

# INDONESIA 2022 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 it states that citizens must accept restrictions established by law to protect the rights of others and to satisfy "just demands based upon considerations of morality, religious values, security, and public order in a democratic society." Some local governments imposed laws and regulations restricting religious observance, such as regulations banning Shia or Ahmadi Islamic practice.

On March 18, a court acquitted two police officers for the 2020 killing of six members of the now-banned Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), despite a finding by the National Human Rights Commission that some were killed after being taken into custody. In Aceh Province, authorities continued public canings for sharia violations. In January, a woman was flogged 100 times in West Aceh after being convicted of adultery. In August, nine child sexual offenders were caned 100 times and given 50- to 70-month prison sentences in the North Aceh Regency.

Authorities continued to detain and sentence individuals to prison for violations of blasphemy laws. In April, a court sentenced a Christian YouTuber to 10 years in prison for blasphemy and hate speech for posting insulting remarks about Islam. In June, Jakarta police arrested six persons on blasphemy charges for promoting their bar by offering free gin to patrons named Muhammad or Maria. In December, a court found former Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports Roy Suryo guilty of blasphemy and sentenced him to nine months in prison for posting a picture of a Buddhist statue edited to resemble President Joko Widodo's face on social media. Local religious majorities sometimes successfully pressured local authorities to delay or deny the construction and renovation of houses of worship for local religious minorities. On December 6, Parliament unanimously approved a new criminal code that expanded the scope of blasphemy- and apostasy-related provisions, effective in 2026.

On June 21 and 22, three individuals destroyed Wale Paliusan, a ritual site belonging to followers of the Lalang Rondor Malesung (Laroma) traditional belief system in Tondei Dua, a village in South Minahasa Regency. The attackers

allegedly targeted Wale Paliusan because they regarded the group's beliefs, which involved idol worship, as deviant. The 2022 annual report of the Setara Institute on Democracy and Peace cited a total of 333 actions infringing on religious freedom during the year. Incidents of religious intolerance were highest in East Java. The report found nonstate actors conducted 175 of the actions infringing on freedom of religion during the year, up from 171 actions in 2021. Total incidents included 19 cases of blasphemy accusations, 13 cases of impeding the construction of a house of worship, 15 cases of forbidding worship, and seven cases of destruction of houses of worship. Some religious minorities reported being successful in obtaining permits to build mosques and rebuild destroyed structures. Some Shia and Ahmadi Muslims reported feeling marginalized and 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 against Shia and Ahmadi Muslims. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) reported there were multiple reports of assaults on Shia Muslims at Shia events.

The U.S. Ambassador and other U.S. 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. On August 30 and 31, to mark the International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief, the embassy and @america hosted a two-day interfaith dialogue that included Jewish, Roman Catholic, Buddhist, and Muslim representatives. 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 277.3 million (midyear 2022). According to the most recent census from 2010, 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 (.07 percent), Confucianism (.05 percent), Gafatar, Judaism, traditional Indigenous religions, other Christian denominations, and those who did not respond to the census question, constitute 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 at between 10,000 and 15,000, with approximately 5,000 in Medan and the rest in Jakarta. In addition to the Balinese Hindu population, there are smaller Hindu groups with ancestral roots in the Indian subcontinent. Estimates range up to 120,000 Hindus, a majority of which reside in the province of North Sumatra. There are very small Jewish communities in Jakarta, Manado, Jayapura, and elsewhere, with the total Jewish population estimated at 200. The Baha'i Faith and Falun Dafa (also known as 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, stating that 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 “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 infringes 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 groups in six faiths: Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Confucianism. The MUI is a quasi-governmental organization of Muslim clerics whose stated responsibility is maintaining religious harmony and supporting national development. While the constitution does not cite any specific branch of Islam as official, the MUI does not accept Shia or Ahmadiyya members and comprises only Sunni Muslim groups, including Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah.

The 1965 Presidential Decree on the Prevention of Blasphemy and Abuse of Religions prohibits “deviant interpretations” of religious teachings and any blasphemous organization; it was codified into law in 1969. The criminal code further prohibits 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. The blasphemy articles in the criminal code also stipulate that in any case of defamation of the six officially recognized religions, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA), MORA, and the Attorney General’s Office (AGO) must first warn the individual in question before bringing a defamation charge. These articles forbid the dissemination of information designed to spread hatred or dissension among individuals or certain community groups based on ethnicity, religion, or race. Individuals may be subject to prosecution for blasphemous, atheistic, or heretical statements under either the provisions or 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 to 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 MOHA. Both ministries consult with 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; 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 or 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 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 2008 joint ministerial decree by MORA, MOHA, and AGO bans both proselytizing by the Ahmadi Muslim community and vigilantism against the group. Violations of the ban on Ahmadis proselytizing 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 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.

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 MORA and other ministries on issues such as the construction of houses of worship, receipt of foreign aid by domestic religious institutions, and propagation of religion.

A 2006 joint ministerial decree issued by MORA and 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, called the Religious Harmony Forum (FKUB), before building can proceed. 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.

Sharia has been in force in Aceh since the enactment of the province's Special Autonomy Law in 2001 and is enforced by Islamic courts. 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 is the only province that implements sharia. The Aceh parliament adopted the Aceh Islamic Criminal Code in 2014; it went into effect in 2015. Sharia has been in force in Aceh since the enactment of the province's Special Autonomy Law in 2001 and is enforced by Islamic courts. These laws, in some cases, provides for up to 100 lashes as punishment. Offenses include same-sex relations, premarital sex and other sexual relations outside marriage, consumption of alcohol, gambling, being alone with someone of the opposite sex who is not a marriage partner or relative, sexual abuse, rape, and accusing a person of adultery without providing four witnesses. Women's rights activists say victims of sexual violence and rape are sometimes punished for adultery if the perpetrator states the encounter was consensual.

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 11 p.m. or visiting such places after 10 p.m. unaccompanied by an appropriate male relative. Sharia regulations prohibit Muslim women resident in Aceh from wearing tight clothes in public, and officials often recommended wearing headscarves. The regulations allow local officials to "remind" Muslim women of these regulations but not to detain them for violating the regulations. 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 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 in

West Kalimantan, forbid or limit the religious activities of religious minorities, especially Shia and Ahmadi Muslims.

The law contains provisions that are reportedly sometimes interpreted to forbid certain interfaith marriages, despite a 1986 Supreme Court decision specifically allowing them. The law requires parties to perform the marriage ceremony according to the rituals and teachings of the religions of both the bride and groom. A 2005 MUI fatwa declares interfaith marriage *haram* (forbidden).

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 at a wedding. This constraint effectively bars members of some smaller groups without such geographic presence from having their marriage ceremony officiated by a member of their faith, although groups may aid each other and facilitate marriage ceremonies by an officiant from a group with similar faith traditions and rituals.

The law requires that an adoptive child must be of the same religion as the adoptive parents. In the case of a child of unknown origin, the government generally will make a determination that the child's religion is the same as the religious majority in the neighborhood or community where the child was found. Adoptive parents must state their belief in God and both must appear at the court hearing. In general, interfaith couples are barred from adoption as by definition one of them does not share the same faith as the child.

A joint ministerial decree by MORA and MOHA requires domestic religious organizations to obtain approval from MORA to receive funding from overseas donors. The decree also forbids dissemination of religious literature and pamphlets to members of other religious groups, as well as all forms of proselytizing, including 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 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**

The Voice of America reported that on September 30, government counterterrorism forces killed a militant believed to be the last remaining member of the East Indonesia Mujahideen (MIT), responsible for the May 2021 killing of four Christian farmers in Poso Regency, Central Sulawesi. MIT is a network with ties to ISIS, responsible for killings of police as well as Christians, some by beheading. Four months prior, in a jungle shootout, government forces killed another MIT member the government believed responsible for the deaths of the Christian farmers.

On July 20, authorities released Rizieq Shihab, former leader of FPI, on parole just over a year after being sentenced, the release being earlier than expected. A court had sentenced the hardline cleric and spiritual figurehead of the now outlawed group to four years in prison in June 2021 for violating the quarantine law and spreading fake news during the COVID-19 pandemic. The court found Rizieq guilty of breaching coronavirus prevention measures when he held and attended several events at the height of the pandemic, including his daughter's wedding.

Since some religious teachings forbid interfaith marriage, some groups and government officials reportedly continued to maintain that there cannot be interfaith marriages if one of the religions specifically forbids interfaith marriages. Religious leaders, human rights activists, and journalists stated that interreligious marriage was difficult unless the groom or bride was willing to marry according to the religious rituals of only one of the two religions. Many interfaith couples opted to get married outside of Indonesia in countries that were less restrictive.

On July 4, Minister of Law and Human Rights Yasonna Laoly and Minister of Religious Affairs Cholil Yaquq Qoumas said that interfaith marriage should be illegal, pointing to the importance of the different requirements of marriage within different religious traditions. Their comments were in response to a Constitutional Court ruling upholding a lower court's decision to deny the registration of a marriage of a Catholic and Muslim couple, an obstacle that

interfaith couples who were able to hold a marriage ceremony occasionally faced, according to reports.

On April 22, the Surabaya District Court granted an appeal by a Muslim man and Christian woman to marry after the local Population and Civil Registry (*Dukcapil*) denied their request. Their interfaith marriage was legally unprecedented in Surabaya. On June 24, four civilians filed a petition with the court challenging the ruling and demanding the court annul the couple's marriage as illegal. A court ruling on the petition was pending at year's end.

On September 29, the Ministry of Religious Affairs recognized North Sulawesi Governor Olly Dondokambey and Vice-Governor Steven Kandouw by awarding them the Harmony Award 2021 for their role in creating and maintaining interfaith harmony in the province through the project "Torang Semua Ciptaan Tuhan," meaning "We Are All God's Creatures." The initiative provided small grants for building houses of worship, monthly allowances for religious leaders, and funds for Muslim and Christian leaders to travel to Mecca and Jerusalem, respectively.

On September 15, the South Jakarta District Court granted the request for an interfaith marriage between a Christian and a Muslim. Judge Arlandi Triyogo ordered the Dukcapil of South Jakarta to publish the couple's marriage certificate.

In July, the provincial legislative assembly of West Sumatra Province passed legislation that recognized that the customs and culture of the dominant Minangkabau ethnic group were based on sharia. While the legislation did not prescribe implementation of any specific regulations, some religious minority groups expressed concern it could open the door for district and city level ordinances based on sharia.

In Aceh, authorities reportedly continued to carry out public canings for sharia violations such as selling alcohol, gambling, and extramarital sex. Canings reportedly continued to occur in public spaces despite the Aceh governor's 2018 order that they should take place only in prison facilities. Media outlets broadcast recordings of the punishments, and observers 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. On January 25, for example, a woman was flogged 100 times at the West Aceh Regency prosecutor's office after being convicted of adultery. On August 25, nine child sexual offenders were caned 100 times and given sentences ranging from 50 to 70 months in prison in North Aceh Regency.

Media reports indicate authorities upheld laws protecting the sanctity of sacred and religious places. On May 10, news media reported that immigration authorities deported Alina Fazleeva, a Russian social media influencer, and her husband and banned them from entering the country for six months after she posted a picture of herself without clothing on a centuries-old tree known as *Kayu Putih*, an act considered offensive towards Balinese Hindus, who view the tree as sacred. She later deleted the post and posted an apology.

On June 10, police arrested Australian citizen Samuel Lockton for climbing a banyan tree in the Dalem Prajapati Temple area in Bali that was considered sacred; officials deported him shortly thereafter.

On December 6, the country's parliament, the Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat (DPR), voted unanimously to pass a revised criminal code that expanded the scope of blasphemy and apostasy provisions. Under the legislation, set to take effect in 2026, pending approval of implementing regulations, the penalty for committing or inciting hostile acts or discrimination against religion would be up to three years in prison. Anyone disseminating such public information or committing or inciting hostile or discriminatory acts against religion, would face up to five years in prison. Anyone who publicly incites others to change or leave their religion or profess no religion or belief in any of the religions present in the country would face up to two years in prison.

On April 6, a West Java court sentenced Christian YouTuber Muhammad Kace, a former Muslim cleric, to 10 years in prison for blasphemy and hate speech stemming from content in several hundred sermons and videos posted on social media. Since converting to Christianity from Islam, Kace had reportedly posted about 400 videos critical of Islam. The court found Kace guilty of insulting Islam and the Prophet Muhammad by stating in his videos that the Prophet was "surrounded by devils and liars." Human rights advocates criticized the sentence and contrasted it with the more lenient five-month sentence – essentially time

served – a Jakarta court handed down in January against Muhammad Yahya Waloni, a Muslim imam who converted from Christianity, for insulting Christianity.

On June 24, Jakarta police arrested six persons employed by the Holywings Bar on charges of blasphemy following their promotion and offer of free alcohol for any patrons named Mohammad and Maria. In a social media post it later deleted, on June 23, the Holywings Bar offered a free bottle of gin to men named Muhammad and women named Maria every Thursday upon presentation of their identification cards. On June 28, the Jakarta provincial government revoked the operating permits of all 12 Holywings branches in Jakarta. The Surabaya city government also suspended the operating permit for a Holywings branch. In Bali, authorities required a new Holywings beach club to change its name due to permit issues. The establishment opened on July 18 under the name Atlas Beach Fest.

On April 7, in a public discussion co-organized by the National Commission on Human Rights, parliamentarians and representatives of prominent civil society organizations, including the Indonesian Consortium on Religious Studies, warned that blasphemy laws pose a threat to freedom of religion and social harmony and urged the government and parliament to use the overhaul of the criminal code, then underway, to substantially amend the existing law or repeal it completely.

On June 10, prosecutors charged former Youth Affairs and Sports Minister Roy Suryo with blasphemy after he posted on social media a picture of a Buddhist statue in the Borobudur Temple that had been edited to resemble President Joko Widodo's face. A representative of the Buddhist community Buddha Nusantara filed a complaint against Suryo with Jakarta police after the post went viral, stating the post offended Buddhists. Suryo later deleted the post. On December 28, the West Jakarta District Court found Roy guilty of spreading hatred and sentenced him to nine months in prison. The NGO Human Rights Watch (HRW) said, "Roy Suryo's arrest shows again that the blasphemy law is destructive and prone to misuse because it enables the 'protection' of religion to be weaponized as a political tool." HRW called for the revocation of blasphemy law provisions. Suryo's appeal was pending at year's end.

On May 5, police arrested Cepdika Eka Rismana in West Java and charged him with blasphemy after his wife uploaded a video to Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, depicting him trampling a Quran. Prosecutors later charged both husband and wife under the ITE law. If convicted, they could face up to six years in prison. The trial was pending at year's end.

On January 14, a court sentenced Muhammad Yahya Waloni, a Muslim convert from Christianity, to five months in prison and fined him 50 million rupiah (\$3,200) for blasphemy against Christians after he posted a video online claiming the Bible was a work of fiction.

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. Ahmadiyya Muslim communities in several West Java regencies continued to report that local governments were encouraging and sometimes forcing such conversions by requiring that Ahmadis sign forms renouncing their beliefs in order to register their marriages or participate in the Hajj.

On February 18, the MUI East Java branch labeled the group Padepokan Tunggal Jati Nusantara, based in Jember Regency, a heretical Islamic organization, following the death of 11 members who drowned while carrying out a spiritual ritual at Payangan beach. The chief of the MUI noted that of the five fundamental principles the organization promotes, some were contrary to Islamic practice, while others were forbidden. The MUI also asked the regency government in Jember to prohibit all the organization's activities and to provide guidance for followers who wanted to repent. On July 15, the Jember District Court sentenced Padepokan Tunggal Jati Nusantara's leader, Nur Hasan, to 3.5 years in prison for negligence resulting in the death of the 11 members.

According to religious groups and NGOs, government officials and police sometimes failed to prevent religious and religiously affiliated 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 banned FPI.

Before the start of Ramadan, the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission released its annual circular outlining regulations on appropriate content and requirements for all televised preachers during the month of Ramadan. The circular required all preachers to be “appropriate,” meaning conforming with standards established by MUI, and to have no association with organizations prohibited by the government. The 2022 circular also added restrictions on sexual, supranatural, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI+) content.

The Setara Institute for Democracy and Peace’s 2022 report on the condition of freedom of religion in the country documented 333 actions infringing on religious freedom, a slight uptick from the 318 actions recorded in 2021. The report found nonstate actors conducted 175 of the actions, up from 171 actions in 2021. Actions included opposition against the construction of places of worship, destruction of places of worship, preaching prohibitions, and accusations of blasphemy. State actors, including local governments (47), police (23), and state educational institutions (14), committed the other 158 actions. Accusations of blasphemy nearly doubled, rising from 10 in 2021 to 19 in 2022. The provinces with the most violations were East Java (34), West Java (25), and Jakarta (24).

Across the country, minority religious groups, including Muslim groups in non-Muslim majority areas, continued to say the official requirement that groups had to obtain signatures from 90 members of the religious community and 60 members of other religious communities in the area supporting the construction or renovation of a house of worship was a barrier.

Members of the Jewish community stated that since their numbers nationwide were so few, it was impossible for them to consider building any new synagogues. The country has only legally recognized synagogue, located in Tondano, Sulawesi.

NGOs continued to report that some local governments did not issue permits for the construction of new places of worship, even when congregations had the required number of members, because those who opposed the construction for religious reasons sometimes pressured neighbors not to support the construction. NGOs reported cases in which a few vocal opponents were reportedly successful in persuading officials to stop issuing construction permits, effectively giving

groups from majority religions a de facto veto over construction of houses of worship by minority faith groups in their respective communities.

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 also reported that some 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 sometimes also faced delays or denials when seeking approval to relocate to temporary facilities while a primary place of worship underwent renovation.

Despite continuing challenges to mosque construction broadly, during the year, Ahmadiyya congregations successfully rebuilt the Ahmadiyya Miftahul Huda Mosque in the Sintang Regency of Kalimantan, which had been destroyed by a mob in September 2021. Following the attack, NU Central Board Chairman Said Aqil Siradj told the press that he strongly condemned any violence against the Ahmadiyya community. Additionally, MORA officials told the press they would begin reviewing the 2008 joint ministerial decree that had criminalized Ahmadi activities. During the year, the Ahmadiyya community constructed six new mosques.

On January 6, the Pontianak District Court sentenced 21 persons to four months and 15 days in prison – essentially time served – for the 2021 ransacking and burning of the Ahmadiyya Miftahul Huda Mosque and for setting fire to a nearby building. The perpetrators called themselves the Muslim Community Alliance and had justified the attack by citing the MUI’s 2005 fatwa describing the Ahmadiyya community as a “deviant sect.” Human rights groups condemned the sentence as too lenient. The NGO Advocacy Team for Freedom of Religion and Belief said that “this very light sentence will almost certainly encourage perpetrators.”

On January 27, the local Jewish community in Minahasa Regency, North Sulawesi, opened a Holocaust museum. North Sulawesi Deputy Governor Steven Kandouw and German Ambassador to Indonesia Ina Lepel attended the opening ceremony.

MUI and the conservative Islamic Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) protested the opening. MUI Advisory Board Deputy Chairman KH Muhyiddin Junaidi stated the museum could provoke outrage in local society and therefore “it should be razed to the ground.” The museum’s founder, Rabbi Yaakov Baruch, said that the museum was unrelated to the Israel-Palestinian conflict, stating, “I was shocked this [issue] became viral and received such strong disapproval. I’m not going to step back just because of pressure from intolerant groups.”

In December, Mataram District Court sentenced Imam Mizan Qudsiyah to six months’ imprisonment for hate speech and spreading false information for comments in a sermon that was viewed on social media. The court found him in violation of the criminal code that prohibits broadcasting content which is likely to incite public unrest. The preceding January, a mob reportedly incensed by his comments burned his mosque and adjacent school in the East Lombok Regency of West Nusa Tenggara Province. The video, a 19-second clip from a sermon delivered in 2020, allegedly showed the imam disparaging local sacred tombs. Immediately after the attack, Minister of Religious Affairs Qoumas asked police to investigate the mosque’s destruction but also asked religious leaders to be careful in delivering sermons. Vice President Ma’ruf Amin also urged law enforcement to prosecute the attackers. At year’s end, the status of the investigation was unknown, and authorities had not identified any suspects in the mosque and school attacks.

On September 7, hundreds of protestors demonstrated against the construction of a new Maranatha church in the city of Cilegon, which borders Serang Regency in Banten Province, citing a 1975 circular that reportedly prohibited church construction in Serang Regency. The Cilegon mayor and his deputy met the protesters and signed the petition against the construction, an act that religious freedom activists called “unconstitutional” and in contravention of church members’ human rights. Wawan Djunaedi, the head of the Religious Affairs Ministry’s Religious Tolerance Agency, said that the 1975 circular was no longer a basis of authority to ban construction of a church. On September 14, Minister of Religious Affairs Qoumas told the press that if the church committee had followed all of the requirements in its application, there would have been no basis for denying the building permit. On September 21, local media reported church leaders filed a lawsuit against the Minister of Religious Affairs and several local officials on constitutional grounds and petitioned the court for an order

authorizing construction. As of the end of the year, construction had not begun, and unknown persons had erected a temporary wall preventing access to the vacant land.

On February 21, Minister of Religious Affairs Qoumas released guidelines intended to address excessive noise complaints related to the amplified Muslim call to prayer and other messages from mosque audio speakers. In justifying the decree in the face of criticism from some Muslim leaders, Qoumas said, “If our neighbors have dogs and they all bark at the same time, don’t we think it’s a disturbance? Therefore, we have to regulate all noises so they don’t become a nuisance.” In March, a group called Action to Defend Islam rallied outside National Police headquarters and demanded that Quomas be arrested for blasphemy for his statement.

In a report from HRW, Ario Sulistiono of the Jehovah’s Witnesses office in Jakarta said that a total of 22 Jehovah’s Witness children had faced discrimination in schools in the country since 2016, with some being denied advancement or otherwise disciplined or even expelled for refusing to perform pledges or songs that they believed were against their religion.

Aliran kepercayaan followers continued to report that in accordance with the law requiring all students to take a religious education class in one of the six officially recognized religions, schools insisted their children attend these classes, without any official accommodation for an alternative course of study or exemption for children of minority religious groups not among the six. Ahmadi Muslim students reported religion classes on Islam focused only on Sunni teachings.

In February 2021, the Ministers for Education and Culture, Home Affairs, and Religion issued a formal letter that stated local governments and schools were neither to require nor prohibit student religious attire, such as hijabs, but were to allow individual students to make their own choice. Minister of Education Nadiem Makarim stated, however, that it would be difficult to enforce such practices.

On July 20, according to media reports, school officials in Yogyakarta forced a female Muslim student at a public high school to wear a hijab. The student

subsequently transferred to a different school, and Governor Sri Sultan Hamengku Buwono X suspended three teachers and the school principal.

On October 13, the Ministry of Education issued a new regulation reaffirming that schools risked sanctions if they forced girls to wear a hijab against students' or their parents') wishes. Despite the October Ministry of Education regulation prohibiting schools from requiring female students to wear the hijab, CSOs reported instances of ongoing social pressure, bullying, and harassment to compel young women to wear hijabs at schools and public spaces, which caused psychological distress and violated their freedom of religion.

According to media reports, the vice principal of a high school in North Jakarta prevented a non-Muslim student from running for a student council position. When a video of a panel interview of all the student candidates for the position became public in which the vice-principal voiced his objections on religious grounds, some lawmakers called for an investigation. School officials responded by dismissing the vice principal from his position but allowing him to remain in the school as a teacher.

In June, Christian groups protested a book, *Pancasila and Citizenship Education*, being used for junior high school students as part of the seventh-grade curriculum. The groups said the book inaccurately represented Christian theology regarding the Trinity. Government officials responded by withdrawing the book, updating it to include the recommendations of Christian leaders for revised text, and reissuing it.

Although the government generally allowed citizens to leave the religion column blank on their identity card (KTP) applications and a 2017 Constitutional Court ruling allowed citizens to select Indigenous faiths on their KTP applications, 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 of the locally dominant religion. According to researchers, this practice obscured the real numbers of adherents to religious groups in government statistics.

NGOs and religious advocacy groups continued to urge the government to remove the religion field from KTPs. Members of religious minorities reported they sometimes faced discrimination after others saw their religious affiliation on their KTPs, even if it was one of the six officially recognized faiths. 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 or accept their religion.

Although interfaith marriages are legal provided the ceremony is conducted under the tradition of one of the faiths of the couple, couples of differing religions who sought to marry reportedly often had difficulty finding a religious official willing to perform an interfaith wedding ceremony. Some couples of differing religions selected the same religion on their KTPs in order to marry legally. Strict enforcement of this policy and implementation rules reportedly varied by region.

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

Many individuals in the government, media, civil society, and general population were vocal and active on the principles of religious pluralism and tolerance, but public figures also used religion to justify discriminating against interfaith couples and other marginalized groups.

On February 13, National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT) official Ahmad Nurwakhid said religious community organizations were at the forefront in preventing the spread of radicalism and terrorism by teaching their followers nationalism infused with appropriate religious teaching that upholds tolerance and the ideology of Pancasila.

On March 18, Minister of Religious Affairs Qoumas, at a seminar organized by the Commission for Interreligious Dialogue within the Episcopal Conference of Indonesia, said the government saw an important role for the Catholic Church in promoting religious freedom and that the country depended on Catholics to sow harmony, respect, tolerance, and fraternity among communities of different faiths.

On May 1, Vice President Amin said that Pancasila was a guarantee that the state would protect people's right to religious freedom, adding that as the state philosophy, Pancasila was consistent with the religious values of the Indonesian people. On June 29, Amin also said that interfaith marriages were haram, citing a fatwa issued by the MUI in 2005.

Multiple religious leaders used their platforms to reject LGBTQI+ persons. On December 1, Deputy Chairman of the MUI Advisory Board KH Muhyiddin Junaidi called LGBTQI+ identity “a mental illness that is dangerous to the survival of humanity.” NU Executive Board Chair Ahmad Fahrurrozi stated that LGBTQI+ persons engage in socially deviant behavior that is not in accordance with the norms, morals, ethics, religion, and values of Indonesian society.

During the year, Surabaya Mayor Eri Cahyadi made statements saying that he wanted the city to be known as a tolerant city that was safe for all. At Christmas, he stated decorations should be allowed to be displayed as a visible manifestation of that principle. Local communities made public statements and gestures in support of religious harmony. On Good Friday, a church in Sidoarjo, East Java hosted an iftar. Hindus and Buddhists were able to practice their faith at UNESCO world heritage sites in and around Yogyakarta.

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

On May 1, Papuan armed separatists shot and wounded a soldier and police officer at a Protestant church during Sunday morning worship service in Pungenungan Bintang Regency, Highland Papua Province. In their investigation authorities had not identified assailants by year's end but believed them to be from the West Papua National Liberation Army and Free Papua Movement.

MORA's Religious Harmony Index for 2022 found a steady increase in religious harmony from 2020 to 2022, but below the index score for 2019. The index was scored from 0 to 100, with 100 being the most harmonious. The national score for 2022 was 73.09, up from 72.39 in 2021 and 67.46 in 2020, but still lower than the national score in 2019 (73.83). The survey attempted to measure levels of tolerance by asking questions such as whether a respondent would support

someone from a different faith becoming president, whether they would be concerned if a house of worship for a different faith was built near them, and if they supported other faiths hosting religious events or celebrations. The three provinces with the highest scores on the harmony index were the Riau Islands, East Nusa Tenggara, and North Kalimantan.

Some Shia and Ahmadi Muslims reported feeling marginalized and under threat. Anti-Shia and anti-Ahmadi rhetoric was common in online media outlets and on social media.

On June 21 and 22, unknown persons destroyed a ritual site called Wale Paliusan in Tondei Dua, a village in South Minahasa Regency, belonging to followers of the Laroma traditional belief system. The attackers, according to local media, claimed to be motivated by local Christian leaders who said the traditional beliefs of the group were deviant because of idol worship. On June 22, the Communion of Churches in Indonesia and rights activists urged the government to protect followers in North Sulawesi who espoused traditional beliefs. On July 12, South Minahasa Regent Franky Wongkar reportedly asked the Laroma not to perform their traditional full moon ritual.

On March 18, one of President Joko Widodo's staff members, Ayu Kartika Dewi, a Muslim, sparked public controversy when she married her Catholic boyfriend, Gerald Bastian. The day after media reports emerged, MUI stated that interreligious marriage was not allowed under the marriage law. The MUI statement did not reference the 1986 Supreme Court decision allowing interfaith marriage.

In January, Ferdinand Hutahae, a Christian Democrat Party politician, posted a comment on social media that media accounts said Muslims found offensive. The post said: "Poor you, your God is evidently weak [and] must be defended. My God is amazing, [He] is everything. He is my defender, and my God does not need to be defended."

In Rome on June 9, Marco Impagliazzo, president of the Community of Sant'Egidio, an Italian-based Catholic group, and Yahya Cholil Staquf, chairman of NU, the country's largest Islamic organization, signed a memorandum of understanding in which they agreed to promote interfaith peace and carry out

humanitarian work in concert. The memorandum formalized the long-standing collaboration between the two institutions on issues such as interreligious dialogue, humanitarian work, and the promotion of peace.

A court convicted more than 50 terrorism suspects in the 2021 Palm Sunday church bombing in Makassar that injured at least 20 persons. The court had not handed down their sentences at year's end. In May 2021, police arrested 11 suspected Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD) members in Merauke, Papua for allegedly plotting 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 JAD members were affiliated with those responsible for the March bombing in Makassar. The court handed down sentences ranging between two years and three and one-half years in prison.

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

The Ambassador, embassy officers, and officers from the consulate general in Surabaya and 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 what Indonesian officials called "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 fora.

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

At the end of Ramadan in April, the embassy arranged a live interview of an embassy official with *Republika Online*, a prominent online media platform with more than 235,000 followers, highlighting Ramadan celebrations in the United States. The embassy official described celebrating Ramadan in the United States, while also underscoring the shared U.S. and Indonesian democratic values of

diversity and tolerance by highlighting the constitutional protections for diverse religious practice in both countries.

In April, the embassy hosted 11 leaders from prominent Islamic youth organizations at an iftar at the Ambassador's residence intended to deepen U.S. government connections with these key national organizations. An embassy official emphasized shared values of volunteerism, tolerance, and diversity, while providing information about embassy educational and exchange programs. The event was covered widely on social media.

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

On April 25, the Ambassador appeared as a guest star on an episode of "Trio Gabut," the popular Ramadan soap opera on television. During Ramadan, the Ambassador also visited an Islamic boarding school (*pesantren*) and interacted with the students to learn more about the country's Islamic traditions during the holy month, discussed Islam in the United States, and highlighted shared values such as tolerance and respect for diversity.

On October 8, an embassy official delivered prerecorded welcoming remarks on religious tolerance to Islamic school teachers at an event facilitated by the country's national mosque, Istiqlal. More than 100 teachers in South Sulawesi province participated in the hybrid training designed to empower Islamic school teachers to respect religious diversity and foster peace within their communities. This program was part of an ongoing multi-year embassy collaboration with Istiqlal on virtual seminars featuring U.S. government and U.S.-based expert speakers on topics including women's empowerment, health, and religious tolerance in democratic societies.

On August 25, an embassy official met with Abdul Basit, the Emir of Jemaat Ahmadiyah Indonesia and leader of the Ahmadi Muslims. They discussed the continuing challenges that community faced, with Basit saying he remained positive in the face of long-standing restrictions on Ahmadiyah's religious activities and hopeful the authorities would lift them.

On August 30 and 31, to mark the International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief, the embassy and @america hosted an interfaith dialogue. The event included Jewish, Catholic, Buddhist, and Muslim representatives.