



PRAY FOR PERSECUTED BROTHERS & SISTERS

Pray for the Persecuted Christians in INDONESIA

Remember the prisoners as if chained with them - those who are mistreated - since you yourselves are in the Body also.

(Hebrews 13:3)



Total Population: 273,523,615

Self-Proclaimed Christian Population: 16% – **Evangelical Witness: 3%**

Muslims: 80%

Death Rate: 6.59/1000 per year: Just today: 4,938

Religious Freedom Threatened for Christians in Indonesia

By Linda Burkle, PhD

Such contrasts in spiritual imagery within Indonesia speak to the unique geography of the Asian country. Indonesia is a large country comprised of a series of islands reflecting diverse cultures and religions. Accordingly, it has a history of religious pluralism with the government recognizing six religions. Indonesia surpasses other countries with the largest Muslim population, 87.2 percent of its 267 million people. Other government-recognized religions include Christianity (9.9 percent) and Hinduism (1.7 percent), as well as Buddhism and Confucianism, together representing under 1 percent of the

population. Such religious pluralism is protected by Article 29 of Indonesia's constitution, which "guarantees all persons the freedom of worship, each according to his/her own religion or belief."

Despite religious rights granted by the constitution, there has been an growing trend of Christian discrimination, taking various forms including hate speech and violence. One particularly relevant example of this discrimination recently has been the denial of building permits for houses of worship. Increasingly, the 2006 Joint Regulation on Houses of Worship Regulation is being used to prevent churches from being built. In November, International Christian Concern reported that at least twenty-three churches have been closed in the past three years, according to the National Commission on Human Rights.

Moreover, the government has continued to prosecute blasphemy allegations and impose severe prison sentences. While proselytization is not illegal, it is exceedingly difficult. According to Open Doors, churches most frequently targeted are those that evangelize; Christian converts from Islam face the most severe persecution from their families and communities.

Citizens are required to indicate their religious affiliation on their government ID cards. As a result, some misrepresent their religion because it impacts their access to government jobs, education, licenses, and permits.

With these growing concerns, the US Commission on International Religious Freedom has put Indonesia on a "special watch list."

Indonesian Muslims are overwhelmingly Sunni Muslims, although they practice "folk" Islam, incorporating animatism into their religion. Most are not strictly observant, unlike the hardliners and radical extremists who influence them and target Christians. The extent of persecution varies greatly among provinces with the highest number of incidents in West Java, Jakarta, and East Java. Aceh province has enacted Shari'a Law, enforced by religious police. While the government typically does not perpetrate discrimination, it often is ineffective or unwilling to provide protection and justice for Christians. According to Human Rights Watch, "the Indonesian government has long coddled militant Islamists implicated in violence against religious minorities. Officials and security forces frequently facilitate harassment of religious minorities and sometimes even blame the victims."

Violent attacks on Christians are commonly led by radical Islamic groups. On November 27, 2020, a horrific attack occurred at small Christian village on the island of Sulawesi, one of 6,000 inhabited islands in Indonesia. A Salvation Army officer serving as a pastor was brutally decapitated and hacked to death, three other church members were also killed, burned in a Salvation Army post used for prayer meetings. Six other houses were burned as villagers fled. The attack was reportedly conducted by a militant Islamic group known as the Mujahideen of East Indonesia. In recent years this group has been responsible for at least twenty deaths of religious minorities whom they believed to be "helping the police."

One thing is clear, in Indonesia as well as numerous other countries, militant Islamic factions are responsible for much of the persecution and violence against Christians.

Yasmin Church Finally Granted a Location to Worship After 15 Years

06/15/2021 Indonesia (International Christian Concern) - For fifteen years, Yasmin Church in Bogor, Indonesia has faced legal hurdles and religious intolerance as they have tried to fight for their right to a church building. ICC reported earlier this month that since 2008, the mayor of Bogor has consistently refused the church permission to construct a building because of a false accusation of forgery on the church's building permit (IMB). The Supreme Court even ruled in 2010 that Yasmin Church had a legitimate right to continue to construct their half-finished building, yet the mayor continued to deny them access.

For fifteen years, Yasmin Church has held their services outside, sometimes in front of the Presidential Palace, in order to continue meeting together. However, this week the Bogor City Administration announced that it will donate a plot of land measuring 1,668 square meters for the construction of a house of worship for Yasmin Church. The land is located close to where the church was originally intended to be built.

Mayor Bima Arya said on June 13, "After the signing of this donation, the land has come under the ownership of GKI Yasmin. The administration will now wait for documents from GKI Yasmin for an immediate issuance of a building permit (IMB)."

This is a victory for Yasmin Church, although some people also view this as a compromise since the church should have been allowed to build its church in the first place. The dispute between the church and the city has become one of the most renowned denials of freedom of religious expression in Indonesia.

The pastor of Yasmin Church, Tri Santoso, has expressed gratitude that dispute is coming to an end. He said, "This represents the state being there for the Christians of Bogor so we can now worship in peace."

The Bogor chapter of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), which is the highest Islamic clerical body in Indonesia, welcomed the land donation. "Those who caused unrest do not have Bogor DNA, I'm sure," stated chapter chairman Mustofa Abdullah.