

# FINAL WWL 2019 COUNTRY DOSSIER

## INDONESIA

### LEVEL 3/EMBARGO

(Reporting period: 1 November 2017 – 31 October 2018)

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## Introduction

### Copyright Notice

### Introduction

World Watch List Indonesia	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2019	65	30
WWL 2018	59	38
WWL 2017	55	46
WWL 2016	55	43
WWL 2015	50	47

*Scores and ranks are shown above whenever the country was among the fifty highest scoring countries (Top 50) in the WWL 2015-2019 reporting periods.*

**Please note:** The highlighted links in the text can be found written out in full at the conclusion of each main section under the heading "External links".

## WWL 2019: Keys to understanding Indonesia

### Link for general background information

BBC country profile: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-14921238>

### Recent country history

Indonesia, which is spread across, depending on how you count the islets, some thirteen or seventeen thousand islands, fought for its independence from the Netherlands in a four year war ending in 1949. After years of violence and corruption, the country made a transition to democracy, starting in 1998. The first direct presidential elections were held in 2004.

In the run up to the elections in early 2017 for the office of governor of Jakarta, mass protests against the ethnic Chinese and Christian Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (known as “Ahok”) for alleged blasphemy brought upwards of 200,000 people to the streets. Having won the first round of elections in February 2017, Purnama lost the second round and was sentenced to two years in prison. He decided not to appeal against the verdict and thus keep the political situation in Indonesia calm. It is a very worrying sign that the election winners played the religious card, relying almost solely on Islamic rhetoric. The regional elections in June 2018 suffered only lightly from sectarian undertones, but more is to be expected in the presidential elections in April 2019.

The triple attacks against three Christian churches on 13 May 2018 (see details and analysis below) highlight how vulnerable Christians are for violent attacks and how widespread radical Islamic groups are, as well.

### The religious landscape

The influence of radical Islamic organizations is growing. Neither federal nor local governments dare to ignore their demands, fearing public unrest. Religious minorities such as the Ahmadis - a Muslim minority – and Christians are frequently targeted. But Indonesia is still diverse: One province, Aceh, at the western tip of Sumatra, is ruled by Sharia law and is even tightening its rules; several other provinces have also introduced Sharia by-laws, leaving Christians in particular in a difficult situation; but at the same time, there are Christian-majority and Hindu-majority provinces as well. Nevertheless, the massive demonstrations against Jakarta’s ex-Governor Purnama have made Christians and other religious minorities in Indonesia nervous as radical Islamic groups are becoming more outspoken and are obviously gaining more and more public ground.

An unknown factor facing Indonesia is the question of how the return of battle-hardened Islamists from Syria and Iraq will affect the country’s radical Islamic groups. How dangerous their return can be was clearly illustrated in the capture of the town of Marawi in neighboring Mindanao/Philippines, which was supported by Indonesian Islamic fighters. A survey of the Wahid Foundation, published in August 2016, found that 8.1% of the Indonesian adult population (approximately 12 million people) hold hardline Islamic beliefs, including the willingness to commit radical acts of aggression. A study, published in May 2018, found that a growing number of students hold [Islamist views](#), all in all 39% have been exposed to radical Islamic ideology. Christians are clearly vulnerable to societal discrimination and even to violence. This is the current situation for Christians in many areas – not just in Aceh and other hot-spots.

The Indonesian government has taken action to close a radical Islamic group called “Hizb-ut-Tahrir Indonesia” but this is just one of the smaller groups active in Indonesia. One of the great unknowns at

the moment is how the largest Muslim organizations in the country, the *Nadhlatul Ulama* (NU) and the *Muhammadiyah* – will counter the growing radicalization in the country. Traditionally, they were seen as moderate and tolerant towards other religious groups, but especially the youth organization of NU has been vocal in calling for a more conservative understanding of Islam.

## The political landscape

While Islamic political parties do not gain many votes in elections, the uniting force of the Islamic religion can be used as an effective political tool and such parties can become junior partners in coalitions. The hard-liners' victory in stopping Purnama being re-elected as governor of Jakarta should not be underestimated: It will have consequences for the national elections due in 2019 as well as in other regional elections. Islamic radical groups announced that the next target on their list was the comparatively tolerant Muslim governor of West Java (home to the country's third largest city, Bandung), where elections took place in April 2018. However, they failed to prevent more moderate candidates being voted in and in general results of the regional elections of 2018 were a "[mixed bag](#)" for President Jokowi.

Of course, the government is trying to hold firmly to its banner of tolerance. A good illustration of how this looks in practice, though, can be seen in the case of Yasmin Church in Bogor, West Java – a church belonging to the Indonesian Christian Church denomination. Despite a judgment passed by the Supreme Court in December 2010, ruling that the church authorities had passed all requirements set up by law to get a building permit, the town's mayor has refused to abide by this ruling and the government has not taken action against him fearing social unrest. The church started to worship in front of the Indonesian president's palace in Jakarta instead, but this did not change the situation at all. In February 2017, almost seven years after the judgment, a compromise was proposed that the church building may be opened if a mosque is allowed to be built next to it [on its land](#). Up to the time of writing (November 2018), nothing has become of this proposal.

The triple suicide-bomb attack against churches in May 2018 sent shockwaves through the country since it was carried out by a whole family, leaving security authorities almost no way to discover plans ahead of the attacks. Attacks on religious minorities not only occur frequently, but are also regularly left unpunished, especially when they are considered insignificant, which leads to a growing climate of fear and desperation. Thus, the country is starting to lose its model character of being a successfully democratic country housing a tolerant form of Islam.

## The socio-economic landscape

Indonesia is developing fast. The growth of the middle class, predominantly in urban areas, has led to increasing prosperity which strengthens society as a whole. Debates in parliament are lively and open, leaving space for discussion and questioning of the government. The media have grown too, becoming a fourth source of power alongside the legislative, executive and judiciary powers. Whether the issue is attacks on religious minorities (mostly labelled as "sectarian strife") or rampant corruption, the media (newspapers, TV, radio and growing social media) do not shy away from aggressive reporting. A growing number of non-governmental organizations complete this picture.

However, in reality such reporting does not change much. The radical Islamic groups taking to the streets are far more effective at influencing both society's point of view and government action which was shown in the blasphemy case against Jakarta's Christian governor. Since under 50% of the population live in an urbanized environment, the growing openness in criticizing the powerful does not reach all citizens; local strongmen have more means for staying in power. Many citizens are weary

of the continued corruption of politicians and are uninterested in politics, but this did not help a clean-sheet politician like "Ahok" at all.

## Concluding remarks

The May 2018 bombings in Surabaya represent the largest radical Islamic attack since the Bali attacks in October 2005 and the largest attacks against Christians since 2000. The May 2018 suicide family killed 18 Christians and left many others severely injured. The attackers were motivated by Islamic State ideology, illustrating the worrying trend of radicalization, this time affecting members of a whole family. There have also been further bomb attacks targeting government security forces. This all adds to a picture of growing volatility and insecurity, affecting in particular religious minorities like Christians. The outburst of violence in May 2017 by Islamic militants in neighboring Philippines, supported by Indonesian fighters, has alerted authorities in Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore alike. They announced joint naval patrols in order to counter the radicals' movements. In the mid-term, this will not be enough to preserve Indonesia's comparatively more tolerant form of Islam.

## External Links - WWL 2019: Keys to understanding Indonesia

- The religious landscape: Islamist views  
<https://www.benarnews.org/english/news/indonesian/radicalism-survey-05032018162921.html>
- The political landscape: "mixed bag"  
<http://www.rsis.edu.sg/rsis-publication/rsis/co18110-indonesias-2018-regional-elections-regional-setback-for-jokowi/#.WzYVdeQUmM8>
- The political landscape: on its land  
<https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2017/02/indonesian-church-closed-for-years-told-you-can-reopen-if-mosque-allowed-on-your-land/>

## WWL 2019: Church History and Facts

### How many Christians?

Pop 2018	Christians	Chr%
266,795,000	32,379,000	12.1

Source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A (eds.), *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed January 2018)

### How did Christians get there?

Searching for the New World and exotic spices, Portuguese merchants came to Indonesia in 1511, firstly to Maluku, in the eastern part of the country. The Portuguese brought with them Roman Catholicism as the first seeds of Christianity in Indonesia.

According to a report compiled by Frederick W H and Worden R L (editors, Washington, 1993) entitled "[Indonesia – A Country Study](#)":

“Christianity had a long history in the islands, with Portuguese Jesuits and Dominicans operating in the Malukus, southern Sulawesi, and Timor in the sixteenth century. When the Dutch defeated Portugal in 1605, however, Catholic missionaries were expelled and the Calvinist Dutch Reformed Church was virtually the only Christian influence in the region for 300 years. Whereas the United East Indies Company (VOC) was primarily a secular and not a religious enterprise, and because Calvinism was a strict, austere, and intellectually uncompromising variety of Christianity that demanded a thorough understanding of what, for Indonesians, were foreign scriptures, Christianity advanced little in Indonesia until the nineteenth century. Only a few small communities endured in Java, Maluku, northern Sulawesi, and Nusa Tenggara (primarily Roti and Timor). After the dissolution of the VOC in 1799, and the adoption of a more comprehensive view of their mission in the archipelago, the Dutch permitted proselytizing in the territory. This evangelical freedom was put to use by the more tolerant German Lutherans, who began work among the Batak of Sumatra in 1861.”

“The twentieth century witnessed the influx of many new Protestant missionary groups, as well as the continued growth of Catholicism and of large regional and reformed Lutheran churches. Following the 1965 coup attempt, all nonreligious persons were labelled atheists and hence were vulnerable to accusations of harboring communist sympathies. At that time, Christian churches of all varieties experienced explosive growth in membership, particularly among those people who felt uncomfortable with the political aspirations of Islamic parties.”

“In the 1990s, the majority of Christians in Indonesia were Protestants of one affiliation or another, with particularly large concentrations found in North Sumatra, Irian Jaya, Maluku, Central Kalimantan, Central Sulawesi, and North Sulawesi. Catholic congregations grew less rapidly in the 1980s, in part because of the church's heavy reliance on European personnel. These Europeans experienced increasing restrictions on their missionary activities imposed by the Muslim-dominated Department of Religious Affairs.”

## What church networks exist today?

Church networks: Indonesia	Christians	%
Orthodox	2,900	0.0
Catholic	7,895,000	24.4
Protestant	18,823,000	58.1
Independent	7,617,000	23.5
Unaffiliated	422,000	1.3
Doubly-affiliated Christians	-2,380,000	-7.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>32,379,900</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<i>(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)</i>		
Evangelical movement	8,964,000	27.7
Renewalist movement	11,546,000	35.7

*Orthodox: Eastern (Chalcedonian), Oriental (Pre-Chalcedonian, Non-Chalcedonian, Monophysite), Nestorian (Assyrian), and non-historical Orthodox. Roman Catholics: All Christians in communion with the Church of Rome. Protestants: Christians in churches originating in or in communion with the Western world's 16th-century Protestant Reformation. Includes Anglicans, Lutherans and Baptists (any of whom may be Charismatic) and denominational Pentecostals, but not Independent traditions such as Independent Baptists nor independent Charismatics. Independents: Believers who do not identify with the major Christian traditions (Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant). Unaffiliated Christians: Persons professing publicly to be Christians but who are not affiliated to churches. Doubly-affiliated Christians: Persons affiliated to or claimed by 2 denominations at once. Evangelical movement: Churches, denominations, and individuals who identify themselves as evangelicals by membership in denominations linked to evangelical alliances (e.g., World Evangelical Alliance) or by self-identification in polls. Renewalist movement: Church members involved in Pentecostal/Charismatic renewal.*

*Source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A (eds.), World Christian Database (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed January 2018)*

The Church is fragmented into more than 300 denominations in Indonesia and suffers from rivalry and disunity. Apart from the Roman Catholic Church, the largest denominations belong to the Reformed and Lutheran traditions, which were brought to the country by Dutch and German missionaries. Over time, smaller denominations such as Baptists, Adventists and the Salvation Army became established, complemented by a number of independent - especially Pentecostal - churches as well, some of them drawing thousands to their worship services.

## Religious context

Religious Context: Indonesia	Numbers	%
Christians	32,379,000	12.1
Muslim	211,942,000	79.4
Hindu	4,286,000	1.6
Buddhist	2,099,000	0.8
Ethnoreligionist	5,882,000	2.2
Jewish	200	0.0
Bahai	26,300	0.0
Atheist	301,000	0.1
Agnostic	3,533,000	1.3
Other	6,346,800	2.4

*OTHER includes Chinese folk, New religionist, Sikh, Spiritist, Taoist, Confucianist, Jain, Shintoist, Zoroastrian.*

*Source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A (eds.), World Christian Database (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed January 2018)*



According to WCD statistics, 79.4% of the population is Muslim. There are also millions of atheists/agnostics, followers of ethnic religions, Hinduism (mainly on Bali), Chinese folk religion and Buddhism.

While Christianity became a major religion in eastern Indonesia, Islam became strong in the western and central parts, especially on the most populous island, Java. The very special brand of Islam in Indonesia, named "Islam Nusantara", has been relatively moderate and tolerant towards other religions. However, it received a strong blow with the successful blasphemy campaign during the election of Jakarta's governor early in 2017. Governor "Ahok" had been the first Christian governor in Jakarta for more than five decades, so his prison sentence for blasphemy and the emotionally charged election campaign, based on strong religious motives, might prove a game-changer for Christians in the country. Another shock were the bomb attacks against three churches in Surabaya in May 2018.

## Notes on the current situation

- Recent surveys show that intolerant sentiments and even violent attitudes against religious minorities are increasing, particularly where the building of houses of worship are concerned. A study from 2016, conducted by the Religious Ministry confirmed that religious conflict in Indonesia is increasing, although still only considered "moderate" in intensity. A survey carried out by the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI) and the Center for Religious Life shows that Indonesia is still tolerant, with the lowest index of 3.1 (quite tolerant) to 4.2 (very tolerant). However, this seems to change in the younger generation. A study published in May 2018 showed that among highschool and university students, 39% were exposed and receptive to radical Islamic views.
- There is a significant demographic change caused by migration and conversion to Islam. Although the government stopped the official policy of supporting citizens to move from an overcrowded Java to the Eastern Provinces, which in the case of Sulawesi and Papua partly hold Christian majorities, the movement continues. Additionally, Muslim missionaries are active among tribal people in Papua and elsewhere.
- Part of the current disunity in the Church is caused by the fear of openly accepting Christians with a Muslim background into congregations, although churches in the cities have considerably more freedom to do this than churches in rural areas.
- The almost simultaneous attacks against three churches in Surabaya, the capital of East Java, on 13 May 2018 sent shockwaves through the whole country. It left 18 faithful dead and wounded scores more. Apart from that, it highlighted a growing trend towards radicalization in a small segment of the population (fuelled by vigilante groups) influencing the whole of society.

## External Links - WWL 2019: Church History and Facts

- How did Christians get there?: Indonesia – A Country Study  
<http://countrystudies.us/indonesia/>

## WWL 2019: Short & Simple Persecution Profile

### Introduction

Reporting period: 1 November 2017 - 31 October 2018

With a score of 62 points Indonesia ranked 30th in WWL 2019, a rise of 6 points compared to WWL 2018.

### What type of persecution dominates?

**Islamic oppression:** Although the Constitution of Indonesia guarantees religious freedom, various regions and territories of Indonesia are governed by a host of Islamic by-laws, including Sharia law in the Province of Aceh. Radical groups have increasingly gained influence using strict religious interpretations to justify the infringement of the rights of religious minorities.

**Religious nationalism:** In regions and islands where other religions dominate (such as Hinduism in Bali), persecution comes from leaving the dominant religion and converting to Christian faith.

### Who is driving persecution?

Some Islamic religious leaders instigate hatred against Christians and other religious minorities via their teaching in mosques, but this occurs in the mass media and by politicians as the new governor of Jakarta as well, even though not openly (see "Persecution engines"). Conservative Muslim political parties, e.g. the PKS, are known to push their agenda for an Islamic nation. It is often their representatives who are behind the drafting and passing of Sharia-inspired policies, including in the field of education. However, radical Islamic pressure groups like the FPI are more influential. They are able to mobilize hundreds of thousands on the streets, which might also happen ahead of the presidential and parliamentary elections in April 2019. However, most problems occur at the local level in the confrontations with radical Islamic pressure groups.

### What it results in

Many converts from Islam experience persecution from their families. However, the intensity of the persecution varies and is mostly in the form of isolation, verbal abuse, etc. Only a small percentage of converts have to face physical violence for their Christian faith. The level of persecution also depends on the region of Indonesia concerned. There are certain hot spots like West Java or Aceh, where radical Islamic groups are strong and exert heavy influence on society and politics.

Once a church is seen to be proselytizing, as many evangelical and Pentecostal churches do, they soon run into problems with radical Islamic groups. Typically, non-traditional church groups also experience difficulties getting permission for building churches. Even if they manage to fulfill all legal requirements (including winning court cases), local authorities still ignore them. There have been reports of Catholic churches having difficulties obtaining building permission as well. All in all, the situation for Christians has continued to deteriorate slowly but steadily in the course of recent years.

## Violence

The following table is based on reported cases. Since many incidents go unreported, the numbers below must be understood as being minimum figures.

Indonesia	Reporting period	Christians killed	Christians attacked	Christians arrested	Churches attacked	Christian-owned houses and shops attacked
WWL 2019	01 Nov 2017 - 31 Oct 2018	18	10	4	19	0
WWL 2018	01 Nov 2016 - 31 Oct 2017	1	3	2	19	0

*Christians killed refers to the number of Christians killed for faith-related reasons (including state-sanctioned executions). Christians attacked refers to the number of Christians abducted, raped or otherwise sexually harassed, forced into marriage to non-Christians or otherwise physically or mentally abused (including beatings and death-threats) for faith-related reasons. Christians arrested refers to the number of Christians detained without trial or sentenced to jail, labor camp, sent to psychiatric hospital as punishment or similar things for faith-related reasons. Churches attacked refers to the number of churches or Christian buildings (schools, hospitals, cemeteries, etc.) attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons. Christian-owned houses and shops attacked refers to the number of houses of Christians or other property (including shops and businesses of Christians) attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons.*

## Examples of specific persecution in the reporting period

- On 13 May 2018, three churches in Surabaya, the capital of East Java, were attacked by suicide bombers, killing 18 Christians and wounding scores more. What shocked the nation was that the attacks were carried out in a highly coordinated way by a whole family, including two girls aged 9 and 12 years old. These attacks were the largest since the Bali bombings in 2005 and the biggest on Christians since 2000.
- In May 2018, a district court in Tangerang sentenced a pastor and Muslim convert to four years in prison and a fine because he had "[intentionally spread information](#) intended to incite hatred against an individual, group and society based on religion", when he shared the gospel with a taxi driver.
- Throughout 2018 the Christian former governor of Jakarta was still in prison, after being sentenced to two years imprisonment on 9 May 2017. The alleged case of blasphemy occurred during a speech in September 2016. The video showing the speech was doctored and the person responsible for it was sentenced as well.
- There have been several reports from different parts of the country where converts to Christianity have been detained by their families and had their cell-phone taken from them. Most are isolated for several weeks and can be expelled from the family home once it is clear that the conversion is serious.
- Children of Christians often face ostracism and verbal abuse. In some regions, Muslim families regularly forbid their children to play with Christian friends. They are called infidels and are sometimes mocked by Islamic religious teachers and made to sit in the back row of the school classroom.

## External Links - WWL 2019: Short & Simple Persecution Profile

- Examples of specific persecution in the reporting period: intentionally spread information  
<https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/coe/four-year-sentence-for-indonesian-pastor-who-evangelised-a-taxi-driver/>

## WWL 2019: Persecution Dynamics

### Introduction

Reporting period: 1 November 2017 - 31 October 2018

### Position on World Watch List (WWL)

With a score of 62 points Indonesia ranked 30th in WWL 2019, a rise of 6 points compared to WWL 2018. This rise in points is part of a trend lasting several years now. The pressure on Christians has become stronger in all *spheres of life* and for all categories of Christians. But in the WWL 2019 reporting period, the violence score almost doubled: The bomb attacks against three churches in Surabaya showed that radical groups do not just talk - they are beginning to act. A stabbing incident with a sword targeting a Catholic priest in Yogyakarta on 11 February illustrates the increasing violence as well. The shock the Christian community experienced when the former Christian governor was arrested and sentenced in May 2017 on charges of alleged blasphemy is still clearly felt.

### Persecution engines

Persecution engines: Indonesia	Abbreviation	Level of influence
Islamic oppression	IO	Very strong
Religious nationalism	RN	Medium
Ethnic antagonism	EA	Weak
Denominational protectionism	DPR	Very weak
Communist and post - Communist oppression	CPCO	Not at all
Secular intolerance	SI	Not at all
Dictatorial paranoia	DPA	Not at all
Organized corruption and crime	OCC	Not at all

*The scale for the level of influence of Persecution engines in society is: Not at all / Very weak / Weak / Medium / Strong / Very strong. For more information see WWL Methodology (long version).*

#### Islamic oppression (Very strong):

Indonesia is a country both blessed and challenged by its diversity. It hosts the largest Muslim population in the world, whose predominant brand of Islam is traditionally fairly tolerant, granting minorities some space (often referred to as: *Islam Nusantara* or *Island Islam*, referring to the archipelago's unique topography of more than 17,000 islands and to its diversity, a term coined by the country's largest Muslim organization, Nadhlatul Ulama). In regard to geography as well as religion, Indonesia is one of the most de-centralized countries in the world. Although the Constitution of Indonesia guarantees religious freedom, various regions and territories of Indonesia are governed by a host of Islamic by-laws, including Sharia law in the Province of Aceh. Radical groups have increasingly gained such a strong influence that the government decided to ban two of them: *Hizb-ut Tahrir Indonesia* in May 2017 and in July 2018, *Jemaah Anshorut Daulah*. However such groups, including the Islamic Defender Front (FPI), wield an increasing influence on society and politics alike. These organizations publically use strict religious interpretations to justify the implementation of Sharia law and the infringement of the rights of religious minorities. Indonesia's universities are known to be hotbeds of [Islamic radicalization](#) and so it is not surprising that a study published by the Indonesian government in May 2018 revealed that a growing number of students hold [Islamist views](#): 24% of all students interviewed agreed with such views and 39% had been exposed to them. Money from Saudi Arabia is pouring into Indonesia, used for education purposes, but having the effect of bringing

Wahhabi ideology into the country. The uphill task of countering intolerant and [at times totally anti-Christian attitudes](#) was recently highlighted in a research paper presented in New Mandala on 1 June 2018, where differences in Indonesia’s 34 provinces were discussed. In the survey, responses to the following five statements were requested:

1. Christians are often dishonest and self-interested.
2. Indonesia would be a better place if there were no Christians in this country.
3. Christians have the right to be elected as regent, mayor, or governor, even in regions where Muslims are the majority.
4. I would be opposed if there was a church being built in my neighborhood.
5. Christians must be allowed to stage demonstrations to protest discrimination against their religion.

Despite some concerns about the methodology employed, the results are clear enough: ‘Broadly speaking, Aceh is the least tolerant and Kalimantan Utara the most tolerant. Among the provinces in Java, Banten is the least tolerant, followed by Jakarta, Jawa Barat, Jawa Timur, and Yogyakarta. That the newly elected governor of Jakarta, Anies Biswedan, a former Minister of Education, used [racial undertones](#) in his inaugural speech by saying: “All of us natives have been oppressed, pushed aside. Now is the time for us to become the masters in the country of Indonesia.” fits into this picture. Radical ideology is spreading its roots and not only Christians are affected by this; Muslim minority groups such as Ahmadis suffer as well.

**Religious nationalism (Medium):**

As already stated, Indonesia is one of the most diverse countries in the world, be it in language, ethnicity or religion. Another example of this is the predominantly Hindu island of Bali. If a Hindu becomes a Christian, he/she experiences strong pressure from family, friends and neighbors to return to the belief of the fathers.

**Drivers of persecution**

Drivers of Persecution: Indonesia	IO	RN	EA	DPR	CPCO	SI	DPA	OCC
	VERY STRONG	MEDIUM	WEAK	VERY WEAK	-	-	-	-
Government officials	Strong	Very weak	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ethnic group leaders	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Non-Christian religious leaders	Strong	Strong	-	-	-	-	-	-
Religious leaders of other churches	-	-	-	Very weak	-	-	-	-
Violent religious groups	Very strong	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ideological pressure groups	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs	Strong	Medium	Weak	-	-	-	-	-
One's own (extended) family	Medium	Strong	Medium	Very weak	-	-	-	-

Political parties	Strong	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Revolutionaries or paramilitary groups	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Organized crime cartels or networks	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Multilateral organizations (e.g. UN, OIC etc.) and embassies	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

*The scale for the level of influence of Drivers of persecution in society is: Not at all / Very weak / Weak / Medium / Strong / Very strong. Please note that "-" denotes "not at all". For more information see WWL Methodology (long version).*

### **Drivers of Islamic oppression:**

Persecution comes from radical Islamic religious leaders, who instigate hatred against Christians and other religious minorities via their teaching in mosques and in the mass media as well, and at times mastermind attacks. Several conservative Muslim political parties, e.g. the PKS, are known to push their agenda for an Islamic nation. Their representatives in the legislation are often behind the drafting and passing of Sharia-inspired policies (including in the field of education), despite having relatively few voters supporting them. More influential are radical Islamic pressure groups like the FPI. They are able to mobilize hundreds of thousands for street demonstrations, they are also used by some politicians and parties to gain electoral leverage. The government per se is not a driver of persecution at the national level, even though it is not too much concerned with the situation of religious minorities. But the difficulties arise more when it comes to the implementation of policies at the local level and to confrontations with radical Islamic pressure groups.

### **Drivers of Religious nationalism:**

Hindu converts are under pressure from their religious leaders, but most pressure comes from their own families, neighbors, friends and communities to return to their old faith. The pressure depends much on the personal circumstances of the convert.

## Context

President Joko Widodo prepares for the national elections in April 2019, which will witness another "clash of the titans" as in 2014, as he will again be [challenged](#) by former Lieutenant-General Prabowo Subianto. The ousting of Jakarta Governor Ahok (mentioned above) was also a warning shot to Ahok's long-term ally, Jokowi, and points to a heated political atmosphere. According to 2018 polls, Jokowi remains much more popular than Prabowo ever was. However, the regional elections on 27 June 2018 proved to be a [mixed](#) bag for President Jokowi, even though they took place largely peacefully and without hate speech. For the Islamists, the election was not about fielding own candidates, but about influencing and supporting candidates from the big parties in their battle against President Jokowi. The president's PDI-P party was able to win several provinces and cities but two of the most populous provinces went to the opposition, namely West Java and North Sumatra. The latter is especially embarrassing for the president as his former running mate and Vice Governor of Jakarta, Djarot Saiful Hidayat, was defeated in the gubernatorial election. Hidayat (Muslim) had run for election in North Sumatra with a Christian candidate as running-mate .

Indonesia still struggles with the threat of violence that radical Islamic groups continue to pose. In May 2018, radical Islamists started a prison riot in a high-security prison in Depok, close to Jakarta, killing several officers. Only five days later, on Sunday, 13 May 2018, a triple suicide attack against three churches took place in Surabaya, the second largest city of the country and capital of West Java. The

attack was carried out by [a whole family](#), including girls as young as nine and twelve. For Indonesia, this was unprecedented and led the authorities to ban the local radical group Jemaah Anshorut Daulah in July 2018. Merely [prohibiting](#) radical movements will not be enough, especially as neighboring southern Philippines offers another place for gathering Islamic radical groups and planning new attacks.

## Christian communities and how they are affected

**Communities of expatriate Christians:** Expatriate Christians are not forced into isolation. This category is therefore not scored separately.

**Historical Christian communities:** These are groups such as the Roman Catholic Church, but also churches related to several ethnicities (such as the Batak Christian Protestant Church). They are monitored and experience persecution once it is noted that they are growing. The historical churches in poorer regions like Papua, East Nusa Tenggara and Mentawai are subject to aggressive [Islamization attempts](#), especially among children, as Islamic mission efforts get bolder.

**Converts to Christianity:** Converts are mainly from a Muslim background and face the most severe persecution, especially in the hot-spot areas. There, they are closely monitored and try to blend in with the surrounding society. If their conversion is discovered, they are put under pressure to give up their new faith. Similarly, on the predominantly Hindu island of Bali, if a Hindu becomes a Christian, he/she experiences strong pressure. Pressure on converts comes mainly from family, friends, community and local authorities.

**Non-traditional Christian communities:** The main congregations in these category are Baptist, Evangelical and Pentecostal. They are made conspicuous by their often fervent propagation of the Christian message, which leads them to be targeted by communities and radical Islamic groups alike. Building or renovating a church can be fraught with difficulties – the authorities must issue a permit and Islamic groups and neighbors will often attempt to hinder the actual building process. (It should be noted that Catholic churches can also face the very same problems when it comes to building and renovating.)

## Pressure in the 5 spheres of life and violence





The WWL 2019 Persecution pattern for Indonesia shows:

- The average pressure on Christians in Indonesia is at a high level, rising from 10.4 in WWL 2018 to 10.5 in WWL 2019.
- Pressure is strongest in the *Community* and *Family spheres* followed by the *Private sphere*. This pattern is typical in situations where Christian converts from a Muslim background draw the most persecution.
- Violence against Christians almost doubled, rising from 6.9 in WWL 2018 to 12.0 in WWL 2019. This is a reflection of the triple suicide attack against churches in Surabaya in May 2018 and the number of blasphemy sentences against Christians and of churches being closed, damaged and/or destroyed.

#### **Private sphere:**

While Christians from Historical communities enjoy freedom from fear to live their Christian life, the situation for converts from Islam is different. Converts always have to be careful in the way they worship, especially if they are the only Christians in their family. Bibles and other Christian literature have to be hidden carefully, and can only be read secretly to avoid conflict. Fellowship with other Christians can become challenging in these circumstances, as they bring themselves and people around them into danger. The situation is different in big cities or in Christian enclaves. On the other hand, other types of Christianity also face limitations in worshipping or expressing their faith in hot-spot areas in Indonesia. In these areas, Christians are closely monitored as are known converts, the latter are subjected to house-arrest and physical or mental abuse. This is most common in hotspot areas like Aceh, East Java, Banten, West Java and West Sumatra.

#### **Family sphere:**

Converts sometimes have to register their children with the majority religion. Changing their religion often draws many questions, suspicion and pressure from the community and, at times, even from the local authorities. It also exposes them to the authorities and the growing radical Islamic groups. When converts are discovered, they often face the threat of divorce and loss of their inheritance rights, which happens to Hindu converts as well. Organizing a baptism, wedding or funeral can become difficult or even impossible in the hotspot areas, especially for converts. Christians that live in enclaves or in big cities like Jakarta and Surabaya, are able to obtain Christian education for their children. However, in provinces where Christians are the minority, there are more difficulties. Children of Christian parents in general are forced to attend Islamic lessons, and be examined in the subject; sometimes this is also due to a lack of Christian teachers. Christian students are frequently discriminated against. Many Muslim families forbid their children to play with Christian children. Converts can be isolated from their families and even be cast out by them.

#### **Community sphere:**

Converts face strong pressure from their family, friends and neighbors to recant their Christian faith, although conversion is not forbidden by law. Chiefly in areas like Aceh and other hot-spot areas, Christians experience discrimination in their private lives as well as in their business lives and are urged to follow Sharia law. In such areas, Christian activities are closely watched by neighbors and Islamic radical groups. In some parts of Indonesia, developers build a housing complex for Muslim residents only and non-Muslims are forbidden to rent or buy a house in that complex. Children of Christian parents report facing discrimination on behalf of teachers and peers in schools and are even denied scholarships and receive poorer marks in religious education. This is done in order to keep such students from meeting the minimum requirements to become a civil servant. Consequently, few

Christians make it into the civil service and many experience discrimination in their business lives. Some churches in Central Java continue to report that they are forced to pay "uang keamanan" (security money) to radical groups in exchange for being able to conduct Sunday services. General biases in society against Christians were highlighted in a research paper, published in May 2018, showing how intolerant and [at times totally anti-Christian attitudes](#) are spread across the 34 provinces of Indonesia. There have been cases reported where Christians were not allowed to become active in their children's school committee or take on positions in social organizations.

#### **National sphere:**

The Constitution does not limit the freedom of Christians; but it recognizes only six faiths: Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism. However, the Constitutional Court stated clearly in a verdict on 7 November 2017 that all religions have to be [treated equally](#), including indigenous religions. The implementation, however, is still pending and given the opposition it faces, it is unlikely that any progress will be made in the election period. Legislation on a local level often restricts religious freedom further. The attitude against Christians is often negative, and even in more tolerant cities like Jakarta, public servants are often discriminated against because of their faith. Christian NGOs can be freely founded, but some Islamic organizations promote bad press against them. Although the country enjoys a free and diverse press, several Islamic media outlets have run smear campaigns and spread fear and hatred towards Christians. One example of this is the campaign against the Chinese. This proved very successful against the ethnically Chinese Christian governor of Jakarta, leaving Christians to wonder where this may end: If even such a high-ranking and well-connected politician like Ahok cannot escape such false accusations, how much less can the average Christian? Increasing social media reach via WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook and Twitter multiplied the effectiveness of such campaigns and make it virtually impossible for minorities to counter it.

#### **Church sphere:**

Churches face massive problems in the registration of congregations and in the construction of church-buildings. Based on the revised Joint Ministerial Decree of 2006, a church can only operate if: i) its congregation has at least 90 members, ii) it has the consent of 60 neighbors from another faith, and iii) it has the approval of both the regency chief (administrative subdivision of a province) and the inter-faith harmony forum. Many churches find the permit extremely hard to obtain, even if they have met all the necessary requirements. And if they do manage to receive the permit, there is no guarantee of protection from the government and local police. In one case, a congregation filed its application five years ago and has never received any response from the authorities since. In other cases, radical groups simply block the entrance of church buildings and hinder access. Based on a survey by the National Commission on Human Rights (Komnas HAM), 85% of worship buildings in Indonesia have no proper permit, especially in rural areas. This includes mosques, churches and the houses of worship of other religions. Prior to building a church, the government of Aceh requires the congregation to collect 150 signatures from neighbors of a different religious background. In the province of Banten, there has been a provincial regulation issued by the governor to prohibit the presence of churches, demanding that Christian meetings are limited to the capital city of Serang. In general, producing or distributing religious materials and Bibles is no problem, but there are exceptions in the hot-spot areas where distributing Bibles to non-Christians may be considered proselytization.

#### **Violence:**

The WWL 2019 reporting period was overshadowed by the triple bomb attack on three churches in Surabaya on 13 May 2018, killing 18 Christians and wounding scores more. These attacks were arguably the first ones in South East Asia committed by [women](#) suicide bombers and even by children

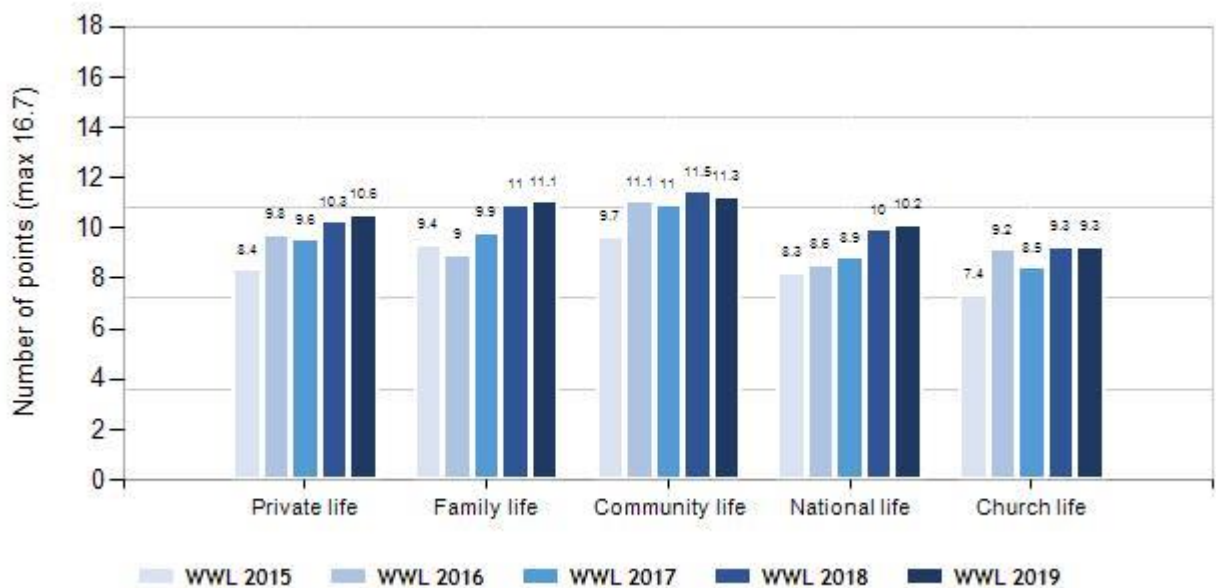
as young as nine. And they were potentially the first ever committed by a whole family. They targeted a Catholic church (SMTB), a Protestant church (GKI) and a Pentecostal church (GPPS).

For a summary of the statistics on violence and further examples, please see the Short and Simple Persecution Profile section above.

### 5 Year trends

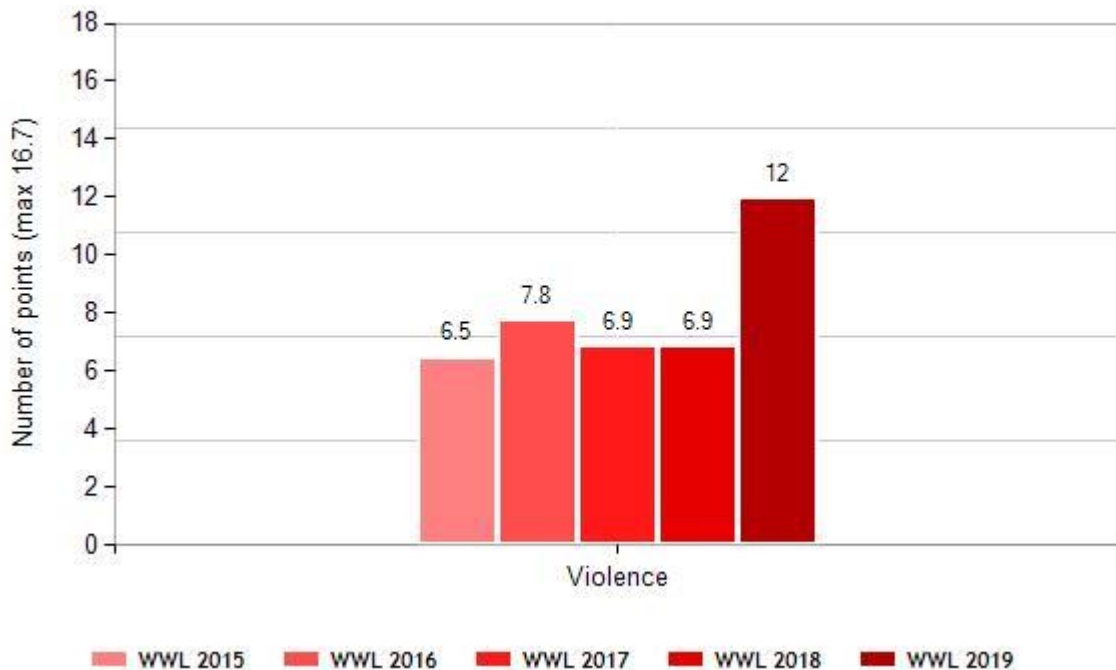
Chart 1 shows that, over the last five WWL reporting periods, pressure on Christians in Indonesia has increased over all *spheres of life*, most notably in *Private, Family and National life*. The increase in points in the *National sphere* reflects how radical Islamic groups are growing in influence and how blasphemy laws are strictly implemented against, among others, the Christian minority. In the last four years, the scores in *Community and Church life* have more or less remained stable at the same very high and high level respectively. This reflects a growing Islamic conservatism, more and more dominating society and politics alike. The average pressure on Christians has crept up each year and remains at a high level, as can be seen in chart 2. The level of violence in WWL 2019 almost doubled reaching an extreme level, having been more or less stable at the still very high level of just under 7 points for most of the preceding reporting periods.

WWL 2015 - WWL 2019 Persecution Profile for Indonesia (Spheres of life)



WWL 2015 - WWL 2019 Persecution Pattern history: Indonesia	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2019	10.5
2018	10.4
2017	9.6
2016	9.5
2015	8.7

### WWL 2015 - WWL 2019 Persecution Profile for Indonesia (Violence)



### Gender specific persecution

There are no specific forms of persecution in Indonesia targeting Christians according to their gender. In exceptional cases, female converts to Christianity have been threatened with divorce and of losing all financial support.

### Persecution of other religious minorities

Other religious groups suffering persecution are the Muslim minority groups Ahmadi and Shia. They have come under scrutiny by both the authorities and radical Sunni groups. Adherents to traditional indigenous religions used not to be recognized by the authorities; the ruling of the Constitutional Court from November 2017 has still not been [implemented](#), as groups like the Indonesian Ulama Council do not want to see traditional religions being placed on a par with Islam, e.g. when it comes to being registered on the ID card.

### Future outlook

**The political outlook:** Indonesia faces decisive times ahead. The fact that ethnic and religious affiliation have been used for political gain without concern for the consequences, shocked many Indonesians and significantly harmed the country's international image of sponsoring a tolerant brand of Islam. Radicalization continues and is increasingly done online and the authorities are struggling to find an antidote against it, just as schools and universities do too. Anies Rasyid Baswedan was inaugurated as Governor of Jakarta on 16 October 2017 after a very dirty election campaign which landed his Christian predecessor and opponent in prison. He decided to continue playing the racial and religious card in his inaugural speech as reported above.

The leader of one of the most radical and influential Islamic groups, FPI leader Rizieq Shihab, who studied in Saudi Arabia was [accused of involvement in a case of pornography](#) and preferred to stay in

Saudi Arabia, until the government [cleared](#) him of the accusations in June 2018. Indonesia's largest Islamic organization, Nadhlatul Ulama (NU), is [mired in a struggle](#) about its theological direction. Many younger clerics view the relatively liberal brand of Islam Nusantara (a.k.a. "Islam of the Islands") as not being compatible with classic Islamic theology and values. Several of those young clerics have formed a group within NU, calling itself [the 'True Path'](#). For decades, the Nadhlatul Ulama, used to follow a moderate course combined with political neutrality, but in recent years, it has become [increasingly Islamist and politically active](#), as an observer said. Many members of Muhammadiyah [do not agree](#) with their leader and choose to join the more radical groups as well and the fact that young members of Muhammadiyah are more interested in a radical understanding of Islam will of course have consequences for all future [elections](#). This all goes to show that Indonesia is in danger of losing its reputation of following a tolerant brand of Islam.

#### **The outlook for Christians - through the lens of:**

- **Islamic oppression:** Both presidential candidates have picked [surprise vice-presidential candidates](#) as running mates; President Widodo has picked 75 year old [Ma'ruf Amin](#), an Islamic cleric and head of both the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) and of the board of advisers of Nadhlatul Ulama (NU). This very conservative, but renowned cleric, may be a clever choice politically, but it may bring more difficulties for religious minorities as Christians, given his track record. Amin has not only backed actions against Muslim minorities like Ahmadis and Shia, but also issued a report claiming that the Christian ex-governor of Jakarta, 'Ahok', had indeed committed blasphemy. Additionally, he has backed all efforts to limit the construction of non-Muslim houses of worship anywhere in Indonesia.

However, this seems to fit the growing conservative stance of society, as two polls from 2018 showed. The large rallies protesting against Ahok have led to a [more intolerant attitude in society](#) in general, as one research paper showed. While in 2016, 48% of respondents to a survey by the Indonesian Survey Institute said that they would oppose a non-Muslim president, this figure rose to 59% in 2018. A similar rise is noticeable when this question is asked in reference to the vice-president, governors and mayors. On the other hand, the survey shows that the number of people opposing non-Muslims building houses of worship in their neighborhood dropped from 64% to 52% - although it should be noted that this figure is still more than half. A study published in October 2018 found that 57% of all teachers are [intolerant of other religions](#). The Center for the Study of Islam and Society (PPIM) at State Islamic University Syarif Hidayatullah discovered in its survey that more than 37% of all teachers said that they had or wanted to 'undertake intolerant actions'. 56% of respondents disagreed with non-Muslims establishing places of worship in their neighborhood, and 21% disagreed with neighbors of other religions holding religious events. Keeping in mind that this group is tasked with teaching and educating Indonesian's next generation, this does not look promising for the country's future and the Persecution engine *Islamic oppression* will be gaining more strength.

- **Religious nationalism:** Concerning the situation of Hindu converts, nothing substantial is going to change. They will continue to face pressure from their family, peers and local community to return back to Hinduism.

**Conclusion:** The fact that President Jokowi made good on his promise and fulfilled a longstanding wish of most Indonesians by [nationalizing](#) the country's largest gold and copper mine (Grasberg in Papua) in July 2018 may give him another boost in popularity. However, whether this will translate into an improvement in the living conditions for Papuan citizens is an open question. Given that the presidential elections are coming up in April 2019, it remains to be seen if politicians can resist the temptation of wooing radical Muslims to increase their quota of votes. Moderate Islamic organizations

like Nadhlatul Ulama or Muhammadiyah will need to become active to reduce such temptation, but it remains to be seen if they have the power to do so. Indonesian Christians may well face more volatile times ahead, no matter the outcome of April 2019 elections.

## External Links - WWL 2019: Persecution Dynamics

- Persecution engines: Islamic radicalization  
<http://jakartaglobe.id/news/one-14-high-school-students-support-islamic-state/>
- Persecution engines: Islamist views:  
<https://www.benarnews.org/english/news/indonesian/radicalism-survey-05032018162921.html>
- Persecution engines: at times totally anti-Christian attitudes  
<http://www.newmandala.org/measuring-religious-intolerance-across-indonesian-provinces/>
- Persecution engines: racial undertones  
<http://www.benarnews.org/english/news/indonesian/indonesia-politics-10162017183054.html>
- Context: challenge  
<https://www.ucanews.com/news/stage-is-set-for-another-clash-of-the-indonesian-titans/82070>
- Context: mixed  
<http://www.rsis.edu.sg/rsis-publication/rsis/co18110-indonesias-2018-regional-elections-regional-setback-for-jokowi/#.WzYVdeQUmM8>
- Context: a whole family  
<https://www.benarnews.org/english/commentaries/asean-security-watch/bombing-aftermath-05142018163425.html>
- Context: prohibiting  
<http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Jakarta-approves-law-prohibiting-radical-Islamist-groups-41266.html>
- Christian communities and how they are affected: Islamization attempts  
[https://international.la-croix.com/news/christians-in-papua-fear-growing-islamization/7429?utm\\_source=Newsletter&utm\\_medium=e-mail&utm\\_content=14-08-2018&utm\\_campaign=newsletter\\_crx\\_lci&PMID=58d1f792a26689dfa2699c74ec4d75ae](https://international.la-croix.com/news/christians-in-papua-fear-growing-islamization/7429?utm_source=Newsletter&utm_medium=e-mail&utm_content=14-08-2018&utm_campaign=newsletter_crx_lci&PMID=58d1f792a26689dfa2699c74ec4d75ae)
- Pressure in the 5 spheres of life and violence: at times totally anti-Christian attitudes  
<http://www.newmandala.org/measuring-religious-intolerance-across-indonesian-provinces/>
- Pressure in the 5 spheres of life and violence: treated equally  
<https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/coe/indonesia-high-court-milestone-ruling-religious-freedom/>
- Pressure in the 5 spheres of life and violence: women  
<https://www.benarnews.org/english/commentaries/asean-security-watch/bombing-aftermath-05142018163425.html>

- Persecution of other religious minorities: implemented  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/14/world/asia/indonesia-religious-freedom-.html>
- Future outlook: accused of involvement in a case of pornography  
<http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2017/08/19/rizieq-wants-to-go-home-after-being-questioned-in-saudi.html>
- Future outlook: cleared  
<https://www.asiasentinel.com/politics/indonesia-police-clear-rizieq-shihab-sex-case/>
- Future outlook: mired in a struggle  
<http://www.rsis.edu.sg/rsis-publication/rsis/co17018-politics-plurality-and-inter-group-relations-in-indonesia-islam-nusantara-its-critics-the-rise-of-nus-young-clerics/>
- Future outlook: the 'True Path'  
[https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2018/08/13/maldives-a-crisis-in-paradise/?utm\\_campaign=Brookings%20Brief&utm\\_source=hs\\_email&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_content=65165853](https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2018/08/13/maldives-a-crisis-in-paradise/?utm_campaign=Brookings%20Brief&utm_source=hs_email&utm_medium=email&utm_content=65165853)
- Future outlook: increasingly Islamist and politically active  
<http://www.newmandala.org/nahdlatul-ulama-politics-trap/>
- Future outlook: do not agree  
<http://www.rsis.edu.sg/rsis-publication/rsis/co18076-muhammadiyah-the-challenge-of-rising-conservatism/#.WuxC1eQUmM8>
- Future outlook: elections  
<https://www.ucanews.com/news/indonesias-hard-line-muslims-target-presidential-poll/82104>
- Future outlook: surprise vice-presidential candidates  
[https://www.reuters.com/article/us-indonesia-politics/indonesian-president-highlights-nationalism-religiosity-amid-vp-pick-concerns-idUSKBN1KV0EV?utm\\_source=Pew+Research+Center&utm\\_campaign=ca53e156e3-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2018\\_08\\_10\\_12\\_57&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_3e953b9b70-ca53e156e3-399904105](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-indonesia-politics/indonesian-president-highlights-nationalism-religiosity-amid-vp-pick-concerns-idUSKBN1KV0EV?utm_source=Pew+Research+Center&utm_campaign=ca53e156e3-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_08_10_12_57&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_3e953b9b70-ca53e156e3-399904105)
- Future outlook: Ma'ruf Amin  
<https://www.rsis.edu.sg/rsis-publication/rsis/maruf-amin-jokowis-secret-weapon/#.W9xjE0m0XIU>
- Future outlook: more intolerant attitude in society  
<https://coconuts.co/jakarta/news/212-anti-ahok-protests-led-increasing-political-intolerance-indonesia-survey-group/>
- Future outlook: intolerant of other religions  
<https://coconuts.co/jakarta/news/57-indonesian-teachers-intolerant-religions-islamic-research-center/>
- Future outlook: nationalizing  
<https://asia.nikkei.com/Business/Markets/Commodities/Indonesia-mine-nationalization-shakes-top-copper-producer>

## Additional Reports and Articles

### WWR in-depth reports

A selection of in-depth reports is available at: <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/reports/> (password: freedom).

### Open Doors article(s) from the region

A selection of articles is available at: <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/articles/> (password freedom).

### World Watch Monitor news articles

Use the country search function at: <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/>

### Recent country developments

Use the country search function at: <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/> (password: freedom).