

**INDONESIA: THE SEARCH FOR  
PEACE IN MALUKU**

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## INDONESIA: THE SEARCH FOR PEACE IN MALUKU

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The fighting that broke out between Christians and Muslims in Ambon, the capital of Indonesia's Maluku province, on 19 January 1999 triggered a virtual civil war that soon spread to other parts of the province. At least 5,000 people (perhaps as many as 10,000) have been killed and close to 700,000 – almost one-third of the population of 2.1 million – became refugees. Peace has yet to be achieved although violence has declined sharply during the last year. Refugees are beginning to return to predominantly Muslim North Maluku (which was separated from the old Maluku province in September 1999) but tensions remain high in Ambon and surrounding islands that are the core of the new Maluku province.

During the initial phase, each side inflicted heavy casualties. But in mid-2000 there was a qualitative change when a Java-based fundamentalist Islamic militia, *Laskar Jihad*, responding to the perception that Muslims were getting the worst of it, sent several thousand fighters to Ambon. They had received basic military training from a small group of sympathetic officers within the Indonesian National Military (TNI – *Tentara Nasional Indonesia*) and were supplied with modern weapons after their arrival in Maluku.

Supported by elements in the security forces, the *Laskar Jihad* put the Christian militias on the defensive, inflicted casualties on the Christian community and forced thousands of Christians to flee, causing the national government to impose a civil emergency in the two Maluku provinces in June 2000. Although Muslim offensives continued, by early 2001 the level of violence was declining and most of the population had been partitioned into Christian and Muslim zones.

The security forces failed dismally to contain the conflict during the first eighteen months partly because they were hamstrung by the competing sympathies many Christian and Muslim personnel felt for co-religionists. After the introduction of the civil emergency, however, the military adopted a new strategy involving establishment of a Joint Battalion (*Yon Gab – Batalyon Gabungan*), a centralised mobile reserve drawn from elite forces of the three services that could be sent quickly to conflict areas. In a context where Muslim militias – backed by *Laskar Jihad* and some military and police personnel – were gaining ground, the *Yon Gab* found itself usually confronting Muslim forces and soon gained a pro-Christian reputation.

The *Yon Gab* appears to have contributed to the decline in fighting but credible allegations about the brutality of some of its members besmirched its reputation and aggravated Muslim antagonism. In November 2001 it was withdrawn and replaced by army special forces (*Kopassus*).

In contrast to North Maluku and the southeast part of the Maluku province, shootings and bomb explosions continue on Ambon and nearby islands although attacks on Christian villages and direct armed confrontations are now rare. *Laskar Jihad* is less openly involved in launching direct attacks on Christians and seems to be concentrating more on religious and social-welfare activities in Maluku although it continues to provide military training and has sent fighters to Poso in South Sulawesi.

*Laskar Jihad* and another, smaller and more secretive, Muslim militia, the *Laskar Mujahidin*, have been suspected of links to terrorist organisations outside Indonesia including *Al-Qaeda* though ICG has found no strong evidence suggesting a significant foreign connection to the

troubles in Maluku. In addition, military and police deserters – Christian and Muslim – appear to be involved in occasional attacks. On the Christian side, youth gangs are ready to retaliate if the violence rises. Local speculation suggests that some elements in the security forces tolerate, or even support, a low level of continuing violence in order to induce property-owners to pay protection money. Continuing emergency conditions also give security personnel other lucrative opportunities.

During the last year there have been signs that at least some Muslims are losing enthusiasm for Laskar Jihad. In the past Maluku's Muslims have not been especially attracted to "fundamentalist" movements, and most do not identify closely with Laskar Jihad. However, many are grateful for its role in fending off Christian militias. Muslims lack confidence in the security forces to maintain order and fear that Laskar Jihad's withdrawal would leave them vulnerable to revenge attacks. However, Christian leaders see its presence as the key obstacle to a more permanent peace.

An effective peace agreement still seems far off in Ambon where Muslim leaders and Laskar Jihad are convinced that the Christian side started the fighting and demand that its leaders apologise on behalf of their community and the brains behind the conflict be prosecuted. Christians are equally convinced that Muslims started the conflict. They also have only limited confidence in the TNI's capacity to protect them.

The government's main priority is to ensure that large scale fighting does not resume. To preserve the present "peace", it is essential that the security forces behave in a professional and neutral manner. In Maluku, however, the reality is that local forces, both the military and especially the police, are highly vulnerable to "contamination", partisan alignment with their own religious community. Although Yon Gab contributed to the decline in violence during 2001, its brutal excesses alienated Muslims. The force that replaced it has yet to win the confidence of both communities.

In North Maluku return to "normalcy" is much more advanced, partly because the Muslim majority is too large to feel threatened politically. Although some of the worst massacres took place on Halmahera in North Maluku, it is now increasingly possible for refugees to return. The security forces are needed to prevent revenge

attacks but it is hoped that a "natural" reconciliation process can take place.

In Maluku, especially Ambon, government and military emphasise that reconciliation should not be "forced" and should proceed "naturally". This means the partition of Ambon and other regions into Christian and Muslim zones will not be ended soon. But the longer partition lasts, the harder reconciliation will be. Meanwhile, limited steps have been taken to provide more opportunities for the communities to meet naturally such as establishment of markets in "neutral" areas of Ambon where Christian and Muslims can intermingle. The *Baku Bae* (reconciliation) movement has sponsored informal meetings between leaders. However, these initiatives are still in early stages, and there is no expectation that natural reconciliation will be achieved quickly.

In January 2002, the national government persuaded leaders of both communities to participate in a peace conference the following month but the gap between the sides remains wide, and the search for peace is far from over.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS TO INDONESIAN AUTHORITIES**

### **CONCERNING THE SECURITY FORCES**

1. Use elite forces from outside Maluku to keep peace as local forces are inevitably vulnerable to partisan involvement.
2. While emphasising reconciliation where possible (North Maluku), give priority in Ambon to apprehending those responsible for shootings and bombing designed to maintain tension and provoke retaliatory violence.
3. Overcome divisions between Muslim and Christian officers before giving the police heavy responsibilities.
4. Avoid behaviour that makes an ultimate settlement more difficult, e.g., by not treating combatants as "enemies" to be killed and by acting strongly against personnel who commit or condone human rights abuses.

5. Combat the practice among security forces of condoning low-level violence in order to extract protection money by both taking firm action against offenders and ultimately raising salaries.
6. Take more intensive steps to recover military weapons held by both Muslims and Christians and to prevent the import of modern arms to the Maluku region.

#### **CONCERNING LASKAR JIHAD AND LASKAR MUJAHIDIN**

7. Ensure that the security forces are able to guarantee the safety of Muslims in Maluku, especially Ambon, before disarming Laskar Jihad.
8. Take measures to prevent intimidation by Laskar Jihad of Muslims who seek a *modus vivendi* with the Christian community.
9. Intensify intelligence operations to identify the membership of the Laskar Mujahidin and its possible links with international terrorist organisations.

#### **CONCERNING LEGAL ISSUES**

10. Reconstitute the justice system as a priority, including a functioning police force, provision of judges, prosecutors and court

staff, and protection of those involved with cases related to the communal conflict.

11. While recognising that the law must be upheld, give precedence to the peace and reconciliation process when considering whether to bring specific prosecutions in a context where violence has been perpetrated by people who believe they acted justifiably to defend their community.

#### **CONCERNING RECONCILIATION**

12. Continue to devote resources to helping the more than half a million refugees from the conflict and seek additional foreign support.
13. Emphasise forward-looking measures rather than determination of the “truth” about the conflict’s beginnings through a Truth and Reconciliation Commission for Maluku that would be counter-productive at this stage.
14. Encourage private efforts for “natural” reconciliation such as those taken by Baku Bae.

**Jakarta/Brussels, 8 February 2002**



## INDONESIA: THE SEARCH FOR PEACE IN MALUKU

### I. INTRODUCTION

The Maluku islands have been engulfed in communal violence for three years since a quarrel between a Christian and a Muslim at an Ambon bus terminal sparked a virtual civil war between two religious communities.<sup>1</sup> An earlier ICG report traced the origins and early development of the conflict.<sup>2</sup> This report examines the circumstances that led to the introduction of a civil emergency in June 2000 and the steps taken toward reducing the violence during the following year-and-a-half.

Despite the gloomy outlook at the end of 2000, considerable progress was made during 2001. In the new province of North Maluku (separated from the southern part of Maluku in September 1999), open conflict is now uncommon and refugees are beginning to return. In Maluku (the southern part of the old Maluku province), especially Ambon and surrounding islands, tensions remain high although the mass confrontations of the first two years are now rare. Nevertheless, isolated clashes still occur and shootings and bomb explosions take place with distressing regularity.

The fighting goes beyond religious labels given to the sides and has its origins in a shifting balance of social and political power. Similar to other parts of Indonesia, the initial conflict in Ambon arose in the context of growing tensions between

indigenous Ambonese and migrants from other parts of Indonesia. In Ambon, however, the majority of the indigenous community was Christian while the migrants, mainly Buginese, Butonese and Makassarese (commonly referred to as BBM) from Sulawesi, were Muslim.

The migrants had been coming to Maluku for decades but their numbers grew rapidly in the 1970s and 1980s, and they were commonly estimated to make up about one-third of the Ambon municipality in the 1990s.<sup>3</sup> According to the Bureau of Statistics, in the municipality of Ambon in 1997, Christians were still in a clear majority – 51.92 per cent Protestant, 5.55 per cent Catholic and 42.38 per cent Muslim in a population of 312,000. In the province as a whole, however, Muslims were a majority. Of a total population in the old Maluku province (before the separation of North Maluku) of about 2.1 million, Muslims were 59.02 per cent, Protestants 35.29 per cent and Catholics 5.18 per cent.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The municipality of Ambon covers about 40 per cent of the territory of Ambon island. Ambon city refers to the commercial and administrative centre of the municipality of Ambon and is situated on the southern side of Ambon Bay. The remaining 60 per cent of Ambon island is part of the *kabupaten* [district] of Central Maluku.

<sup>2</sup> ICG Asia Report No. 10, *Indonesia: Overcoming Murder and Violence in Maluku*, Jakarta/Brussels, 19 December 2000.

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<sup>3</sup> The influx of ‘spontaneous’ BBM migrants should not be confused with the government’s transmigration program which placed people, mainly from Java and Bali, in agricultural projects in the outer islands. Between 1969 and 1999 Maluku received 97,422 transmigrants – less than five per cent of the provincial population. Transmigrants were naturally not placed in the municipality of Ambon but were provided with land in, among other districts, next-door Central Maluku where the total number of transmigrants since 1969 constituted about eight per cent of the 1997 population. Ambon Information Website <http://websitesrcg.com.ambon>. Transmigrants from Java, however, were not prominently involved in the fighting in Maluku.

<sup>4</sup> Ambon Information Website: Population and Religious Breakdown of Maluku, <http://websitesrcg.com.ambon>. Muslims were in the majority in Central Halmahera (80.63 per cent), North Maluku/Ternate (69.78 per cent) and Central Maluku (68.20 per cent). Apart from Ambon Municipality, Christians were in the majority in Southeast

Ambon's predominantly Christian elite was increasingly challenged by the influx of Muslim migrants. As in many other parts of Indonesia, migrants had become dominant in small trade, local transport and similar urban occupations. Christian domination of the bureaucracy, with origins in educational advantages obtained during the Dutch colonial era, was being undermined by expanded educational opportunities for Muslims.<sup>5</sup>

The gradual shift in political power was reinforced by developments at the national level in the 1990s as then President Soeharto attempted to mobilise Muslim support. In Maluku he appointed Muslim Ambonese governors for the first time, and Muslims obtained more positions in the local bureaucracy. After Soeharto's fall and with the approach of national and provincial elections in June 1999, political tensions rose as displaced Christians attempted to win back influence, particularly through the *Partai Demokrasi Indonesia – Perjuangan* (PDI-P) led nationally by Megawati Soekarnoputri. As a consequence of the fighting, tens of thousands of BBM migrants fled to Sulawesi, thereby virtually guaranteeing the victory of the PDI-P in Ambon.<sup>6</sup>

The outbreak of mass violence on 19 January 1999 – the holiday marking the end of *Ramadhan*, the Muslim fasting month – was sparked by a quarrel between an Ambonese Christian and a Bugis migrant but it had been preceded over two months by clashes between Christian Ambonese and BBM migrants in villages within the Ambon municipality.<sup>7</sup> What was initially a conflict

between indigenous Ambonese and migrants, however, was quickly defined in religious terms as attacks and counter-attacks led to the burning of churches and mosques. In particular the burning of mosques by Christian gangs enraged Ambonese Muslims, who allied themselves with their co-religionists rather than their ethnic brothers.<sup>8</sup>

The violence in Ambon city spread rapidly to other parts of the island and then to neighbouring islands. After a pause for peaceful elections, rioting started again in July and continued intermittently to the end of 1999. Fighting also broke out in predominantly Muslim North Maluku where Christian-Muslim relations, although influenced by events in the south, had their own dynamic involving the resettlement 25 years earlier of a Muslim community in a Christian district and the centuries-old rivalry between the sultanates of Ternate and Tidore. These now focused on the struggle to dominate the newly established province of North Maluku.<sup>9</sup> By mid-December official figures revealed that 775 people had been killed and 1,108 seriously wounded in the two provinces while 8665 homes, 115 churches and mosques and 942 shops had been destroyed.<sup>10</sup>

But the worst was yet to come. In the final week of 1999 as Christians celebrated Christmas and Muslims fasted during Ramadhan, fighting was widely renewed. Deaths at least doubled during the three weeks after 26 December and by mid-January 2000, the number of refugees had risen to 276,446, of whom 99,572 – presumably mainly Butonese – had fled to Southeast Sulawesi.<sup>11</sup> In

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Maluku - Protestants (54.26 per cent), Catholics (23.08 per cent) and Muslims (22.13 per cent).

<sup>5</sup> As one priest observed, Muslims had previously been confined largely to menial occupations but were now "increasingly wearing coats and ties". ICG interview in Ambon.

<sup>6</sup> PDI-P won 53 per cent of the votes in Ambon, well ahead of Golkar with 19 per cent and the Muslim PPP with 14 per cent. See Gerry van Klinken, "The Maluku War: Bringing Society Back In", *Indonesia* (Cornell University), Vol. 71 (April 2001). Many Muslims suspected that elements within the PDI-P had provoked the fighting for this reason. In previous elections during the Soeharto era, Golkar – fully backed by the government apparatus – had, of course, always won overwhelming victories.

<sup>7</sup> *Luka Maluku*, pp 61-65; Erwin H. Al-Jakartaty, *Tragedi Bumi Seribu Pulau*, Jakarta: BukKMaNs, 2000. pp. 36-37; S. Sinansari ecip, *Menyulut Ambon: Kronologi Merambatnya berbagai Kerusuhan Lintas Wilayah di Indonesia*, Bandung: Pustaka Mizan, 1999, pp. 48-51; Rustam Kastor, *Konspirasi Politik RMS dan Kristen*

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*Menghancurkan Ummat Islam di Ambon-Maluku*, Yogyakarta: Wihdah Press, 2000, Bagian Pertama/ch.3. Muslims in particular regard Christian attacks on the Muslim villages of Wailete and Bak Air, across Ambon Bay from Ambon city, as the real beginning of the conflict.

<sup>8</sup> In contrast, in a similar conflict that broke out on exactly the same day in West Kalimantan, Muslim Malays joined together with non-Muslim Dayaks to massacre Muslim Madurese migrants.

<sup>9</sup> ICG Report, *Indonesia: Overcoming Murder*, op. cit., pp. 3, 6-7. The province of Maluku was divided into two on 16 September 1999. The demand for a separate province of North Maluku was first made in the 1950s. It is speculated that the Habibie government granted the demand two months before the presidential election because it was assumed that the strongly Islamic new province would provide an additional five regional votes in the People's Consultative Assembly for the incumbent.

<sup>10</sup> *Kompas*, 13 December 1999.

<sup>11</sup> *Kompas*, 14 January 2000.

the worst incident, at Tobelo on Halmahera island in North Maluku, Christians, many of whom had been forced to flee from their home regions, massacred more than 400 Muslims and forced another 10,000 to flee the district.<sup>12</sup>

Until May 2000 the fighting was limited largely to inhabitants of the region. However, news of the massacre of Muslims in Tobelo stirred Muslims throughout Indonesia and strengthened the perception that the Christian side was winning.<sup>13</sup> The next round of fighting contrasted sharply with the earlier period in two respects. First, a Java-based Muslim militia, the Laskar Jihad, arrived in Maluku to reinforce the Muslim side. Secondly, although individual army and police personnel were involved from the beginning, it became increasingly obvious that some military units were supporting the Laskar Jihad fighters, who were often equipped with standard military weapons.

Although some police units were identified with the Christians, the entry of Laskar Jihad with the backing of some army units produced a decisive shift in the force balance. Whether, as some observers claim, the sides had been relatively evenly matched before April 2000 or, according to a common Muslim perception, the Christians were ascendant, there is no doubt that after May the Muslims were on the offensive. During May and June fighting intensified both in Ambon and in North Maluku. During the week after 21 June, 300 people were killed, taking the total since January 1999 to nearly 3000.<sup>14</sup>

The national government, which had resisted pressure for emergency rule, finally agreed. At midnight on 26 June, the two Maluku provinces were placed under a "civil emergency", the lowest of three levels of emergency provided under the 1959 State of Emergency law.

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<sup>12</sup> ICG Report, *Indonesia: Overcoming Murder*, op. cit., p. 8. Others estimated that as many as 800 were killed. Tamrin Amal Tomagola, "The Bleeding Halmahera of North Moluccas", *Jurnal Studi Indonesia*, 10:2, September 2000, p. 4. After the fighting in Ambon, Muslim refugees fled to North Maluku where they clashed with Christians, who in turn fled to Tobelo. Tim Peneliti Lipi, *Bara Dalam Sekam*. Bandung: Mizan/LIPI, 2001. p. 104.

<sup>13</sup> Inflammatory reporting in the Muslim newspaper, *Republika*, contributed to this perception.

<sup>14</sup> "Communal Violence in Maluku", Human Rights Watch Backgrounder, 29 June 2000.

## A. THE SECURITY FORCES BEFORE THE CIVIL EMERGENCY

The steady expansion of the fighting between religious communities in Maluku proved beyond the capacity of the police and army to contain. In the first instance the maintenance of internal order is a police responsibility but the police commander may call for military assistance if the challenge is too big. In Maluku the military (TNI) were called in quickly and soldiers soon greatly exceeded police. On several occasions conflict was so intense that the police chief handed over command to his military counterpart. On 15 May 1999 the military district command under a colonel was upgraded to a full regional command (the Pattimura command) under a brigadier-general.

The Maluku crisis happened as the TNI was under widespread criticism for its role as the chief supporter of the regime of former President Soeharto. Since May 1998 the TNI had been increasingly condemned for corruption and abuse of human rights. After years of unrestrained brutality in confronting demonstrators and other dissidents, soldiers found themselves in new circumstances where their old standard of behaviour could result in court charges.<sup>15</sup>

The security forces in Maluku also suffered from a shortage of personnel. In March 1999 police (*Brimob*) and army troops together amounted to 5,300<sup>16</sup> in a territory with a population of two million spread over hundreds of islands. By the end of November the number had risen to only about 6000.<sup>17</sup> The main reason why more troops could not be sent to Maluku was that Indonesia had placed at least 18,000, and possibly many more, in East Timor where the referendum promised by President Habibie was held on 30 August. It was only after the overwhelming majority of the East Timorese people voted for independence and

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<sup>15</sup> In explaining the failure of his troops to take firm action against violent mobs, the military commander in Maluku claimed that he feared that "legal charges may be brought against them in the future if they open fire on mobs". Brigadier General Max Tamaela's comment was relayed to the press through the Maluku governor, Saleh Latuconsina. *Jakarta Post*, 26 June 2000.

<sup>16</sup> *Republika*, 19 March 1999. The *Brimob* is the police's paramilitary force.

<sup>17</sup> *Kompas*, 6 December 1999.

Indonesian forces withdrew that the TNI was able to increase its presence in Maluku.

By January 2000 the strength of the TNI and Brimob increased to fifteen battalions (11,250).<sup>18</sup> By the time the civil emergency was declared in June 2000, there were nineteen battalions (seventeen army and two police, about 14,000 personnel).<sup>19</sup> Despite the increase in numbers, military commanders continued to complain that they did not have enough troops and equipment to cope with the spreading conflict. In particular they lacked transport and so were often outnumbered in particular locations, especially after the entry of the Laskar Jihad.

The troop reinforcements during the first half of 2000, however, were unable to deal with the most fundamental obstacle to effective security operations. The core security forces in the Maluku region consisted of three local (often called “organic”) army battalions<sup>20</sup> and the locally recruited police. But local soldiers and policemen included, of course, both Muslims and Christians. It is generally estimated that the army was divided more or less evenly while Christians made up about 70 per cent of the police.<sup>21</sup>

As the conflict spread it was only to be expected that soldiers would side with their own community or, as military leaders put it, become “contaminated”.<sup>22</sup> As more reinforcements arrived

from outside Maluku, the new Commander of the TNI, Admiral Widodo, said that “it would be better if local troops are not directly involved in handling clashes”.<sup>23</sup>

The massive influx of reinforcements from outside Maluku, however, did not provide a perfect solution to the “contamination” problem. Indeed the first reinforcements called in by the then provincial police chief, Col. Karyono, immediately after the outbreak of the conflict in January 1999 seemed to aggravate the conflict.

The nearest reinforcements – a *Kostrad*<sup>24</sup> battalion in Ujung Pandang (now known as Makassar, its original name) in South Sulawesi and a Brimob unit in Kendari, Southeast Sulawesi – were from the same regions as the Muslim migrants in Ambon who were involved in the initial clashes with Ambonese Christians.<sup>25</sup>

As outside troops increased during 1999 and the first half of 2000 they often identified with the combatants. Although all military units were deliberately mixed and regularly rotated from one area to another,<sup>26</sup> soldiers naturally became acquainted with the residents of the villages that they defended and were often given food, drinks and cigarettes by villagers. It was not unusual when clashes took place that soldiers sided with people they had been meeting on a daily basis, with the result that Muslim soldiers sometimes defended Muslim villages against Christian attacks and Christian soldiers defended their friends against Muslim attacks. When a village organised a

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<sup>18</sup> According to Admiral Widodo, the commander of the TNI. *Gatra*, 22 January 2000.

<sup>19</sup> According to the Minister of Defence, *Jakarta Post* 15 July 2000.

<sup>20</sup> Battalions 731, 732 and 733.

<sup>21</sup> The regional police headquarters (*Polda*) was dominated by Christians while the Ambon headquarters (*Polres*) was controlled by Muslims. This created a dilemma for the military. If they detained a Muslim agitator, for example, they feared that if he were handed over to the *Polda* he would be ‘finished off’ but if handed over to the *Polres* he would be released. The same dilemma in reverse arose when Christian agitators were detained. ICG interview with an army officer, October 2001.

<sup>22</sup> General Wiranto, at that time still the Minister of Defence and Security and Commander of the Armed Forces, admitted as early as March 1999 that “some individual soldiers from the region were apparently influenced by the conflict and supported one side because of family connections”. Quoted by the Minister of Information, Lt. General Yunus Yosfiah. *Republika*, 4 March 1999. Later, Major General Suaidi Marasabessy, the head of a special military task-force dealing with the

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Maluku crisis, said explicitly that some military personnel had joined the conflict because members of their own families had been killed by the other side. *Kompas*, 1 December 1999.

<sup>23</sup> *Kompas*, 10 December 1999.

<sup>24</sup> The army’s Strategic Reserve Command, *Kostrad*, is a centralised force available for deployment in any part of the country.

<sup>25</sup> In fact the soldiers in *Kostrad* battalions are not necessarily recruited in the areas where they are based and it was reported that only about 30 per cent of these troops were Buginese or Makassarese but it is only to be expected that they were not considered neutral by the Christians in Ambon no matter how they behaved. For the 30 per cent estimate, see *Luka Maluku*, pp 80-81. Asked why he called in troops from Sulawesi rather than Irian Jaya, the police chief said that “geographically it was faster to bring aid from Ujung Pandang than from Jayapura”. *Republika*, 3 March 1999.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with former Pattimura commander, Major General Max Tamaela, 11 September 2001.

revenge attack on another village, soldiers might participate.

This is not to say that troops always favoured one side or the other. Troops were usually stationed on the borders between Muslim and Christian areas and were often able to deter or prevent attacks. There are many reports of troops arresting either Muslim or Christian marauders. But it was also widely reported that troops often stood by when clashes were taking place or failed to intervene when armed militias were obviously moving towards a target area.<sup>27</sup>

This may sometimes have been because troops sympathised with the attacking side but in other cases, as pointed out by the new provincial police chief, Col. I Dewa Astika, “rioters outnumber the troops and are armed with standard military weapons”. A dozen or so soldiers or policemen could hardly have been expected to intervene in an assault launched by hundreds of well-armed assailants. Another explanation was suggested by a Muslim member of the national parliament (DPR), who said he had heard of cases where troops requested money before they would take action to protect a group threatened with attack.<sup>28</sup>

Security personnel not only joined in the fighting but also supplied combatants with arms and ammunition. General Suaidi explained that during the first five months of the conflict combatants had relied mainly on home-made firearms and “traditional” weapons such as machetes and knives. In the second half of 1999 standard military weapons were increasingly used.<sup>29</sup>

In February 2000 the national police chief, Gen. Rusdihardjo, estimated that 80 per cent of the bullets used in the conflict originated from the security forces.<sup>30</sup> It was not necessarily the case, however, that all arms were supplied by personnel sympathetic to one side or the other. A large supply of standard rifles and ammunition had been seized in the Laskar Jihad’s military-backed attack

on the Brimob armoury at Tantui in Ambon in June 2000.<sup>31</sup> It has also been claimed that it was common for soldiers to sell ammunition to combatants and to rent, or even sell, rifles. Sometimes soldiers even paid for food with bullets.<sup>32</sup> As an Ambonese member of the national DPR put it, “The ammunition and guns are sold by soldiers who need money to live”.<sup>33</sup>

The poor performance of the military was recognised by its leaders. The army chief of staff, General Tyasno Sudarto, apologised for the failure of his troops to stop the fighting and said that “the TNI itself does not have the capacity and is not trained to face conflict and disperse [fighting religious groups]. Frankly, until now we don’t have this capacity and at this moment are still learning”.<sup>34</sup>

The involvement of the security forces rose to a new level following Laskar Jihad’s arrival.

## B. THE SECURITY FORCES AND LASKAR JIHAD

Laskar Jihad was formed by Muslim radicals in Java in response to rising Muslim casualties in Maluku at the end of 1999. The massacre by Christians of over 400 Muslims at Tobelo in North Maluku during the last week of December 1999 had enflamed Muslim sentiment throughout Indonesia. Following Friday prayers on 7 January 2000 a massive rally – estimated between 100,000 and 300,000 – at the *Lapangan Merdeka* (Freedom Square) in the centre of Jakarta demanded that the government save the Muslims of Maluku.

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27. For examples of both types of behaviour, see *Luka Maluku*, pp.79, 96, 99, 101.

28. For the police chief’s remarks, see *Jakarta Post*, 26 June 2000. For the speculation by the parliamentarian, see *Republika*, 3 March 1999.

29. *Kompas*, 20 October 1999.

30. *Kompas*, 17 February 2000.

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31. In mid-2000 an unnamed “senior military officer” was quoted as estimating that 700 SS-1 rifles were in the hands of the combatants. *Tempo*, 9 July 2000, p. 23. The figure mentioned in the report is 7,000 but this seems too many. 700 is closer to the number seized in the raid on the police armoury. It is still a matter of contention whether the arms were taken by Muslims or Christians. A senior police officer said that probably both sides obtained some. ICG interview with senior police officer.

32. ICG interviews with military officers in Jakarta and Ambon.

33. *Jakarta Post*, 10 December 1999. The Pattimura commander at the time denied that his troops sold weapons. He said that the Ambonese became very accomplished at making weapons that looked virtually identical with standard military weapons. ICG interview with Maj. Gen. Max Tamaela, September 2001.

34. *Kompas*, 18 April 2000.

Muslim party leaders, including Amien Rais, the chairman of the MPR and leader of the National Mandate Party (PAN – *Partai Amanat Nasional*), Hamzah Haz, the leader of the United Development Party (PPP – *Partai Persatuan Pembangunan*), and Ahmad Sumargono of the Crescent and Star Party (PBB – *Partai Bulan Bintang*), addressed the rally.<sup>35</sup> Amidst calls for *jihād* (just war) several radical Islamic organisations began to register volunteers to fight in Maluku.

Demands for *jihād* coalesced around a new radical Islamic organisation, the Communication Forum of the *Ahlus Sunnah wal Jamaah* (Congregation of the Followers of the Prophet), which established Laskar Jihad. Led by a 38-year old religious teacher, Ja'far Umar Thalib, Laskar Jihad quickly claimed 10,000 members of whom 2000 began military training under the guidance of members of the TNI "in their private capacity, not on behalf of the institution", as one of the organisation's leaders put it.<sup>36</sup>

The training was conducted at Bogor, close to Jakarta and was soon reported in the Jakarta press. On 6 April 2000 several hundred white-clad sword-wielding trainees descended on the presidential palace in Jakarta where the ever-accessible President Abdurrahman Wahid agreed to meet eight of them. However, the discussion was short and the delegation was dismissed by an angry president. Outside, Ja'far Umar Thalib declared that "Jihad is the final effort for Muslims to stop the Christians' rebellion in Maluku".<sup>37</sup>

Despite the president's oral instruction that Laskar Jihad members be prevented from leaving Java for Maluku, Ja'far openly proclaimed that 3000 of his forces would depart Surabaya (East Java) for

Maluku on 29 and 30 April.<sup>38</sup> After the police, on government instructions, closed down their training camp at Bogor, the trainees returned to their home base in Yogyakarta from where they progressed to Surabaya and, unhindered, boarded ships for Maluku.<sup>39</sup>

The failure of the security forces to prevent the departure of Laskar Jihad, whose leaders had made no secret of their intentions, has never been adequately explained. Military officers said that the army did not have authority to intervene unless requested by the police. Police officers said that they had no authority to prevent Indonesian citizens from travelling from one province to another.

The members of Laskar Jihad did not carry arms and claimed that their purpose was to carry out missionary activities and provide humanitarian aid to the victims of the Maluku violence. It would have been an infringement of human rights to detain them when they had committed no crime, some military and police officers proclaimed.

On the other hand, some observers have suggested that disaffected elements within the military elite deliberately permitted Laskar Jihad to go to Maluku in the hope that rising conflict would undermine the authority of the civilian government and remind the country that the military still was important. An extreme version of this suggests that some were attempting to create conditions that would justify the military's return to power. It is also likely that some military and police officers genuinely sympathised with the plight of Muslims in Ambon and believed that Laskar Jihad would help to defend them.

The Acting Co-ordinating Minister for Political and Security Affairs, Lt. Gen (ret.) Surjadi Sudirja, expressed surprise when he heard that Laskar Jihad forces had arrived in Ambon. "Actually, the government has done everything to prevent them

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<sup>35</sup> *Kompas*, 10 January 2000. Sumargono demanded that Brigadier General Max Taemala, the regional commander in Maluku and a Christian, be tried by an international tribunal.

<sup>36</sup> *Gatra*, 25 March 2000.

<sup>37</sup> *Jakarta Post*, 7 April 2000. Laskar Jihad and other Muslims had been enraged by the president's comment the previous week to the effect that the conflict in Maluku arose in essence from discrimination against Christians during the Soeharto period when Muslims were treated as "golden boys". Muslims were also agitated by the president's proposal to lift the ban on the Communist Party.

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<sup>38</sup> *Panji Masyarakat*, 01, year IV, 26 April 2000.

<sup>39</sup> The chief of police in East Java at the time was Da'i Bachtiar, now chief of the national police. The Maluku governor, Saleh Latuconsina, said: "As a Muslim and a chief of the administration, I am really disappointed with and concerned about the way they entered Maluku, despite an order from the President to deny them entry. They should have been banned from embarking for this province". *Jakarta Post*, 12 May 2000.

from entering the area of conflict, through containment by the police and military as well as through surveillance by the communication ministry", he said.<sup>40</sup> In Ambon itself the regional military commander, Brig. Gen. Max Tamaela, exclaimed that "It is giving me migraine" and asked "Why didn't the officials at Tanjung Perak Port (in Surabaya) stop them...and what happened to the other military commanders".<sup>41</sup>

Tamaela's migraine soon became worse when he heard that not only Laskar Jihad members but also weapons had been sent separately from Surabaya. In Jakarta, the Minister of Defence, Juwono Sudarsono, complained about "a container loaded with firearms entering the area. They (i.e. soldiers) did nothing about it, they let it enter".<sup>42</sup>

By the middle of May 2000 Laskar Jihad fighters joined local Muslim militias in offensives against Christian positions amid increasing indications that they were receiving the open backing of some military units. During the mid-May fighting in Ambon, Christians accused soldiers from Kostrad battalion 303 and an engineering battalion of failing to act against Muslims who burnt down a church, a public-health centre and houses in the Christian Ahuru district.<sup>43</sup> Reportedly elements in battalion 303 and the local Maluku-based battalion 733 supported the Laskar Jihad attack on the Brimob headquarters and armoury on 21 June.<sup>44</sup> After the introduction of the civil emergency on 26 June, Christian sources reported that troops were withdrawn from many areas of Ambon just before Muslim attacks, including one that destroyed the Pattimura University.<sup>45</sup>

Similar reports were received from North Maluku where Muslim operations were controlled by a local militia, the *Pasukan Jihad*, under the leadership of Abubakar Wahid.<sup>46</sup> In several cases Christian villages in the Galela district were attacked by Muslims after they rejected protection offered by army troops whom they considered biased.<sup>47</sup> When over 100 residents were killed in the village of Duma, Christians claimed that some troops had joined the attacking Muslim forces.<sup>48</sup> However, troops did not always side with the Muslim militias. For example, security forces in Ternate fought against a Muslim militia intending to go to Halmahera.

The introduction of Laskar Jihad supported by elements within the military and police shifted the balance of power and resulted in the Muslim side gaining ascendancy. According to the Defence Minister, Juwono Sudarsono, 'The dispatch of Laskar Jihad and any other forces has reached almost 10,000 people in the last three months and they have become the main reason for the ongoing ground conflict'.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> *Jakarta Post*, 10 May 2000.

<sup>41</sup> *Jakarta Post* 16 May 2000. Once they had arrived, Tamaela himself seemed ambivalent, however. "We cannot stop them from coming", he said. "But if they act badly in Ambon, we will take firm measures". He also said that they could not be stopped because they did not carry arms and had not committed crimes. *Jakarta Post* 9 May 2000.

<sup>42</sup> *Jakarta Post*, 15 July 2000. An internet newsletter claimed that nine containers of weapons had been sent and provided the name of the ship, the name of the company sending the containers and the address to which they were sent in Ambon. *TNI Watch*, 20 May 2000.

<sup>43</sup> *Jakarta Post*, 23 May 2000; *Siwalima Report* 20, 18 June 2000.

<sup>44</sup> *SiaR News Service*, 27 June 2000.

<sup>45</sup> *Masariku Report* 62, 5 July 2000, *Masariku Report* 69, 31 July 2000.

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<sup>46</sup> In February 2000, a Laskar Jihad exploratory mission visited North Maluku. It concluded that the *Pasukan Jihad* was capable of carrying out operations in that region. The Laskar Jihad, therefore, concentrated on the southern part of the province. ICG interview with a Laskar Jihad official, October 2001.

<sup>47</sup> *Jakarta Post*, 30 June 2000.

<sup>48</sup> *Xpos* 22/III 26 Juni-2 Juli 2000.

<sup>49</sup> *Jakarta Post*, 15 July 2000. Juwono's estimate of 10,000 is much higher than those given by other sources.

## II. THE CIVIL EMERGENCY

Preoccupied with the politics of the transition from Soeharto's military-backed authoritarian rule to a more open and democratic system, the national government had taken no serious initiatives to end the conflict in Maluku. President Abdurrahman Wahid had assigned responsibility for Maluku to the vice-president, Megawati Soekarnoputri, but she had been largely inactive. When both made a brief visit to Maluku on 12 December 1999, the president caused much disappointment by stating that the Maluku crisis could only be settled by the people of Maluku: "The government can only encourage a settlement". Megawati's contribution was to "appeal to society to immediately stop the fighting that has caused suffering".<sup>50</sup> When the fighting was flaring up in North Maluku in the last week of the month, Megawati was on a notorious shopping trip to Hong Kong.

President Abdurrahman Wahid continued to resist calls for martial law, presumably because he did not want to create a precedent that could be used by the military to restore lost influence. But as the government increasingly lost control of its security forces and fighting spread in Maluku and North Maluku during June 2000, he finally issued Presidential Decision No 88, 2000, which placed the two provinces under a state of civil emergency from midnight on 26 June.

Under the civil emergency, the Governor of Maluku, Saleh Latuconsina, and the Acting Governor of North Maluku, Brigadier General Abdul Muhyi Effendie, were appointed as civil emergency authorities (PDS -*Penguasa Darurat Sipil*) in their respective provinces. The regional military commander, Brigadier General Max Tamaela, an Ambonese Christian, was replaced by Brigadier General I Made Yasa, a Balinese Hindu, whose appointment was expected to support the impression that the military was truly neutral.

A state of 'civil emergency' is the lowest of three levels of emergency provided by Government Regulation in Lieu of Law No. 23 of 1959. Initially the central government had considered activating a bill on Overcoming Dangerous Conditions (*Penanggulangan Keadaan Bahaya*) passed by the

parliament in 1999 but not signed by President Habibie. Much more "democratic" than the 1959 law, it required approval of the provincial legislature for a state of emergency. However, in the circumstances of Maluku in mid-2000 it was hardly feasible to convene the legislature. In North Maluku a legislature had yet to be formed.

The government, therefore, had no alternative to the authoritarian 1959 law. However, it rejected the higher level of "military emergency", which gave authority to the military commander rather than the governor. Under the civil emergency, the PDS took direct control of the police and exercised powers to restrict public communications, search and confiscate materials, tap and control telecommunications, ban rallies and meetings, impose curfews, and conduct body searches.

In Maluku the governor's first emergency decree imposed a curfew and banned meetings of more than ten people without a clear reason. People were given until midnight on 30 June to hand in all weapons.<sup>51</sup>

The declaration of civil emergency, however, had no immediate impact on the fighting in Ambon. The Muslim offensive culminated on 4 July in the destruction of Pattimura University and three adjoining villages. Although a state institution, the university had long been identified with Christians in the eyes of Muslims, who suspected that its technical college was manufacturing weapons. Thousand fled, many taking refuge at the Halong naval base. More than 110 people were killed during the first month of the civil emergency.<sup>52</sup>

Armed with civil emergency powers the governor of Maluku initially imposed a policy of "limited isolation" to prevent the entry of both Laskar Jihad and arms. The military and naval commands were instructed to check all new arrivals and their cargoes. According to an official, "If they do not have complete documents and a strong purpose to come here, the security forces will forbid their entrance" while ships carrying arms would be seized by the navy and those responsible prosecuted. However, a total ban of ship

<sup>50</sup> *Kompas*, 13 December 1999.

<sup>51</sup> *Jakarta Post, Kompas*, 28 June 2000.

<sup>52</sup> *Jakarta Post*, 24 July 2000.

movements was not imposed for fear of the economic consequences.<sup>53</sup>

By the middle of July 2000 the navy had stopped 67 ships carrying weapons and deployed another eight vessels to the region.<sup>54</sup> However, as the Acting Governor of North Maluku, Brig. Gen. Muhyi, said, even with 20 warships it would be difficult to prevent outsiders reaching the hundreds of islands that make up the two provinces.<sup>55</sup> The PDS of Maluku responded by imposing a total ban on passenger ships calling at Maluku ports from 10 August to 10 September because, as he said, “the minor isolation imposed in Ambon is not effective enough to prevent ‘unwanted outsiders’ and weapons smuggling”.<sup>56</sup> At the end of the month, the ban was lifted but passenger ships had first to dock at the Halong naval base for search before proceeding to the Yos Sudarso port for disembarkation.<sup>57</sup>

At the core of the problem, however, was the failure of the military and the police to prevent Laskar Jihad members and armaments from leaving ports in other parts of Indonesia – especially Surabaya and Makassar. “If the authorities, especially the military in charge of Surabaya and Makassar fail to do so, the conflict in Maluku will be unresolved and leave us with piles of problems”, Governor Saleh Latuconsina said. The new police chief in Maluku, Brigadier General Firman Gani, said he would send officers to check boats leaving Makassar’s port.<sup>58</sup>

The governor, the military commander and the chairman of the Maluku provincial parliament agreed on 10 May 2000 to expel Laskar Jihad from Maluku.<sup>59</sup> However, not only were Laskar Jihad members not expelled but within days their offensive was launched in Ambon and elsewhere. Following the introduction of the civil emergency, the Maluku PDS called on the central government to back the policy of returning Laskar Jihad and

ordered the new military commander in Maluku to act.<sup>60</sup> However, the military still seemed reluctant. The commander insisted that the governor issue a special decree,<sup>61</sup> but no action was taken.

The government even seemed powerless to move against provocative broadcasts by radio stations. For example, the *Gema Suara Muslim Maluku* radio station broadcast a speech by Ja’far Umar Thalib at the Al Fatah mosque on 3 September 2000 in which Laskar Jihad’s leader declared that its work would not end until Ambon was ruled by Muslims.<sup>62</sup> The governor and the police chief summoned Ja’far for questioning on 14 September but took no further action when he failed to appear.<sup>63</sup> Six months later, in March 2001, the governor only complained about another illegal station, *Suara Perjuangan Muslim Maluku*, which he said was responsible for “rampant provocation trying to incite another outbreak of violence”.<sup>64</sup>

During the latter part of 2000 and early 2001 Laskar Jihad fighters and their local allies continued their drive to force Christians in Ambon and nearby islands to flee from their villages. Residents of Muslim villages were mobilised to attack neighbouring Christian villages. Maps provided by Laskar Jihad show that eight Christian villages or townships on Ambon were taken over by Muslim forces during the fighting between May 2000 and February 2001.<sup>65</sup>

In November 2000 forced conversion of Christians to Islam took place on the small Kesui and Teor islands east of Seram Island after a clash in which nine were killed.<sup>66</sup> An investigation conducted by the Maluku Governor reported that 97 per cent of the villagers older than thirteen had converted “due to lack of personal security” while the other three per cent “were forced to convert to Islam as they had their lives on line”.<sup>67</sup> Similar forced conversion was reported from Lata Lata in North

<sup>53</sup> *Jakarta Post*, 10, 12 and 20 July 2000.

<sup>54</sup> *Jakarta Post*, 17, 19 July 2000.

<sup>55</sup> *Kompas*, 14 July 2000.

<sup>56</sup> *Jakarta Post*, 4 August 2000.

<sup>57</sup> *Jakarta Post*, 11 September 2000.

<sup>58</sup> *Jakarta Post*, 27 July 2000.

<sup>59</sup> “For even the slightest move that instigates chaos, we will directly call on all Maluku people, both Muslims and Christians, as well as security forces, to expel them”, they said. *Jakarta Post*, 12 May 2000.

<sup>60</sup> *Republika*, 25 July 2000; *Jakarta Post* 27 July 2000.

<sup>61</sup> “We must issue a legal base for it. We cannot just deport them. Who can guarantee that in the future there will be no charges against the military for taking stern measures?” he asked *Jakarta Post*, 20 July 2000.

<sup>62</sup> *Jakarta Post*, 11 September 2000.

<sup>63</sup> *Indonesia: Overcoming Murder*, p. 13.

<sup>64</sup> *Jakarta Post*, 29 March 2001.

<sup>65</sup> See maps at Laskar Jihad website, [www.laskarjihad.or.id](http://www.laskarjihad.or.id).

<sup>66</sup> *Jakarta Post*, 21 December 2001.

<sup>67</sup> *Jakarta Post*, 1 February 2001.

Maluku.<sup>68</sup> Church officials said they had evidence of 4,000 forced conversions on six islands.<sup>69</sup> On the other hand Human Rights Watch claimed that Muslims had been forced to convert to Christianity when Christian forces attacked Tobelo and Galela in North Maluku in December 1999.<sup>70</sup>

Although the introduction of the civil emergency did not have an immediate impact, the frequency and intensity of fighting declined over the next year. Tension remained high and clashes continued but casualties were much less. In October 2000, the chairman of the National Commission on Human Rights' Maluku Investigation and Mediation Commission was able to say that mass conflicts involving thousands were no longer taking place although people were still being killed in inter-village fighting.<sup>71</sup> Part of the security improvement was a result of a new approach by the military to prevent soldiers and police siding with combatants.

### III. THE NEW MILITARY APPROACH

The national military leadership had long been concerned about the support given by some troops to combatants in the civil conflict. In January 2000, the TNI commander, Admiral Widodo, stressed that:

One of the keys to the successful prevention of the conflict is the neutrality of our personnel in the sense of impartiality in their actions. In the past there have been individuals who, due to family ties, place of residence and other factors, have been involved in the conflict. This is true of both sides in some of the areas of conflict.<sup>72</sup>

A priority of the new commander, Brig. Gen. I Made Yasa, was to remove "contaminated" troops. Following the involvement of an engineering battalion in attacks in Ambon City on 20 July 2000, he ordered their return to their home province of East Java.<sup>73</sup> In October he overhauled the regional command headquarters staff, replacing his assistants for intelligence and territorial affairs, who were believed to favour the Muslim and Christian sides respectively.<sup>74</sup> The new provincial police chief, Firman Gani, adopted a similar policy, saying:

In this situation we do not need evidence. All we need are indications that a soldier or police officer is partial. Then we'll get rid of him. So far, I have transferred 600 police officers, dishonourably discharged sixteen and imposed sanctions on 87 others.<sup>75</sup>

The governor proposed that troops be rotated out of Maluku every three to four months in order "to avoid partiality and possible involvement in the ongoing conflict".<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Chris McCall, "Christians forced to convert in brutal Jihad", *South China Morning Post*, 4 July 2001.

<sup>69</sup> Lindsay Murdoch, "Brutal religious war leaves a paradise soaked in blood", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 January 2001.

<sup>70</sup> Sidney Jones, Testimony before the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, 13 February 2001.

<sup>71</sup> Bambang W. Soeharto, in *Kompas*, 4 October 2000. Not all clashes between villages were motivated by religious differences. Bartels notes a fierce battle between the villages of Wakal and Hitu on Ambon Island – both Muslim villages. He adds, "It seems entirely possible that also much of the fighting between Moslem and Christian Ambonese may only be fought under the pretext of religious differences but is in actuality a struggle for the increasing scarcer resources of villages' land". Dieter Bartels, "Your God is No Longer Mine", [www.indopubs.com](http://www.indopubs.com), 9 September 2000.

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<sup>72</sup> *Gatra*, 22 January 2000. In advice to his successor, the retiring Pattimura commander, Max Tamaela, said that if the new commander "fails to maintain his troops' neutrality, chaos and riots will continue". *Jakarta Post* 20 June 2000.

<sup>73</sup> *Jakarta Post*, 26 July 2000.

<sup>74</sup> *Jakarta Post*, 16 October 2000.

<sup>75</sup> *Jakarta Post*, 3 March 2001.

<sup>76</sup> *Jakarta Post* 27 July 2000.

However, nine months later the TNI spokesman, Air Vice Marshal Graitto Usodo, was still explaining that “Another failure is that there are some troops roaming around and creating chaos outside the chain of command and some even joined the Laskar Jihad warriors”.<sup>77</sup> In August 2000 the provincial police chief admitted that ten per cent of his force was missing, and “I don’t know their location, whether they have deserted or joined the rioters”.<sup>78</sup> His successor, Brigadier General Edi Darnadi, in July 2001 even proposed that all 2000 police personnel (including Brimob) in Maluku be replaced because they were incapable of carrying out their duties in a neutral way.<sup>79</sup>

The involvement of elements of the military and police in the fighting had bedevilled relations between the two forces, especially following the support given by military personnel to Laskar Jihad’s attack on the Brimob’s living quarters and armoury in June 2000. Fighting between police and military units took place from time to time, sometimes with certain army elements siding with the police against other army units. In July troops from Kostrad battalion 509 and Brimob on one side reportedly exchanged fire with Diponegoro and Brawijaya army troops on the other.<sup>80</sup>

Another incident arose from a ‘misunderstanding’ when a Brimob member in civilian clothes approached the Halong naval base. The regional police chief explained that “As he was not wearing his uniform some marines became suspicious of him and beat him...only to learn that he is a policeman”. Subsequent gun battles resulted in one policeman being killed and twelve police and five marines wounded.<sup>81</sup>

In the latter part of 2000, however, military and police units seemed to become more ready to resist Laskar Jihad. In March 2001 the TNI spokesman

noted that “there were only minor, sporadic conflicts in the islands and the situation has been relatively calm over the last couple of months due to fast and effective movement of crack troops”.<sup>82</sup> He was referring to the introduction of a Joint Battalion (Yon Gab) consisting of 450 personnel drawn from the special forces of all three services – the army’s Kopassus, the navy’s Marines and the air force’s Paskhas.

In contrast to other forces brought from outside Maluku which had been spread out in small posts and often sided with the local communities where they were placed, the Yon Gab, according to Yasa, was to “function as a tactical command unit and only be used in certain emergency situations”. It arrived on 9 August 2000.<sup>83</sup>

The Yon Gab was quickly tested. Only three days after its arrival, fighting broke out in Ambon in the area bordering Christian-occupied Mardika and Muslim-occupied Batu Merah. The troops fired warning shots after which the Christian group backed away but the Muslims fired on the military personnel. The troops returned fire and six were killed, eighteen wounded. Brigadier General Yasa commented that “the incident at the Batu Merah-Mardika area late on Friday will become a lesson to any parties instigating an attack”.<sup>84</sup> The following month Yon Gab troops arrested twelve Laskar Jihad members after a sweep operation although all were later released. Muslims claimed the detainees were treated brutally, with three suffering heavy injuries.<sup>85</sup>

The first Yon Gab had been sent to Maluku at a time when military-backed Laskar Jihad forces were gaining the ascendancy. Consequently, Muslims saw Yon Gab as aligned with the Christians side while Christians tended to be grateful for its presence. A second Yon Gab replaced the first in early 2001. The Muslim perception that the Yon Gab was both anti-Muslim and brutal was strengthened by incidents in January and June 2001.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> *Jakarta Post*, 1 March 2001.

<sup>78</sup> *Jakarta Post*, 7 August 2000.

<sup>79</sup> *Kompas*, 13 July 2001. Darnadi also mentioned the case of a police officer who had tried to take a neutral position but was accused of being a traitor and killed by members of his own community. *Koran Tempo*, 13 July 2001. Nor was the governor’s proposal to speed up rotation implemented. For example, the Diponegoro battalion 407 only left Maluku in June 2001 after nine months’ service. *Jakarta Post*, 22 June 2001.

<sup>80</sup> *Jakarta Post*, 15 July 2000

<sup>81</sup> *Jakarta Post, Republika*, 3 February 2001.

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<sup>82</sup> *Jakarta Post*, 1 March 2001.

<sup>83</sup> *Jakarta Post*, 14 August 2000.

<sup>84</sup> *Jakarta Post*, 14 August 2000.

<sup>85</sup> *Republika*, 7 November 2000.

<sup>86</sup> It seems to be virtually routine for Indonesian soldiers to torture detainees after clashes in which soldiers have been killed or wounded. For example, a few days after the outbreak of the conflict in January 1999 a Kostrad soldier

## A. THE JANUARY 2001 CLASH

On the night of Friday 19 January 2001 – the second anniversary of the outbreak of fighting – troops of the first Yon Gab conducted a sweep in Ambon. In circumstances that are not entirely clear, two Muslim men were killed and their bodies taken away by soldiers, one allegedly dragged by a rope attached to an armoured vehicle. Four men were arrested and accused of carrying weapons. One was Darul Quthni Tuhepalle, a journalist with the national newspaper, *Media Indonesia*, who also represented the PPP in the provincial parliament.<sup>87</sup>

As seems to be almost standard practice, the detainees were kicked and beaten before being released. Muslims reacted to the killings by erecting barricades in the Batu Merah area from where they fired on security forces. According to the local branch of the semi-official Indonesian Ulama's Council (MUI - *Majelis Ulama Indonesia*), another two Muslims were killed and ten wounded during two days.<sup>88</sup>

On the evening of Sunday 20 January, troops were again fired on during a sweep search for firearms. Reportedly, one soldier was wounded. They identified the Hotel Wijaya II as a source of sniper fire and attacked it at about 4 a.m. on 21 January. Nine civilians and one of the Brimob were killed in the attack which resulted in the capture of several police officers and an army officer. One police officer, Ajutant Senior Commissioner (Colonel) J. Saragih, had been ordered to return to Jakarta three months earlier but apparently refused. The army officer, Major Nurdin Nontji, was a former chief of staff of the Central Maluku military district command (Kodim).<sup>89</sup> As a result of the raid fourteen officers were arrested. It appears that they

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was killed in a Christian district of Ambon. A number of Christian youths were captured by the military police, who beat them and, it is claimed, cut off the ear of one. A military police officer explained that it was necessary to take action against the youths because otherwise the friends of the killed Kostrad soldier would have reacted more drastically. The officer is quoted as saying, "It was proper to beat them after they were captured because military solidarity is so strong that the soldiers would have lost their tempers if they had seen the murderer of their colleague". *Luka Maluku*, pp. 95-96.

<sup>87</sup> *Jakarta Post, Republika*, 22 January 2001.

<sup>88</sup> *Republika*, 22 January 2001.

<sup>89</sup> *Kompas, Republika*, 23 January 2001.

were not aligned with Laskar Jihad but, involved in illegal commerce.

Among those detained was Commander (Lt. Colonel) Abdi Dharma Setepu, the new commander of Brimob in Maluku who had only arrived in Ambon the previous day. That his presence in the hotel had been inadvertent did not spare him from the treatment meted out to the others. Like them he was stripped naked, beaten and tortured. A journalist who met him afterwards reported that he had fifteen bayonet slashes on his body. The army major was unable to walk.<sup>90</sup> After the incident, Brigadier General Yasa defended his troops' action as "in accordance with procedures".<sup>91</sup> When asked by a journalist whether slashing detainees with bayonets was part of the "TNI's procedures", he angrily refused to reply.<sup>92</sup>

This incident aggravated already poor relations between the army and the Ambon police.<sup>93</sup> On 22 January 2001 a gunfight broke out between Brimob and Yon Gab in the Air Besar area of Passo. Two Yon Gab personnel were wounded in another gunfight on 24 January. Flags were flown at half-mast at police headquarters. The Ambon police chief, Adjutant Senior Commissioner Hasanudin, complained that it was difficult to investigate the killing of the two civilians because the military commander "cannot be persuaded to co-operate" while Yasa sent a letter "asking the police chief to control his personnel in the field".<sup>94</sup>

## B. THE JUNE 2001 CLASH

On 20 May 2001 masked Muslims launched a series of night-time attacks in Christian areas of Ambon, in particular Mardika, Belakang Soya and Karang Panjang. These continued for a week and reportedly resulted in eighteen deaths.<sup>95</sup> On 12 June, a similar attack was made on a Catholic

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<sup>90</sup> *Republika*, 23 January 2001.

<sup>91</sup> *Republika*, 24 January 2001.

<sup>92</sup> *Republika*, 26 January 2001. An Ambonese journalist told ICG that the hotel management and nearby stallholders had complained that Yon Gab soldiers had also stolen money from them. Interview in Ambon, January 2002.

<sup>93</sup> As noted above, the Ambon city police headquarters was entirely Muslim – in contrast to the Christian regional police headquarters.

<sup>94</sup> *Jakarta Post, Republika*, 25 January 2001.

<sup>95</sup> *Kompas, Koran Tempo*, 26 May 2001.

diocesan conference centre, Wisma Gonzalo Veloso, in Karang Panjang. Several houses were burnt down, including that of a former acting governor, G. J. Latumahina – a Christian. Three residents and several attackers were killed and many more wounded. On the same day three people were killed when a speedboat in Ambon Bay was fired on.<sup>96</sup>

In the next two days barricades were erected in Muslim areas. After soldiers from Diponegoro battalions 407 and 408 exchanged fire with Muslim forces, 92 Yon Gab troops carried out a sweep on 14 June in nearby Kebon Cengkeh where Laskar Jihad was strong. As usual the stories were inconsistent. According to the military, troops were ambushed resulting in one soldier being killed and seven wounded. The Yon Gab then attacked a three-story building used by Laskar Jihad as a medical centre and radio station.

Laskar Jihad described soldiers climbing a ladder to enter the second storey of the clinic where they interrogated and assaulted staff and patients, fifteen of whom were taken away in a truck. It is claimed that twelve Laskar Jihad members were taken from the truck and executed on the way to the military base.<sup>97</sup> In all 23 Muslims were killed including an army sergeant-major who was being treated at the medical centre at the time.<sup>98</sup> The Yon Gab troops claimed they found four AK-47 rifles and home-made bombs and firearms at the “medical centre”. They also destroyed the radio station, *Suara Perjuangan Muslim Maluku*.<sup>99</sup>

There is some doubt, however, about the source of the clashes that led to the Yon Gab intervention. According to a Laskar Jihad official, the initial raids were conducted by a second organisation, Laskar Mujahidin, which operates independently in

Ambon. The Laskar Mujahidin, in contrast to Laskar Jihad, works underground and is thought to have about 100-200 members.<sup>100</sup>

On the other hand the Catholic Crisis Centre reported that some of those who attacked the Wisma Gonzalo Veloso wore black T-shirts with the legend “Laskar Jihad”.<sup>101</sup> Following demands from various Muslim organisations, the National Human Rights Commission established a fact-finding team that heard testimony from wounded Laskar Jihad members. Reportedly the team recommended that the case be brought before either a military or civilian court but not the new human rights court.<sup>102</sup> Results of this investigation, however, have not been announced publicly.

Following this incident, Laskar Jihad’s leader, Ja’far Umar Thalib, broadcast from Jakarta through the re-established *Suara Perjuangan Muslim Maluku* a fatwa declaring it obligatory for Muslims to kill I Made Yasa. He referred constantly to Yon Gab as “dogs of the Christian RMS”.<sup>103</sup> Laskar Jihad also claimed implausibly that 90 per cent of the Yon Gab were Christians.<sup>104</sup>

### C. THE REPLACEMENT OF THE YON GAB

The level of fighting in Ambon had declined drastically since the arrival of Yon Gab in Ambon in August 2000. During 2001 open clashes between Muslim and Christian forces had become rare, and Laskar Jihad was no longer obviously mobilising Muslim villagers to attack neighbouring Christian villages.<sup>105</sup> Laskar Jihad, it seems, had been forced by its losses in clashes with Yon Gab

<sup>96</sup> *Koran Tempo* 13 June 2001, *Jakarta Post* 16 June 2001.

<sup>97</sup> “Kronologis Pembantaian Muslimin oleh Yon Gab: Tawanan Disiksa Lalu Ditembak”, [www.Laskarjihad.or.id](http://www.Laskarjihad.or.id), 16/06/2001. A lawyer representing the Laskar Jihad, Mahendradatta, claimed that the Yon Gab had adopted the principle that ten enemy soldiers had to die for each Yon Gab member killed. *Koran Tempo*, 6 July 2001. A very senior government official in Maluku more or less confirmed the Laskar Jihad account when he said he believed that the number of detainees who reached the destination was much less than the number at the beginning of their journey. ICG interview in Maluku.

<sup>98</sup> *Koran Tempo*, *Jakarta Post* 16 June 2001.

<sup>99</sup> *Koran Tempo* 19 June 2001, *Jakarta Post* 26 June 2001.

<sup>100</sup> ICG interview with Laskar Jihad official, Jakarta, October 2001.

<sup>101</sup> Crisis Centre Amboina report, no.188, 13 June 2001.

<sup>102</sup> *Koran Tempo*, 24 November 2001.

<sup>103</sup> The broadcast was made on 17 June. “Fatwa Mati Untuk Pangdam Pattimura”, [www.Laskarjihad.or.id](http://www.Laskarjihad.or.id) (18/06/2001). Muslims often claimed that they were fighting Christian separatists who aimed to revive the RMS (Republic of South Maluku), an abortive movement that had been defeated by central government forces in 1950.

<sup>104</sup> “90 Persen Anggota Yon Gab Beragama Kristen”, [www.Laskarjihad.or.id](http://www.Laskarjihad.or.id) (17/06/2001).

<sup>105</sup> Occasional attacks did take place but it was not certain that they were conducted by the Laskar Jihad. For example the attacks by Muslim villagers on the Christian villages of Waemulang and Ewiri on Buru island in November and December 2001.

to revise its strategy. In interviews in Ambon, ICG heard much praise for Yon Gab from Christians who supported its firm measures. Muslim opinion ranged from those who were critical of its brutality to those who demanded its withdrawal.

That the Yon Gab behaved with excessive zeal in the Kebon Cengkeh incident was indicated by the announcement on 18 June 2001— only four days later - that Brigadier General I Yasa Mada was among 111 officers throughout Indonesia who were being transferred to new positions.<sup>106</sup> The commander of Sector A covering Ambon and nearby islands, Colonel I.G. K. Sugiarta, was also relieved. Yasa was replaced by Brigadier General Mustopo, a Kopassus officer who had been chief of staff of the Wirabuana command in Sulawesi.

Yasa's replacement was followed in November 2001 by the unannounced withdrawal of the Yon Gab itself and its replacement by a Kopassus unit. The change, however, was not as drastic as it might have seemed because Kopassus had in fact contributed a substantial part of the Yon Gab. While some Christians regretted the withdrawal of Yon Gab, a Kopassus officer claimed it was replaced in response to changing conditions. According to him, the Yon Gab was formed to confront the large-scale clashes taking place in Ambon in the middle of 2000 and had performed well. Now security was being undermined by isolated small-scale attacks, shots fired at speedboats crossing Ambon Bay, and occasional bomb explosions.

This officer claimed that Kopassus's intelligence and operational detachments were well suited to deal with these challenges.<sup>107</sup> However, the several months of relative calm since the Kebon Cengkeh incident ended with a new spate of shooting and bombings in November 2001, shortly after the arrival of the Kopassus force.

Meanwhile, Brigadier General Mustopo took a major step to confront the continuing "contamination" problem among largely Ambonese "organic" troops, transferring at the end of 2001 the Ambon-based Battalion 733 to Papua.

#### IV. THE FAILURE TO UPHOLD LAW

Despite the security forces' relatively successful efforts to reduce direct violence, the civil emergency government was still far from able to take legal action against those responsible for disorder. During the early months of the conflict, the police arrested the two men whose quarrel had triggered the initial violence, and they were sentenced to jail terms of six and five months respectively.<sup>108</sup> But as the violence spread it became more difficult to arrest those involved and especially to bring them to court.

The national police chief announced in July 2000 that the Maluku police had investigated 490 criminal cases and arrested 855 suspects but trials could not be held. "Our difficulty at present", he said, "is that legal institutions such as prosecutors, courts and so on are not operating. Prosecutors, judges and court clerks have gone. And many of the prisons have broken down".<sup>109</sup> The following month the governor said that over 200 cases were ready for trial, which might be held on naval ships.<sup>110</sup> When asked in November 2001 whether cases could be taken to court in the near future, he described the courts as still "paralysed" and admitted that the law could not be upheld in the current circumstances.<sup>111</sup>

Despite the obvious involvement of both Muslim and Christian militias in attacks, including murder and the destruction of property, none were ever charged in court although some individuals were occasionally arrested. Not only were Laskar Jihad forces largely unhindered in Maluku but its leaders were free to travel to other parts of Indonesia, including Jakarta, where they often gave press interviews and addressed congregations in mosques. The former Maluku army commander, Max Tamaela, explained that it had been impossible to round up Laskar Jihad members. Some had been arrested by police who were then confronted by hundreds of protestors and forced to release them rather than risk further violence.<sup>112</sup>

<sup>106</sup> *Kompas*, 19 June 2001.

<sup>107</sup> ICG interview with military officer.

<sup>108</sup> *Luka Maluku*, pp. 92-93.

<sup>109</sup> *Kompas*, 14 July 2000.

<sup>110</sup> *Jakarta Post*, 31 August 2000.

<sup>111</sup> ICG interview with Maluku governor, Saleh Latuconsina, 10 November 2001.

<sup>112</sup> ICG interview with Major General Max Tamaela, 11 September 2001.

Christian militia leaders and supporters were no less immune from legal action.<sup>113</sup>

In Laskar Jihad-controlled districts, Muslims were also among those killed. Expressing the powerlessness of the police, the former Maluku police chief, Firman Gani, recalled that “a Muslim had been killed and his corpse left hanging in front of a mosque. Those who killed him were themselves Muslims. Why? Because he was considered to be a traitor who traded with Christians”.<sup>114</sup> A number of Muslims were killed for supplying alcohol and involvement in prostitution.<sup>115</sup>

In late April and early May 2001, the police finally took “symbolic” legal steps against leaders from both sides. On 30 April, Alexander Manuputty, the leader of the Maluku Sovereignty Front (FKM - *Front Kedaulatan Maluku*), a largely Christian organisation calling for independence for Maluku, was detained. He had been first arrested on 11 January but quickly released.<sup>116</sup> On 25 April, the anniversary of the declaration of the foundation of the abortive Republic of South Maluku (RMS) in 1950, the FKM held a small flag-raising ceremony in which the Indonesian, UN and RMS flags were raised and the 1950 declaration was read out. The ceremony was attended by about one hundred people and was disbanded by the police after only ten minutes.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> For example, in December 2001, a Christian mob burned down the municipal parliament building in Ambon no more than 200 metres from the provincial police headquarters but no action was taken. Not only were the police worried that firm measures could easily trigger a bigger riot but they were concerned that individual police – who in that area were almost entirely Christian – could become targets within their own community. ICG interview with senior police officer.

<sup>114</sup> *Kompas*, 6 August 2001. See also *Indonesia: Overcoming Murder*, p. 11.

<sup>115</sup> Although the impression was created that Laskar Jihad was implementing Islamic criminal law in the areas it controlled, a Laskar Jihad spokesman explained that these killings had been carried out spontaneously by local people. The men killed for “trading with Christians” were suspected, he said, of also supplying information to the Christian side ICG interview with Laskar Jihad official, Jakarta, October 2001.

<sup>116</sup> Muslims often claimed that the Christian side was really aiming to separate from Indonesia but there is little to suggest that there is widespread support for independence in the Christian community.

<sup>117</sup> *Jakarta Post, Republika*, 26 April 2001.

Manuputty was arrested a few days after this ceremony and charged with violating a ban on the FKM.<sup>118</sup> In November he was found guilty and sentenced to four months imprisonment.<sup>119</sup> There was, however, no suggestion that Manuputty had been responsible for violence against Muslims and his conviction was not a serious measure to bring Christians responsible for violence to justice.

Manuputty’s arrest, however, seemed designed to pave way for the arrest of the Laskar Jihad leader, Ja’far Umar Thalib, on 4 May 2001 at Surabaya’s Juanda airport. After his arrest, the national police spokesman explained that the police had been compiling information about him

since 1999, and then when he started the jihad training camp in Bogor, we started to watch him more closely... We also observed him when he mobilised mass movements from Tanjung Priok in North Jakarta, to Ambon. The Laskar Jihad group caused trouble for our police forces in Ambon... he is allegedly one of the reasons why there is so little peace in Maluku.<sup>120</sup>

Ja’far was held for questioning on two charges, the first that he had violated Article 156a, paragraph (a), of the criminal code referring to activities that insult or lead to hatred “of any religion followed in Indonesia”.

But it was the second charge that apparently drove the police to act. On 27 March Ja’far had, in accordance with *shari’a* law, presided over the execution of a follower who had confessed to adultery. The 27-year-old man was buried to the waist and, before hundreds of residents of Ahuru village in Ambon, stoned to death. He had been given the opportunity to withdraw his confession but, preferring punishment in this life to punishment in the next, he had accepted his sentence.<sup>121</sup> The police questioned Ja’far with a view to charging him with murder.

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<sup>118</sup> *Republika*, 1 May 2001.

<sup>119</sup> *Siwalima* (Ambon), 10 November 2001. In the absence of a judge in Ambon willing to hear the case, a judge had to be brought from outside Maluku.

<sup>120</sup> *Jakarta Post*, 5 May 2001. The reference to Jakarta’s port, Tanjung Priok, is probably mistaken. Most Laskar Jihad fighters left via Surabaya’s port, Tanjung Perak.

<sup>121</sup> *Tempo*, 20 May 2001, p. 29. Ja’far’s sermon on the occasion of the execution was placed on the Laskar Jihad

The national police chief declared that all Indonesians were subject to national law but Ja'far's followers argued that in practice no law was observed in Maluku. In this legal vacuum, the Laskar Jihad leaders claimed, Maluku Muslims had decided, at a meeting at the Al Fatah mosque in Ambon on 8 January 2001, to implement Islamic law.<sup>122</sup>

Ja'far's arrest provoked protests from dozens of Islamic organisations including representatives of the Muslim parties, PPP, PBB and the Justice Party (*Partai Keadilan*) as well as the Muslim-based PAN in Yogyakarta where Ja'far has his home base. In Jakarta radical Islamic organisations including KISDI and *Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah* joined the protest.<sup>123</sup> One deputy chairman of the Muhammadiyah and secretary-general of MUI, Din Syamsuddin, offered to be a guarantor for Ja'far's release. Six hundred Laskar Jihad supporters arrived in Jakarta and 50 protested at the national police headquarters where he was taken after his arrest.<sup>124</sup>

Ja'far attributed his arrest to an international Christian-Jewish conspiracy.<sup>125</sup> His supporters regard Laskar Jihad as the saviour of the Muslim community in Maluku after the police and military had failed to restore security during the first sixteen months of the fighting. The leader of the PPP in Yogyakarta, Fauzi AR, said that "Ja'far prevented ethnic cleansing of Muslims by the separatist group in Maluku. Why didn't the police arrest Christian separatist leaders"? The prominent Muslim politician and lawyer, Hartono Mardjono, argued that "the man who was stoned to death had committed adultery and had asked to be punished according to *shari'a* (Islamic law) which is *rajam* ...so why should Ja'far be punished as a result"?<sup>126</sup>

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website, [www.laskarjihad.or.id](http://www.laskarjihad.or.id), 30 March 2001. In the sermon he regretted that Islamic law was not implemented in Indonesia because "the government of Indonesia is led by a head of state who is an apostate and unbeliever who despises and insults the law of Islam". The head of state at the time was Kiyai Haji Abdurrahman Wahid.

<sup>122</sup> *Tempo*, 20 May 2001, p. 29.

<sup>123</sup> *Republika*, 9 May 2001. On these organisations, see ICG Briefing Paper, *Indonesia: Violence and Radical Muslims*, 10 October 2001.

<sup>124</sup> *Jakarta Post*, 8 May 2001.

<sup>125</sup> *Tempo*, 20 May 2001. p. 30.

<sup>126</sup> *Jakarta Post*, 8 May 2001. *Rajam* is the Islamic punishment of stoning to death.

Although charges were not withdrawn, Ja'far was released on 15 May 2001 and placed under house arrest.<sup>127</sup> On 12 June he was released from house arrest.<sup>128</sup> On 8 August he was received by the new vice-president and PPP leader, Hamzah Haz, at the vice presidential office.<sup>129</sup> Since then Ja'far has made many public appearances including participation in televised discussions of the American bombing of Afghanistan but Laskar Jihad has maintained a relatively low profile in Maluku. The government's unwillingness to charge Ja'far reflects its reluctance to provoke that section of the Muslim community – both in Maluku and elsewhere in Indonesia – that believes Laskar Jihad saved the Muslims of Ambon from Christian violence in 2000.

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<sup>127</sup> *Jakarta Post*, 16 May 2001.

<sup>128</sup> *Jakarta Post*, 14 June 2001.

<sup>129</sup> *Jakarta Post*, 8 August 2001.

## V. UNEASY CALM

The intensity of fighting in the region has declined drastically in the last year. Though tensions remain high in Ambon, peace has been more or less restored in North Maluku and much of Central Maluku and has long been prevalent in Southeast Maluku.

One consequence of the fighting since 1999 is that huge numbers of people became refugees. The main victims were religious minorities who then sought protection in districts where their own community is the majority. By the time the civil emergency was declared in June 2000, almost one third of the population of the two Maluku provinces had become refugees. The total number in refugee camps in the two provinces was 486,797 while another 11,065 had been resettled by the government.<sup>130</sup> Others had fled outside the region. At the end of 2001, it was reported that about 160,000 Muslim Butonese from Maluku were in refugee camps in Buton in Southeast Sulawesi<sup>131</sup> while 40,000 mainly Christian refugees from North Maluku were reported to be in predominantly Christian North Sulawesi.<sup>132</sup> And, of course, others had fled their homes and sought refuge with relatives and friends outside refugee camps. As a result of the fighting the population of Ambon Municipality dropped from 314,000 in 1998 to 206,210 in the 2000 census.<sup>133</sup> Most refugee camps are occupied either by Muslims or Christians although a few, such as that at Halong Naval Base in Ambon, are mixed.

The flight of refugees has led to the effective partitioning of much of the two Maluku provinces into Muslim and Christian zones.<sup>134</sup> This has reduced the scope for physical conflict but it has

also brought together people who have experienced not only the loss of their homes but the murder and injury of family, friends and neighbours. As long as these concentrated pools of resentment and bitterness remain, the potential for renewed conflict will be present.

In contrast to Ambon and Central Maluku, security conditions in North Maluku improved rapidly throughout 2001, and many refugees are returning to home areas. The restoration of order has been facilitated by the overwhelming predominance of Muslims in contrast to Ambon where the communities are more balanced. In 1997 Muslims made up 72 per cent of the region's population, and their political domination could not be challenged.<sup>135</sup> As a consequence of the fighting the Christian minority was limited largely to a few districts such as Tobelo and part of the island of Morotai while Muslims predominated elsewhere.<sup>136</sup>

As refugees began to return, territory within previously mixed districts was initially divided into Muslim and Christian zones which meant that many could not go back to their homes – or the places where their homes had once stood. One obstacle to full repatriation was the government's inability to provide funds for rebuilding while others could not go back because their homes were occupied by members of the other community. In February 2001 seventeen foreign governments pledged assistance for rehabilitation in North Maluku.<sup>137</sup>

Although the two communities remain largely segregated, small groups are gradually returning to their original residences even if that area is largely occupied by the other community.<sup>139</sup> In July 2001 Tobelo was in effect still closed to Muslims while Ternate was closed to Christians but minorities were returning to other areas.<sup>140</sup> By the end of 2001, small numbers of Christians were returning

<sup>130</sup> AFP, 20 June 2000, citing the Indonesian Population and People's Movement Administration Agency.

<sup>131</sup> Jakarta Post, 22 December 2001.

<sup>132</sup> Kompas, 28 April 2001.

<sup>133</sup> Jakarta Post, 21 February 2001, Kompas, 10 November 2001.

<sup>134</sup> After an interview in Ambon's Muslim zone, ICG was driven by a Muslim leader to the "border" of the Christian zone where he was staying. The Muslim leader explained that it would be doubly dangerous for him to enter the Christian zone. First, he might be attacked by Christians and secondly, on his return, he might be attacked by Muslims suspicious about why he entered the Christian zone.

<sup>135</sup> In the recent controversial election of the provincial governor and the later annulment of the election, religious affiliation does not seem to have played a significant role.

<sup>136</sup> P. Bambang Wisudo, "Damai di Tengah Pertikaian tak Berkesudahan", Kompas, 5 October 2000.

<sup>137</sup> Indonesian Observer, 25 February 2001.

<sup>138</sup> Indonesian Observer, 25 February 2001.

<sup>139</sup> ICG interview with Tamrin Amal Tomagola, October 2001.

<sup>140</sup> Forum Keadilan, No. 15, 15 July 2001.

to Ternate – although not to nearby Tidore – and some Muslims were returning to Tobelo. By January 2002, the provincial government had assisted 26,274 refugees to return while it was estimated that another 60,000 had returned independently.<sup>141</sup>

Tension, however, remains high in the municipality of Ambon and the part of the island it shares with the district of Central Maluku. Unlike in North Maluku there is no early prospect of resolving the refugee problem. On Ambon island, Christians predominate in the Leitimor peninsula in the south and Muslims in the Leihitu peninsula in the north but communities are still interspersed in many parts of the island.<sup>142</sup> It is impossible for Muslims and Christians to travel around the island without entering territory controlled by the other group.<sup>143</sup> The Ambon municipality itself is sharply divided into Muslim and Christian zones with very limited “neutral” territory.

One deep cause for concern and suspicion among both communities is the mystery of where the 700 weapons taken from the Brimob armoury in Tantui in June 2000 are. Although they disappeared during a Muslim attack, many Muslims are convinced they were removed before the attack by Christian police.

#### A. LINKS TO INTERNATIONAL TERROR?

In contrast to 2000 and early 2001 when mass clashes were still taking place between rival militias, open attacks are now rare. The Laskar Jihad appears to be concentrating more on the religious, educational and social-welfare activities

that have always been part of its agenda, although its members continue to be prepared for military conflict. The Laskar Jihad claims that it continues to maintain 3000 men in Maluku<sup>144</sup> but other sources believe that its numbers have declined. A military source estimated that by the beginning of 2001 there were only about 1300 to 1500 in Ambon. More recently another military source claimed that by October 2001 the number had gone down to 800.<sup>145</sup> These estimates are supported by the impressions of Muslim leaders and officials interviewed in Ambon.<sup>146</sup>

According to the military, one possible explanation for the decline is that the Laskar Jihad is not as well funded as previously.<sup>147</sup> Another explanation might be that Laskar Jihad is shifting its focus to Poso in Central Sulawesi where Christians and Muslims have been fighting since 1998. It also appears that Laskar Jihad leaders may have drawn a lesson from their disastrous confrontations with the Yon Gab. The formal military training its forces received and the standard weaponry some carried had stood them in good stead when attacking Christian villages but it was a different matter when facing elite TNI forces.<sup>148</sup>

Following the Al-Qaeda attack on New York and Washington, foreign journalists, apparently relying on American intelligence sources, claimed variously that “dozens of foreign Islamist fighters”,<sup>149</sup> “a few hundred Afghan and Pakistani mujahideen”<sup>150</sup> or “Taliban guerrillas”<sup>151</sup> have now

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<sup>141</sup> *Kompas*, 28 January 2002. The total number of refugees in North Maluku was recorded as 266,137.

<sup>142</sup> Outside parts of Ambon city, the only neutral village on Ambon island is Wayame, facing Ambon city from across Ambon Bay, where village leaders – both Muslim and Christian -- have firmly resisted involvement in the conflict. Their resolve has no doubt been backed by the government’s need to protect a large Pertamina installation through which oil supplies are channelled not only to Maluku but also to Papua. On Wayame, see “Belajar Damai dari Wayame”, *Tempo*, 30 December 2001.

<sup>143</sup> Because the road from the airport to the city of Ambon passes through both Muslim and Christian villages, air passengers have to go to the city by speedboats which take them to either the Muslim or Christian parts of the city.

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<sup>144</sup> ICG interview with a Laskar Jihad official, Jakarta, October 2001.

<sup>145</sup> Information from TNI spokesman, Air Vice Marshal Graitto Usodo, October 2001.

<sup>146</sup> ICG interviews conducted in Ambon in early November 2001 and early January 2002.

<sup>147</sup> ICG interview with a military intelligence officer, September 2001. It is widely believed that part of Laskar Jihad’s initial funding was provided by military officers trying to undermine the Abdurrahman Wahid government. After his fall, the military had a warmer relationship with President Megawati and no interest in destabilising her leadership.

<sup>148</sup> As the TNI spokesman, Graitto Usodo, pointed out, “The Yon Gab consists of Kopassus, the Marines and Paskhas, which are highly trained for combat. The battle was therefore unequal. We were more expert and better armed so there were casualties”. *Kompas*, 23 June 2001.

<sup>149</sup> John Aglionby, “Islamists in SE Asia Linked to Bin Laden”, *Guardian* (UK), 11 October 2001.

<sup>150</sup> Susan Sim, “Alarmist foreign portrayals”, *Straits Times* (Singapore), 14 October 2001.

reinforced the Laskar Jihad campaign in Maluku.<sup>152</sup> During ICG's visits to Ambon in November 2001 and January 2002, no concrete support for these claims could be found.

Seven "Middle Eastern-looking men" arrived in Ambon in July 2001 on the same commercial flight as the governor and were whisked away by a large welcoming group of Laskar Jihad members after refusing to show passports to officials but there is no evidence of large numbers arriving by air.<sup>153</sup> One official admitted it is possible small numbers may have landed by boat on isolated islands but he was adamant that no more than seven had come through Ambon's Pattimura airport. In any case it is not obvious that the seven were warriors rather than, for example, religious teachers, like the Dutch Protestant pastors who have visited the Christian part of Ambon. Officials and other observers in Ambon, from the governor down, all doubt that large numbers of foreigners are operating with Laskar Jihad in Maluku although most admitted a few dozen could be present.<sup>154</sup>

Foreign speculation has also centred on possible links with Osama bin Laden's Al-Qaeda organisation. A *New York Times* article cited a U.S. official as claiming that "armed Islamic fundamentalist groups have received money, men and arms from the bin Laden group and its allies".<sup>155</sup> This speculation was reinforced by an apparently casual claim by Lt. General Hendropriyono, the head of Indonesia's national intelligence bureau (BIN), in December 2001 that Al-Qaeda had used a Laskar Jihad training camp in Poso, Central Sulawesi. His source, however,

<sup>151</sup> Tim Weiner, "American Action is Held Likely in Asia", *The New York Times*, 10 October 2001.

<sup>152</sup> A Laskar Jihad spokesman said that two Yemeni Arabs had fought with the Laskar Jihad in 2000 but both were killed in battle. ICG interview with a Laskar Jihad official, October 2001.

<sup>153</sup> ICG interviews with Governor Saleh Latuconsina and an airport official, November 2001. Ambon does not have an international airport with immigration and customs facilities but the passports of foreigners are sometimes inspected.

<sup>154</sup> ICG interviews in Ambon, November 2001 and January 2002. If there were large numbers of foreigners in Maluku, the governor said, "surely someone would have noticed them".

<sup>155</sup> Tim Weiner, "American Action", op. cit. ICG's scepticism about such claims was indicated in Harold Crouch, "Qaida in Indonesia? The Evidence Doesn't Support Worries", *International Herald Tribune*, 23 October 2001.

seemed to be the interrogation of Al-Qaeda suspects in Spain rather than observation on the ground. His claim, which he later retracted, was publicly doubted by other senior officials, including the Co-ordinating Minister for Political and Security Affairs, General Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, and the regional police chief in Central Sulawesi.<sup>156</sup>

The Laskar Jihad leader, Ja'far Umar Thalib, has said that he rejected financial support offered by an emissary of Osama bin Laden in the middle of 2001.<sup>157</sup> It should be noted that Al-Qaeda and the Laskar Jihad have significant ideological and religious differences.<sup>158</sup>

## B. WHO BENEFITS FROM CONTINUING VIOLENCE?

Although large-scale confrontations between armed militias have been rare during the last year, occasional attacks have been launched on villages, the most recent on 13 January 2002 against Rutong, a Christian village, on the south coast of Ambon. Attacks were also launched on two Christian villages – Waemulang and Ewiri - on the island of Buru on 1 November 2001 and 7 December 2001. Although the aggressors were clearly Muslims, neither their exact identity nor their motivations were clear.

Despite small military or police guards on the villages (usually only a dozen or so personnel), it has been suggested that some military personnel may have participated in the attacks. It is possible that such conflicts are related to long-standing inter-village rivalries involving land or simply intended to provide opportunities for looting. Not all clashes of this sort are between Christian and Muslim villages. In late December 2001, for example, one man was killed and six wounded in a

<sup>156</sup> *Jakarta Post*, 13 December 2001, *Koran Tempo*, 14 December 2001.

<sup>157</sup> "Yang Menanti Berkah Osama", *Tempo*, 30 September 2001, p. 25.

<sup>158</sup> Ja'far Umar brands bin Laden as a follower of *khawarij* (a group which separated itself from the Muslim mainstream shortly after the death of the Prophet Mohamad). As evidence, Ja'far points to bin Laden's "rebellion" against the government of Saudi Arabia which implements Islamic law. See Laskar, "Laskar Jihad tidak Terkait Usamah bin Laden", [www.laskarjihad.or.id](http://www.laskarjihad.or.id), 2 October 2001.

clash between two Muslim villages on the small Kelang Island, off West Seram.<sup>159</sup>

This does not mean, of course, that inter-village rivalry has not been exploited by external groups interested in maintaining tension. In Ambon municipality itself several months of relative calm ended with violent incidents beginning in November 2001. In one, on 9 November, two men were killed when the bomb they were carrying on a motorcycle exploded prematurely in front of Ambon's main Protestant church. On 11 December an explosion on a Christian boat, the *Kalifornia*, killed ten and injured 46 passengers.<sup>160</sup> This was followed by an angry demonstration of Christians who burned down the Ambon municipal parliament building.

On 19 December nine people were killed in an attack on another Christian boat in Ambon Bay. On 27 December yet another Christian boat was attacked but in this case it seemed that the conflict was part of a wider battle between elements of the police and the marines following the wounding of four policemen in two separate shootings earlier in the day.<sup>161</sup> On the night of 8 January the scene moved to the Muslim side when masked men with military weapons destroyed two small cafés in Galunggung known to be frequented by Muslim gang members. One waiter was killed.

The character of the recent violence raises questions about its origins. The attacks were not directed against strategic targets and did not bring significant benefits to either the Muslim or Christian sides. The victims and potential victims were usually not involved in the main struggle – women taking goods to the market on a Christian boat, a waiter in a Muslim café, and passers-by in bomb explosions. The purpose seemed less to impose losses (except perhaps in the conflict between the police and the marines) than to maintain a general level of tension that would prevent progress toward a lasting peace. It is

possible that the perpetrators hope the attacks on one community or the other will provoke the victims' side to retaliate.

In the absence of strong evidence, there is much speculation in Ambon about who is behind the renewed – although sporadic and small-scale – violence. Among the possible beneficiaries of continuing tension are the following candidates:

*Laskar Jihad*: Laskar Jihad's self-justification for its presence in Ambon depends on continuation of the conflict. Its leaders continue to make provocative anti-Christian broadcasts through its radio station, and it strongly opposes concessions to the Christian side. The only basis for a settlement, in its view, is the arrest, trial and conviction of the Christians it accuses of initiating the conflict in 1999. There have been some signs that Laskar Jihad may be trying to extend its influence in Ambon, especially in the area around the Catholic Church's Wisma Gonzalo Veloso in the Karang Panjang district.<sup>162</sup>

*Laskar Mujahidin*: Although it arrived in Ambon in December 1999, before Laskar Jihad, it became more prominent in 2001. In contrast to the Laskar Jihad's members in their flowing white robes, Laskar Mujahidin warriors usually wear masks and are sometimes described as "ninjas". Its strength is said to be about 100-200 and it operates independently of Laskar Jihad whose spokesman, as noted above, blamed it for provoking the Kebon Cengkeh incident in which the Laskar Jihad's medical centre was attacked by the Yon Gab. Laskar Mujahidin is also opposed to compromise with Christians. According to the Laskar Jihad leader, Laskar Mujahidin was willing to accept the aid offered by Osama bin Laden's emissary that Laskar Jihad rejected.<sup>163</sup> According to some sources, it has also recruited some foreign fighters from Afghanistan or Pakistan.

*Christian gangs*: In contrast to the situation in 2000 when Christian youths were mobilised to confront Muslims, it appears that Christians are no longer organised for fighting under a central structure. However, Christian gangs – often

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<sup>159</sup> *Siwalima* (Ambon), 3 January 2002.

<sup>160</sup> Christians tended to believe that a bomb had been placed on the boat but it is possible that the explosion may have been accidental.

<sup>161</sup> A comment by the Coordinating Minister for Political and Security Affairs, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, suggested that the conflict between the marines and the Brimob was over possession of petroleum fuel, the price of which was about to rise. *Koran Tempo*, 22 January 2002.

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<sup>162</sup> Crisis Centre Amboina report, no.210, 16 November 2001.

<sup>163</sup> "Yang Menanti Berkah Osama", *Tempo*, 30 September 2001, p. 25.

engaged in petty criminal activities – are still ready to be mobilised if a major conflict erupts again. Christian gang members appear to have been involved in the burning of the Ambon municipality parliament building on 11 December 2001.

*Military and Police “Deserters”:* The security forces have never fully overcome the “contamination” problem, particularly among local Ambonese soldiers and police. It is usually estimated that around 20-50 military and police personnel – both Christian and Muslim - continue to carry out occasional attacks on members of the other community. In many cases these individuals have seen family members, friends and neighbours killed or wounded in earlier fighting and seem motivated by revenge. While some appear to have deserted from their units, others still seem to be at least formally attached to the security forces.

*The military:* Previous ICG reports have often referred to the failure of the Indonesian government to provide adequate financial support to the security forces with the result that both individual units and individual personnel are forced to raise a large part of their financial requirements in the field.<sup>164</sup> The continuing emergency in Maluku provides opportunities for the security forces to acquire additional income, for example, by imposing “taxes” on trade and other legitimate economic activities or involvement in lucrative illegal enterprises including gambling, prostitution and narcotics. While security forces have no desire to return to the all-out conflict of 1999-2000, their financial interests are served by a high level of public nervousness. Occasional bomb explosions and shootings are sufficient to persuade businesspeople and property-owners to pay for special protection. On several occasions bomb explosions in Ambon have been traced to low-ranking military.<sup>165</sup>

*Criminal interests:* Criminal groups have a strong interest in maintaining the current level of tension in which the police are virtually immobilised by religious differences and the courts cannot function effectively. As long as tension continues, major progress toward “normalcy” will be obstructed and

criminal groups can do business as usual. For example, those involved in the drug trade, gambling and extortion, among others, benefit from the absence of the rule of law.

It is of course difficult to draw firm conclusions about who is sponsoring the current violence. However, it seems clear that not all recent incidents were perpetrated by Muslim or Christian partisans. To the extent that elements of the military and police are involved in keeping tensions high, strong action from Jakarta is needed to lay the foundations for peace. But there are few signs the government has the will or the capacity.

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<sup>164</sup> ICG Asia Report No.9, *Indonesia: Keeping the Military Under Control*, Jakarta/Brussels, 5 September 2000.

<sup>165</sup> It is not necessarily the case that such military personnel were acting on the orders of superior officers. It is quite possible that they were simply hired for a fee.

## VI. RECONCILIATION?

In the weeks and months after the outbreak of violence in January 1999, the provincial government took the initiative to sponsor pledges between community leaders to end the fighting and live again in harmony. But the fighting continued, and the net effect of these government-sponsored pledges was to undermine confidence further.<sup>166</sup>

The central government also took steps to promote reconciliation. In January 2000 the Minister of Religion facilitated a meeting between Muslim and Christian leaders who produced an impressive document outlining steps to stop the conflict and carry out rehabilitation. But little was achieved before the upsurge of fighting following the entry of the Laskar Jihad to Maluku in April 2000.<sup>167</sup>

In January 2000, a year after fighting began, the National Commission on Human Rights established a fact-finding team which described itself as concerned also with mediation.<sup>168</sup> Although it gathered data on events, it did not make much progress with mediation. On one occasion it took to Bali 30 Muslims and 30 Christians for a course on mediation but the process foundered on the first day. The Muslim side had proposed that the discussions be held on the basis of acceptance of the unitary republic, knowing that some of the Christians had been identified with the separatist FKM. The Christians said that such an issue should be discussed at the end of the meeting. The result was that the two sides split and the course had to be conducted separately at different hotels.<sup>169</sup>

Early in 2000 another initiative was launched by a group of Jakarta-based Christians and Muslims who established what they called the *Baku Bae* (reconciliation) movement to promote dialogue

between the communities.<sup>170</sup> An initial meeting was held in Jakarta in August between twelve prominent members of the Maluku community, followed by a second attended by 40 in Bali in October. A third meeting in Yogyakarta in December was attended by 80 people including religious and customary (*adat*) leaders, youth representatives, NGO activists and others described as "war leaders".<sup>171</sup> The third meeting decided to hold a conference in Maluku itself in March 2001.

Organised by a Jakarta-based NGO, the Go-East Institute, the National Dialogue of the Maluku and North Maluku Community was held near Tual on the Kei islands in Southeast Maluku and attended by 1500 Muslims and Christians from all parts of the region. The conference issued a statement promising to continue peace efforts and proposed "the use of local traditions as a meeting point for accommodating the interests of the different groups in the province". It also proposed that "all local traditional leaders, or *Bapa Radja*, once again take the lead...but at the same time support state law and guarantee the acceptance of all migrants living in the province".<sup>172</sup>

The Baku Bae process, however, has not been smooth. At the first unpublicised meeting in Jakarta, each side blamed the other for the conflict. In opening the third meeting in Yogyakarta, the Sultan of Yogyakarta had said that the important thing is not to identify who is right and wrong but to create institutions capable of mediating between the communities. But a Muslim leader, Haji M. Jusuf Ely, argued that reconciliation could only begin after the roots of the conflict had been revealed and called on the government to identify those responsible. The Muslim community, he said, could not accept peace without upholding the law and revealing truth.<sup>173</sup>

At the Tual meeting some Muslim representatives from Ambon were unwilling to sign the agreement. The head of the Muslim Students' Association

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<sup>166</sup> ICG Report, *Indonesia: Overcoming Murder*, op. cit., p. 18.

<sup>167</sup> Lambang Trijono, *Keluar dari Kemelut Maluku*, Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2001. pp. 155-7.

<sup>168</sup> The team was led by Bambang W. Suharto and included Major General (ret.) Samsuddin, B.N. Marbun and Major General (ret.) Soegiri. *Jakarta Post*, 22 January 2000.

<sup>169</sup> ICG interview with Maj. Gen. Samsuddin of the National Commission on Human Rights, September 2001.

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<sup>170</sup> The initiative was taken by Ichsan Malik of the University of Indonesia with two NGOs – the Christian Yayasan Hualopu and the Muslim Inovasi Group.

<sup>171</sup> *Kompas*, 22 December 2000, Bambang Wisudo, "Perlawanan terhadap Pengajur Perang", *Kompas*, 8 September 2001.

<sup>172</sup> *Jakarta Post*, 20 March 2001.

<sup>173</sup> *Kompas*, 9 December 2000.

(HMI) in Ambon said that they “could be rejected by our members” if they signed.<sup>174</sup> The attitude of some Muslim representatives reflected a deep conviction that Christians had planned the original outbreak of violence in Ambon in 1999.

One concrete proposal that emerged from the Baku Bae process was a plan to establish two “neutral zones” for economic activities, education and health services on the borders between Christian and Muslim districts. One zone was established at Nania village, near the Christian town of Passo at the isthmus between the predominantly Muslim Leihitu peninsula in the north of the island and the predominantly Christian Leitimor peninsula in the south.<sup>175</sup> A second zone was at Pohon Pule near the centre of Ambon. Sidewalk markets were set up at both Nania and Pohon Pule where Christians and Muslims participated as vendors and shoppers.

In the Pohon Pule area, Pattimura University was able to establish a temporary campus (in place of the campus destroyed in July 2000) and the Army Hospital was open to Muslims and Christians seeking medical treatment.<sup>176</sup> Another informal market sprang up in a narrow “neutral” zone at Mardika.<sup>177</sup> Neutral zones, however, have not gone unchallenged. During the latter part of 2001 several bombs have exploded near markets, killing some and wounding others.<sup>178</sup>

The Baku Bae movement also encouraged professional groups to meet. For example, with the Alliance of Independent Journalists, it supported a meeting of Muslim and Christian journalists in March 2001 in Bogor, West Java, which later resulted in the establishment of a “Media Centre” in the neutral zone at Mardika. In January 2002 Baku Bae held a workshop for Christian and Muslim lawyers in Jakarta. Among other groups for which workshops are planned are intellectuals,

teachers, military and police personnel, NGOs, religious leaders and businesspeople.<sup>179</sup>

Following a central government-sponsored “peace” agreement in December 2001 between warring Christian and Muslim communities in Poso, Central Sulawesi,<sup>180</sup> a team of government leaders headed by the Coordinating Minister for Political and Security Affairs, Gen. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, and the Coordinating Minister for People’s Welfare, Jusuf Kalla, visited Maluku on 26 January 2002. It persuaded Muslim and Christian leaders to explore a Poso-type meeting to discuss resolution of the Maluku conflict. Another round of separate meetings with the two groups was held in Makassar, South Sulawesi, on 30 January, which resulted in agreement for further peace talks in February.

Efforts to promote reconciliation between communities that have suffered horribly as a result of communal fighting can proceed slowly at best. In a society where many have lost family and friends and a third of the population has been forced to abandon homes, mistrust is deeply entrenched. The hope of reconciliation is always in danger of being swamped by demands for revenge.

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<sup>174</sup> *Jakarta Post*, 20 March 2001.

<sup>175</sup> *Kompas*, 8 September 2001.

<sup>176</sup> *Forum Keadilan*, No. 15, 15 July 2001. According to this source, the hospital also provided a venue where a Christian man was able to meet his Muslim wife and their children.

<sup>177</sup> *Forum Keadilan*, No. 15, 15 July 2001.

<sup>178</sup> *Koran Tempo*, 28 September, 2001. An earlier attempt by the Maluku governor to open a neutral market in September 2000 had been disrupted by opponents of contact between the two communities.

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<sup>179</sup> Joint Committee of Baku Bae Maluku, *The Community-Based Reconciliation Process of Baku Bae in Maluku*, Bogor, 2001.

<sup>180</sup> Fighting between indigenous Christians and immigrant Muslims had been recurring since December 1998.

## VII. CONCLUSION

Three years after the outbreak of mass violence most people in Maluku and North Maluku remain effectively partitioned in Christian and Muslim areas. Open fighting is rare but not completely absent. Some progress has been achieved in returning refugees in North Maluku but not in much of the Maluku province. In the city of Ambon, not only can refugees not go home but residents are generally afraid even to enter the other community's areas.<sup>181</sup> Although an uneasy calm is maintained, the "trauma" experienced by both communities means that a lasting peace based on reconciliation is still far out of reach.

In these circumstances government and military leaders believe that top priority in Ambon must be to prevent the resurgence of mass violence. Preserving the status quo is seen as a major advance compared to the situation a year ago. One military officer told ICG that the military's basic strategy is to prevent renewal of fighting in the hope that people will gradually learn to live with each other.<sup>182</sup> Similar views were expressed by church and Muslim leaders. This approach assumes that it is still too early to expect that people who have lost family, friends and homes at the hands of the other community will willingly embrace reconciliation with those they hold responsible. For the authorities, to prevent them attacking each other again is enough challenge.

This approach, however, is often criticised because it leaves the fundamental causes of conflict unresolved. As some observers point out, unless these basic issues are dealt with, renewed fighting is always possible. Segregation of the two communities is likely to become permanent in the absence of some form of fundamental reconciliation. Many fear that once the military presence is reduced, conflict could quickly resume.

The fundamental obstacle to reconciliation is mutual distrust. Such distrust is hardly surprising given the history of the last three years. In the past

the military and police proved incapable of providing protection. Although the military's performance has improved during the last eighteen months, many Christians and Muslims feel that they have no choice but to rely on their own resources to defend against possible aggression.

Most Christians believe that peace cannot be achieved as long as Laskar Jihad remains in Maluku. They therefore advocate firm action by the government and military to expel Laskar Jihad and, ideally, to charge its leaders in court. A military officer assured ICG in Ambon that the military could "easily" deal with Laskar Jihad if ordered but he warned that civilian casualties could be high.<sup>183</sup>

The governor also believes that the military has the capacity to expel Laskar Jihad but said it was politically impossible. Not only would casualties be high but many Muslims continue to welcome its presence. The governor also said that he could not take strong measures without the backing of the central government but Jakarta was reluctant to endorse action that would invite Muslim protest.<sup>184</sup>

While part of the Muslim community supports Laskar Jihad enthusiastically and attributes the present relative security of Muslims to its presence, others have become critical of its "fanatical" approach to Islamic teaching and its opposition to moderates who are ready to seek a *modus vivendi* with the Christian population. But, ultimately, most Muslims continue to appreciate the Laskar's presence as "a reserve force" in the event that conditions deteriorate again.<sup>185</sup> At the core of Muslims' acceptance of Laskar Jihad is lack of confidence in the capacity of the military and police to protect them if fighting breaks out again. It is certain that any attempt to force Laskar Jihad to leave would meet massive Muslim protests in Maluku and most likely elsewhere in Indonesia.

While Christians call for expulsion of Laskar Jihad as the crucial step to ensure peace and harmony, Muslims leaders demand an apology from the Christian community as a precondition for

<sup>181</sup> While ICG was visiting Ambon in November 2001, the car of a Chinese trader was fired on when he decided to risk taking a short cut through a Muslim area. His wife was wounded in the shooting.

<sup>182</sup> ICG interview with a military officer in Ambon, November 2001

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> ICG interview with Governor Selah Latuconsina, 10 November 2001.

<sup>185</sup> ICG interviews with Muslims, Ambon, November 2001. The term "reserve force" was used by several moderate Muslims.

reconciliation. They also insist on the arrest and trial of those deemed responsible for the outbreak of the conflict. These demands reflect the universal conviction among Muslims that it was the Christian side that started the fighting in January 1999. They argue that Lebaran, the main Muslim festival in Indonesia when Muslims celebrate the end of the fasting month and visit the homes of family and friends, was an ideal time for Christians to attack an unprepared community. They also claim that some Christian leaders wanted to force Muslim migrants from Sulawesi to flee the province before the national election and thus reduce support for Muslim parties. But no conclusive evidence has ever been produced while Christians seem no less convinced that the Muslim side threw the first stone.

To what extent can communal conflict like Maluku's be resolved by legal processes? It is sometimes argued that a fundamental resolution cannot be achieved unless the truth behind the conflict is exposed and those responsible for violence held accountable. But in communal conflicts those accused of criminal acts by one side are often regarded as heroes by the other side. There is a great risk that the prosecution of people regarded by their own followers as acting in defence of their communities would revive old emotions and antagonisms and could even trigger renewed conflict.

The establishment of a Truth and Justice Commission in the circumstances of Maluku could, as Governor Saleh Latuconsina and other Maluku leaders believe, re-open old wounds and thus make eventual reconciliation even harder to achieve.<sup>186</sup> If the main goal is to make it possible for the two communities once again to live together peacefully, the launching of prosecutions could do more harm than good. Ultimately, if the leaders of both communities could agree on who should be prosecuted, legal processes could be part of the peace process. But ICG's interviews do not give grounds for confidence that such an agreement could be reached.

In any case, it is hard to imagine that courts could be established in the near future in Ambon to handle sensitive cases arising from communal

conflict. Local judges are either Muslim or Christian and generally share the sentiments of their own communities. Judges also live in their own communities and could find themselves in real danger if they heard cases involving popular communal leaders. Even in the relatively peripheral case of Alexander Manuputty, the judge had to be brought to Ambon from another province. The establishment of an effective justice system also requires creation of a disciplined police force – in contrast to the present situation where it is only a slight exaggeration to say that Ambon possesses two rival police forces.

Meanwhile, the sides remain far apart. As long as the two communities are separated from each other and continue to fear renewed violence, the security forces will bear a large responsibility for maintaining peace. In contrast to the impotence of the military and police before the introduction of martial law when both were internally divided along religious lines, the deployment of the "neutral" Yon Gab contributed to a decline in open fighting. However, the Yon Gab was not able to free itself of the military culture embedded during the Soeharto New Order period which imposed no limits on what soldiers could do to "enemies".

The brutal treatment of Muslim prisoners – whether Laskar Jihad or from within the security forces themselves – alienated Muslims who saw Yon Gab as favouring the Christian side. In Maluku where the rival militias have enjoyed significant popular support, failure to treat captured combatants in a humane way only heightens distrust and makes eventual settlement even more difficult to achieve.

Continuing low-level violence in Ambon, however, raises questions about the commitment of the security forces to a final resolution of the Maluku conflict. Regular outbreaks of violence in the form of occasional shootings and bomb explosions create an atmosphere in which businesspeople and property owners feel vulnerable and are willing to pay members of the security forces for protection. The stronger the sense of insecurity, the more they are willing to pay. Continuing disturbed conditions also provide opportunities for military and police personnel to engage in criminal activities involving narcotics, illegal gambling and so on while the sharp demarcation lines between Muslim and Christian

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<sup>186</sup> ICG interview with Governor Saleh Latuconsina, 10 November 2001.

zones provide opportunities to engage in, or to “tax”, trade between the zones.

Military and police personnel, therefore, have a material interest in continuing conflict. It seems that such officers are not aiming to provoke clashes on the scale of those in 2000 but merely to keep the pot boiling. The involvement of military and police officers is particularly entrenched among local “organic” troops but it would be surprising if elite forces from outside Maluku are not involved. Competition for limited resources also helps to explain the periodic fighting between army, police and marines.

Rather than force the resumption of contacts between Muslims and Christians, several officials emphasised that relations between the communities should be allowed to evolve naturally, at their own pace. The government hopes that if relative peace can be preserved, the scope for such contacts will gradually widen. The government-supported common markets in neutral areas of Ambon are an example. Another is the transaction point at Galala, on the road leading from Ambon city to Passo, where Christians bring their produce to the border of the Muslim zone and it is bought by Muslim traders for sale in Muslim markets. The state Pattimura University is another natural site where Muslims make up about 30 per cent of the student body. Several high schools also cater to both Muslim and Christian students in neutral zones. Baku Bae continues to promote contacts between members of professional groups.

In the long run, of course, it will be necessary to take steps to create conditions that will support peace between the two communities without the need to maintain a large military and police presence. If the current effective partitioning of Ambon persists, the overwhelming majority in both communities will continue to have no contact with the other community, and generations of children will grow up without friends, or even acquaintances, on the other side. But in the short run care must be taken to ensure that measures intended to bring about reconciliation do not in themselves spark renewed conflict.

Reconciliation must indeed be natural, not forced, if it is to have a realistic chance. Measures should not be pushed forward to end the present effective segregation of the two communities until sufficient trust has been restored. Similarly efforts to

encourage return of refugees should be gradual. Nevertheless, the efforts of Baku Bae and other groups to bring about closer ties between the two communities should be encouraged even though a full settlement still remains distant.

**Jakarta/Brussels 8 February 2002**

## APPENDIX A MAP OF MALUKU



## APPENDIX B

### GLOSSARY

<b>Ahlu Sunnah wal Jamaah</b>	Congregation of the Followers of the Prophet	<b>Laskar Jihad</b>	Radical Muslim militia
<b>Baku Bae</b>	Reconciliation movement	<b>Laskar Mujahidin</b>	Radical Muslim militia
<b>Bapa Raja</b>	Traditional Maluku leaders	<b>Laskar Yesus</b>	Christian militia
<b>BIN</b>	National Intelligence Agency	<b>MUI</b>	Indonesian Ulama's Council
<b>Brawijaya East Java</b>	Regional Military Command in East Java	<b>Paskhas</b>	Air Force Special Forces
<b>Brimob</b>	Police Mobile Brigade	<b>PAN</b>	National Mandate Party
<b>Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah</b>	Indonesian Islamic Faith-Strengthening Board	<b>Partai Keadilan</b>	Justice Party
<b>Diponegoro</b>	Regional Military Command in Central Java	<b>Pasukan Jihad</b>	Radical Muslim militia [North Maluku]
<b>Fatwa</b>	Authoritative Islamic instruction	<b>PBB</b>	Crescent and Star Party
<b>FKM</b>	Maluku Sovereignty Front	<b>PDI-P</b>	Indonesian Democratic Party – Struggle
<b>Golkar</b>	Functional Group Party	<b>PDS</b>	Civil Emergency Authority
<b>HMI</b>	Muslim Students' Association	<b>PPP</b>	United Development Party
<b>Jihad</b>	Just war	<b>Polda</b>	Provincial police headquarters
<b>KISDI</b>	Indonesian Committee for Solidarity with the Islamic World	<b>Polres</b>	Municipal police headquarters
<b>Kabupaten</b>	District	<b>Rajam</b>	Execution by stoning
<b>Kodim</b>	Military District Command	<b>Ramadhan</b>	Muslim fasting month
<b>Kopassus</b>	Army Special Forces	<b>RMS</b>	Republic of South Maluku
<b>Kostrad Command</b>	Army Strategic Reserve	<b>Sharia'</b>	Islamic law
<b>Lapangan Merdeka</b>	Freedom Square	<b>TNI</b>	Indonesian National Military
		<b>Wirabuana</b>	Regional Military Command in South Sulawesi
		<b>Yon Gab</b>	Joint Battalion

## APPENDIX C

### ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP

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The International Crisis Group (ICG) is a private, multinational organisation committed to strengthening the capacity of the international community to anticipate, understand and act to prevent and contain conflict.

ICG's approach is grounded in field research. Teams of political analysts, based on the ground in countries at risk of conflict, gather information from a wide range of sources, assess local conditions and produce regular analytical reports containing practical recommendations targeted at key international decision-takers.

ICG's reports are distributed widely to officials in foreign ministries and international organisations and made generally available at the same time via the organisation's Internet site, [www.crisisweb.org](http://www.crisisweb.org). ICG works closely with governments and those who influence them, including the media, to highlight its crisis analysis and to generate support for its policy prescriptions. The ICG Board - which includes prominent figures from the fields of politics, diplomacy, business and the media - is directly involved in helping to bring ICG reports and recommendations to the attention of senior policy-makers around the world. ICG is chaired by former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari; former Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans has been President and Chief Executive since January 2000.

ICG's international headquarters are at Brussels, with advocacy offices in Washington DC, New York and Paris. The organisation currently operates field projects in more than a score of crisis-affected countries and regions across four continents, including Algeria, Burundi, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone, Sudan and Zimbabwe in Africa; Myanmar,

Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan in Asia; Albania, Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia in Europe; and Colombia in Latin America.

ICG also undertakes and publishes original research on general issues related to conflict prevention and management. After the attacks against the United States on 11 September 2001, ICG launched a major new project on global terrorism, designed both to bring together ICG's work in existing program areas and establish a new geographical focus on the Middle East (with a regional field office in Amman) and Pakistan/Afghanistan (with a field office in Islamabad). The new offices became operational in December 2001.

ICG raises funds from governments, charitable foundations, companies and individual donors. The following governments currently provide funding: Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, the Republic of China (Taiwan), Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. Foundation and private sector donors include the Ansary Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Ford Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the Open Society Institute, the Ploughshares Fund and the Sasakawa Peace Foundation.

**February 2002**

## APPENDIX D

### ICG REPORTS AND BRIEFING PAPERS\*

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*Zimbabwe: Time for International Action*, Africa Briefing, 12 October 2001

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