a 2020 Supreme Court decision ordering the Bogor government to reinstate the building permit for the original location. GKI Yasmin also disputed Arya's June statement, saying the issue remained unsettled and that its congregation had not been involved in any plans for a proposed relocation, with the government instead negotiating with GKI Pengadilan, an affiliated church, and not directly with GKI Yasmin. GKI Yasmin members boycotted an August 8 event hosted by Mayor Arya to present the building permit for the new church. On September 10, Presidential Chief of Staff Moeldoko publicly congratulated Arya for successfully resolving the dispute while deputy chair of the Setara Institute Bonar Tigor Naipospos told press the case reflected a dominant trend in the country where "minority groups [are] forced to relent to satisfy the majority groups," rather than the government ensuring legal protection for those minority groups. On August 27, Vice President Ma'ruf Amin, after attending Friday prayers at the National Istiqlal Mosque, walked through the newly constructed "Tunnel of Brotherhood" that connected the mosque with the nearby Jakarta Catholic Cathedral. Amin stated that the tunnel was "not just a symbol, but it can create the

inspiration to unite religious communities.” President Widodo had initially approved construction of the tunnel in February 2020.

In December 2020, the National Islamic Institute in Manado, North Sulawesi, a state-run Islamic college, built a “religious moderation house” on its campus as a place for discussion of religious tolerance and pluralistic society. Interfaith leaders from the local Muslim, Hindu, Catholic, Christian, Confucian, and Buddhist communities attended the inauguration of the building.

In July, the Paramadina Center for the Study of Religion and Democracy released a report finding that between 2015 and 2020 there were at least 122 cases of local communities resisting the construction of houses of worship by appealing to local governments under the auspices of the 2006 joint ministerial decree on houses of worship, with approximately 60 percent of cases involving churches, 28 percent involving mosques, and the remaining 12 percent involving Buddhist, Hindu, and Confucian temples.

Aliran kepercayaan followers continued to say teachers pressured them to send their children to religious education classes conducted by one of the six officially recognized religions. Minority religious groups not among the six recognized religions said that schools often allowed their children to spend religious education time in study hall, but that school officials required parents to sign documents stating their children received religious education. Ahmadi Muslim students reported religion classes on Islam focused only on Sunni teachings.

On February 3, the Ministers of Education and Culture, Home Affairs, and Religious Affairs issued a joint ministerial decree on the use of uniforms in schools, prohibiting most state-run schools from compelling female students to wear hijabs. The decree came after two non-Muslim students in West Sumatra refused to wear school-mandated hijabs. Parents of one of the students filmed their meeting with school officials who stated the student had to wear a hijab and posted the video on social media, prompting the national news media to report on the story. The school principal subsequently apologized, acknowledging that 23 non-Muslim students in the school had been required to wear the hijab. The decree ordered local governments and school principals to abandon regulations requiring the hijab but did not prohibit Muslim female students and teachers from choosing to wear the hijab at school.

In February, press reported that the National Commission on Violence Against Women identified 32 provinces and regencies in the country that required girls and

women to wear hijabs in public schools, government buildings, and other public spaces. In some cases, young women had their hair cut, were expelled from schools, were penalized, or were fired from their jobs. In February, a Human Rights Watch researcher told the press that schools in more than 20 provinces made religious attire mandatory in their dress code.

On May 3, the Supreme Court annulled the joint ministerial decree on hijabs, declaring that the decree violated four laws, including the National Education System Law and Child Protection Law, and said that children under 18 had no right to choose their own clothes. Religious Affairs Minister Qoumas said he was disappointed with the ruling and would consult with his cabinet colleagues on what to do next.

In March, Human Rights Watch released a report on dress codes for women and girls, finding that “over the past two decades, women and girls in the country had faced unprecedented legal and social demands to wear clothing deemed Islamic as part of broader efforts to impose the rules of sharia in many parts of the country.” The report found that women and girls across the country were subject to local regulations, social pressure, bullying, and harassment to compel them to wear hijabs at schools, government offices, and in public spaces, causing psychological distress and violating their freedom of religion.

On March 1, Reverend Gomar Gultom, the chairman of the Communion of Churches in Indonesia, the largest Protestant Christian umbrella organization in the country, released a statement that said that the group had written to the Minister of Religious Affairs to work with the Ministry of Education and Culture and with book publishers to revise or drop Islamic textbooks that refer to the Bible. Gultom said that religious lessons “should be carried out in a private space, such as among families and in houses of worship – not in schools.” The letter cited criticisms of the Gospels in the Islamic textbooks.

On April 5, Minister Qoumas directed all MORA employees to give opportunities for prayers from religions other than Islam at all MORA events and activities.

According to media reports, in April, the Ahmadi Muslim community displaced from their village of Gereneng by communal violence in 2018 had moved near Mataram, West Nusa Tenggara. The local government of West Nusa Tenggara told press that it was exploring plans to build the infrastructure in this new location and cautioned against the return of the community to Gereneng village due to social hostility there. Local CSOs and academics criticized the government

approach as giving in to local religious majority pressure rather than protecting religious minorities.

In Mataram, West Nusa Tenggara, approximately 120 Ahmadi Muslims remained internally displaced in cramped apartments after a mob expelled them from their East Lombok village in 2006. According to media reports in May, the community continued to lack permanent residences. Media also reported in May that 16 other Ahmadi Muslims displaced by the same conflict were living in a former hospital in Praya, Central Lombok.

Although the government generally allowed citizens to leave the religion column blank on their identity cards (KTPs) and a 2017 Constitutional Court ruling allowed citizens to select indigenous faiths on their KTPs, individuals continued to report difficulties accessing government services if they chose either option. Faced with this problem, many religious minority members, including those following indigenous beliefs, reportedly chose to identify as a member of an officially recognized religion close to their beliefs or reflecting the locally dominant religion. According to researchers, this practice obscured the real numbers of adherents to religious groups in government statistics.

In June, the local government of Banyuwangi Regency, East Java, provided identity cards to close to 300 aliran kepercayaan adherents listing their correct religion. Previously adherents either did not have identity documents or had the documents with a blank in the column for religion. On June 2, Banyuwangi regent Ipuk Fiestiandani told press that the government would provide services to all community members without discrimination.

NGOs and religious advocacy groups continued to urge the government to remove the religion field from KTPs. Religious minorities reported they sometimes faced discrimination after others saw their religious affiliation on their KTPs. Members of the Jewish community said they felt uncomfortable stating their religion in public and often chose to state they were Christians or Muslims depending on the dominant religion where they lived, due to concern that local communities did not understand their religion.

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

interreligious marriage, although this option was severely limited due to COVID-19 pandemic-related travel restrictions.

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

Both the central and local governments included elected and appointed officials from minority religious groups. For example, Andrei Angouw won the December 2020 election for mayor of Manado, becoming the country's first Confucian mayor. President Widodo's 34-member cabinet included six members of minority faiths (four Protestants, one Catholic, and one Hindu), the same total number as during his previous administration.

Many individuals in the government, media, civil society, and general population were vocal and active in protecting and promoting tolerance and pluralism. On April 7, during the opening ceremony for the ninth National Conference for the Indonesian Islamic Propagation Council, President Widodo stated that exclusive religious practices had to be avoided and that religious groups had to respect each other's beliefs in order to avoid creating divisions in society.

On September 13, Minister of Religious Affairs Qoumas delivered a speech to the G20 Interfaith Conference highlighting what he stated was Indonesia's commitment to religious pluralism and tolerance and the role of religion in fostering international peace.

On March 26, Minister Qoumas wished happy new year (Naw-Ruz) to followers of the Baha'i Faith in a video uploaded to YouTube where he discussed the importance of unity and religious moderation. The video began to be spread widely online in July, and hard-line groups began to criticize the Minister's new year's message. In response, Qoumas told press that while the government officially supports and protects the six official religions of Indonesia, that did not mean other religions such as Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Shintoism, or Taoism were illegal in the country or not protected by the constitution. Following Qouma's statement, MUI chair Cholil Nafis publicly cautioned the MORA against providing support or recognition to the Baha'i religion.

In January, President Widodo nominated and the lower house of parliament unanimously approved General Listyo Sigit Prabowo, a Protestant, as the head of the Indonesian National Police. Prabowo was the first Christian to hold the

position since the 1970s. He received the support of the NU and Muhammadiyah as well as leading Muslim organizations and clerics in Banten, the province bordering the capital known for what observers said was its religious conservatism, where he previously led the local police. However, the head of the MUI, expressing concern regarding Prabowo's nomination, said that "even though Indonesia is a secular country, it would not be appropriate if the leader of the police had a non-Muslim background. It was natural for leaders of any country to have the same religion as that of the majority of the population."

Foreign religious workers from numerous religious groups continued to state they found it relatively easy to obtain visas, and some groups reported little government interference with their religious activities. COVID-19 pandemic-related restrictions that severely restricted incoming travel for foreigners to Indonesia also impacted the ability of foreign religious workers entering the country.

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

On September 27, religious leaders from different faiths attended the Dialogue of Religious Council Leaders in Jakarta, hosted by the Ministry of Religion, issuing the joint "Declaration of Religions for a Just and Peaceful Indonesia." Representatives from the ministry, MUI, the Indonesian Association of Churches (PGI), the Indonesian [Catholic] Bishops' Conference, Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia (PHDI), Representatives of Indonesian Buddhists (Walubi), and the Indonesian Confucian High Council (Matakin) all signed the document. The statement said all forms of discrimination, violence, hatred, and destruction of places of worship were contrary to religious teaching and reiterated the leaders' support for the unity of the state and Pancasila.

According to press reporting, the government proposed the promotion of the ninth-century Mahayana Buddhist temple Borobudur, one of the world's largest Buddhist structures, as a global tourism destination. The reports stated that the project would be aimed at attracting domestic and international visitors, with the goal of promoting a more moderate face for religion in the country. Minister for Religious Affairs Qoumas stated the government was studying how to promote Buddhist ceremonies at Borobudur "which can be attended by Buddhists [from] all over the world," as part of efforts by the authorities to improve religious moderation in the country. Sudhamek Agoeng Wasposito Soenjoto, chairman of the Indonesian Buddhayana Council supervisory board, expressed his desire that Borobudur not be

described as a “global Buddhist worship center,” since it could lead to “misunderstanding and misinterpretation,” and the term “Universal Center for Culture and Spirituality Study for Various Religions” be used instead.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

On May 11, four Christian farmers in Poso Regency, Central Sulawesi, were killed by the East Indonesia Mujahedeen, designated by the Indonesian government as a terrorist group. The same group was accused of killing four residents of Sigi Regency, Central Sulawesi, in November 2020. According to the Voice of America, local police said the attackers were motivated by “terrorism and robbery.” A spokesperson for President Widodo condemned the incident, promising that the terrorists responsible for the attack would be caught. On September 18, security forces killed the group’s leader Ali Kalora in a firefight. At year’s end, security forces continued operations seeking to apprehend the remaining members of the group.

On March 28, two suicide bombers, later identified as a married couple, attacked the Catholic Sacred Heart of Jesus Cathedral in Makassar, South Sulawesi Province, killing both assailants and injuring 20 bystanders. Police said the wounded included four guards and several churchgoers. The attack occurred during a Palm Sunday Mass. Police identified the two bombers as members of Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD), an organization designed by the Indonesian government as terrorist, that was previously responsible for the 2018 bombings of three churches in Surabaya, East Java. In a televised address, President Widodo called for calm and said “the state guarantees the safety of religious people to worship without fear.” Religious Affairs Minister Qoumas publicly called on police to improve security at houses of worship. In May, press reported that police had arrested 53 individuals in connection with the bombing.

On May 28, police arrested 11 suspected JAD members in Merauke, Papua, for an alleged plot to kill Catholic Archbishop of Merauke Petrus Canisius Mandagi and planning attacks at several Christian churches in easternmost Papua Province. Police told press that the suspected members were affiliated with those responsible for the March bombing in Makassar.

Shia and Ahmadi Muslims reported feeling under constant threat from “intolerant groups.” Anti-Shia and anti-Ahmadi rhetoric was common in online media outlets and on social media.

Individuals affiliated at the local level with the MUI used rhetoric considered intolerant by religious minorities, including fatwas declaring Shia and Ahmadi as deviant sects. The national MUI did not address or repudiate local MUI officials who called for such fatwas. In August, the National MUI Conference released a recommendation that the MORA should always consult with MUI prior to making decisions related to Ahmadi, Shia, and Baha'i issues. In March, the local MUI for Pandeglang Regency, Banten Province, declared the Hakekok Balatasutak, a local religious group, as deviant and stated that its members needed counseling to be brought back to the correct religious path. Following the destruction of an Ahmadi mosque in Sintang Regency, West Kalimantan, in September, the local MUI signed an agreement with the local FKUB to "embrace" the local Ahmadi community to ensure they returned to the correct teachings of Islam.

On August 12, Muhammad Roin, chair of the West Java chapter of the Indonesian Islamic Propagation Council, stated that "Shi'ism" was not part of Islam and was a deviant sect. He called on the local government and police in West Java to stop any Shia plans to commemorate Ashura.

According to the Setara Institute's annual report on freedom of religion in the country, nonstate actors conducted 185 actions infringing on freedom of religion in 2020, up from 168 actions in 2019. These actions included 62 cases of intolerance, 32 cases of reporting blasphemy, 17 cases of refusing the creation of a house of worship, and eight cases of forbidding worship.

On June 3, hundreds of Nahdlatul Ulama members in Banyuwangi Regency, East Java, demonstrated against the construction of a Muhammadiyah-affiliated mosque in their community. Soon afterwards, the local heads of Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah met and publicly stated they were able to resolve the dispute. Several points from the Nahdlatul Ulama-Muhammadiyah meeting included agreement that Muhammadiyah complete administrative requirements for mosque construction and that both parties encourage communication between their followers at the local level.

On September 20, the Nahdlatul Ulama Central Board issued a letter to all institutions affiliated with Nahdlatul Ulama to cease collaborative programs and projects with the two international organizations, the American Jewish Committee and the Institute for Global Engagement, as well as the Leimena Institute, a Christian think tank based in the country. No reasons were given in the letter for the decision. Activists reported their view that the letter undermined religious freedom and was spearheaded by certain factions in NU that viewed the actions of

these minority religious organizations as “disruptive” to the country’s social fabric. As of the end of the year, the Nahdlatul Ulama Central Board had not publicly provided a reason for why it issued the letter.

A conspiracy theory blaming Jews for the COVID-19 pandemic spread widely online, leading Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal, and Security Affairs Mahfud MD to state that the COVID-19 pandemic was not the result of a Jewish conspiracy. Mahfud stated that even some academics and professors had reiterated this conspiracy theory and that he wanted to stop its spread since it distracted from efforts to combat the pandemic.

Christian news sites reported that approximately 12 elementary school children, ages nine to 12, vandalized a Christian cemetery in Solo (Surakarta), Central Java Province, on June 21. According to local authorities, the children attended a school near the cemetery.

On June 10, residents of Ponorogo Regency, East Java, rejected a plan to convert a house into a church in their neighborhood. Media reported that one of the local leaders had rejected the plan because the house owner had not asked for permission from majority Muslim local community before pursuing the plan. Yohanes Kasmin, who led the congregation asking for the conversion, said the dispute was a result of a misunderstanding and that since its creation the congregation had never had a permanent place of worship.

In April, Christians, Hindus, and Buddhists joined with local Muslims in Blitar Regency, East Java, to help build a mosque. Members of the community told the press that the Hindu-majority community had a long history of interfaith cooperation.

According to a May survey by Saiful Mujani Research and Consulting, a public opinion pollster, 88 percent of Indonesians were aware of the conflict between Israel and Palestinians, and of those respondents, 65 percent agreed that the conflict was between Judaism and Islam, 14 percent disagreed, and 22 percent said they did not know.

Many of the largest and most influential religious groups and NGOs, including Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, officially endorsed and advocated for tolerance, pluralism, and the protection of minority groups on numerous occasions. In July, the secretary general for the Supreme Council of Nahdlatul Ulama and the

World Evangelical Alliance signed a statement of cooperation establishing a working relationship to promote intercultural solidarity and respect.

According to the “Who Cares about Free Speech” report by the Future of Free Speech, a collaborative project of NGOs and academic organizations, only 26 percent of citizens surveyed in February supported the freedom to express opinions offensive to religion, while the other 74 percent agreed that the government should be able to prevent people from saying things offensive to religion.

According to a September survey by Saiful Mujani Research and Consulting, 16 percent of respondents indicated their support of a government that operated based on the teachings of Islam, while 77 percent stated the government should not be based on any single religion.

The MORA’s Religious Harmony Index for 2020 found a decrease in religious harmony from 2019 to 2020. The index used a survey of 1,220 respondents in 34 provinces to measure harmony across three dimensions: tolerance, equality, and solidarity. The index was scored from 0 to 100, with 100 being the most harmonious. The national score for 2020 was 67.46, down from 73.83 in 2019. A MORA policy paper stated four likely reasons for this decrease: increased prejudice directed at different groups, especially against adherents of aliran kepercayaan, Ahmadi and Shia Muslims, and atheists; a decrease in the tolerance subindex, with 38 percent of respondents saying they would be bothered if a house of worship belonging to another faith was built near them; a decrease in the equality subindex, with 36 percent of respondents stating they would not support someone from a different faith becoming president; and a decrease in the solidarity index, with 36 percent of respondents saying they would not support other faiths in hosting religious events or celebrations. According to the survey, more than 50 percent of respondents reported never having direct contact with people from a different faith.

On December 20, the MORA announced results from the 2021 Religious Harmony Index, finding that overall religious harmony score had increased to 72.39.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy and Engagement

The Ambassador, Charge d’Affaires, embassy officers, and officers from the Consulate General in Surabaya and the Consulate in Medan regularly engaged with all levels of government on religious freedom issues. Issues discussed included actions against religious minorities, closures of places of worship, access for

foreign religious organizations, convictions for blasphemy, and defamation of religion. They also discussed the undue influence of “intolerant groups,” the importance of the rule of law, the application of sharia to non-Muslims, the importance of education and interfaith dialogue in promoting tolerance, the equal protection of all citizens regardless of their religion or belief, and promotion of tolerance in international forums.

On February 22, the Charge d’Affaires delivered remarks highlighting religious freedom and tolerance at an event for the 43rd anniversary of the National Istiqlal Mosque, which included participation from the Vice President, ministers, and senior government officials.

On April 9, an official from the Department of State Office of International Religious Freedom provided remarks focused on religious freedom and pluralism at an MUI seminar entitled “Reading the Direction of U.S. President Joe Biden’s Policy regarding Muslims and the Islamic World,” appearing along senior Muslim scholars.

On December 15, the Ambassador delivered remarks on the importance of religious freedom and tolerance, as well as calling for the cessation of violence against Ahmadi and Shia Muslims, during an MUI event entitled “International Webinar on Human Rights in Various Perspectives and the Launching of MUI Human Rights School.” Other speakers at the event included Minister of Religious Affairs Qoumas, Speaker of the People’s Consultative Assembly (MPR) Bambang Soesatyo, and Deputy Minister of Law and Human Rights Edward Hiariej.

In February, the embassy began working with the National Istiqlal Mosque’s Voice of Istiqlal initiative, which seeks to encourage tolerance and diversity, interfaith dialogue, and gender equality in Indonesia and internationally. The embassy provided language and technical training to Voice of Istiqlal’s staff. Soon after this training began, Voice of Istiqlal hosted and broadcast online an interfaith dialogue with Muslim, Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, and Confucianist leaders in September to discuss the importance of interfaith cooperation in helping deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. The event included speeches by Vice President Amin, Cardinal Ignatius Suharyo Hardjoatmodjo, chairman of the Council of Churches in Indonesia Gomar Gultom, and Grand Imam Nasaruddin Umar.

In March, the embassy completed a project with the Yogyakarta-based Srikandi Lintas Iman to promote religious pluralism through early childhood education and utilizing social media among women. The project provided training to 57 teachers

from Yogyakarta schools and 59 women religious leaders. Content promoting religious freedom and tolerance created as part of the social media component of the project reached more than 130,000 persons.

On September 30, the embassy completed its \$11.5 million project with the Asia Foundation engaging legal aid organizations to defend human rights and religious freedom in six provinces, including all provinces in Java except Banten and Papua. The embassy supported these partners in developing advocacy papers for outreach on regulations that discriminate against religious minorities, improving their capacity to represent minority religious groups in legal cases, undertaking strategic public campaigns to build wider civil society engagement in challenging intolerance, and publishing periodic reports on abuses of religious freedom. The project was estimated to have helped provide legal assistance to 240,000 persons from marginalized communities.

The embassy continued a \$24.33 million project aimed at developing more effective tools and systems to bolster religious tolerance. The project partnered with national and local-level government officials, CSOs, universities, research institutions, and grassroots movements that focus on promoting religious freedom and tolerance.

The embassy continued a \$3.3 million activity to promote religious tolerance and pluralism among high school students. Through partnerships with the Ministries of Religious Affairs and Education and Culture, the project aimed to design and implement innovative arts and cultural curricula in select districts to advance community resilience to religious intolerance.

During Ramadan, the embassy and consulates conducted extensive outreach campaigns in print and electronic media and in social media to highlight religious tolerance, reaching an estimated 100 million Indonesians. The Charge d'Affaires appeared on *Amanah Wali 5*, one of the highest-rated serialized dramas in the country, where she visited a fictional market to learn about Indonesian customs and discuss tolerance and diversity. Embassy officials appeared on television, radio, and online shows, as well as in press interviews, to share their experiences of celebrating Ramadan in the country and the U.S. approach to religious pluralism and freedom. The embassy hosted a series of online events and assisted in press placements, showcasing Indonesians who had lived in the United States and could discuss their experiences of religious freedom and pluralism there.

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

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

The embassy sponsored four Indonesians to join a virtual program on religious freedom and pluralism. During the five-week program, participants met U.S. religious leaders of different faiths to discuss the role religious officials play in their own societies and develop ideas for how they can work with leaders of similar or different faiths on shared goals for their societies.

On May 7, the embassy hosted a discussion on “Community Building in Islam,” which featured speakers from Indonesia and the United States, including Grand Imam of the National Istiqlal Mosque Nasaruddin Umar, discussing how religious leaders could help build communities across religious divides.

On August 25, the embassy hosted a virtual talk show entitled “Fostering Diversity and Tolerance among Youth” that showcased alumni of U.S. exchange programs. Discussion at the event focused on how young Indonesians perceived pluralism and how they had experienced discrimination based on religious, ethnic, and racial groupings, as well as ways they had sought to overcome these divides.

The embassy posted translated speeches and commentary on religious freedom by the Secretary of State, the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, and other high-level government officials on its website. The embassy also developed graphics for social media and sent information to local journalists to encourage them to cover these issues.