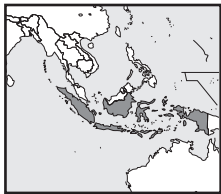


Longing for peace



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The authoritarian legacy

President Megawati Sukarnoputri named 2003 the Year of Peace and Non-Violence. However, violent conflict remains a daily reality for the people of Indonesia. The authoritarian government of General Suharto, backed by the military and the official Golkar party, was in power from October 1965 to May 1998, and left the country plagued by different kinds of violence. For more than three decades, the Government employed systematic repression, banishment and censorship. The Government also attempted to annex East Timor, where the bloody consequences of the invasion in 1975 continue to this day. In 1979 the government policy of displacing whole populations, called *Transmigrasi*, increased separatist violence, the number of displaced people and refugees, and levels of inter-ethnic conflict.¹

In 1998 General Suharto was succeeded by B J Habibie, who governed amid protests and inter-ethnic clashes until October 1999. At that point elections were held, and Abdurrahman Wahid, leader of the Islamic coalition Nahdlatul Ulama, took office. In July 2001, after facing violent conflicts and being implicated in corruption scandals, Wahid was forced out of office and Sukarnoputri became president.

State violence and terrorism

At present there are conditions of extreme violence in the conflict-ridden areas of Aceh, Poso-Central Sulawesi, Maluku and Irian Jaya (West Papua). Thousands of people have been killed, displaced, or disappeared. In Aceh, in the westernmost part of the island of Sumatra, opposition to the central Government has from the beginning taken two dif-

ferent forms. One is a movement in favour of a referendum to decide the political future of the region, which has strong support from civil society; the other is an armed group, Gerakan Aceh Merdeka, or GAM (Movement for a Free Aceh). Indonesian security forces have used the same repressive measures against both. The conflict was characterised by abuses on the part of the police, army and GAM, until May 2000 when President Wahid's Government agreed to a humanitarian truce which lasted until 2001. However, assassinations still took place, including in Medan the murder of Aceh activists Jafar Siddiq Hamzah and Safwan Idris.² In the Aceh region there are still more than 5,000 families living in refugee camps. In the other conflict areas the refugee problem also remains unresolved: in Malucas only 16,000 families out of a total of 36,000 have been able to return home from refugee camps,³ and in Poso-Central Sulawesi 18,000 families remain in the camps.⁴

Two events during 2003 indicate the resurgence of different kinds of violence: an attack on the offices of Kontras, the committee responsible for investigating cases of disappeared persons, which is opposed to government policy in Aceh; and an attack against the national newspaper *Tempo*, after it published an investigation into a fire at a textiles shopping centre, implicating an important businessman in accusations of corruption and nepotism. On the one hand, these attacks illustrate the use of violent and illegal methods to defend the interests of certain powerful individuals, and on the other, they threaten the freedom of expression.

Recent bombing attacks have also generated a climate of fear among the population. In October 2002, more than 180 people died as a result of a bomb attack on a nightclub in Bali. On the same day, another bomb exploded close to the United States consulate in Sanur. The Islamic network Al Qaeda was blamed for both attacks. The recent car-

bomb explosion at the Marriott Hotel in Jakarta on 6 August 2003 left at least 10 people dead and more than 100 injured.

Violence against poor people and women

In addition to the local conflicts and terrorist attacks, there are other - less visible - forms of violence which seriously undermine human security.

Mass evictions, for example, are common in urban areas. In August 2003, 2,000 families working in the informal sector were brutally evicted in Jembatan Besi to the west of Jakarta. In September in Tanjung Priok, north of Jakarta, 189 houses were demolished, leaving homeless 550 people who had paid high prices for their plots of land. This kind of practice has continued in Jakarta and other cities, and clearly violates the rights of citizens enshrined in Article 27 of Indonesia's Constitution.⁵

Women are particularly subject to violence in different forms. Komnas Perempuan (the National Committee on Violence Against Women) claims that in 2002 violence against women increased by 62% compared to previous years. Data for 2003 have not yet been processed, but the information collected by the Committee indicates that it is still on the rise. Seknas Pekka (the National Secretariat of the Women Heads of Households Empowerment Programme) reports that the number of women heads of households has increased, especially in conflict areas. Most of them live in extreme poverty, with daily incomes of less than USD 1.

The dangers of corruption

Indonesia is listed 122th out of 133 countries in the Corruption Perceptions Index 2003, published by Transparency International.⁶ This level of corruption constitutes an obvious threat to human security, because it has significantly slowed the process

1 For further information on the political situation in Indonesia since 1965, see: *The World Guide. An alternative reference to the countries of our planet. 2003-2004.* Montevideo: ITeM-New Internationalist Publications Ltd, 2003.

2 Human Rights Watch Report 2001.

3 Information from several NGOs and working parties.

4 POKJA RKP (Kelompok Kerja Resolusi Konflik Poso): Non-governmental working party for conflict resolution in Poso.

5 With regard to mass evictions in Indonesia, see: "Mass eviction of urban poor continuing in Jakarta". Asian Human Rights Commission. www.ahrchk.net/ua/mainfile.php/2003/583/

6 Transparency International. "Corruption Perceptions Index 2003". www.transparency.org

of social and economic recovery. According to the World Bank,⁷ corruption threatens development, disproportionately affecting the poorest, it endangers Bank projects and undermines public confidence in development aid. The World Bank recommends that civil society work together with the Government, while avoiding co-optation, to reduce impunity and promote transparency. The Government has recently created the Corruption Eradication Commission (Law 30/2003).

A time bomb

Among the most prominent threats to human security are those posed by socio-economic conditions, affecting food, health and education. Indonesia has a population of about 217 million, 40% of whom live in urban areas.⁸ According to official figures, more than 18% are living below the poverty line. Infant mortality is 38.09 per 1,000 births. As for access to education, although some progress was made in 2003, 9% of the population is still illiterate. Data collected in 2002 indicate that 12.69% of women and 5.85% of men cannot read or write.⁹

According to several different observers and agencies, unemployment has reached alarming levels. Recent ILO reports indicate that the work force is expanding by 2.5 million people per year. The annual rate of economic growth is 4%, which only allows 1.3 million new jobs to be created.¹⁰ According to official figures, there are at present 10.8 million unemployed and 32 million underemployed. The Indonesian Business Association (Apindo) reports that 150,000 jobs were lost during 2003 in the forestry and textile sectors alone.¹¹ Andrew Steer, the World Bank representative in Jakarta,

called the situation “a time bomb”, and the Minister for Labour, Jakob Nuwa Wea, considers unemployment to be a serious threat to political stability, especially for the forthcoming legislative and presidential elections to be held on 5 April and 7 July 2004 respectively.¹²

Militarisation and elections

The Government has developed a range of strategies to deal with the problems described above.

Some of these have been controversial, for example the creation of a Military Operations Zone in Aceh in order to combat the GAM. In the other conflict areas, as well, government action has been predominantly military in nature.

Recent terrorist attacks have given rise to decrees 1/2002 and 2/2002, which enable the Government to create special units combining soldiers with police. These units may hold suspects for three days without trial, and information obtained by the intelligence services may be used as evidence. The decrees, which permit the death penalty in cases of terrorism, have been criticised by several sectors of society. From the legal point of view, it has been pointed out that Article 46 of Decree 2/2002 contradicts the 1945 Constitution (Article 281, paragraph 1) by applying the decree retroactively to people linked to the Bali terrorist attacks. Some NGOs have also criticised the decrees because they undermine action by civil society. Finally, since accusations of terrorism generally come from US sources, this tends to increase US intervention in national politics.¹³

In addition, the Government has initiated a process of decentralisation by putting into effect the Decentralisation Law (22/1999). One of the most visible results of this project is the increase in the number of provinces, from 26 to 33. This has brought about many changes, especially in the handling of financial resources, and exposes the need to explore new strategies on the road to decentralisation.

In 2003, the Government designed a new electoral system, which will be used in April and July 2004. It will be the first time that citizens of Indonesia have an opportunity to elect their representatives directly, and it is hoped that this change will strengthen democracy.

New challenges

Within this complex panorama, the prospect of a major change in the political system has powerfully motivated different civil society activist groups. These groups have concentrated their activities primarily on monitoring military operations in the conflict zones, fighting corruption in the Government and in political campaigns, protecting the rights of the poor in urban areas, defending the freedom of expression, and campaigning on environmental issues and women's rights. Some groups have also been formed to monitor government policies, on education, public debt, etc.

Building human security requires a complete transformation of economic, social, political and cultural systems. This is an arduous task. The forthcoming elections provide an opportunity for political reform which could signal the beginning of structural change. ■

7 World Bank. *Combating Corruption In Indonesia. Enhancing Accountability For Development*. Report No 27246-IND. 12 November 2003. www.worldbank.org

8 *The World Guide. An alternative reference to the countries of our planet. 2003-2004*. Montevideo: ITeM-New Internationalist Publications Ltd, 2003.

9 BPS-Statistics Indonesia 2003. *Statistik Kesejahteraan Rakyat (Welfare Statistics)*.

10 *Asian Labour News*. 20 January 2004. www.asianlabour.org

11 *Ibid.*

12 *The Washington Times*. “Unemployment poses threat in Indonesia”, 16 January 2004.

13 Sebastian, Leonard C. “Indonesia's New Anti-Terrorism Regulations”. Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. www.ntu.edu.sg/idss/Perspective/Research_050225.htm