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INDONESIA

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In the middle of the night we heard the soldiers were pulled out. The villagers on guard duty asked them to stay, some even lay down in front of their vehicle, according to people who were there. But they were told, 'We're just following orders to return to Poso.'

-- resident of Betalemba, Central
Sulawesi, March 2001.

BREAKDOWN: FOUR YEARS OF COMMUNAL VIOLENCE IN CENTRAL SULAWESI

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BREAKDOWN: FOUR YEARS OF COMMUNAL VIOLENCE IN CENTRAL SULAWESI

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I. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

On December 24, 1998, a young Protestant in the town of Poso in Central Sulawesi province, Indonesia, stabbed a Muslim in the arm. Fighting broke out around town, and a spiral of violence was unleashed. The Poso region proved fertile ground for communal violence: underlying economic, ethnic, and religious tensions were soon compounded by the actions of political rivals, some of whom encouraged and exploited the violence.

Over the next four years, Muslim and Christian groups mounted extended attacks on opposing neighborhoods and villages. For most of that time there was no effective response from authorities. Although it is difficult to determine the precise scope of the violence, it has been extensive: the most credible sources estimate that 1,000 people have been killed, with many more injured and one hundred thousand displaced.

This report provides a comprehensive account of the violence, culled from eyewitness interviews and data compiled by local organizations. It analyzes the Indonesian government's response and the reasons violence has continued to erupt periodically in Poso for four years running. Although the violence reflects social tensions, the fact that it has persisted for so long with such a high human toll is a product of systemic government failure, both local and national. According to many residents, an effective and unbiased deployment of police or military (Tentara Nasional Indonesia, TNI), supported by a justice system that could hold perpetrators individually accountable, could have ended the problem when it began in 1998.

Residents of Poso allege that, in many cases, cycles of recrimination and revenge have been fueled by local or outside provocateurs, and conspiracy theories are rife. Although provocation has played a role in other incidents of unrest in Indonesia and there are signs of such efforts in Poso, this report does not attempt to address all such claims, many of which are based more on speculation than evidence. As noted below, it is clear that, whatever the merits of such claims, authorities have had the capacity to take decisive action to stop the violence and have failed to do so.

In several different cases, highlighted below, eyewitness observers report that when security forces were deployed and acted professionally, outbreaks of violence were sometimes halted in a matter of hours. Other attacks were allowed to proceed over the course of several days. In some cases, when the police or military did act, they exacerbated conditions by firing on protestors or committing human rights violations as a form of retaliation, a frequent phenomenon in conflict areas in Indonesia. Only a handful of people were prosecuted for violent crimes, with sentencing often inconsistent. Many of the worst crimes have gone unpunished, and several subsequent outbreaks were explicitly linked to frustration over the lack of arrests for prior violence.

Conflicts eventually broke out in more than half of Poso's subdistricts. As the conflict escalated, the number and sophistication of weapons increased and the death toll grew higher, creating new ranks of aggrieved victims seeking revenge in the absence of justice. The failure of the government to protect citizens also gave credibility to hard-liners on both sides and facilitated the arrival of the radical Muslim group Laskar Jihad, based hundreds of miles away on Java.

There has been a great deal made of the role of Laskar Jihad in exacerbating conflicts in Maluku¹ and elsewhere, and our research confirms that Laskar Jihad's presence helped fuel conflict in Poso. As Muslim leaders told us, however, Laskar Jihad had this effect in part because local Muslim communities had lost all faith in the security forces and saw Laskar Jihad's presence as instrumental to their security. As this report was being finalized, Laskar Jihad announced it was disbanding and that members in Poso would soon leave the region.

¹ In the Maluku islands communal violence also raged for four years between Muslims and Christians, with at least five thousand deaths and massive displacements. As in Poso, the violence began with a street fight, fed on underlying political and economic tensions, and unfolded amidst widespread rumors of provocation. See Human Rights Watch/Asia, "The Violence in Ambon," *A Human Rights Watch Report*, vol. 11, no. 1, March 1999; and International Crisis Group, "The Search for Peace in Maluku," February 8, 2002.

Central Sulawesi has also gained attention recently as the site of a possible al-Qaeda training center. Although this report summarizes the information that others have gathered, Human Rights Watch did not research the question and came across no firsthand evidence on the subject during the course of our research in Poso. The role of underground international Islamist networks in Indonesia clearly merits attention, as the October 12 bombing in Bali that killed some 180 people tragically demonstrates. It is important, however, that such analysis does not obscure the factors responsible for conflicts such as Poso. As in Maluku, the conflict in Poso reflects local and domestic Indonesian political dynamics that would exist with or without outside agitators, let alone an international terrorist training center. Indeed, the causal arrow may point in the opposite direction: the chaos that destroyed so many lives in Poso is the very environment that groups such as al-Qaeda seek out as bases for their operations.

This report begins with an overview of the religious, political, and economic roots of the conflict. Religion became the predominant idiom of the conflict, yet participants recognized and were eager to emphasize to Human Rights Watch that many other factors have been at play. Significantly, Poso has long had a religious mix, with indigenous and migrant Muslim populations, as well as locally rooted Protestant and Catholic communities. Relations among these different communities were relatively peaceful in the years prior to 1998. As in Maluku, however, the nearly even split of Poso's population between Muslims and Christians meant that violent cleavages, once they emerged, could be expected to persist absent decisive intervention by security authorities.

As in other areas in Indonesia, the power vacuum created by the resignation of Soeharto in May 1998 opened the doors to new, often unruly social forces. More than three decades of militarism and authoritarian rule had left civilian institutions discredited and in disarray, and had made military and police institutions fundamentally suspect in the minds of many local inhabitants. Local political battles also fueled the conflict. In a number of cases, noted below, outbreaks of violence were directly connected to competition for local political office and the accompanying economic spoils. The Poso conflict was also exacerbated when it became a national issue, and partisans, in particular members of Laskar Jihad, came to Poso for reasons having more to do with national than local political dynamics.

After providing an overview of the context, the report offers a chronological account of the violence. Largely following the framework used by local residents when describing the Poso conflict, this report divides the conflict into five phases: outbreak (December 1998), intensification of Muslim attacks (April 16, 2000 to May 3, 2000), counterattacks by Christian communities (May 23, 2000 to July 2000), displacement and destruction (June to December 2001), and the Malino peace process and its sometimes violent aftermath (January 2002 to the present). As the first three phases have been covered elsewhere,² this report focuses on the last two.

In the first two phases, urban Muslim migrants and their rural allies in villages along the coast dominated. There were fewer fatalities than in later phases, but many neighborhoods were badly damaged. While the third phase saw casualties on both sides, it was largely a vendetta by Protestants and a few Catholic migrants, and Muslim casualties were particularly high.

Many local sources describe the fourth phase as having begun in June 2001 with a new wave of house burnings, a massacre of Muslim women and children, and numerous clashes. The arrival of Laskar Jihad in July 2001 and the widespread destruction of villages that followed eventually prompted intervention by Jakarta.

In December 2001, representatives of the two sides signed a declaration in the hill town of Malino in South Sulawesi. Unlike previous attempts, the declaration was more than a *pro forma* handshake agreement by traditional leaders carrying out instructions from above. More than ever before, the national government in Jakarta put its substantial resources and political clout behind crucial provisions such as rehabilitating thousands of burned homes. The declaration was still criticized by some as top-down and pre-ordained, with local and

² Lorraine V. Aragon, "Communal Violence in Poso, Central Sulawesi: Where People Eat Fish and Fish Eat People," *Indonesia* 72 (October 2001), pp. 45-78; David Rohde, "Indonesia Unraveling?" *Foreign Affairs* July-August, 2001.

provincial figures merely ratifying plans that were already in place. The declaration also skirted two crucial questions: the removal of fighters from outside the area and accountability for acts of violence. Despite these defects, many on both sides were ready to work with even a flawed declaration in order to end the violence. Conflict fell dramatically after the signing, with the worrying exception of several bombings and other incidents of violence.

At this writing, it was unclear whether peace truly would take hold. Beginning in June 2002, bombings and mysterious shootings were again on the rise, and August and September saw the return of attacks on villages.

The continuing conflict in Poso is significant in its own right due to the widespread loss of life and displacement, especially as it is often overshadowed by the even deadlier conflict in neighboring Maluku. But Poso also serves as a case study and a cautionary tale for other conflict zones in Indonesia. A more decisive and unbiased Indonesian government response, aided by the international community, is imperative.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS

To the Government of Indonesia

1. Support the Malino Declaration through competent and impartial investigation and prosecution of the violence in Poso, with prompt and effective responses to any new incidents. Law enforcement must be ongoing, not tied to limited phases or operations, and include more than the confiscation of weapons. The Malino process and NGO conflict-resolution programs can only succeed if the necessary conditions are in place for investigating and prosecuting crimes and ensuring the security of the civilian population.

2. Establish an impartial, independent investigation of all past serious incidents, such as the July 3, 2001 killings at Buyung Katedo and the November 2001 attacks that leveled villages in Poso Pesisir subdistrict. While it would be practically impossible to examine every incident, an effective inquiry would reduce some of the outstanding grievances and show that both sides share responsibility for the violence and have suffered as a result. This recommendation underscores the importance of restoring the National Human Rights Commission as an effective body.

3. Prosecute all military and police personnel implicated in human rights violations and report publicly on the outcomes. Greater transparency in the legal processes of both civilians and security forces would go a long way to reassure residents that accusations of bias and abuse in the behavior of security forces are taken seriously, and may help deter future rights violations.

4. Ensure that the rights of internally displaced people are fully protected in accordance with “Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement” prepared by the Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations. Allow full access by international and national NGOs that provide aid impartially to all displaced persons in need.

5. The National Assembly should conduct an inquiry into the lessons of Poso (and other areas where similar conflicts have occurred) that can be applied to resolving future conflicts including:

- effective civilian oversight and accountability mechanisms to address human rights abuses and bias
- the role of the criminal justice system in addressing impunity
- coordination between civilian authorities, police, and military

6. Ensure that security forces respect the Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officers and the UN Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials. Of particular importance is the principle that “Law enforcement officials, in carrying out their duty, shall, as far as possible, apply non-violent means before resorting to the use of force and firearms. They may use force and firearms only if other

means remain ineffective or without any promise of achieving the intended result.” Police officers active in Poso and other conflict areas should receive training in these principles.

To the International community

1. Maintain pressure on the Indonesian government for civilian oversight and accountability for security forces. The Indonesian military should not be permitted to use the war on terrorism as an excuse to avoid implementing the reforms necessary to be a professional and unbiased force capable of protecting human rights when called upon.

2. Foreign organizations and governments must recognize that both sides have suffered and that the roots of the conflict are complex. Laskar Jihad, foreign Christian organizations, and some journalists have characterized the problem as a one-dimensional or even one-sided religious war, a misconception that hampers reconciliation and efforts to address underlying causes. Governments concerned with terrorism and Muslim-Christian violence should not address the Poso conflict in ways that oversimplify the problem or aggravate perceptions of bias.

3. Ensure that all aid is distributed equitably and impartially. It is especially important that oversight eliminates the opportunities for corruption that may make continued conflict a source of economic benefit to any parties.

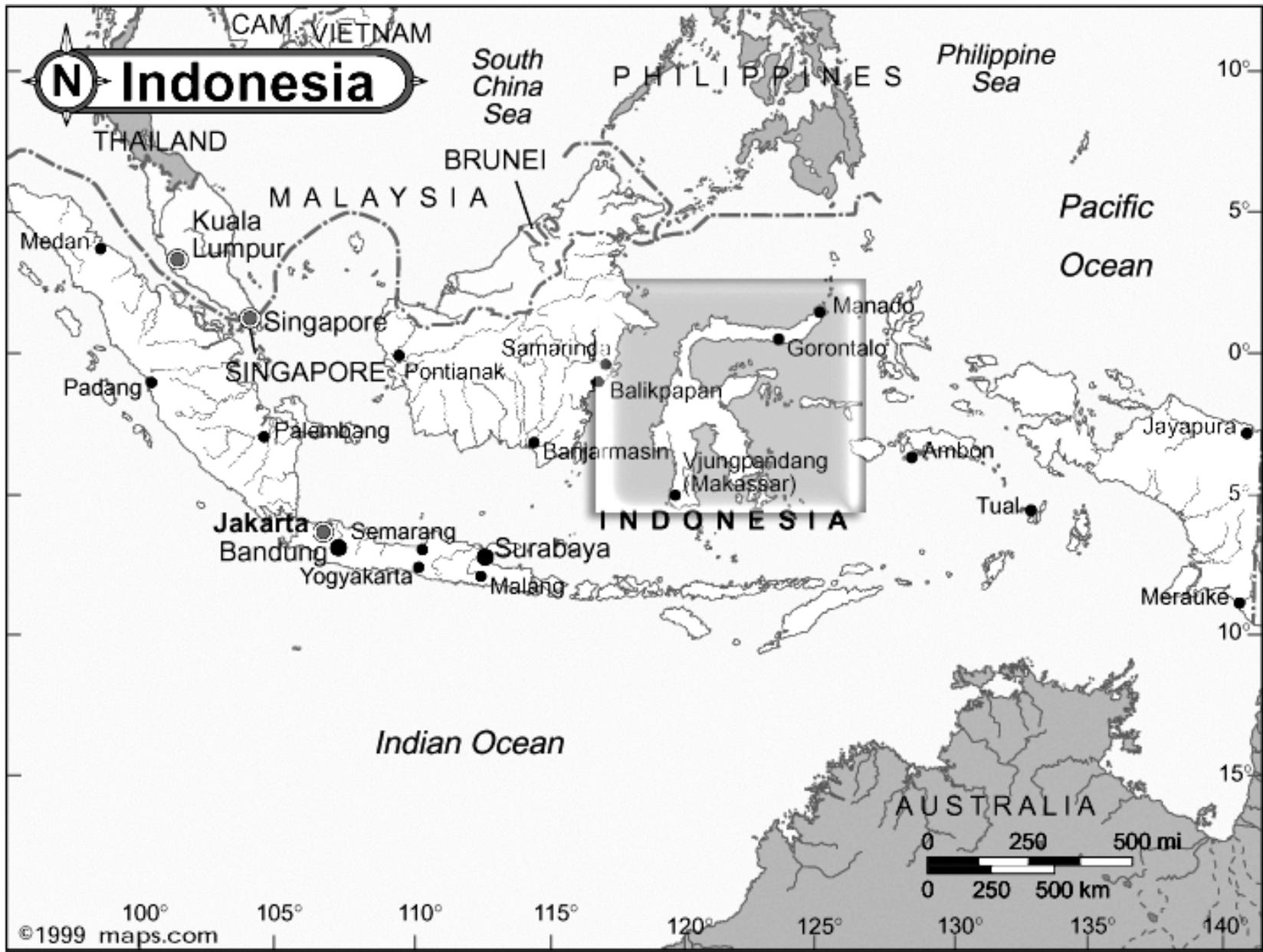


Figure 1: Location of Sulawesi in Indonesia.

III. PART ONE: CONTEXT, CAUSES, AND LASKAR JIHAD

Context

Central Sulawesi is a mountainous province sandwiched between the wealthier south and north of the irregularly shaped island. Poso is one of the province's eight districts, several of which were established in 2002. The capital of Poso district, the town of Poso is situated on the gulf, a six-hour drive southeast from the much larger provincial capital of Palu. Poso district has a primarily Muslim population in the cities and coastal villages, and an indigenous Protestant majority in the uplands. Dutch missionary activity began at the turn of the twentieth century, and members of the Central Sulawesi Christian Church (Gereja Kristen Sulawesi Tengah, GKST) make up the majority of the interior of the district.

In addition to indigenous Muslims, there are many migrants from South Sulawesi, known as Bugis or Buginese, and from the Gorontalo region to the north. There is also a long tradition of Arab traders settling in the region, and their descendants play an important role in Muslim religious and educational institutions. The district also includes villages built under the government transmigration program, which brought in residents from densely populated areas, such as the primarily Muslim islands of Java and Lombok, and the Hindu island of Bali. The Muslim community is thus made up of indigenous people, official transmigrants, and economic migrants of numerous ethnicities. Many migrants have lived in the district for decades. Muslims attained a majority in Poso district by the late 1990s, and now top 60 percent, according to government figures.

Ethno-linguistic groups that include the Pamona, Mori, Napu, Besoa, and Bada populate the upland interior of the district. Many of these groups were once chiefdoms and had a history of intermittent warfare. The town of Tentena is the economic and spiritual center for Poso Protestants, home to the Central Sulawesi Christian Church headquarters, or Synode. It is located on Lake Poso in North Pamona subdistrict, one of several subdistricts with an ethnic Pamona majority. Although the conflict originally centered on tensions between Muslim Bugis migrants and ethnic Pamona Protestants, many other groups were pulled in through their ethnic, cultural, or economic ties.

By the 1990s key sectors of the economy were dominated by migrants. Ethnic Chinese and Bugis traders dominated the lucrative cacao, clove, and copra trades. They also owned small shops, as did Arab migrants and migrants from Gorontalo. More Muslims arrived after the financial crisis began in 1997. Some migrants cut down forest areas to raise cacao, which had become a valuable export crop due to the devaluation of the rupiah. While Protestants retained many civil service positions in local government agencies, they increasingly felt this avenue was closing, particularly in the case of "strategic positions" in top government jobs. These positions, such as *bupati* (district head) and *sekwilda* (district secretary), were sources of wealth and prestige through the distribution of government funds and contracts.³

In the decade before President Soeharto's resignation in 1998, the military put down sporadic conflicts in Palu, Poso, and transmigration sites.⁴ Most of these conflicts were between Muslims and Christians, but some were between local and migrant Muslims. A clash between youths in 1995 led to an attack on a mosque in Tegalorejo and the destruction of Protestant houses in Madale.⁵ Residents also reported efforts at provocation well before the recent violence, such as the circulation of letters incriminating Muslims in Christian neighborhoods and vice versa. Reports of church burnings on other islands quickly spread among the Christian community as well. Describing conditions prior to December 1998, one Palu resident said, "There was no smoke yet, but there were embers."⁶

³ Loraine Aragon, "Communal Violence in Poso," p. 56.

⁴ The Soeharto government quickly clamped down on any indication of communal violence, which was characterized as SARA, an acronym for ethnic, religious, racial, or intergroup (*suku, agama, ras, antargolongan*) conflict.

⁵ Drs. Suriadi Mappangara, ed., *Respon Militer Terhadap Konflik Sosial di Poso*, (Palu: Yayasan Bina Warga, 2001), pp. 35-6.

⁶ Human Rights Watch interview, name withheld upon request, Palu, March 2002.

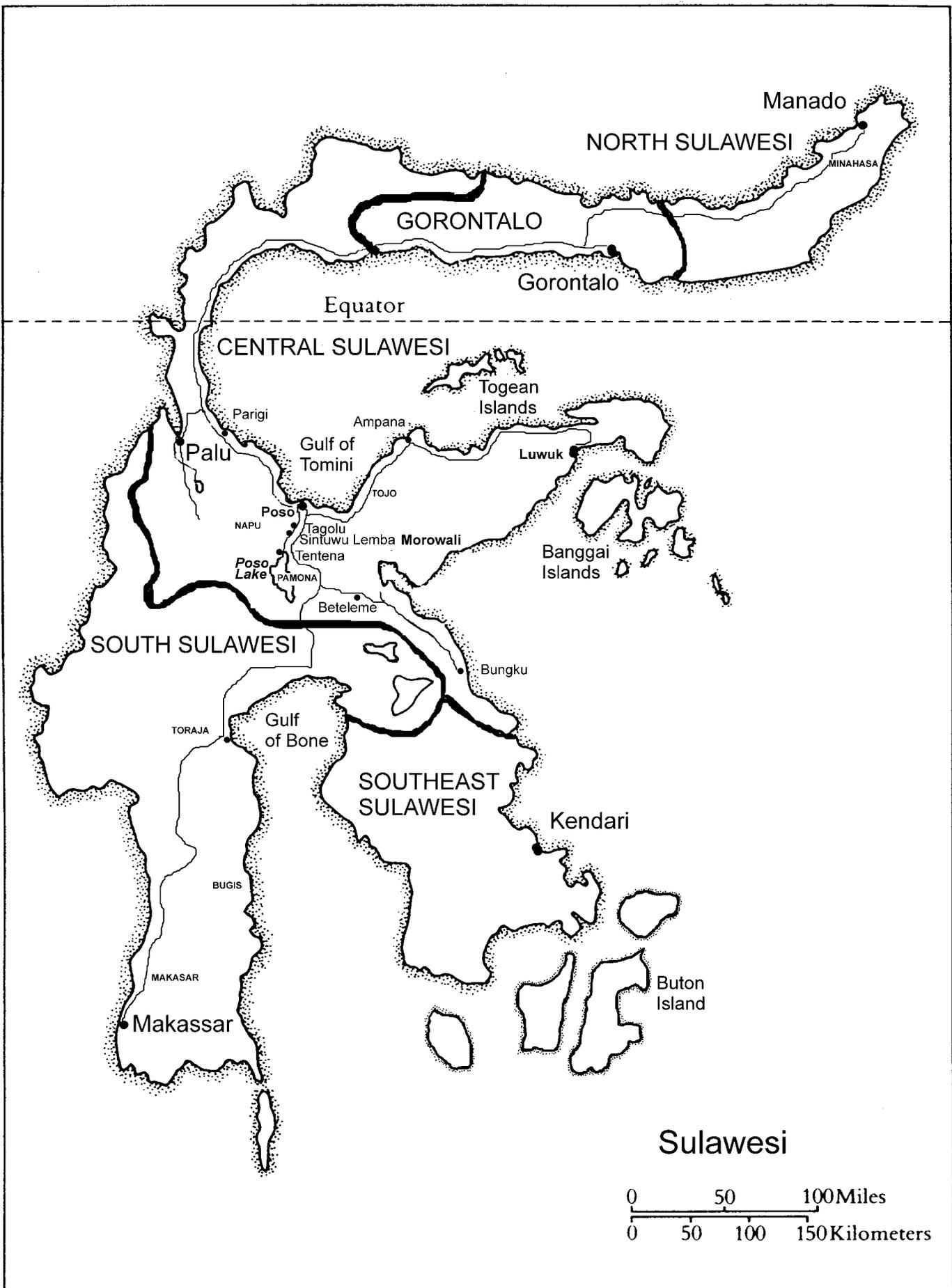


Figure 2: Central Sulawesi. Based on a map by Lorraine Aragon. First published in Lorraine V. Aragon, "Communal Violence in Poso, Central Sulawesi: Where People Eat Fish and Fish Eat People," *Indonesia* 72 (October 2001).

Conflict in post-Soeharto Indonesia

The period surrounding Soeharto's 1998 resignation was chaotic. Throughout the country there were rumors of provocation by entrenched interests hoping to derail corruption trials, investigations, and other elements of a democratic transition. Many violent incidents occurred just weeks before the outbreak in Poso, including clashes between students and a militia tied to the army in Semanggi, Jakarta, on November 13, communal violence in Ketapang, Jakarta, on November 22, and violence in Kupang, West Timor, on November 30. Although the Poso crisis lasted through four years and three presidents, that fact that it began during this period of violence and political intrigue is significant.

Causes of the conflict

Many officials sought to dismiss the crisis in Poso as the work of unknown provocateurs. While there is evidence of incitement, it is the underlying religious, political, and economic tensions that best explain the violence. They are considered here separately, but the causes mutually reinforce one another. Because these conditions are not unique to Poso, it is critical that the Indonesian government responds impartially and effectively to prevent isolated incidents from feeding on underlying conditions to create protracted conflict.

Religious roots of the conflict

In Indonesia, religion and politics are often intertwined. President Soeharto frequently tried to co-opt Islam to maintain power, radical Islam became a form of opposition, and numerous religion-based parties have appeared in recent years. However, in Poso there were those on both sides who were eager to frame the conflict as entirely religious, sometimes using scriptural language.⁷

In Palu, prominent Muslim legal advocate Tajwin Ibrahim explained the roots of the problem as a long campaign of "Christianization." Ibrahim argued that after seeing the percentage of Christians decrease in the district, the strategy shifted from missionary activity to economic inducements, and then to violence to chase away Muslims. Other Muslims have argued that reports of forced conversion, destruction of houses of worship, and attacks on local Muslims as well as migrants demonstrated the religious nature to the conflict.⁸ Christians, especially solidarity groups abroad, depicted the conflict as an Islamic "holy war" against the Protestants.

It is also important to note that Poso residents told Human Rights Watch that it was primarily people from other villages who were involved in the violence. One Christian displaced person from the village of Matak explained that "the Muslims in the village are all good people. We didn't have a problem with them. It was always people from outside the village, riding by, screaming, shooting guns. We were terrorized, so we finally fled in July 2001." A Muslim man from a village near the scene of a May 2000 massacre at Kilo Nine said he sought refuge at the army post after Christian neighbors warned him of the coming attack.⁹

Clearly the religious nature of the conflict cannot be ignored. But many of these same proponents of a religious explanation also stressed the role of land, cash crops, and government positions. Religious figures on both sides pointed to political and economic causes. To describe the Poso crisis as a purely religious conflict is dangerously misleading.

Political roots of the conflict

A more common opinion is that while religion can no longer be separated from the conflict, it was secondary to political goals. Though not an iron-clad rule, there had been a consensus among local politicians on power sharing of the "strategic positions" in district government, such as the district head (*bupati*) and the district secretary (*sekretaris wilayah daerah* or *sekwilda*). A Muslim *bupati* was expected to have a Protestant *sekwilda*, and vice versa. This had been the case in many prior administrations, but the informal arrangement started to fray.

⁷ Lorraine Aragon, "Communal Violence in Poso," pp. 74-5.

⁸ Mappangara, ed., *Respon militer*, p. 67.

⁹ Human Rights Watch interviews, names withheld upon request, Tentena, Napu and Poso, March 2001.

Muslims originally from the Bungku area of Morowali, which split off from Poso district in 1999, came to dominate the field, holding the spot of *bupati*, assistant *bupati*, district assembly chair, and mayor of Poso.

A report compiled by Muslim academics includes data on the religious affiliation of officeholders between 1989 and 1999. While comparison over time is difficult due to the creation of new posts and incomplete data, the available information indicates a shift from a slight Christian majority to a Muslim one in the top fifty or so positions in the office of the *bupati*, the heads of offices (*kantor*), agencies (*dinas*), divisions (*bagian*), and subdistricts (*kecamatan*). During the 1990s Christians went from holding 54 percent of these key posts to 39 percent, while Muslim numbers rose accordingly.¹⁰

The chronology suggests a connection between the question of power sharing and outbreaks of violence. The first phase of the violence broke out just after the December 13, 1998, announcement that the *bupati* of Poso District would not seek re-election. The selection of the district secretary in April 2000, and threats made when one candidate was not chosen, coincided with the outbreak of the second phase. Finally, the outbreak of the fourth phase in July 2001 coincided with the selection of a new district secretary.

The political explanation has wide public support. The report by Muslim academics found that 67 percent of those surveyed attributed the conflict to politics, primarily competition for positions. Only 6 percent described the cause as religious.¹¹ Asked for the cause of the conflict, a Muslim religious leader in Palu who allegedly recruited fighters early in the conflict, replied: "Politics. Then religion was dragged in, brought in inadvertently. Politicians from both sides tried to gain support through religion."¹²

Poso district is not unique in the province. An NGO in the provincial capitol of Palu called the Institute for the Development of Legal Studies and Human Rights Advocacy (Lembaga Pengembangan Studi Hukum dan Advokasi Hak Asasi Manusia, LPS-HAM) has tracked spikes in violence coinciding with the selection of a new *bupati* or mayor in the districts of Banggai, Banggai Islands, Morowali, Buol, Toli-toli, Donggala, and the municipality of Palu. The NGO linked 17 percent of mob violence in the province to elite politics.¹³

After the question of power sharing reemerged with the selection of a district secretary in July 2001, many Muslims pointed to previous district administrations in which both top spots were occupied by Christians, or occasionally Muslims, with no conflict. But the relative lack of conflict during previous administrations took place under very different conditions. The top-down, centralized bureaucracy was largely imposed from outside, and many of the top bureaucrats were retired military officers from Sumatra or South Sulawesi. Decentralization and the economic crisis had also raised the stakes of the patronage system in recent years as districts and provinces retained a higher portion of revenues.

Furthermore, some Muslims agreed there was a power sharing problem, and even proposed the unpopular idea of redistricting. A provincial assembly member from the Muslim PPP party argued that "[i]f jobs are allocated in a balanced way, the conflict will at least be dampened." He was one of several Muslims who suggested public debate on breaking Poso into several districts, including one with a Christian majority.¹⁴

¹⁰ Appendix 2: "Balance of Strategic posts in Poso District, 1989-1999," in Mappangara, ed., *Respon militer*.

¹¹ Mappangara, ed., *Respon militer*, p. 66.

¹² Human Rights Watch interview, name withheld upon request, Palu, March 2002.

¹³ Erik W. and Damar, "Government criticized over sectarian conflict in Poso", *Jakarta Post*, December 19, 2001; Lembaga Pengembangan Studi Hukum dan Advokasi Hak Asasi Manusia (LPS-HAM) and Pusat Kajian Dan Pengembangan Media, "Pandangan Akhir Tahun: Situasi Hak Asasi Manusia dan Tindak Kekerasan di Sulawesi Tengah Tahun 2001 (End of Year View: The Situation of Human Rights and Violence in Central Sulawesi in 2001)," December 14, 2001, p. 8.

¹⁴ "Mustar: Penyebab Konflik Tak Terjadinya Power Sharing," *Mercusuar*, July 5, 2001; "Poso Membara, Siapa Yang Salah," *Mercusuar*, July 6, 2001. In May 2002 there was discussion of creating a new province of East Sulawesi made up of the districts of Banggai, Banggai Kepulauan, Morowali, and Poso.

Economic roots of the conflict

The political struggles have an economic aspect, since political power leads to control over the distribution of government contracts, aid, and jobs. Even more directly, members of the two sides in the conflict were engaged in an ongoing competition to secure land and access to markets for their goods. Once the violence erupted, economic gain, in the form of the cash crops of the displaced, the supply of weapons to the fighters, and the looting of villages, helped to sustain it.

There had once been mutually beneficial trade relationships between the Christians in the uplands and the Muslims on the coast. But changes in the economy, intensified by the currency crash, and the influx of migrants had replaced this relationship with competition over scarce resources. In rural areas the competition over land for cash crops pitted Javanese and Bugis migrants against ethnic Pamona. Because cash crops were sold through Poso traders, ties between urban and rural areas, which frequently shaped battlefield alliances, were economic as well as religious.¹⁵

Clashes in urban areas often began in areas of intense economic competition, such as terminals and markets, while in rural areas the harassment of farmers in their cacao groves was used as an excuse to carry out attacks. The radical Muslim group Laskar Jihad cited cacao disputes as the cause of both an October 2001 conflict at Betalemba-Tabalo, and of more extensive attacks that November: “The attack on Tengkora happened because Christians started to harass women who were harvesting cacao... It wasn’t planned.”¹⁶

Laskar Jihad wrote that the October 30, 2001, razing of Pinedapa village took place because for “more than a year the [Christians] have enjoyed the cacao that belongs to Muslims. Unfortunately their determination is not supported by an awareness that they are in a Muslim area. So the *umat* [Muslim community] was forced to give them a lesson. Tuesday [October 30] there was an armed clash, and by Wednesday Pinedapa had been razed to the ground.”¹⁷ In a fifteen-point letter to the district assembly, one hard-line Poso Muslim group devoted the third point to the taking of cacao and the cutting down of trees.¹⁸

There are indications that the desire for economic gain perpetuated the conflict. In Maluku there are more widespread reports of security forces profiting from protection arrangements, but in Poso, too, an economy inevitably sprung up around the conflict. A profitable cottage industry supplied tens of thousands of weapons, and continued to supply them even after the Malino Declaration, according to press reports. More money went for evacuation: one displaced person reported paying one million rupiah (US\$100) for a truck to take four families from Tentena to Palu. Finally, there were reports that the razing of Christian villages in November 2001 was accompanied by well-organized convoys of trucks to loot the household objects and livestock before the villages were burnt to the ground.

A combination of causes

While Poso is often described as an ethnic or religious conflict, this is far too simple a conclusion. There is ample evidence and widespread agreement that the roots of the conflict were multiple and complex. The NGO LPS-HAM concluded that the Poso crisis was caused by the accumulation of economic, criminal, social, and political factors. A report by Muslim academics described the causes in very similar terms. Religion and ethnicity, they concluded, became “political vehicles for certain elite interests.”¹⁹

However, these deeply-rooted causes do not explain why the conflict was allowed to progress through five phases in four years, leaving approximately 1000 people dead. As noted above, many regions in Indonesia share these tensions, due to the widespread nature of the transmigration program and recent economic and political upheavals. But it was in Poso, as in the Malukus, that the government failed to effectively respond first to

¹⁵ Aragon, “Communal Violence in Poso,” p. 56.

¹⁶ Human Rights Watch interview, name withheld upon request, March 2002.

¹⁷ *Berita Laskar Jihad*, No. 3, November 3, 2001

¹⁸ Forum Silaturahmi dan Perjuangan Muslim Umat Islam (FSPUI), July 10, 2001.

¹⁹ LPS-HAM, “Pandangan Akhir Tahun,” p. 20. Mappangara, ed., *Respon militer*, p. 121-2.

minor incidents, and then to increasingly large-scale attacks, allowing the cycle of retribution to escalate out of control.

The Question of Laskar Jihad

While the conflict was brewing in Poso, a new radical Muslim group was emerging on Java. In Jakarta in 1998, faced with a likely democratic transition and increasingly vocal student protests, elements of the political and military elite mobilized Muslim civilian defense groups (*pam swakarsa*). Some of these groups joined together in a loose union known as the Islam Defenders Front (Front Pembela Islam, FPI). FPI was often in the news for attacking bars and brothels or making threats towards Americans. In late 2000, there were efforts to bring together Muslim militias (*laskar*) around the conflict in Maluku. A new organization developed under the leadership of a young religious teacher named Jafar Umar Thalib, who had once fought in Afghanistan. The organization, Laskar Jihad, was far more unified, disciplined, and ideological than previous groups such as FPI.

It is widely believed that a hard line faction of the military helped train and arm Laskar Jihad. The International Crisis Group notes that the “conclusion is unavoidable that the LJ received the backing of elements in the military and police. It was obviously military officers who provided them with military training and neither the military nor the police made any serious effort to carry out the president’s order preventing them from going to Maluku. And, once in Maluku, they often obtained standard military arms and on several occasions were openly backed by military personnel and indeed units.”²⁰

Laskar Jihad’s ties to serving or retired army officers is frequently cited to explain the failure to rein in the armed group as it moved freely through the country to engage in conflict. The American ambassador to Indonesia at the time of these events recently wrote in a letter to a United States senator that the “only time an Army general acted firmly against an indigenous terrorist group, Laskar Jihad, it resulted in his removal from his command, a powerful lesson to others.”²¹

Adding further credibility to the allegations is a recurring pattern since the 1970s of political and military factions trying to break an impasse by taking advantage of both communal tensions and radical Islam.²² This does not mean that Laskar Jihad is a pure creation of the army. The movement has likely benefited from a convergence of interests between its own goals and those of military and political factions.²³

In July 2001, after several exploratory visits (and two and half years of conflict), Laskar Jihad arrived in Poso. Their arrival in Poso increased the strength and organization of the Muslim fighters. Some human rights activists in Jakarta theorized that the army had allowed Laskar Jihad to enter the conflict to even the sides, so as to maintain a role for the military and make operations easier. Whatever the motive, the civilian and military authorities failed to protect the human rights of those living in Poso by failing to prevent Laskar Jihad’s well-publicized arrival or to stop their well-organized attacks.

²⁰ International Crisis Group, “Indonesia: Violence And Radical Muslims,” October 10, 2001. The Center for Defense Information recently concurred: “The support the militant group continues to receive from the highest levels of the Indonesian military ensures its survival. Sympathizers within TNI are believed to provide the group with cash, and possibly arms, and to order Moluccan officials not to crack down on Laskar Jihad members. According to Western intelligence sources, Laskar Jihad was actually founded with covert backing of military hardliners who wished to destabilize the post-Soeharto reformist government of Abdurrahman Wahid.” Center for Defense Information, “In the Spotlight: Laskar Jihad,” March 8, 2002.

²¹ Letter from Ambassador Larry Gelbard to Senator Patrick Leahy, July 18, 2002.

²² See International Crisis Group, “al-Qaeda In Southeast Asia: The Case Of The ‘Ngruki Network’ In Indonesia,” August 8, 2002. An expert on Islam in Indonesia similarly concludes, ‘Rather than “Islamic” extremism or primordial passion, then, the proximate cause of Indonesia's plague of religious violence has been elements of the old regime seeking to destabilize the country so as to block political reform.’ Robert W. Hefner, Muslim-Christian Violence in Maluku: The Role of National Politics, paper presented for the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, Hearing on the Maluku Islands, Washington D.C., February 13, 2001 (on file at Human Rights Watch).

²³ Human Rights Watch interview with Robert Hefner, August 2002.

Laskar Jihad described their strategy in Poso as a “multidimensional approach... deploying not only ground troop volunteers but also those in the field of advocacy, health care, logistics, proselytizing (*dakwah*), public relations and other areas that help support this noble movement.”²⁴ Laskar Jihad representatives described their mission to Human Rights Watch as threefold: spiritual guidance, humanitarian aid, and defense of their fellow Muslims.

Laskar Jihad set up guard posts in key spots, such as the border of Christian Betalemba and Muslim Tabalo, with no constraints from the police. A Laskar Jihad advocacy team worked with Muslim legal groups in Palu and Jakarta, frequently issuing joint statements or meeting with political figures to urge action following attacks on Muslims by Christian fighters or security forces.²⁵ By late August they were publishing a daily news report in Poso called *Bel@: Berita Laskar Jihad*. Typically covering the latest developments in the conflict, the one-pager also included spiritual instruction, information on health services, and calls for *jihad*:

Poso still awaits attention of the *mujahidin*, this land longs for the return of Muslims that want to *jihad* to defend their region, to defend the respect and authority of the community of Muhammad. In the land of Poso the arena of *jihad* is wide open and promise the highest reward from Allah. The land of jihad is here, on our land, in our hometown: POSO!²⁶

Muslims argued that they needed Laskar Jihad to defend them. An academic who would later head the Muslim delegation at the Malino talks defended Laskar Jihad as having come to defend Muslims from inhumane attacks. The presence of the Laskar Jihad members (2,000 in his liberal estimate) was legal, he argued, because they reported to provincial and district officials when they arrived and tried to help the government prevent the spread of conflict as “partners of local government.”²⁷ Laskar Jihad itself proclaimed, “If security forces are really no longer able to protect the rights of the Muslims, then we are forced to do it ourselves.” A member of their legal team told Human Rights Watch that they made the decision to come to Sulawesi after a visit in June showed that the Muslims were outmatched, citing the July 3, 2001, killings at Buyung Katedo. The group was able to take advantage of Muslim fears and government inaction to promote its own agenda of radical Islam and domestic *jihad*.

As Ramadan began in December 2001, women in Poso and nearby villages increasingly wore Muslim dress as urged by religious leaders. Handbills posted by Laskar Jihad around town urged women to wear head coverings (*jilbab*), and also threatened purveyors of alcohol and gamblers with “action” if they remained open. Both Muslim and Christian residents told Human Rights Watch that women who did not wear *jilbab* were harassed and called *kongkoli* (an epithet for Christians). However, one young woman explained to Human Rights Watch that her decision to wear a *jilbab* was purely voluntary, and that Laskar Jihad had only helped locals become better Muslims.

Laskar Jihad was open about training residents to fight, but also careful to present itself as a partner of the security forces and civilian authorities. A senior Laskar Jihad member named Abdurrahman wrote, “Laskar Jihad itself has already several times held joint trainings with residents... The goal is that communities can create neighborhood watch groups in their areas to help the work of security forces,” not to replace the police but to assist them.²⁸ Over time the relationship with security forces began to fray.

As in Maluku, Laskar Jihad strove to depict their struggle as a fight for the integrity of Indonesia. They claimed the Christians manipulated human rights and democracy to free East Timor. They further claimed that Christians in Maluku used ethno-religious conflict to fight for the Republic of the Southern Moluccas (Republik

²⁴ Ayip Syafruddin, “Mengapa Laskar Jihad ke Poso,” *Mercusuar* (Palu), August 7-8, 2001, <http://www.laskarjihad.or.id/artikel/keposo.htm>

²⁵ “DPRD Sulteng Akan Bentuk Tim Kerja Tangani Poso,” *Berita Laskar Jihad*, August 25, 2002.

²⁶ *Berita Laskar Jihad*, September 26, 2001. In Laskar Jihad’s belief system, *jihad* is not a metaphorical struggle, but an actual one that pits the world of Muslims against the world of non-Muslims, or *kafirs*.

²⁷ “Laskar Jihad Merupakan Mitra Pemerintah,” Prof. Dr. Sulaiman Mamar, MA.

²⁸ *Berita Laskar Jihad*, September 22, 2001.

Maluku Selatan, an independence movement dating from the 1950s), and tried to get the United Nations involved in the Malukus. Since Poso did not even have a remnant separatist movement, Laskar Jihad argued that Christians were trying to create an independence movement. The radical Muslim group warned that if the call for a Christian-majority district “is fulfilled maybe tomorrow they will demand their own country.” Another Muslim group urged the Poso district assembly to declare the Christian fighters to be separatists who were undermining the recognized government.²⁹

The arrival of Laskar Jihad coincided with a spike in violence in July 2001 and was followed later that year by a surge in attacks on villages. In September, Laskar Jihad leaders urged Muslims to prepare for the next phase. In mid-November, as things were heating up, Laskar Jihad did a joint training with the people of Mapane and the neighboring hamlet of Pattirobajo. The event is described as a day of physical training and “theoretical knowledge about various techniques of battle.” Unlike previous training efforts believed to be held by both sides, Laskar Jihad carried out trainings publicly. After a training at Toliba, Tojo subdistrict, a Laskar Jihad “military instructor” named Abu Ayyub remarked he was pleased with the enthusiasm of the fifty participants.³⁰

Although hard-liners on both sides frequently spoke out against the other group, Laskar Jihad’s rhetoric targeted peace efforts themselves. Its daily publication, which the group posted on walls and sold in shops, was interspersed with militant claims that the root cause of the conflict was religion not politics, and that reconciliation was yet another attempt by Christians to grab power. In keeping with the organization’s ideology of a state of war between the Muslim world and the non-Muslim (*kafir*) world, Christians were referred to as *kafirs*, or the newly-coined epithet *kongkoli*.³¹ After describing an alleged attack on Muslims among their clove trees on August 20, 2001, the writers urged: “This matter should open the eyes of government officials to see the reality, that the request for reconciliation from the Christians is at its essence their strategy to consolidate their organization.” Reconciliation was in their eyes a “campaign of ‘*rekongkoli*’... a strategy to cheat, fool, and betray Muslims.”³²

The arrival of Laskar Jihad in July 2001 increased the strength of the Muslim side by adding several hundred experienced fighters, some of them armed with automatic weapons, according to Christian eyewitnesses. One result was a shift from the skirmishes and hit-and-run attacks of the previous year to frontal attacks that razed Christian villages to the ground. Laskar Jihad’s own accounts of the fighting detail well-organized attacks over several days carried out in close cooperation with local Muslims. The openness of Laskar Jihad’s arrival, training, and role in armed attacks demonstrated the security forces’ unwillingness to prevent conflict.

Laskar Jihad is losing its untouchability at the national level. On May 4, 2002, the group’s founder and “commander-in-chief” (*panglima*) Jafar Umar Thalib was arrested in connection with a speech he made in Maluku prior to a bloody attack on a Christian village. A top Christian leader was also arrested. While Thalib’s arrest was an important step, it will be important to see how such politically difficult prosecutions proceed, and to arrest those directly responsible for the continuing violence. Although Thalib’s trial began August 14, many observers are skeptical that Thalib will be convicted. In a sign of the high political stakes of the case, top Muslim politicians, including Vice-President Hamzah Haz, visited Thalib in detention. In a surprise move, just days after the October 12 terrorist attack on Bali put the spotlight on radical Islam in Indonesia, Laskar Jihad announced its decision to disband.

al-Qaeda

After the September 11, 2001 attacks, there was renewed scrutiny of radical Islam in Indonesia and throughout the world. In Poso, the label “provocateur” was replaced by “terrorist.” As early as September 28, Laskar Jihad was denying links to al-Qaeda. The group’s leader, Jafar Umar Thalib, had fought the Russians in

²⁹ “Kongkalikong Para Kongkoli,” *Berita Laskar Jihad*, September 22, 2001; “Akar Masalah Tragedi Poso Adalah Kristenaisasi,” *Berita Laskar Jihad*, August 31, 2001; Forum Silaturahmi dan Perjuangan Muslim Umat Islam (FSPUI), July 10, 2001.

³⁰ *Berita Laskar Jihad*, No. 13 11/14; *Berita Laskar Jihad*, December 10, 2001.

³¹ The term is derived from the name of a prominent pastor, a local tree, and the word for conspiracy.

³² “Pasukan Merah Tembak Warga Mapane,” *Berita Laskar Jihad*, October 12, 2001.

Afghanistan, but claimed to have turned down offers of support from Bin Laden due to philosophical and religious differences. The evidence so far indicates that, while some Indonesians were undoubtedly involved in international terrorist networks, Laskar Jihad itself maintained a primarily domestic agenda. While a few radical organizations made a show of registering Indonesians ready to fight the United States in Afghanistan, Laskar Jihad provided careful reasoning why *jihad* in Poso or Maluku was more important for Indonesian Muslims. The argument included theological and practical reasons, such as language, cost, and climate, concluding, “[t]hanks to Allah for bringing the battlefield of *jihad* to our archipelago.”³³

In late 2001 Poso returned to the spotlight after an al-Qaeda suspect in Spain testified that hundreds of international fighters had been trained in the region. The Indonesian intelligence chief A. M. Hendropriyono then described Poso as an area of “link-up” between international terrorists and domestic radicals.³⁴ The Central Sulawesi Police Chief said police had investigated reports of training camps in Kapompa, Tojo subdistrict, but found no evidence. The police did say a few days later that they found an abandoned warehouse that could have been used as a training camp, but offered no evidence.³⁵

After Muslim politicians criticized Hendropriyono for making accusations without proof, he explained that his comments were based on the Spanish case rather than domestic intelligence. He may have had a variety of motives for supporting the allegations. The presence of terrorists could increase the likelihood of reviving United States support for the Indonesian army. Some analysts also thought his comments were designed to make it easier to remove domestic radical groups, such as Laskar Jihad, from the conflict areas. Hendropriyono’s later comments do indicate pressure on Laskar Jihad: “the people of Sulawesi... want to resolve their problem themselves. This means it will be best if the presence of those who do not belong there can be ended with appropriate measures.” He stressed that once such groups are removed, the government will protect all parties.³⁶

The most recent indication of a link between al-Qaeda and conflict in Poso came with the arrest of a German national named Seyam Reda in Jakarta on September 17, 2002. Reda has been linked to a suspected al-Qaeda operative named Omar Al-Faruq, who had been arrested in Indonesia and turned over to American officials. Reda was found with videotapes showing training activities from a conflict area in Indonesia. Police officials implied it was either Poso or Maluku, and unnamed sources who had seen the tapes told the press the tapes showed trainees with automatic weapons in the Poso area in December 2001.³⁷

The rough terrain of Central Sulawesi makes it possible that an al-Qaeda training camp existed undetected at some point, and the initial information from Spain was partly corroborated by a later arrest in the Philippines.³⁸

³³ *Berita Laskar Jihad*, October 11, 2001.

³⁴ Fabiola Desy Unidjaja, “International training camp in Poso 'empty,’” *Jakarta Post*, December 14, 2001; “Kepala BIN Hendropriyono: Poso Jadi Ajang 'Link-Up' Teroris Internasional,” *Kompas Cybermedia*, December 13, 2001; Greg Fealy, “Is Indonesia a terrorist base?” *Inside Indonesia* no.71, (July-September 2002).

³⁵ “Kapolda Sulteng Bantah Jaringan al-Qaeda Beroperasi di Poso,” *Kompas Cybermedia*, December 13, 2001; “Indonesian police say abandoned warehouse may be former al-Qaeda camp,” *Associated Free Press*, December 19, 2001.

³⁶ “Hendropriyono Tuding Al-Qaidah Terlibat Kerusuhan Poso,” *Republika*, December 13, 2001.

³⁷ “Indonesian ministers view tapes seized from German,” *Reuters*, September 30, 2002. Leaked foreign intelligence reports were said to state that al-Faruq had admitted to mounting Christmas 2000 church bombings and to helping Agus Dwikarna, now detained in the Philippines, to create Laskar Jundullah, a militant Islamic group active in Sulawesi. Romesh Ratnesar, “Confessions of an al-Qaeda Terrorist,” *Time.com*, September 15, 2002; Maria Ressa, “al-Qaeda links to Indonesian violence,” *CNN.com*, August 14, 2002.

³⁸ After an Indonesian named Agus Dwikarna was arrested in the Philippines in March 2002, *The Washington Post* reported that unidentified intelligence officials alleged that a camp “located in dense jungle near the port city of Poso” was attended in late 2000 by two dozen Filipinos from the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, several Malaysians from the Malaysian Mujaheddin Group, and “scores” from the Middle East, Europe and North Africa. Dwikarna was alleged to have provided documentation for the foreigners through a humanitarian organization, helping to bring them to Poso to train and participate in attacks in Sulawesi and Maluku. “Indonesian Arrested in Manila Had Ties to al-Qaeda,” *Washington Post Foreign Service*, May 9, 2002. For more on Dwikarna, see International Crisis Group, “al-Qaeda In Southeast Asia: The Case Of The ‘Ngruki Network’ In Indonesia”, August 8, 2002.

Several Christian victims and fighters reported foreigners among the Muslim fighters, such as at a battle near Pandajaya village.

However, no fighters or activists from either side interviewed by Human Rights Watch thought there was an international network such as al-Qaeda involved in the conflict. A Muslim religious leader in Palu told Human Rights Watch: “I’m not denying there was training. There was. But there was no connection with al-Qaeda. The training was done by lots of people, ex-military for example... Any Muslim can become a *mujahiddin* if threatened. So the people of Poso have become *mujahiddin*, even children can join in. But there is no al-Qaeda here. Bin Laden has not come here, although it would be great if he did come!”³⁹

It is not clear to what extent there is an al-Qaeda presence in Central Sulawesi. What is clear is that the conditions said to be conducive to their operations—including four years of lawlessness, conflict, and Muslim radicalization—have developed, in part, because of the policies of the very institutions now sought by the U.S. as allies in the fight against terror. While it is not surprising that the United States is seeking more cooperation from the Indonesian military, in the absence of effective oversight and accountability mechanisms these institutions may prove to be poor partners in the war on terror.

IV. PART TWO: CHRONOLOGY OF THE CONFLICT

This chronology illustrates the nature of the conflict. Not every incident is included and, in many cases, there are several versions of the same events.

Both sides bore responsibility and both experienced casualties as the violence spread and intensified. With each phase, the sophistication of weapons increased, from machetes to projectiles to homemade guns and, according to some eyewitnesses, automatic weapons. The vast majority of weapons, and virtually all of those turned in, were machetes, other blades, and *senjata rakitan*, homemade weapons from small workshops. Workshops in the town of Ampana had a reputation for copying pistols and even M16s. Factory-made bullets, some of them reportedly with TNI markings, were selling at one point for Rp. 5000 (US\$0.55) each.⁴⁰

The First Phase: December 1998

The first phase was short and limited to several neighborhoods in Poso town, although truckloads of allies from other areas joined the fray. Proponents of the provocateur theory pointed out that the violence began just after the *bupati*'s December 13, 1998, announcement that he would not seek re-election, opening the field to a range of ambitious candidates. As noted above, this phase also coincided with unexplained outbreaks of violence throughout Indonesia.

On Christmas Eve, 1998, which fell during Ramadan that year, a young resident of the Protestant neighborhood of Lombogia named Roy Runtu Bisalembah stabbed Ahmad Ridwan, a Muslim from the Kayamanya neighborhood. According to Christian accounts Ridwan then fled into a mosque. Muslim versions described it as an attack on a Muslim asleep in the mosque courtyard, and in some versions the victim was at prayer or was even an Imam. Religious leaders from both groups blamed alcohol and agreed to ban it during Ramadan. Police began seizing liquor. Muslims made their own raids, and when Protestant youths defended the mostly Christian Chinese shops, numerous fights broke out.

Rumors spread of burnt churches. On December 27 machete-armed Protestants from Tentena arrived, reportedly led by a member of the district assembly, Herman Parimo. Parimo had been involved in a militia from the 1950s called the Central Sulawesi Youth Movement (Gerakan Pemuda Sulawesi Tengah, GPST), and his fighters adopted that name. At least nine trucks of Muslims arrived from the urban centers of Palu, Parigi, and Ampana. One Muslim account estimates 1,000 Muslims arrived in twenty-seven trucks, pickups, and

³⁹ Human Rights Watch interview with Ustad Yahya Al-Ahmri, Palu, March 2001.

⁴⁰ Human Rights Watch interview, name withheld upon request, Palu, March 2002.

motorboats.⁴¹ The fighting escalated, and police did little, but claimed to have sealed the roads into Poso. After a week, the fighting tapered off amidst heavy rains, though displaced persons remained in Tentena, Parigi, and Ampana.

Banners, anonymous letters, and graffiti attacking Protestant government officials proliferated, notably targeting Parimo and his alleged backer, a *bupati* hopeful named Yahya Patiro.⁴² (For an example see attachment.)

The Regional Military Commander blamed the riots on eight Protestant troublemakers the authorities had in custody. Members of the National Commission for Human Rights (Komnas-HAM) said an inquiry showed the conflict was not due to religious or ethnic tensions. They blamed the violence on “miscommunication” and claimed that no local officials were involved. The provincial government formed a “Clarification Team” that interviewed forty witnesses and also concluded that no officials had acted as provocateurs.⁴³

Parimo, the alleged leader of the Protestant convoy from Tentena, was arrested.⁴⁴ Rumors persisted that top officials in Poso were behind the violence, such as the Muslim *bupati* Arif Patanga, or his Protestant deputy Yahya Patiro. Patiro was given a post in the provincial government in Palu, angering Muslims. In February 1999 police charged the *bupati*'s younger brother Agfar Patanga with incitement to violence. Then, in June 1999, the governor removed the *bupati*. A forensics lab in South Sulawesi later concluded that Agfar Patanga was the author of an anonymous letter accusing Protestant officials of starting the violence.

Following new laws on decentralization, the position of *bupati* was to be filled not by appointment but by election in the district assembly. The elimination of candidates, including Patiro, a Protestant, and Damsyik Ladjalani of the Muslim PPP party, left three contenders: a Muslim member of the former ruling Golkar Party named Muin Pusadan; a Muslim named Ismail Kasim; and a Protestant politician named Eddy Bungkundapu.

In June 1999 the first democratic national elections in over four decades took place, electing assembly members at the central, provincial, and district levels. While opposition parties did well on Java, the ruling Golkar party rode its patronage network to electoral victories in Sulawesi, as in many of the outer islands. Their success ensured that Golkar candidate Muin Pusadan was selected as *bupati* in a close vote in October 1999, disappointing a wide range of Muslim and Protestant backers of other candidates.⁴⁵

The Second Phase: April 16-May 3, 2000

After more than a year of relative calm, political and legal events in April 2000 raised tensions. The second phase continued along the same battle lines as the first phase, with Protestant neighborhoods suffering the brunt of the damage. The trial of the former *bupati*'s brother Agfar Patanga had begun. In another corruption trial, a local businessman named Aliansa Tompo was charged with misappropriating funds from a rural credit program (Kredit Usaha Tani, KUT). There were rumors that some of this money was used to hire mobs to attack the courthouse and burn documents, forcing suspension of both cases. Patanga's trial later reconvened in Palu.⁴⁶

More significantly, the second highest position in the district, district secretary (*sekretaris wilayah* or *sekwilda*) was under consideration, and competition was intense. A newspaper printed statements on April 15 by

⁴¹ Mappangara, ed., *Respon Militer*, p. 41.

⁴² Aragon, “Communal Violence in Poso.” Other names listed are Christian Rongko, R. Tobondo, Dimba Tomimomor, Julius Pode, D. Limpadeli, Frans Saulino, and Eddy Bungkundapu. See Mappangara, ed., *Respon Militer*, p. 42.

⁴³ Mappangara, ed., *Respon Militer*, p. 43; Loraine Aragon, “Communal Violence in Poso.”

⁴⁴ Parimo was later sentenced to fourteen years, but died in custody in April 2000 while the case was under appeal to the Supreme Court.

⁴⁵ Pusadan, a Poso native who had spent many years in Palu, was rumored to be the choice of Golkar leaders at the provincial level. Like Pusadan, the next district secretary (*sekwilda*) and speaker of the district assembly were also Golkar Muslims originally from the region of Bungku in Morowali. Resentment may have been further increased by the 1999 creation of the separate Morowali district, giving Bungku Muslims two bases of power.

⁴⁶ Human Rights Watch interview, name withheld upon request, Palu, and Aragon, “Communal Violence in Poso,” p. # 65.

Chaelani Umar, a member of the provincial assembly from the Unity Party (Partai Persatuan), predicting more violence if the former *bupati* hopeful named Ladjalani was not chosen.

The next day, a Muslim youth claimed to have been attacked by Protestants, and showed cuts on his arm as proof. Muslims retaliated, and a fight between youths from the Protestant neighborhood of Lombogia and Muslims from the neighborhoods of Kayamanya and Sayo escalated into widespread violence. For several days mainly Protestant houses were burnt near the bus terminal and in Lombogia.

The Poso police chief called in Palu troops from the police paramilitary unit known as the Mobile Brigade (Brimob). On April 17, Brimob officers fired on the crowd, killing Mohammad Yusni (23) and Yanto (13) and injuring eight other Muslims, including a man named Rozal Machmud who reportedly died later of his injuries. After burial of the victims that same afternoon, angry Muslims attacked Lombogia and burnt houses, churches, and schools.⁴⁷

The next day Governor Paliudju visited the area and was met by a group of Muslims led by businessman and fraud suspect Aliansa Tompo. They demanded that Ladjalani receive the position of *sekwilda*, that the case against Agfar Patanga be dropped, that the police chief be fired, and that Brimob be sent back to Palu.⁴⁸ The demands mirrored the underlying themes of the conflict: political competition, a politicized judiciary, and dissatisfaction with law enforcement.

Brimob was sent home, but the house burnings continued after an unidentified body was found next to a type of hat worn by Muslims. Muslims from town and the surrounding areas burned houses, churches, and the headquarters of the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P), leaving Lombogia and Kasiguncu in ruins. So-called sweepings—a term for roadblocks and inspections by either security forces or, as in this case, civilians—began in Muslim neighborhoods. Several Protestants were reportedly pulled from cars and killed.

The regional military command in Makassar, South Sulawesi, eventually sent 600 soldiers and the fighting subsided. The Governor called on Protestants, many of whom had fled to Tentena or the hills above Poso, not to retaliate but instead to leave it to God. The police declared the second phase over on May 3.⁴⁹

During the second phase the two sides began to use colored headbands and armbands to distinguish themselves. The Christians fighters became known as the red soldiers or red group, and the Muslims as white soldiers or white group. This report adopts the use of colors to describe these armed civilian groups. Though the importance of religion should not be overlooked, the two groups also organized along social, ethnic, and economic lines, and thus the term Protestant or Muslim fighters risks oversimplifying the conflict.

The Third Phase: Retaliation begins, May 23, 2000

Just three weeks later the next phase began, dominated by a wave of retaliatory attacks by the red fighters against Muslim communities. There were direct clashes with white fighters, but also the kidnapping and killing of noncombatants. Human Rights Watch interviews confirm that migrants from South Sulawesi and Gorontalo were singled out, but that other ethnic groups suffered as well.

In early May, there had been rumors that many young Protestants who were displaced had fled to a red group training camp in Kelei. Red attack teams operating in this phase were called the “red bats” and “black bats.”⁵⁰ Black-clad and masked “ninjas” were said to be seeking out Muslims in Kayamanya thought to be

⁴⁷ Mappangara, ed., *Respon Militer*, p. 50.

⁴⁸ WALHI-Sulteng and David Rohde, in Aragon, “Communal Violence in Poso.” p. 65.

⁴⁹ Lorraine Aragon, “Communal Violence in Poso,” p. 66.

⁵⁰ According to one Tentena resident, the situation in Kelei was not one of training, but that a group of angry, displaced young men were on their own, able to return to Poso free from the restraint of more moderate community leaders. According to this view, these young men helped spark the third phase by going into town to defend the Catholic Church from a rumored attack and then sending back word that the battle was on.

responsible for earlier attacks.⁵¹ The ninjas were rumored to be led by Fabianus Tibo, a Catholic plantation worker from the island of Flores who had served time for killing a man years earlier. A Protestant named A. L. Lateka was described variously by the press and the police as the brains, the financial backer, or the “intellectual actor” behind the violence.

Early on the morning of May 23, a group of ninjas killed a policeman, Sergeant-Major Kamaruddin Ali (47), and two Muslim civilians, Abdul Syukur (40) and Baba (60). They reportedly then hid in a Catholic Church in the neighborhood of Moengko. The group, including Tibo, began negotiating with the police to surrender. A Muslim mob formed, and, instead of surrendering, Tibo and many others fled into the hills behind the church compound. The church was burnt down at 10:00 a.m. and fighting broke out around town, most intensely in Sayo, where ten people were injured with arrows and stones. The governor again hinted at outside provocateurs, while the police announced that three suspected ninjas had been detained and taken to Palu after being beaten by the crowd. Two weeks later three alleged provocateurs, identified only as Yen (25), Raf (20), and Leo (21) were detained on charges of instigating the May 23 riots.⁵²

On May 28, a widespread attack on Muslims took place in several villages in the district. In the most notorious incident, a group of Christians, said to include Tibo and his group, surrounded Sintuwu Lemba village, which is also known as Kilo Nine for its distance south from Poso town. The village is made up of successful Javanese cacao farmers whose previous resettlement in South Sulawesi had failed. The women and children were captured and some women were sexually assaulted. Some seventy men ran to the nearby Muslim school, Pesantren Wali Songo, where many were killed with guns and machetes, whether or not they surrendered. Thirty-nine bodies were later discovered in three mass graves, although Muslim sources estimated a total of 191 deaths in the attack. One resident who survived the attack told a journalist he had been captured again four days later and taken to the river to be executed, where once again he was one of few survivors.⁵³

According to a report compiled by Muslim academics, on the morning of the attack the villagers sought refuge at the district military command in Kawua. They allege that the Lage subdistrict head and the subdistrict police chief forced them to return home, insisting the situation was safe. This would later become a source of anger in the Muslim community, who saw it as a clear sign of bias by security forces.

The attack on Kilo Nine was part of a wider attack on Muslim villages. A Muslim resident of nearby Tabalo village told Human Rights Watch:

They attacked Tabalo, on a Sunday, the same day as Kilo Nine. We were told to leave. The red [Christian] fighters came with lots of cars. I'm not sure if they had guns, but they had *dum-dums*, Ambon arrows, and bamboo spears.⁵⁴ There were some ninjas, too. First they burnt the houses near the road. We ran and hid and then they burnt the rest, but left the Christian houses. I don't know who they were. I just know my house is gone. We were forced to walk to the Tangkora

⁵¹ Masked attackers are a familiar phenomenon in Indonesia, having surfaced in turbulent contexts such as East Java in 1998 and East Timor in the mid-1990s.

⁵² Lorraine Aragon, “Communal Violence in Poso”; “Poso Rusuh Lagi,” *Mercusuar*, May 24, 2000; “Police arrest three alleged provocateurs in Poso riot,” *Jakarta Post*, June 6, 2000.

⁵³ John McBeth and Oren Murphy, “Bloodbath,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, July 6, 2000. Lorraine Aragon, “Communal Violence in Poso.”

⁵⁴ Ambon arrows (*panah Ambon*) are projectiles named for their origin in Maluku. Fashioned out of metal bars used in construction, they are fired using bows or large slingshots. In Palu, Rp. 20,000 (U.S.\$2.20) can buy a slingshot or more than twenty arrows. A *Dum-dum* is a homemade shotgun, originally used for hunting. Made from a hollow tube from a motorcycle part or pipe, this weapon fires small projectiles such as glass and nails up to fifty meters using the explosive charge from the heads of a box of matches. A basic version can be purchased for Rp. 60,000 (U.S.\$6.60); a more sophisticated one using a trigger (and in some cases even rotating chambers) for Rp. 250,000 (U.S.\$27.75). These originated in South Sulawesi and many Bugis reportedly brought them back after visiting their home province in the early stages of the conflict. *Organik* or factory made weapons included aging rifles, army or police weapons, and reportedly automatic weapons. There were also allegations that weapons meant for Christian fighters had been intercepted in the mail with an American return address.

elementary school. Three people were taken away on the road, then two more in Tangkora, plus I think three others.⁵⁵

Another resident of Tabalo, living in temporary shelter in the town of Poso, described the same attack to Human Rights Watch in greater detail:

The attackers were youth from Tabalo, plus more from Tangkora and Sanginora. There were hundreds of them. They had their faces covered, but I recognized some from the village.

We were forced out of our houses and told to gather in front of the mosque. They told us we were going to the subdistrict military command. But when we got to the mosque they herded us towards the Tangkora elementary school. We left midday and it was ten at night when we got there. The school guard, a Christian, came looking for my husband. He said, "Is [your husband] there?" I said, "He's sleeping." He said, "Please wake him. There's a meeting at the village hall."

My husband never came back. Later, I asked, "Where is he?" They said he was brought to Sanginora. I think they took him because he is Bugis.

They kept us there for two days and two nights. They had us walk towards Kasiguncu, guarding us all the way. The only army we saw was a Muslim soldier from the subdistrict military command, and he couldn't do anything because they took his weapon away. Then we spent two nights in Kasiguncu. They took us to the edge of the city and retreated.⁵⁶

Tabalo residents identified those taken during the attack and not seen since as:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| 1. Arifin Lasina, (36, Bugis) | 5. Muis (36, Bugis) |
| 2. Tamrin (40, Javanese) | 6. Wageo (17, Bugis) |
| 3. Rahman Hala (40, Gorontalo) | 7. Yusni (50, Gorontalo) |
| 4. Agus Salim (35, Bugis) | 8. Arman (36, Gorontalo) ⁵⁷ |

A similar attack around the same time took place on a village of transmigrants from Lombok and Java. The account showed similar methods, and underlines the targeting of certain ethnic groups:

We were told to gather at the village hall by about 100 men with masks or cloths over their faces. A truck came, and they had a list. They took away eight people from Lombok and four from Java. At 2:00 we were made to walk. We saw a truck with two people in the back: her brother [indicates young woman] and another relative.

He said tell my wife not to cry, we're just going to get some things in the next town. We never saw them again. We walked all the way to Mapane. We spent two nights there and then went by truck to Poso town.

They never told us they would come after us. They just said it was Bugis and Gorontalo they wanted. If they had said we had to leave, okay we would have. But they never said anything about people from Lombok or Java.⁵⁸

Muslims claimed the violence was planned during a national Koran reading contest in Palu, when authorities would be distracted by the huge event and by the presence of the president and vice-president. But the

⁵⁵ Human Rights Watch interview, name withheld upon request, Poso, March 2001.

⁵⁶ Human Rights Watch interview, name withheld upon request, Poso, March 2001.

⁵⁷ Human Rights Watch interview, name withheld upon request, Poso, March 2001.

⁵⁸ Human Rights Watch interview, name withheld upon request, Poso, March 2001.

event may also have contributed to the escalation. At about this time, a gathering of thousands of Muslims took place at the Palu headquarters of Al-Khaira'at, an important religious and educational institution in Eastern Indonesia. It had reportedly been announced at mosques that something important would be discussed, though it is not clear that top leadership was aware of these plans.

A source who attended the event remembered a speech by an Al-Khaira'at figure: "Muslims of Palu, at this time our brothers in Poso will be surrounded by the Christian *kafirs*. Let us together go and help them. If we die in war it is not in vain. We struggle in the path of Allah. Allah has promised heaven for those of his people who fight the *kafirs*."⁵⁹ The eyewitness also reported seeing the national Golkar treasurer Fadel Muhammad taking charge of supplies for the gathering. (Muhammad was later a controversial selection as governor of the new province of Gorontalo to the north of Central Sulawesi. He has also been linked to a national financial scandal known as Buloggate II, in which Rp. 40 billion (US\$4.4 million) was diverted from the state logistics agency to Golkar's 1999 election campaign.)

While fighters were being recruited, a member of Al-Khaira'at's board brought raw materials to a workshop and ordered weapons made. In one day the workshop produced 8000 arrows and almost ninety *dumdums*, or homemade shotguns, which were picked up that evening.⁶⁰ The witness saw machetes and small amounts of money distributed at the gathering, from which two trucks of Palu Muslims went to Poso. After one of the recruits was killed in the village of Tokorondo on May 29, enthusiasm fell, and there is less evidence that Palu Muslims directly participated in later stages of the conflict. At the same time, many Muslim leaders in the capital remained prominent in the public discussion and legal aspects of the conflict.

It is not clear to what extent Al-Khaira'at as an institution was involved. But clearly some of its leadership were involved in arming and recruiting fighters. One religious leader from Al-Khaira'at, Yahya Al-Amri, explained to Human Rights Watch, "At first religious institutions tried to reduce the conflict. But then it shifted to religion, and religious institutions joined in; they became involved in the conflict."⁶¹ Muslims also accused Central Sulawesi Christian Church leaders of becoming involved in training and recruiting fighters, although the church maintained that its newly created Crisis Center was only carrying out investigations, advocacy, and humanitarian efforts.

By late May the conflict returned from the nearby villages to the town of Poso. The governor named A. L. Lateka, the Protestant figure, as responsible for the latest wave of violence. On June 2, 2000, hundreds clashed in the Muslim neighborhood of Kayamanya, and Lateka was killed.

The Palu government at last asked Jakarta for help from the army, and the Regional Military Command sent 1,500 more soldiers, ten tanks, and a combat unit. On June 6, Christians battled with police east of Poso with heavy casualties. The police arrested nine people, identifying three as provocateurs, but bodies continued to turn up through July in the Poso River or ravines nearby. In mid-July, 124 Protestants were arrested southeast of Poso, in Kolonedale, for carrying weapons, mainly machetes. On July 25, Tibo was caught by the army near his home, at the house of the village head of Jamur in Morowali, and brought to Palu. Two other Catholics from Flores residing in Beteleme, Dominggus da Silva Soares and Don Marinus Riwu, were arrested by the police.⁶²

Brimob troops from Java arrived and began an operation they called Sadar Maleo, while TNI troops from Makassar began their parallel Operation Cinta Damai (Peaceful Love). They posted soldiers in sensitive areas, made efforts to confiscate weapons, and built barracks for displaced persons. The high casualties of the third phase began to fall after July 2000. In August, the governors of Central, North, and South Sulawesi met in Tentena to sign a "peace accord," pledging aid to encourage the return of displaced persons. President Wahid and

⁵⁹ Human Rights Watch interview, name withheld upon request, Palu, March 2001.

⁶⁰ Human Rights Watch interview, name withheld upon request, Palu, March 2001.

⁶¹ Human Rights Watch interview, name withheld upon request, Palu, March 2001.

⁶² Aragon, "Communal Violence in Poso"; Human Rights Watch interview, name withheld upon request, Tentena, March 2001.

Poso leaders attended a traditional ceremony in which a water buffalo head was buried. The official peace effort adopted the Pamona phrase Sintuwu Maroso: “Strong when united.”⁶³ The top-down nature of the agreement later came under heavy criticism.

The Fourth Phase: Displacement and Destruction, July 2001-December 2001

After the violence of the third phase died down in July 2000, intermittent conflict continued for another year before the next major outbreak. The continued failure of a series of military and police operations to prevent violence or hold perpetrators accountable opened the door to the arrival of the radical Muslim group Laskar Jihad. Their arrival, in turn, led to a new round of attacks that razed numerous villages before a joint declaration was agreed upon at the end of 2001.

A typical clash in the fourth phase began with a conflict between neighboring villages, such as over cacao harvests. Rumors of an attack circulated, and fighters from one or both sides gathered before launching a “pre-emptive” attack.

According to LPS-HAM, an NGO in Palu that has followed the conflict closely, there were 124 incidents in 2001, leaving 141 dead, ninety injured, and 2,438 houses burned. At least twenty-seven people were reported missing and 102 others were kidnapped or tortured in this period. The NGO described the violence in 2001 as revenge attacks, with both sides claiming they were attacked first.⁶⁴

The first few months of 2001 were dominated by the trial in Palu of the three Catholic migrants from the island of Flores: Fabianus Tibo; Dominggus Soares da Silva; and Don Marinus Riwu. Tibo had served time for a 1990 murder, leading many to assume he was a *preman*, or hired thug, who had been paid to join in the violence. It is suspected that Tibo, although Catholic, was recruited by Protestants due to his reputation as a good fighter.

His defenders point out that the 1990 death resulted from Tibo’s efforts to aid a Muslim in a fight against Balinese attackers. His family argued that he was a scapegoat, assumed to be a leader because at fifty-seven he was one of the oldest people present. Supporters pointed out all the reasons he could not have been the leader of the red troops: he was uneducated, a migrant, and a Catholic. His lawyer and family members claim he was only trying to protect the Catholic Church compound in Moengko the night of the ninja attack.

Tibo’s trial in early 2001 was one of the few attempts to prosecute anyone for murder, rather than the occasional weapons charge. It was also an effort to assign responsibility to those said to have led the fighters. But rather than serving to reduce tensions through legal means, the trial exacerbated them due to violent protests outside the courthouse, questionable testimony inside, and frustration on both sides over the handling of sixteen alleged ringleaders named by Tibo. An important opportunity was lost when the courts failed to conduct the trial professionally and when the subsequent investigations were not transparent.

Throughout the trial there were violent protests outside the courthouse, mostly by Muslim displaced persons from Poso, frequently resulting in police firing warning shots. One member of the defense team quit after being injured by a rock outside the courthouse.⁶⁵

Inside the courthouse the trial was filled with dramatic accusations and graphic testimony by the survivors of the Kilo Nine attack describing the killings and sexual assaults. The key witness was a Muslim given the pseudonym “Anton” who made some astounding claims. He asserted that he infiltrated a Christian training camp for a month, but could not identify any of the 700 trainees because masks were worn the entire time. He also claimed that 727 guns were delivered to Tentena by aircraft, a charge that Muslims would raise when the subject of sweeping for arms arose.

⁶³ The phrase originally referred to the mutual exchange of community resources and services. Aragon, “Communal Violence in Poso.”

⁶⁴ LPS-HAM and Pusat Kajian Dan Pengembangan Media, “Pandangan Akhir Tahun,” December 14, 2001, pp. 18 and 22.

⁶⁵ Human Rights Watch/Asia interview, March 2002, Palu.

On April 5, 2001, all three defendants were convicted for their role in three separate incidents of premeditated murder. All three were sentenced to death.⁶⁶ In a dramatic moment just prior to sentencing, Tibo named sixteen alleged ringleaders. They included influential Protestants, such as Yahya Patiro and Eddy Bungkundapu, and nine of them were civil servants or retired military.⁶⁷ The Supreme Court later upheld the decision. Tibo's lawyer requested a review (*peninjauan kembali*) based on new evidence, which was rejected in May 2002.⁶⁸ On September 30, 2002, a court in Central Sulawesi heard new testimony in a further defense effort to obtain judicial review. A policeman named Irwanto Hasan, dismissed from the force for his involvement in sectarian violence, testified, allegedly changing his account of Tibo's guilt. The Supreme Court will decide if a retrial based on new evidence is possible.⁶⁹

The conflict intensifies

In late June and July 2001 an upsurge in violence, which some consider the beginning of the fourth phase, made it clear that the conflict was far from over. The violence was significant for both sides. The massacre of fourteen Muslims at Buyung Katedo, many of them women and children, outraged Muslims and helped ensure a positive reception for Laskar Jihad soon after. The fact that the violence again coincided with the filling of a key district post reopened debate on the question of power sharing in local government. Both sides agreed the government was failing to address the conflict effectively.

In June, armed groups became more aggressive towards villages and farmers on the edges of town, leaving ten dead or missing and numerous houses in Poso and neighboring Morowali destroyed. On June 28 a group of unidentified armed men attacked a vehicle from South Sulawesi near Watuawu, south of Poso. The vehicle was later found burnt and the six passengers missing.⁷⁰

Plans for a protest at Poso government offices by Christians from Tentena soon raised tensions further. According to police and army officials, Muslims from Ampana marched to Poso on June 30 after hearing a rumor that thousands of Tentena residents were coming to demonstrate. The Muslims were confronted in Malei, Lage subdistrict, where fighting left a man named Pakibu (60) dead, two injured, and thirty houses burnt. TNI and police sent two platoons to contain the violence and reported conditions calm by the next day, but mobs were said to be forming in nearby villages.⁷¹

Tentena leaders said they would send just thirty representatives to town on July 2. The delegation from Tentena was stopped on its way into Poso by Muslim residents of Sayo neighborhood, and forced to return home. The Central Sulawesi daily *Mercusuar* (which later changed its name to *Radar Sulteng*) reported on the house burnings and the roadblock with the inflammatory headline "Phase IV of the Poso Conflict Breaks Out."⁷²

The next day, July 3, the violence indeed intensified as red troops attacked Buyung Katedo, Sayo, and Toyado, while white troops burnt houses and churches in Poso Pesisir and Poso town.⁷³ In one of the worst of these incidents, early on the morning of July 3 attackers killed at least thirteen Muslims in the hamlet of Buyung Katedo in Sepe village, all but two of them women and children. Buyung Katedo is particularly vulnerable to hit-and-run attacks from the mountains and had been attacked before.

Musa, the Imam of the local mosque, was said to have been burnt to death, while the rest were killed with machetes:

⁶⁶ Human Rights Watch opposes the death penalty in all circumstances as fundamentally inhumane.

⁶⁷ Document on file with Human Rights Watch/Asia.

⁶⁸ "Tibo Tolak Dihukum Mati," *Radar Sulteng*, December 26, 2001.

⁶⁹ "Death-row Indonesian Christian militia leaders seek review," Agence France-Presse, September 30, 2002.

⁷⁰ "Polisi Terus memburu Enam Korban," *Nuansa Pos*, July 3, 2001

⁷¹ "Satu Tewas, 30 Rumah Dibakar," *Mercusuar*, July 1, 2001.

⁷² "Kerusuhan Poso Jilid IV Pecah," *Mercusuar*, July 3, 2001.

⁷³ "Poso Terus Membara," *Mercusuar*, July 5, 2001.

- | | | |
|-----------------------|---------------|----------------|
| 1. Musa (50) | 6. Erni | 10. Sumiati |
| 2. Muhammad Aman (40) | 7. Diana | 11. Fitian |
| 3. Sanaria | 8. Linda | 12. Firman (1) |
| 4. Aminah | 9. Siyul Jaya | 13. Ilham |
| 5. Hadra | | |

A headline announced “Buyung Katedo Massacre Begins Outbreak of Poso Phase IV.” The same day, a red group entered Sayo and burnt temporary barracks and a Muslim prayer house. Police reported that the attack killed one civilian, and three policemen.⁷⁴

Early on July 5 a firefight broke out in Toyado, Lage subdistrict. The military and police reported that hundreds of red attackers set fire to the barracks built for displaced Muslims. When security forces intervened they became targets themselves. After firing warning shots, they killed six of the red fighters.⁷⁵

Security forces responded to the rise in fighting around the city’s edges by sending more troops. Although past efforts had been ineffective, the new Regiment Commander in Palu said that after evaluating previous operations, “[t]here is no change, it’s fixed. That is the [policy] implemented so far by the police, which is to appeal to the groups in the conflict to ‘cooling down’ [sic] and look for a peaceful path. After that the forces will conduct sweepings.” Asked how long the “appeal” would take, he replied “That’s a police method. I’m not sure.”⁷⁶

The police were indeed using the same practices they had before. Under the latest phase of the police operation, Sadar Maleo IV, anyone who turned in weapons would not be charged, but if they were later found with arms they would be charged under a 1951 emergency law. The provincial police chief argued that the small outbreaks and revenge attacks at the edges of town were being adequately addressed by joint TNI-police posts.⁷⁷

By July 7 officials said the region was quiet. After delaying his trip twice for security reasons, the governor went to Poso but was blocked from visiting the Protestant town of Tentena by Muslim mobs. One sign read, "Governor, the massacres are not in Tentena, but in Buyung Katedo." Kayamanya's leaders later explained that they had reports that Tentena was not safe.⁷⁸

A few days later the regional military command sent yet another company to guard the trans-Sulawesi highway, bringing the total of outside TNI units to five: three from Makassar and two from Palu. The police had brought in six companies, mostly Brimob. The Regional Military Commander Ahmad Yahya said that in the last month security forces had confiscated one hundred weapons, mostly homemade or aging rifles, and arrested ten people on weapons possession. But he added that he regretted the government’s failure to use the break in the violence to foster reconciliation.⁷⁹

There was some ambivalence about the new troops. The head of Morowali district said village heads had agreed that screening new residents for provocateurs would be more effective than sending soldiers. In Tentena, residents rejected the placement of Brimob officers because they were angry over the July 5 shootout in Toyado that left six Protestants dead. Eventually they allowed two platoons to be installed.⁸⁰

⁷⁴ "Poso Mencekam, 14 Tewas Dibantai," *Mercusuar*, July 4, 2001; "Pembantain Di Buyung Katedo Awal Pecahnya Poso Jilid IV," July 9, 2001. Another child, Mohammad Arif, was said to be missing, possibly raising the toll to fourteen.

⁷⁵ "Aparat-Perusuh Bakutembak," *Mercusuar*, July 6, 2001.

⁷⁶ "Poso Makin panas, Muspida Rapat Mendadak," *Mercusuar*, July 6, 2001.

⁷⁷ "Kapolda: Darurat Sipil Belum Waktunya," *Mercusuar*, July 7, 2001.

⁷⁸ "Permasalahan di Poso Bukan Faktor," *Mercusuar*, July 9, 2001; "Perusuh Poso Kembali Beraksi," *Nuansa Pos*, July 9, 2001.

⁷⁹ "Kodim Poso Kirim Dua Peleton ke Ampana," *Nuansa Pos*, July 11, 2001. "Pangdam: Mestinya Ada Upaya Rekonsiliasi di Saat Poso Aman," *Nuansa Pos*, July 10, 2001.

⁸⁰ "Brimob...," *Mercusuar*, July 10, 2001; "Akhirnya Brimob Diterima Warga Tentena," *Mercusuar*, July 11, 2001.

The renewed violence revived debate about the role of power sharing in the conflict, and specifically the selection of a new Muslim district secretary. The *bupati* had recently selected a Muslim named Awad Al-Amri as district secretary. A Christian politician, Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) chair Datlin Tamalagi, made the link between the selection and the violence, stating, "[t]he policy of the Poso district government has not satisfied people. That has very much caused new conflicts." Asked if he was referring to the recent appointment of Al-Amri, he replied, "Yes, go ahead and interpret it that way. What's clear is that power sharing is not happening there."⁸¹

This issue also revealed tensions between provincial and district leaders. The Palu newspaper *Mercusuar* claimed to have information from inside the governor's office that the governor had called Pusadan, the *bupati* of Poso, and told him to delay Al-Amri's appointment. Pusadan reportedly agreed, but then went ahead with the appointment. According to the source, the governor then told the *bupati*, "If anything happens you will have to be responsible; it's not my headache anymore." The governor soon after chastised the assistant *bupati* for staying in Palu, telling him to go to Poso and deal with problems there.⁸²

Laskar Jihad arrives

The failure of the government to stop the violence had another effect. Incidents such as the killings at Buyung Katedo encouraged the intervention of Laskar Jihad in July 2001. These relatively well-armed, well-trained fighters reinvigorated the conflict and the sporadic attacks increasingly took the form of organized assaults that leveled entire villages. Christians reported seeing automatic weapons used first in Uelene in July 2001, and later in Ranunoncu, Lembamawu, Sepe, and Silanca. Members of Laskar Jihad made several advance visits before officially joining the fray, meeting with provincial and district officials on arrival. As in their arrival in Maluku the year before, Laskar Jihad's arrival was no secret, and security forces did nothing to prevent it.

On July 25 unknown perpetrators bombed the police headquarters in Palu as hundreds of officers were preparing to handle a demonstration. Police officers opened fire, killing three civilians. According to the Palu organization LPS-HAM, the three victims had no link to the protest, let alone the bombing.⁸³

The intense conflict of early July declined, but periodic attacks on villages and farmers working on their cacao or clove trees continued. A new round of police operations began in October, named Operation Sadar Maleo V. As in previous rounds, two weeks of voluntary weapons handovers were followed by "sweeping" under the 1951 Emergency Law.

The Mapane Incident

By late October tensions between Laskar Jihad and security forces began to emerge, as illustrated in an incident in Mapane village. The incident was important in that it was one of the few instances where an armed group was detained and charged for carrying weapons. The previous incident of note had been the arrest of 124 Protestants in July 2000. While the interception of fighters heading for a conflict area was long overdue, it was accompanied by mistreatment and an alleged summary execution, which exacerbated tensions and mistrust. Court testimony by detainees points to a police motive for the arrests and torture—retaliation for the killing of a police officer rather than concern for the rule of law. Indonesian police and military have a history of committing human rights violations in retaliation for any injuries sustained during operations.

Laskar Jihad published an account of the incident, which also illustrates how the different Muslim groups coordinated their attacks. In this version, on October 18, Muslims from Tabalo were chased from their cacao groves near the border with Christian Betalemba, while security officers did nothing. That evening the Muslims burnt a car carrying goods to Betalemba, chasing off the driver and the police officers guarding it.

⁸¹ "Muin Pemicu Petikaian Di Poso?" *Mercusuar*, July 4, 2001.

⁸² "Muin Pemicu Petikaian Di Poso?" *Mercusuar*, July 4, 2001; "Gubernur 'Semprot' Wabup Poso," *Mercusuar*, July 6, 2001.

⁸³ "July Pembakaran Rumah Menonjol" *Mercusuar*; LPS-HAM, "Pandangan Akhir Tahun," p. 14.

The next day Laskar Jihad and Tabalo Muslims prepared for a rumored attack. On October 20 the subdistrict police and military pulled out of Betalemba, allegedly due to a hostile crowd. Tabalo residents reported seeing Christians cutting down their trees, and decided to attack first. There were three Muslim groups preparing for attack: local residents, Laskar Jihad, and “supplemental troops” (*laskar bantuan*) from other areas such as Poso town.

According to Laskar Jihad, more security forces arrived, but the angry fighters “couldn’t be restrained” by *Ustadz* (teacher) Umar Jawas of Laskar Jihad. That evening the Muslim *laskar bantuan* forces set out, and the first shots were fired. They killed a Muslim Brimob officer named Ardiansyah, and captured two others, who were later released.

By 11:00 p.m. most *laskar bantuan* had gone home to Poso town, but some were caught in a sweeping by security forces at Ratulene-Kasiguncu. With 150-200 fighters left, Tabalo Muslims asked Poso Muslims to send help. It was these reinforcements who later accused security forces of arbitrary detention, torture, and summary execution.

A witness named Abu Halifah Romi later testified that he and a friend stopped their motorcycle at the Brimob post in Mapane to report. Two minutes later a truck full of young men coming from Poso stopped at the post and the Brimob officers fired their guns in the air and ordered all passengers to get down. According to Halifah, everyone was forced to lie facedown on the ground, after which they were hit with rifles, kicked, and stripped of their clothes. Halifah told the court that the Brimob officers accused them of killing a fellow policeman.⁸⁴

The detainees were allegedly tortured from 3:00 a.m. to 5:00 a.m. Two detainees, Widyanto Heri Kisananto (22) and Tegu Widyanto (33) later testified that they were tortured until Heri's head bled, requiring stitches and leaving his vision impaired. They testified that they were forced to strip and lie on the ground, and were hit with rifle butts. Widyanto also said the police accused them of killing Ardiansyah.⁸⁵

According to Laskar Jihad and later accounts of the court testimony, the detainees were told to run home. Afraid they would be shot, no one ran except for a youth named Ahmad Sutomo who was then killed in a volley of shots. The forty-three detainees were then brought to Palu where they were again accused of carrying weapons and of killing Ardiansyah. Police soon released fourteen suspects, including three minors.⁸⁶

At a December 10 pre-trial hearing called a *praperadilan*, lawyers for the twenty-nine detainees still in detention argued that there were procedural violations in the arrest, detention, and investigation: arresting officers did not show the documentation required under the criminal code⁸⁷; they carried out brutal and sadistic acts—stripping the detainees, torturing them, and firing the shots that caused the death of Sutomo; and after the arrests they were not given arrest warrants (*surat penangkapan*) and their families were not notified as required by law. The prosecution asserted that the suspects had been caught in the act of carrying weapons, ammunition, and bombs and that no warrant was necessary.⁸⁸

The court ordered all but two of the detainees released immediately and awarded them Rp. 200,000 (US\$22.00) each. Two were not released because their parents had received the necessary documentation from the

⁸⁴ LPS-HAM, “Kesaksian Korban Dalam Sidang Kasus Mapane,” July 27, 2002.

⁸⁵ “Dianiaya dan Ditelanjangi Korban,” *Mercusuar*, December 2001.

⁸⁶ *Berita Laskar Jihad*, “Kronologis Persistiwa Tabalo–Mapane,” October 24, 2001; *Berita Laskar Jihad*, November 4, 2001 and November 14, 2001.

⁸⁷ Indonesian Criminal Code, section 18(10).

⁸⁸ “Praperadilan Kasus Mapane Digelar Maraton,” *Radar Sulteng*, December 12, 2001. Indonesian Criminal Code, section 18(2).

police.⁸⁹ These two, Syamsudin and Sutamin, were released December 19, 2001, when their detention period was up. Charges were not dropped, and the men were told to stay in Poso while the investigation continued.⁹⁰

A lawyer for the detainees said at the time of the hearing that the police chief told him ten police officers were being questioned for their role in the incident.⁹¹ The case against members of the Brimob unit reopened at Poso District Court on July 25, 2002, with witness testimony.

Christians interviewed by Human Rights Watch often described the release of suspects as linked to the end of Ramadan, and questioned the lack of follow-up. Thus, in one of the few cases of arrests of fighters on their way to join a battle, the government forces appeared to have been motivated by revenge. They tortured the detainees and allegedly carried out a summary execution. This absolute disregard for the rule of law left both sides feeling that they had been treated unfairly by the justice system.⁹²

The November attacks

Soon after the Mapane incident, one of the first in a series of village razings took place at Pinedapa. On October 29, according to Laskar Jihad's own version of events, word arrived that Christians from Pinedapa, in Poso Pesisir subdistrict, were harassing passing Muslims as they drove through the district. The village was also accused of refusing to let Muslim displaced persons return from Parigi to harvest their cacao. Muslims from nearby villages joined the attack, and Pinedapa was razed to the ground that night.⁹³

In early November, there were new outbreaks at the city's edge. Fighting in Sayo and Kayamanya neighborhoods left some buildings burnt. One person died and four people were injured in a clash in the Gebangrejo neighborhood.⁹⁴ Fighting at Jembatan (Bridge) II on November 11 caused several casualties, including a retired soldier. Police and TNI sent personnel and both sides reportedly fled, although a participant told Human Rights Watch that the battle lasted five hours before troops arrived. On November 12 a clash at the border of Tanah Runtu and Lembomawu villages involving hundreds of fighters lasted all morning, again ending when security forces arrived and pushed the white side back.⁹⁵

After several weeks of skirmishes, local officials claimed calm had returned by November 14, the eve of Ramadan. The quiet proved to be the calm before the storm. Over the course of several days in late November and early December, eight villages in Poso Pesisir and Lage subdistricts were largely burnt to the ground: Betalemba, Patiung, Deuwa, Sanginora, Tangkura, Padalembara, Silanca, and Sepe. Press reports put the week's violence at between nine and fifteen dead, and thousands fled to the mountain towns of Napu and Tentena.⁹⁶ It was a scale of violence that had not been seen since the July 2000 attacks of the third phase, but this time Christian villages and neighborhoods bore the brunt of the attack. The scale of the violence, and rumors of an attack on Tentena itself, drew unprecedented attention from Jakarta and the international community.

As in October, Laskar Jihad claimed the cause of the conflict was the harassment of Tabalo residents working in their cacao groves. According to Laskar Jihad's own account, on November 27 the attack began at 6:00 a.m. after the red group began massing in Betalemba and firing shots towards Tabalo. At 11:00 a.m. the

⁸⁹ *Berita Laskar Jihad*, December 12, 2001.

⁹⁰ *Berita Laskar Jihad*, December 20, 2001.

⁹¹ "Pengacara Kasus Mapane Akan Tuntut Matinya Tomo," *Radar Sulteng*, December 19, 2001.

⁹² Interestingly on December 8, 2001, a group of ten residents from Tabalo was detained in Betalemba for carrying weapons. The weapons were taken and the men were released on the grounds that the socialization phase of the latest police operation, in which fighters were urged to voluntarily surrender their weapons, had not yet been carried out. LPS-HAM, "Pandangan Akhir Tahun," p. 33.

⁹³ *Berita Laskar Jihad*, "Akibat Berani Serang Muslim Pinedapa Dibumi Hangus," October 31 2001

⁹⁴ "Dua Meninggal dalam Aksi Baku Tembak di Poso," *Media Indonesia*, November 13, 2001.

⁹⁵ "Baku Tembak di Poso, Satu Orang Tewas," *Media Indonesia*, November 12, 2001. *Berita Laskar Jihad* November 13, 2001.

⁹⁶ "Tiga Anggota TNI Tertembak di Poso," *Kompas Cybermedia*, December 3, 2001, "Indonesia troops accused in troubled eastern town," Reuters, December 6, 2001.

Muslims decided to infiltrate the Protestant area and were met with gunfire. Security forces at their post in Betalemba also shot at Muslims and were attacked themselves. Muslim fighter Abdullah alias Muhammad Sanusi (33) died and another named Sa'ad was injured. At 2:00 p.m. Muslim fighters arrived from Poso town and the coastal subdistrict of Poso Pesisir. A Tabalo resident named Yudi (15) died, but the Betalemba Christians were pushed back to Tangkura. Christian sources reported one Christian named Kede (30) killed in Betalemba.

At 4:00 p.m., hours after the battle began, two army units from Infantry Battalion 711 arrived in Betalemba. Muslim women and children had built barricades to stop army trucks from traveling from Mapane to the Ratulene-Tabalo intersection. Laskar Jihad reported that the soldiers negotiated with one of their leaders, the same *Ustadz* (teacher) Umar Jawas who had also presided over the October battle, to extract their colleagues in Betalemba. The soldiers reached the Patiwunga-Tangkura border and the Muslim fighters retreated. By 5:30 p.m. security forces occupied Betalemba while the Muslims set up watch in Tabalo.⁹⁷

According to the Laskar Jihad account, on November 28 the Muslim forces decided to advance to the elementary school in Patiwunga, again claiming to anticipate a Protestant attack. Christians descended from above and there was a short firefight. Some Muslims went back to Tabalo, while others advanced. At 10:00 a.m., the white troops reached the edge of Tangkora, which they began to burn. Shootouts killed two Protestants (which Christian accounts confirmed), but most residents had already fled. By 1:00 a.m. Tangkora was burnt down and the white troops pulled back to Tabalo.⁹⁸

A resident of Tangkura described the attack:

There were many of them. They [the white fighters] had—what kind of gun is it that doesn't stop? I don't know but it was sophisticated. We heard and saw them and we ran. We got on a truck and came here, but some people spent seven or eight days in the forest. This was on November 27. On Tuesday was Betalemba and Patiwunga, then Wednesday was Tangkura. There were trucks behind them, and the leader was big and tall and had a beard, and was dressed in white. All our livestock was lost and the vehicles were taken.⁹⁹

On November 29, Sanginora and Dewua were overrun by 4:00 p.m., and Laskar Jihad reported killing four Christians. The Crisis Center of the Central Sulawesi Christian Church reported that the attackers had heavy equipment for use in the destruction and looting as well as oil tanks for the burning of villages.¹⁰⁰

As many as 11,000 displaced persons fled into the hills to Napu. One displaced person from Betalemba who sought refuge recalled fleeing from village to village:

On the morning of the 27th, the white fighters—who knows if they were [Laskar] Jihad or not—entered Betalemba. There were eight soldiers from Battalion 711 posted there. After a clash they withdrew to Tangkora. The Muslims burnt Betalemba at 3:00 in the afternoon, as soon as they controlled the village. We went to Sanginora, but soon there were rumors it would be attacked, too.

In the middle of the night we heard the soldiers were pulled out. The villagers on guard duty asked them to stay, some even lay down in front of their vehicle, according to people who were there. But they were told, "We're just following orders to return to Poso."

⁹⁷ "Betalemba-Patiwunga Dijebol Kaum Muslimin," *Berita Laskar Jihad*, November 28, 2001.

⁹⁸ "Jatuhnya Desa Tangkura," *Berita Laskar Jihad*, November 29, 2001.

⁹⁹ Human Rights Watch interview, name withheld upon request, Napu, March 2001.

¹⁰⁰ "Sanginora and Dewua berhasil bumihangus," *Berita Laskar Jihad*, November 30, 2001; Crisis Center-GKST, "Jihad Muncul, Aparat Hilang," electronic posting, November 29, 2001 (on file at Human Rights Watch).

On November 28, the white group freely entered Patiwunga and Tangkura. The next day Dewua and Sanginora were burnt down, the houses, the church; even the statue of Jesus was decapitated.

I was panicked. We were eighteen kilometers away when they entered Sanginora. People were cutting down trees as roadblocks, but the Muslims had chainsaws and tractors. We walked seven kilometers in the forest and watched the smoke rise, heard the explosions. We spent half the night in the forest and then pleaded with a car that someone had rented to take us to Napu; my husband can't walk.

I trust the security forces. But my doubts are this: why were they pulled out on November 27? Now TNI is building houses and Brimob's behavior is better. But what we really want is security. If I have to choose a house or security, I'll live in hut. The important thing is to be safe.¹⁰¹

A Central Sulawesi Christian Church account of the attacks also claims that the TNI and police officers pulled out of Betalemba, Patiwunga, Tabalo, and Tangkura in the midst of the attacks.¹⁰² The accounts of the two sides are very similar on this point, but not entirely consistent with regard to when and where the police were. There is a clear perception that they were withdrawn, and the results were unequivocal, namely that the sustained attacks caused the destruction of a string of villages over several days.

The attacks began Tuesday in Poso Pesisir and additional TNI troops reportedly did not arrive until Friday, after six villages had been leveled. However, the day after their arrival, December 1, the attacks shifted to Lage subdistrict, at the villages of Sepe and Silanca.

On December 1, Laskar Jihad reported destroying Batugencu, part of Sepe village, "in a sea of fire."¹⁰³ According to a Christian version of events, at noon four trucks of newly arrived troops from South Sulawesi moved from Poso towards Tentena to guard villages. Laskar Jihad arrived and around 9:00 p.m. the attack began. Sepe villagers—previously attacked in December 2000 and October 2001—defended the road into the village and there was heavy fighting until two trucks of soldiers arrived at 10:30 p.m. and told the people to pull back and let them through. But the army then pulled back, allowing Laskar Jihad to move forward and take the village. In several hours all the houses were destroyed and the villagers' belongings ransacked.¹⁰⁴ It is difficult to confirm this version, but there is evidence that the soldiers did engage the attackers in a fight, as three soldiers from Infantry Battalion 711 from Palu were reported in critical condition.¹⁰⁵

The extensive November violence also affected the Hindu Balinese transmigrants who had largely been left alone. In some villages the only houses left standing were those of the Balinese. But by early December over 1,400 Balinese from several villages in Poso Pesisir had fled to other districts. The secretary of the local Hindu organization reported that it was too dangerous, there was no food coming in, and for the last week they had been unable to get to their fields. Nearly fifty Balinese houses and at least one temple were burnt in the attacks.¹⁰⁶

The military response to the November attacks

Rumors of a full-scale attack on the Protestant center of Tentena were amplified by Christian solidarity organizations abroad. It is hard to determine how real the threat was, but white troops were clearly moving village by village up the road. Earlier, Laskar Jihad had threatened: "If the Christians indeed continue to try to perpetuate this conflict, then as newcomers in Poso, Laskar Jihad won't be satisfied until we have seen Lake Poso. The *umat* [Muslim community] will struggle until the last drop of blood is spilt."¹⁰⁷ A battle for Tentena would have had enormous casualties, and it is possible that the arrival of new troops and attention from Jakarta averted it.

¹⁰¹ Human Rights Watch Interview, name withheld upon request, Napu, March 2001.

¹⁰² "Laskar Jihad Kembali Menyerang," Crisis Center-GKST.

¹⁰³ *Berita Laskar Jihad*, December 2, 2001.

¹⁰⁴ "Penyerangan Desa Sepe," Crisis Center-GKST.

¹⁰⁵ "Tiga Anggota TNI Tertembak di Poso," *Kompas Cybermedia*, December 3, 2001.

¹⁰⁶ "Ribuan Warga Bali Dievakuasi Dari Poso," *Kompas Cybermedia*, December 4, 2001.

¹⁰⁷ *Berita Laskar Jihad*, November 18, 2001.

The international war on terror raised the international profile of the conflict. Indonesia was criticized for allowing the chaotic conditions that the international community believed al-Qaeda was seeking. There were high-level meetings in Jakarta and official visits to the area. Additional police and TNI companies were sent to protect vulnerable areas, separate the two sides, conduct mobile patrols, and secure roads.¹⁰⁸

Coordinating Minister for Politics and Security Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono announced a joint military-police *Operasi Pemulihan Keamanan* (Security Restoration Operation). The six-month operation was to include two months to stop the violence, plus four more months to restore peace, confiscate weapons, expel outsiders, and monitor conflict areas closely; carry out legal action; and conduct rehabilitation, reconstruction, and reconciliation. Yudhoyono noted that Indonesia faced negative international opinion due to the continuing conflict, but urged security forces not to let the fear of being accused of human rights violations keep soldiers from acting firmly.¹⁰⁹

In the joint Security Restoration Operation, the police were nominally in charge. This contrasts with the situation in Maluku, where the joint operations of 2002 are led by the army in what some critics have called "martial law by stealth." However, even in Poso the actual authority of the police was limited, and there were indications that if the police could not handle the job of the integrated command, it would shift to the army.¹¹⁰

By December 3, army officials reported that order had been restored with help from the Jakarta troops, although there were no known arrests. The same day, Christian sources reported four bomb explosions in Poso town.¹¹¹ The Security Restoration Operation was underway by mid-December, searching for weapons and identity cards. Although those without clear identification were supposedly to be questioned and sent home, there are no known cases of removals from the area.¹¹²

In addition to troops sent under the Security Restoration Operation, the government announced that elite troops from the rapid reaction strike force (Pasukan Pemukul Reaksi Cepat, PPRC), would be sent to the province for military exercises. Ryamidzar Ryacudu, chief of the Strategic Reserve (Kostrad) that makes up much of the PPRC, acknowledged that sweeping was the job of regular army and police, but added a warning: "Unless later there is a situation of urgency and the regional military command can't handle it, and the police can't handle it, then Kostrad will go in to secure things. Now control is still in the hands of the police, right?" Previous training exercises were held in Papua, and in 2002 more were planned for Maluku, indicating a pattern of holding training exercises in conflict areas.¹¹³

The Toyado Incident

In the aftermath of the November attacks and in the midst of a series of a high-profile visits, the military was accused of committing serious human rights violations, including "disappearances" and extra-judicial executions. Angry over the injuries sustained in the clash at Sepe on December 1, soldiers allegedly abducted seven Muslim men and youths from Toyado village in Tojo subdistrict, five of whom were later found dead. Together with the earlier Mapane case, which implicated the police paramilitary unit Brimob, the Toyado incident reflects a pattern of retaliation, rather than strict law enforcement, by security forces. The accusation that one victim was handed over to the Christian side to be killed greatly increased suspicions among Muslims that the security forces were not impartial. The seven abducted were identified as:

¹⁰⁸ "Pemerintah Diharapkan Pertimbangan Status Poso," *Kompas Cybermedia*, December 3, 2001.

¹⁰⁹ "Menko Polkam: Pemerintah akan lakukan Operasi Pemulihan Keamanan di Poso," *Kompas Cybermedia*, December 3, 2001; "Presiden Setuju Operasi Pemulihan Keamanan Terpadu di Poso," *Kompas Cybermedia*, December 4, 2001.

¹¹⁰ "Poso Dijadikan Zona Latihan TNI," *Radar Sulteng*, December 11, 2001.

¹¹¹ "Untuk Sementara, Poso Terkendali," *Kompas Cybermedia*, December 4, 2001; "Bom Meledak di gereja Sion Poso," Crisis Center-GKST.

¹¹² "Laskar Jihad Terus Dirazia, Poso Membaik," *Manado Post*, December 10, 2001.

¹¹³ "Poso Dijadikan Zona Latihan TNI," *Radar Sulteng*, December 11, 2001. PPRC is made up of units from the Army Strategic and Reserve Command (Kostrad) and Army, Navy and Air Force task forces.

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Hasyim Toana (50) | 5. Latif (25) |
| 2. Imran Lacuru (32) | 6. Kede (26, escaped) |
| 3. Syuaib Lamarati (16) | 7. Iwan (18, escaped) ¹¹⁴ |
| 4. Awal (20) | |

Some later reports of the investigation into the incident include an eighth victim named Riyadi or Aswat. When word of the abduction spread, including the allegation that the men had been taken to a house in Christian Tagolu, a mob formed at the Bonesompe military post to demand their release. The armed crowd was prevented from burning down a church near the command, leading to fighting between the crowd and security forces. A man named Syarifuddin was reported killed in the incident, while gunfire and explosions injured others. The district military commander denied knowing the whereabouts of the men and promised to quickly resolve what he described as a missing persons case.¹¹⁵

The case changed from missing persons to murder when the body of one of those missing, sixteen-year-old Syuaib Lamarati, was found with stab wounds in the river. Police said they had not ruled out soldiers as suspects. Soon after, soldiers found four more bodies in shallow graves near Tagolu.

A reporter accompanying the Jakarta delegation said Security Minister Yudhoyono refused to go look at the corpse of Lamarati, but promised, "We are attempting to bring those allegedly involved in violence to court."¹¹⁶ B. S. Marbun of the National Human Rights Commission, one of the Jakarta figures in Poso at the time, commented, "Members of the public said the military has done some torture. The military denied that. So, we still have to verify this." No follow-up from the commission has been made public.

An army official told the press that a joint team of military police and the Regional Military Command had interviewed sixty-five witnesses (most of them soldiers) and identified four suspects from Company B of District Military Command 711 in Kawua, saying more might be added on torture charges. He said they would face a military tribunal, but would not name the suspects.¹¹⁷ Reports of the investigation noted that fifty soldiers had been involved in the incident, including the platoon commander. There was little news of the case, until June 2002, when ten soldiers from Infantry Battalion 711, including two officers, were declared suspects. The Palu military police chief said all the materials, including Komnas-HAM recommendations, had been sent to the army's Auditor General for review. A trial was set to start later in 2002.¹¹⁸

Retaliation on civilian populations by security forces after casualties is common in Indonesia, particularly in heavy conflict areas such as Aceh. In Poso this pattern served to strengthen convictions that the army and Brimob were biased, which made efforts to uphold the law through weapons searches and roadblocks much more difficult. The slow pace and lack of public information about the outcome of military justice proceedings neither reassured the civilian population nor helped deter future abuses.

The Malino Declaration

Official visits by top police officials, cabinet ministers, and members of the National Human Rights Commission, helped initiate plans for a new reconciliation meeting. Even Laskar Jihad, which normally ridiculed the reconciliation process, acknowledged that the effort would be more effective than previous ones, due to Jakarta's interest.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁴ "10 Anggota TNI Jadi Tersangka Kasus Penculikan di Poso," *Republika Online*, June 25, 2002. "Ten Indonesian soldiers to face court martials," ABC Radio Australia News, June 26, 2002.

¹¹⁵ "Tujuh Warga Sipil di Poso Diculik," *Kompas Cybermedia*, December 3, 2001.

¹¹⁶ "Indonesia troops accused in troubled eastern town," Reuters, December 6, 2001.

¹¹⁷ "Empat Oknum TNI Mengarah Tersangka," *Radar Sulteng*, January 11, 2002.

¹¹⁸ "Sebanyak 10 Anggota TNI Jadi Tersangka Kasus Penculikan di Poso," *Kompas Cybermedia*, June 25, 2002.

¹¹⁹ "Komnas Ham Turunkan Tim ke Poso," *Kompas Cybermedia*, December 3, 2001; *Berita Laskar Jihad*, December 17, 2001.

Some observers worried the efforts would rely too heavily on a military approach. Muslim academic Sulaiman Mamar, who would soon lead the Muslim delegation to Malino, noted that the attention was good, but that the visits had fostered hatred, “because the various statements about efforts to resolve the conflict prioritize too much a security approach that is top-down and tends to be unfair.” In a rare move, Christian organizations and parties called for the United Nations Security Council to intervene.¹²⁰

But despite the challenges, a break in the fighting and a surge in attention from Jakarta led to a new dialogue in the hill town of Malino, South Sulawesi. This fifth attempt at a peace agreement was a new and more comprehensive approach to conflict resolution. Coordinating Minister for People’s Welfare Yusuf Kalla, a native of Sulawesi, headed the mediation team and helped ensure resources for rebuilding and other crucial follow-up activities. While the dialogue was underway, a comprehensive military presence manned checkpoints on major roads in the district.¹²¹

Past agreements in Poso and other conflict areas had primarily consisted of *pro forma* handshakes by a handful of religious or traditional leaders designated from above. These top-down agreements had increased mutual distrust when such pacts inevitably fell apart. The traditional ceremony of August 2000, attended by President Wahid, had been followed by further outbreaks, bolstering the hardliner view that reconciliation was only a tactic by the other side to gain an advantage.

In contrast, the talks on December 19-20, 2001 at Malino recognized the humanitarian, legal, and security dimensions of the conflict in the choice of attendees, the resources provided by Jakarta, and the formation of follow-up working groups. Hastily selected by leaders of each side with an eye towards geographic, ethnic, and professional diversity, the participants were more representative than earlier small teams appointed by authorities. Work plans addressed the various dimensions of the conflict, and included a timetable for action. The process still retained elements of the old centralized and military approach to ending conflict, and the more complex aspects, such as Laskar Jihad and justice issues, were not clearly resolved, but the new approach was a welcome change.

One Muslim participant said the participants at Malino were presented with three scenarios by officials from Jakarta: 1) continued conflict and more victims, and the imposition of civil emergency status; 2) designation as a military operations area (*Daerah Operasi Militer*, DOM) giving the military a much freer hand; or 3) peace. The Muslim participants urged that “peace” be replaced by “dialogue” so as not to get too far ahead of local population.¹²²

After each group met separately to review the history of the conflict, a ten-point Malino Declaration agreed:

1. To cease all forms of conflict and dispute.
2. To obey efforts to enforce the law and support legal sanctions against lawbreakers.
3. To ask the state apparatus to act firmly and justly to maintain security.
4. In order to create a condition of peace, to reject the imposition of a state of emergency and any foreign party involvement.
5. To dismiss slander and dishonesty against all parties and enforce an attitude of mutual respect, and to forgive for the sake of peaceful coexistence.

¹²⁰ “Laskar Jihad Merupakan Mitra Pemerintah,” Prof. Dr. Sulaiman Mamar, MA; “Poso Muslims return home, Christians take refuge,” *Jakarta Post*, December 14, 2001.

¹²¹ One journalist noted that many checkpoints had been taken over from Laskar Jihad and some still carried Osama Bin Laden posters. “Indonesian troops try to keep lid on Poso cauldron,” Reuters, January 23, 2002.

¹²² “Mencari Kembali Sintuvu Maroso,” *Forum Keadilan*, no. 40, January 20, 2002.

6. Poso is an integral part of Indonesia. Therefore every citizen has the right to live, come and stay peacefully and respectfully of local customs.
7. All rights and belongings have to be returned to their lawful owners as they were before the conflict began.
8. To return all displaced people to their respective homes.
9. Together with the government, to carry out complete rehabilitation of the economic infrastructure.
10. To carry out respective religious laws according to a principle of mutual respect and to abide by all the agreed upon rules, in the form of laws, government regulations, or other regulations.

Attached to the declaration were two work plans: one for economic and social matters; one for security and law enforcement. The work plans cover six months and were to take place in seven subdistricts in Poso and Morowali:

December 21, 2001, until January 6, 2002: public appeals to turn in weapons, while publicizing the penalties for weapons possession, including life in prison and the death penalty.

January 7 to February 7: Amnesty for the voluntary surrender of weapons. Weapons are to be collected by the village head and turned over to the nearest security post.

February 7 to March 7: Return of displaced persons.

February 7 to July 7: Law enforcement (*peneggakan hukum*). Joint police and military troops carry out weapons collection, targeting those suspected of weapons possession and those who hide or assist perpetrators. The methodology is to be preventive and “repressive,” using searches of vehicles, houses, and questioning witnesses and suspects. Existing unresolved cases are to be prioritized.

February 7 and March 7: Removal of outsiders. The first step is identification of outsiders (*pendatang*) with no fixed residence or who did not register with authorities within fourteen days of arrival under the criminal code.¹²³ They will be told to register promptly and information will be given to local officials to assist in “voluntary returns.” Returns are to be carried out through agreement with the local community, by enforcing the relevant provisions of the criminal code, or through local regulations.¹²⁴

This provision, together with Point 6 of the Declaration on the right of all Indonesians to live peacefully and respectfully of local customs, gave wide latitude for newcomers to remain. While it does allow for the removal of those who do not follow regulations, or who do not choose to live peacefully and respectfully, there are no known cases of anyone being removed.

The period of January 7 - February 7, 2002, was scheduled for the voluntary surrender of arms to security forces under the Malino Declaration. Even before that date officials in Poso town and Lage subdistrict reported that hundreds of weapons had been turned over to police. By March officials estimated nearly 39,000 weapons had been turned in, nearly all of them homemade. Despite sightings of factory issue and even automatic weapons during the fighting, by March only one had been found, hidden under a bridge.¹²⁵ Leaders on both sides supported the confiscation of arms in principal, but were concerned that procedures for searching houses be followed. Laskar Jihad circulated a guide to the rights of homeowners. On the Christian side there was some hesitation due to a prior experience of turning in weapons that were then used as evidence in the Tibo trial. Some residents

¹²³ Indonesian Criminal Code, sections 505 and 515.

¹²⁴ Malino Declaration for Poso, Annex 1: Bidang Keamanan dan Penegakan Hukum. Agenda Dan Rencana Kerja Sebagai Tindak Lanjut Pertemuan Malino Untuk Poso.

¹²⁵ “Warga Muslim Poso Serahkan Lagi Ribuan Senjata,” *Kompas Cybermedia*, January 1, 2002.

expressed skepticism of official figures, noting that the estimates of weapons turned in by each side were suspiciously even.

Weaknesses in the declaration

As noted, the declaration was an improvement over previous efforts. But many of the elements were recycled tactics from earlier or ongoing military operations and had already been announced. The timetable was unrealistic and many dates, such as for the start of weapons searches, were later pushed back. Other difficult questions, such as the removal of Laskar Jihad and the handling of new and prior crimes, were left vague, and as a result suffered from weak implementation.

Both sides seemed critical of the process but tired of the conflict. Criticism of the process generally related to the composition of the teams, the continued top-down approach, or mistrust of the other side. A Christian invitee who declined to participate at Malino told Human Rights Watch that too many people from Palu rather than Poso had been involved. He was one of several who viewed the meeting as one of parties being called to account, rather than a dialogue for peace.¹²⁶ Responding to the criticism that Malino was attended by too many Palu-based leaders, some participants stressed that they sought a lot of input from Poso residents, or even that people in the field were too hotheaded.¹²⁷

Demonstrating the deep mistrust, Muslim hard-line politician Nawawi Sang Kilat said Muslims had few hopes for the agreement, while Laskar Jihad cited a litany of incidents that had occurred despite past reconciliation efforts. According to the group, one point rejected in Malino as too extreme was “if this accord is violated, then the Muslim community is ready for *jihad* (*apabila pemufakatan ini dilanggar maka umat Islam siap jihad fi sabilillah*)”.¹²⁸

A provision of the agreement was the formation of working groups (*kelompok kerja* or “*pokja*”) and a socialization team.¹²⁹ At the district level, nine working groups were formed with different areas of operation: Security, Law, Mental and Spiritual Rehabilitation, Social Rehabilitation, Economic Rehabilitation, Physical Rehabilitation, Return of Displaced Persons, Education, and Health. A separate Socialization and Reconciliation Team was made up of members from each side in each affected subdistrict.¹³⁰

The membership and approach of these committees became a point of contention. Pastor Damanik, a top Protestant leader and signatory (and a target of Muslim anger due to suspicion of his involvement in the fighting), criticized the *bupati*'s failure to include him on the socialization team. He also urged that socialization be carried out jointly, and even invited former opponent Sofyan Lembah, who had once put a price on Damanik's head, to Tentena. In Palu, prominent signatories from both sides, including S. Pelima, Sofyan Lembah, Nawawi Sang Kilat, Sulaiman Mamar, and Yus Mangun, warned the government of their dissatisfaction with the membership of the province-level working group, but denied looking for a piece of the rehabilitation projects.¹³¹

Due in part to such disagreements, the working groups were slow to get off the ground. A Tentena group called the Independent Committee to Monitor Implementation of the Malino Declaration conducted a small survey of displaced persons in late January 2002. They found that six weeks after the signing only 43 percent had heard of the working groups and only 15 percent could name any members. Only 6 percent said they had felt its

¹²⁶ Human Rights Watch/Asia interview, Napu, March 2001.

¹²⁷ *Berita Laskar Jihad*, January 8, 2002.

¹²⁸ *Berita Laskar Jihad*, December 22, 2001 and December 24, 2001.

¹²⁹ The common Indonesian practice of disseminating information from the top through community leaders or mass communication is referred to as “*socialisasi*” or socialization.

¹³⁰ “Keputusan Bupati Poso, Nomor: 188.45/0300/2002 Tentang Penyempurnaan Susunan Personalia Tim Kelompok Kerja (Pokja) Dan Tim Sosialisasi Sert Rekonsiliasi Dekalrasi Malino,” January 15, 2002.

¹³¹ “Damanik Sesalkan Tim Sosialisasi,” *Radar Sulteng*, January 8, 2002.; “Gubernur Aminuddin Diwarning: Alumni Malino Ditinggalkan Dalam Keanggotan Pokja Perdamaian,” *Radar Sulteng*, January 2002.

effects.¹³² In early March, a member of the Poso working group, currently a displaced person in Tentena, told Human Rights Watch that to his knowledge the only activity so far had been the opening ceremony, to which he had not gone due to lack of bus fare.¹³³

One of the most important aspects of the agreement was the provision of funds to support rebuilding. Previous reconciliation efforts had not adequately addressed the problem of destroyed housing and infrastructure, which kept many people from returning home and made acts of revenge more likely.

This time, however, the Coordinating Minister for People's Welfare Yusuf Kalla, who played a central role as Head of the Mediation Team at Malino, pledged substantial resources from Jakarta. The provincial government announced plans to rebuild 9,321 units of temporary housing and nearly 600 public facilities (including 120 houses of worship) by the end of fiscal year 2002, with 882 already underway in January 2002. The housing was to consist of corrugated zinc roofing with either plywood or plank walls built on the foundation of destroyed houses in order to allow people to return home quickly.¹³⁴

Humanitarian aid in Indonesia is often criticized for being "projectized" (*diproyekkan*), or made into a money-making proposition for agencies, army units, or politicians. After Malino, the military was given an explicit role in housing rehabilitation, reportedly in lieu of the normal payment from provincial government to the army for deployment. Two sacks of rice were allocated per house to help feed those doing the construction, with the excess to be sold for other foodstuffs. There were the usual suspicions that funds or materials were being siphoned off, but some observers were optimistic that the plan would help keep extortion down and give TNI a stake in a peace-time economy.

But if the humanitarian question was at last addressed, the problem of Laskar Jihad remained. Laskar Jihad's strategy has long been to integrate into the local community by providing social and educational services, taking ordinary jobs, and linking up with local organizations. Even as the organization tries to expand into new areas, such as the conflict areas of Papua and Aceh, it puts down roots in existing areas of operation. In addition, Jakarta was fearful of angering Muslim parties by cracking down on a prominent Muslim organization, and Poso Muslims were unwilling to forgo their allies.

Lack of common ground led to the vague language in the declaration, affirming the right of anyone to remain in the area "peacefully and respectfully". Some process of removal was to take place between February 7 and March 7. However, neither Christian observers nor Laskar Jihad themselves reported any removals by mid-March 2002, and there were no reports of any prior to the start of their voluntary departure in October 2002. A member of the Laskar Jihad legal team told Human Rights Watch that most members had obtained the needed letter of introduction and reported to local officials, and none had been forced to leave. When inspection of ID cards began he expected this might be a problem, but said that many members were registering for local ID cards. Some Christians accused them of getting fraudulent documents from sympathetic officials, but Laskar Jihad asserted they were valid.

A similar lack of clarity on legal issues undermined implementation of the Malino Declaration. The joint Security Restoration Operation had already specified a phase where law enforcement would take priority, and the Malino Declaration specified that a law enforcement approach would be taken for the five months after February 7, primarily regarding illegal weapons possession. It did not specify a policy for crimes committed before or after that phase. As it is, members of both communities expressed concern that new incidents involving both civilians and security forces were being ignored or downplayed in the interests of peace. The question of justice for past

¹³² Komite Independen Pemanantau Pelaksanaan Deklarasi Malino (Committee to Monitor Implementation of the Malino Declaration), "Results Report of the KIPPD Survey,"

¹³³ Human Rights Watch interview, name withheld upon request, Tentena, March 2002.

¹³⁴ "Papararan Gubernur Sulawesi Tengah Tentang Perkembangan Penanganan Dan Penanggulangan Konflik Poso Pasca Pertemuan Malino, Tanggal 18-20 Desember 2001," January 2002.

incidents, such as the killings of fourteen Muslims at Buyung Katedo or the November 2001 destruction of Christian communities, has also not been addressed.

The Malino Declaration set an important precedent through its recognition of the need for broader-based dialogue, a multi-dimensional approach to conflict resolution, and adequate funding. But the residual weaknesses of a top-down, security-oriented approach need to be fixed in Poso and in all similar efforts. The crucial question of justice for past crimes and removal of outside groups needs far more clarity, teeth, and monitoring to avoid continuing tensions.¹³⁵

The Fifth Phase: After Malino

The Malino declaration helped reduce the level of violence. There continued to be occasional bombings or fights, a few of them fatal, but little of the wholesale destruction of villages or widespread killings of the previous four phases. Referring to the fragile peace, residents frequently referred to Poso as “not safe, but secured.” One displaced person told Human Rights Watch she was convinced that “if security forces are removed we will all be shot within hours.” Many families were sending a few members home to clean up and build temporary housing, but had no plans to dismantle their carefully built shelters.¹³⁶

In the first major threat to the agreement, on New Year’s Eve four churches were bombed in Palu, including a Pentecostal church, an Adventist Church, and an Indonesian Protestant Church. There was some debate about a relationship to the violence in Poso. The buildings did not belong to the Central Sulawesi Christian Church, the denomination most closely associated with the red side, and they were all in Palu, not Poso. The bombing of churches over the holidays occurs almost annually in Indonesia, a pattern that has been linked to both national politics and to Muslim extremists.

However, one of three men arrested in Palu was a Malino signatory from the Muslim delegation. Identified as Yon or YS, he was charged with making maps of the churches and hiding bomb materials at a neighbor's house. Muslim leaders condemned the bombings as an effort to bring the conflict to the provincial capital of Palu. The effort was not successful, although minor incidents continued in Poso itself.¹³⁷

A Muslim legal advocacy team identified nine cases of alleged abuse of Muslim civilians by Brimob units and three by army units between the Malino declaration and February 14, 2002.¹³⁸ Whether these cases demonstrate bias, the all too common human rights abuses by security officers, or both, is difficult to determine. Residents were also concerned that incidents of violence were frequently written off as purely criminal (*tindak pidana murni*) in order to give the impression that the conflict had ended. For example, in March the Central Sulawesi Police Chief asserted all fourteen recorded cases of violence since the Malino accord were criminal rather than sectarian, including the bombing of the government emergency aid office.¹³⁹

Rumors circulated in the Christian community that Muslims were threatening to attack as soon as the troops withdrew. In mid-January, Muslims in Malei were still conducting patrols with Laskar Jihad, again on the

¹³⁵ The apparent success of Malino led to a “Malino II” in February 2002 to address the conflict in Maluku. The similarity of the agreements raised some concern that Jakarta had replaced a *pro forma* handshake with a *pro forma* ten point agreement. The conflict in Maluku was even more intractable: involving many islands, higher casualties, and more direct participation of security forces. The Malino II agreement has proved less effective than its predecessor in resolving the conflict.

¹³⁶ Human Rights Watch interview, name withheld upon request, Napu, March 2001. The national weekly Forum Keadilan wrote that “Revenge can’t be erased like ink on a page. Each group seems to be waiting for the opposing side to make the first move.” “Mencari Kembali Sintuvu Maroso,” *Forum Keadilan* no. 40, January 20, 2002.

¹³⁷ “Tersangka bom terancam hukuman mati,” *Surya*, January 10, 2002. “Pemboman Gereja di Palu Adudomba Pihak Ketiga,” *Kompas Cybermedia*, January 2, 2002; “Presiden Instruksikan Polri Agar Usut Kasus Bom Tahun Baru,” *Kompas Cybermedia*, January 2, 2002.

¹³⁸ “Data-data Pelanggaran Ham Oleh TNI/Polri di Poso,” Tim Pengacara Muslim Poso, et al, February 2002.

¹³⁹ “Security and order in Poso improving after Malino deal,” *Jakarta Post*, April 23, 2002.

claim that Christians were stealing their cacao. A journalist visiting the area after the Malino accords saw four weapons workshops still in operation in both Tentena and Poso.¹⁴⁰

Late May and June 2002 saw some worrying developments, and by August one NGO reported that there had been twenty five violations of the Malino Declaration with no effective response by police.¹⁴¹ One resident described “a shift from an open war to a secret war of bombings and mysterious shootings.”¹⁴² Yusuf Kalla, one of the architects of the Malino Declaration, noted in early August, “There is no more conflict among the people, but there are small terror groups...They explode bombs one day and fire shots on another.” Kalla blamed unidentified Indonesians from outside the region, but said neither Laskar Jihad nor the military was behind the recent violence.¹⁴³

A man named Agus Pasolle, who had recently returned to Lakalemba village in Poso Pesisir subdistrict, was found dead on May 16. On June 5, a bomb exploded on a bus in Toini village in Poso Pesisir subdistrict, on the main Palu-Poso-Tentena route, killing four and injuring seventeen passengers, all Christians. Another returned displaced person named Risman Pontali (48) was found dead in Kayamanya on June 9.¹⁴⁴

On July 1, 2002, the Security Restoration Operation was replaced with a three-month security maintenance operation (*operasi pemeliharaan keamanan*), still under the command of the Central Sulawesi police chief. Troop strength was reduced from over 4,000 to 2,100 police, plus two companies of soldiers. The police said that they were able to reduce security forces because neighborhood watch groups, or *siskamling*, were helping to guard the peace.¹⁴⁵

Another bomb exploded on a bus traveling from Palu to Tentena on July 12. An NGO investigation at the scene found that the bus left Palu at noon heading for Tentena. After arriving in Poso without incident the bus entered the hills of Kawua and Ranononcu. Just twenty meters from a joint army/police post, the driver, Jhoni (32), saw a bag by the side of the road. He stopped, thinking it had fallen off a previous bus. (Due to the shootings and bombings, buses often drive in convoys). As it was being loaded onto the bus the bag exploded, killing a seventeen-year-old female passenger and injuring several others. Within fifteen minutes a bomb squad assigned to the Poso police arrived and marked off the crime site and the other passengers were questioned, but no perpetrators were identified.¹⁴⁶

Beginning in July, there were five mysterious shooting incidents:

- On July 3 at 1:30 p.m., unknown assailants shot Ivert Lengkono (49), from Betania village in Poso Pesisir subdistrict, while he was riding his motorcycle home. The hospital extracted a bullet, said to be from a Colt, but Lengkono died five days later.
- On July 6, Yos Tompodung (50) was shot in a crowded Kasintuwu bus terminal in Poso town. The shooter fled on a motorcycle before he could be identified; the bullets were again described as coming from a Colt 38.
- On July 7, in Mayura village, South Pamona subdistrict, Ones L (38) was shot in the head and died while fishing from a boat in the Kodin river.
- On July 11 around 9:00 gun shots rang out in Silanca village, Lage subdistrict, and residents found Albert Laodi (32) shot in the back. Residents of Silanca then retaliated by attacking Mohammed Mustari (47), a Muslim who happened to be passing by on the road to Poso. Both men were taken for medical treatment.

¹⁴⁰ *Berita Laskar Jihad*, January 13, 2002; *Forum Keadilan*, no. 40, January 20, 2002, p. 40.

¹⁴¹ “Kondisi Pengungsi Di Kamp Kec. Lage, Kec. Pamona Utara, Pamona Timur, Poso Pesisir, Pamona Selatan, Dan Lore Utara Kabupaten Poso,” LPS-HAM, August 2002.

¹⁴² Personal communication, August 7, 2002.

¹⁴³ “Interview: Jakarta peacemaker says worst of violence is over,” Reuters, August 6, 2002.

¹⁴⁴ “Poso returns to normal despite recent incidents,” *Jakarta Post*, June 19, 2002.

¹⁴⁵ “Operasi Pemilihan Keamanan di Poso Dihentikan,” *Republika*, July 5, 2002.

¹⁴⁶ LPS-HAM, “Bom Kembali Guncang Bus Angkutan Umum Di Poso.”

- On July 19, Nyoman Mandri (26) and Made Jabir (26) were found dead from gunshot wounds in Masani, Poso Pesisir subdistrict, around 2:30 p.m. The two were apparently shot in their car while heading towards Poso. A Poso Police official told the press the motive was robbery.¹⁴⁷

There were no arrests, and comments by provincial military commander Colonel Suwayuhadji only added to the confusion. The colonel told the press in early August that for the past few weeks Kopassus soldiers had been secretly investigating reports of foreign soldiers, as well as the bus bombings, without even the knowledge of the police. He added that there was a “point of clarity” (*titik terang*) on the identity of those disrupting the peace but gave no details, acknowledging that the “hardest job is to find the perpetrators of mysterious shootings. The Indonesian Military is committed to reveal the mastermind of the bomb terror and mysterious shooter in Poso.”¹⁴⁸ No suspects have been identified to date.

The seven-month implementation period of the Malino Declaration ended on July 31, 2002. Residents had reported rumors of a new round of attacks as soon as the declaration period and the army presence ended. At first there seemed little change. The police resumed searching homes for weapons on August 1 and reported confiscating several homemade rifles.¹⁴⁹ On August 3, 2002, there was a closed meeting of Malino signatories and top provincial and district officials to evaluate developments in Poso. The next day the Poso *bupati* Muin Pusadan announced the creation of a Communication Forum (Forkom) to replace the *pokja* working groups. He said the forum would be active at village and subdistrict level, unlike the provincial and district working groups, but that a small team at the district level would support and coordinate local activities. He hoped they would be operational by the end of August.

But even as the signatories were meeting, the decapitated body of a local Muslim leader named Sukirman was found in Tegalrejo on August 3. Participants at the workshop called for a police investigation of the killing in the hopes of preventing new violence.¹⁵⁰

However, early the next day a series of attacks began, several of them fatal. According to a local NGO investigation of the incident, early on August 4, unknown men advancing from the direction of the coast attacked Christian residents of Matakko village. There was later gunfire from the hills as well. One witness told the NGO that at 3:30 a.m. he and two friends were resting after hunting for bats behind his home. They heard shots, followed by the sounding of the alarm by the village’s civilian guard post. He reported hearing several volleys of gunfire and six explosions from the direction of the Matakko Pentecostal Church. Seven residents were injured in their homes by gunshots: Lemu Tagandi (66), Padengka (32), Mayonge Katuta (75), Padea Paleba (67), Nety Toeya (49), Uce Doda (21), Silas Makeo (26), and Lemu Tagandi (66). The attack destroyed twenty-seven houses and both the Pentecostal Church and the Central Sulawesi Christian Church were burnt and bombed.¹⁵¹

Using trucks and taxis, the Central Sulawesi Christian Church’s Crisis Center evacuated more than 1,500 Christians, mostly women and children, from Matakko, Galuga, Malei–Lage, and Tongkoyang to Sepe and Silanca villages. An unknown number of Muslims also fled to villages where they felt safe. Local Muslim leaders told NGO investigators that they were especially saddened by the failure of about sixteen soldiers from Battalion 711

¹⁴⁷ LPS-HAM, “Penembak Misterius Terus Beraksi Di Poso,” July 2002; LPS-HAM, “Korban Penembakan Misterius Di Poso Terus Bertambah,” July 20, 2002.

¹⁴⁸ “12 Kopassus Personnel Flown into Poso,” *TEMPO Interactive*, August 7, 2002; “Kopassus Selidiki Adanya Pasukan Asing di Poso,” *Kompas Cybermedia*, August 4, 2002.

¹⁴⁹ “Poso Muslim leader found beheaded,” *Jakarta Post*, August 5, 2002.

¹⁵⁰ “Poso Muslim leader found beheaded,” *Jakarta Post*, August 5, 2002.

¹⁵¹ As of August 5, there seven residents whose whereabouts were unknown. Four of them, Z. Doda, Olmas Daya, Yohan Ewakola, and Cecen D. Mangiri were on guard duty at the time of the attack, as well as father and two young children: Yayus Mayamba (30), Finda Mayamba (8) and Iva Mayamba (5). “Serangan Fajar Di Matakko,” LPS-HAM Investigative Report; “Poso Bergejolak, Tiga PO Tetap Beroperasi,” *Kompas*, August 5, 2002.

at a post near the Matakoto clinic, as well as police officers at a nearby Brimob post, to take any action to stop the attack.¹⁵²

In another attack on Tuesday, August 6, 2002, nine men fired shots and threw Molotov cocktails in Malitu, Poso Pesisir subdistrict, according to a police spokesman and NGO reports. Twenty-one temporary homes were destroyed and 500 people fled, but there were no casualties.¹⁵³ Two days later unknown attackers fired on a bus with automatic weapons killing an Italian tourist and injuring four other passengers near Mayo village in South Pamona subdistrict.¹⁵⁴

Minister Kalla and Police Chief Dai Bachtiar facilitated another follow-up meeting on August 11-12. Participants at the meeting agreed that violence, arson, murder, and provocation are criminal acts for which perpetrators bear individual responsibility. They pledged to fully support the efforts of security forces to restore peace.¹⁵⁵

But as in the previous week, new violence broke out just as the meeting ended. Six people were reported killed and hundreds of homes destroyed in several Christian areas, again including the neighboring villages of Sepe and Silanca. Press accounts identified five of the dead as Y. Ombitaka (60), Eipius Montorutu (24), Ndolu Sulelino (31), Sena Kangea (32), and Efrata Lagani (35). A Crisis Center official accused a group of Brimob of attacking nearby Batugencu village while looking for police officer Andi Amir, missing since August 10 when three Brimob officers were stopped by a Christian mob in Silanca village. The policeman's burnt body was found later.¹⁵⁶

On August 15, the village of Mayumba, in Mori Atas subdistrict of Morowali district, was attacked and burnt with several fatalities. According to the Central Sulawesi Christian Church, the church helped organize the evacuation of Mayumba and neighboring Peleru over the next few days. On August 17 their cars were stopped and searched by security forces.¹⁵⁷ The police reported finding fourteen homemade guns and ammunition in the car of Christian leader Pastor Rinaldy Damanik. Damanik denied the charges and claimed that the police had not followed procedures for a search regarding witnesses or receipts for confiscated property. After attempts to arrest him in Tentena were blocked by his supporters, he was summoned to national police headquarters in Jakarta to be questioned as a witness, and was arrested.¹⁵⁸

A bomb exploded on the evening of September 19 near a bible school, causing three serious injuries. Three other bombs, described as sophisticated by police, were found and disarmed the next morning. Four more people were wounded by an explosion near the main market in Poso on September 26.¹⁵⁹

As of September there were 5,000 security officers in the area, 2,000 of them soldiers, including three battalions from outside the area. The twelve special forces (*Kopassus*) officers were still divided between Poso and Tentena, ostensibly watching for foreigners. The economy was again functioning, the roads were open, and

¹⁵² "Serangan Fajar Di Matakoto," LPS-HAM Investigative Report; "Poso Bergejolak, Tiga PO Tetap Beroperasi," *Kompas*, August 5, 2002.

¹⁵³ Kondisi Pengungsi Di Kamp Kec. Lage, Kec. Pamona Utara, Pamona Timur, Poso Pesisir, Pamona Selatan, Dan Lore Utara Kabupaten Poso, LPS-HAM, August 2002. "Violence erupts in 'calm' Sulawesi," *Straits Times*, August 8, 2002.

¹⁵⁴ "Italian Killed In Attack On Bus On Indonesia's Sulawesi," Associated Press, August 9, 2002.

¹⁵⁵ "Penegakan Hukum di Poso Jangan Seret Komunitas," *Kompas Cybermedia* August 28, 2002.

¹⁵⁶ "Poso tense as six killed in Christian village," *Jakarta Post*, August 14, 2002; "Five Waves of Violence," *Tempo Magazine*, no. 50/II/August 20-26, 2002.

¹⁵⁷ "Penegakan Hukum di Poso Jangan Seret Komunitas," *Kompas Cybermedia* August 28, 2002.

¹⁵⁸ "Poso Christian leader arrested," *Jakarta Post*, September 11, 2002.

¹⁵⁹ "Kapolda: Pelaku Peledakan Bom di Palu Orang Terlatih," *Kompas*, September 20, 2002; "Death-row Indonesian Christian militia leaders seek review," *Agence France-Presse*, September 30, 2002.

there were few reports of shots in the night. Palu residents reported that explosions were still frequent, which were seen as unsuccessful efforts to bring the conflict to the capital.¹⁶⁰

An explosion rocked a nightclub on Bali on October 12, changing perceptions of radical Islam and terrorism in Indonesia. On October 15, three days after the blast in Bali, Laskar Jihad publicly announced a decision to disband. Laskar Jihad figures offered a variety of reasons for the decision, citing an internal dispute over whether the organization had become too political and lost its mission. Laskar Jihad leader Jafar Umar Thalib claimed the decision was unrelated to the Bali explosion, and had been made several days before the attack, after meeting with Saudi Arabian *ulemas*. Some observers assumed that the decision must have been prompted by the withdrawal of support from patrons in the military after the terrorist attack on Bali. Abdul Malik, spokesman of Laskar Jihad's Poso branch, denied the government had forced the organization to disband: "We dissolve our volunteer organization following the government's serious commitment to maintaining security and justice in the conflict area."¹⁶¹ On November 6 the Islam Defenders Front (FPI) also announced that they were disbanding their paramilitary wing.

Observers expressed fears that Laskar Jihad or its more militant members might go underground and be harder to control, or that they could be used by the military or other groups. The first group of 600 returning Laskar Jihad members arrived by ship in Jakarta on October 18 from Maluku. The group was part of two batches of 750 said to be planning a return to their schools and home villages in East and Central Java. Christian leaders in Maluku and Papua reported that over 1,000 remained and that harassment continued.¹⁶²

A journalist who has closely followed the Poso violence told Human Rights Watch that one week after Laskar Jihad's announcement, approximately one hundred members had passed through Palu on their way back to Java from Poso. An unknown number had decided to remain in Central Sulawesi, ostensibly to carry out social service, though no longer under the Laskar Jihad name.¹⁶³ The continued presence of Laskar Jihad has long been a sore point for Christians unhappy with the implementation of the Malino accords. Security conditions in Poso will now largely hinge on whether Laskar Jihad's departure is carefully monitored to ensure that neither remaining radicals nor opportunistic attacks on Muslim communities further derail the peace process.

The Toll

The question of casualties is extremely sensitive and political. The conflict has been fuelled by a sense of grievance made stronger by incomplete or slanted news reports on the latest attacks and rumors of impending massacres. The lack of clear reporting by the media or investigation by the government, coupled with the wide terrain and the duration of the conflict, make it difficult to determine the number of victims. It is important to acknowledge that both sides have suffered enormously in the conflict.

While some estimates go as high as 2,000, most come in between 500 and 1,000 deaths. The government estimated, as of December 5, 2001, just prior to the signing of the Malino accords, that 577 had been killed, 384 injured, 7,932 houses destroyed, and 510 public facilities burnt or damaged. A Muslim group, the Victims of the Poso Conflict Evacuation and Fact Finding Team (*Tim Evakuasi Pencari Fakta Korban Muslim Kerusuhan*

¹⁶⁰ "Mabes TNI Masih Pertahankan Kopassus di Poso," *Kompas Cybermedia*, September 15, 2002. Telephone interview, Palu, October 22, 2002.

¹⁶¹ "Laskar Jihad Denies Bali Link," *Laksamana.net*, October 17, 2002. The arrest of Abu Bakar Baasyir, the alleged spiritual leader of the al-Qaeda linked terrorist network Jemaah Islamiah, and of the leader of Front Pembela Islam, Habib Rizieq meant that the three most prominent radical Muslim leaders were simultaneously facing prosecution. The charges were unrelated to the Bali bombing, but the terrorist attack made the prosecutions politically feasible. The FPI leader was detained on charges of instigating violence and vandalism in connection with attacks on Jakarta nightclubs. This had gone on for several years, but a crackdown began after a particularly violent October 4 incident. At the time of this writing Baasyir had not been implicated in the Bali explosion and was being questioned after alleged al-Qaeda operative Omar al-Faruq linked the cleric to a series of Christmas 2000 church bombings.

¹⁶² "First batch of Laskar Jihad members arrive in Surabaya from Ambon," *Jakarta Post*, October 18, 2002. "Indonesia: Christian leaders says Laskar Jihad is still active," Australian Broadcasting Corporation, October 18, 2002.

¹⁶³ Telephone interview, name withheld upon request, Palu, October 22, 2002.

Poso), claims that between May 2000 and December 2001, 840 Muslim bodies were recovered, mostly from the Poso River and the forests at the edge of the city. An unknown number were said to be missing. Many of the fatalities are thought to date to the third phase, in May and June 2000.¹⁶⁴

While this question is something that could be determined by a thorough independent investigation, the highly politicized environment, the forward-looking terms of the Malino Declaration, and the weakness of the National Human Rights Commission make such an effort unlikely. If not carried out with a high degree of professionalism, such an inquiry could exacerbate conditions further.

But reconciliation is also likely to be impeded unless both sides feel that justice has been served in the worst crimes, and that the question of the missing is addressed. There are still grievous crimes for which no one has been held responsible, such as the killings of fourteen Muslims at Buyung Katedo in July 2001 and the razing of Christian villages in November. The families of the missing, many of whom were publicly taken away during attacks, are still waiting for information about their relatives.

Internally Displaced Persons

With each new wave of violence, residents fled to areas where members of their religion made up the majority: Muslims went to Palu, Poso town, and the coastal town of Parigi, while Christians fled to Tentena and Napu in the mountains, or Manado in North Sulawesi. As of January 2002, just after the Malino Declaration was signed, the government's office for coordinating humanitarian response to the conflict estimated a total of 86,000 displaced persons in Central Sulawesi. The Central Sulawesi Christian Church estimated 42,000 displaced persons in Christian areas of the province. If these estimates are accurate, there were roughly even numbers of displaced people from both groups.¹⁶⁵

After the Malino accord, there was some tentative progress. By late February 10,000 displaced persons had returned home, mostly to Poso town, Poso Pesisir, Lage, and Tojo subdistricts.¹⁶⁶ Human Rights Watch found that in March 2002 many families were tentatively sending home male family members to clean up the wreckage and build temporary housing, while waiting to see if the situation remained stable. Some were also waiting for the end of the school year. Since then the number of displaced persons has steadily, but slowly, fallen. The district social welfare agency reported that, as of mid-July 2002, 43,308 persons had returned home, roughly 40 percent of the estimated 110,227 displaced people.¹⁶⁷

There are two important exceptions to this positive trend. New violence often sends traumatized residents fleeing back to safe areas. For example, clashes in August 2002 forced some 1,200 to seek refuge in Tentena alone. Official or individual efforts to rebuild have been hurt by new rounds of violence throughout the crisis. Several people told Human Rights Watch they had seen their homes destroyed more than once, and the barracks built by the district government and TNI in 2000 were often targeted in attacks. Christians in Tentena also had no plans to dismantle their laboriously built shelters, in case they needed to seek refuge in the future.¹⁶⁸

The other important exception relates to displaced persons who are minorities in their home areas. Muslim displaced persons from Tentena told Human Rights Watch in Palu that they had no plans to go home, although a remnant of twenty-four Muslims had never left and reported the situation to be safe.

Some displaced persons were given access to land in their new areas, such as the Nunu area of Palu, and were able to support themselves through agricultural activities. Christian displaced persons in Tentena built extensive housing and many were able to find work in the market town, which did well economically since travel to other markets was limited. In areas where land or jobs were scarce the conditions were much worse.

¹⁶⁴ "In 1.5 Years 840 Mayat Warga Muslim Poso Dievakuasi," *Nuansa Pos*, December 25, 2001.

¹⁶⁵ Estimates of the government Implementation Coordination Unit (Satkorlak), January 2002; and the Crisis Center of the Central Sulawesi Christian Church, December 2001.

¹⁶⁶ "Police Head to Poso to Help Disarm Factions," *Jakarta Post*, February 25, 2002.

¹⁶⁷ "Forkom Gantikan Pokja Malino di Poso," *Kompas*, August 4, 2002.

¹⁶⁸ "Konflik Poso Akan Diserahkan ke Wapres," *Nuansa Pos*, July 6, 2001.

A local NGO reported in August 2002 that the basic needs of displaced persons were not being met, noting the poor nutritional status of children, as well as widespread diarrhea, skin infections, and tetanus from gunshot wounds.¹⁶⁹ A 2001 government mental health assessment indicated that more than 55 percent of those displaced suffered from psychological troubles, while the main health problems were malaria, respiratory infections, gastric-intestinal problems, and skin diseases.¹⁷⁰

The U.N. *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* states that the government has “the primary duty and responsibility to establish conditions, as well as provide the means, which allow internally displaced persons to return voluntarily, in safety and with dignity, to their homes... or to resettle voluntarily in another part of the country.”¹⁷¹ There is a continuing need for local and international NGOs and U.N. agencies to provide assistance in the voluntary return and rehabilitation of displaced persons. Leaders on both sides of the conflict noted the role of revenge attacks by displaced people in perpetuating the violence, so their voluntary return and reintegration is critical. Those displaced persons from areas in which they were a minority should not be pushed to return until they feel safe. Alternatively, the government can settle them in other areas.

V. PART THREE: ANALYSIS

Poso was not unique in Indonesia in its demographic split, economic competition, and political struggle. The fights between urban youth from different neighborhoods that sparked fighting in the early phases are also extremely common. What put Poso in the unenviable company of long-running conflicts in Maluku and Central Kalimantan was the government’s failure to protect the basic rights of the local population and prevent the conflict from escalating over four years. The root problems can and must be addressed, but they will remain a factor in modern Indonesia for the foreseeable future. Therefore, it is critical to understand and reverse the failures of government officials, security forces, and the courts to reduce the conflict in Poso.

The Role of the Security Forces

Accusations of direct involvement by the military and police take two forms: either that the military has fomented violence to undermine the civilian government and to further its economic interests, or that Christians and Muslims within the armed forces have given training, support, or weapons to the different factions. There is less evidence of direct involvement in the conflict by security forces in Poso than in Maluku. There are several incidents of military involvement detailed by partisan sources that Human Rights Watch could not confirm. For example, Christians circulated photographs of an empty bag of army ammunition, said to have been found after a battle with Muslim civilians in Seipei in November 2001. In another example, Muslims identified a list of sixteen members of the District Military Command in Poso they suspected of involvement in the conflict through participation in attacks, or by supplying ammunition, training, or information to the Christian fighters.¹⁷² It is also widely believed that much of the training of fighters was by retired Christian and Muslim military officers. As recently as October 2002, a man identified as a Jakartan Muslim was arrested in the port of Poso unloading 2,800

¹⁶⁹ Kondisi Pengungsi Di Kamp Kec. Lage, Kec. Pamona Utara, Pamona Timur, Poso Pesisir, Pamona Selatan, Dan Lore Utara Kabupaten Poso, LPS-HAM, August 2002.

¹⁷⁰ Norwegian Refugee Council, “Background information on the IDP situation in Indonesia,” August 28, 2002.

¹⁷¹ UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, U.N. Doc. E/CN.4/1998/53/Add.2 (1998), noted in Comm. Hum. Rts. res. 1998/50 (17 April 1998), principle 28. “Although non-binding, the Guiding Principles are based upon and reflect international humanitarian and human rights law, which are binding. Resolutions of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights and the General Assembly have described the Principles as a comprehensive framework for the protection of internally displaced persons, and have welcomed their use and encouraged UN agencies, regional organizations and NGOs to disseminate and apply them. UN agencies and NGO umbrella groups in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee have endorsed them. Regional bodies in the Americas, Africa and Europe have endorsed or acknowledged them with appreciation. Individual governments have begun to incorporate them in national policies and laws and some national courts have begun to refer to them as a relevant restatement of existing international law.”

¹⁷² “Daftar Nama-nama Anggota Kodim 1307/PS Yang Diduga Terlibat Kerusakan Poso” (On file with Human Rights Watch).

rounds of ammunition still wrapped in their packaging from PT Pindad, the state-owned weapons producer in Bandung.¹⁷³

The perception of bias by security forces is reinforced by their record of failing to protect vulnerable communities. There is widespread conviction among Muslims that local police and military turned a blind eye to the Kilo Nine killings of May 2000, while Christians point to the withdrawal of troops from villages in the November 2001 attacks. The Muslim legal advocacy team criticized sweeping for arms because they said security forces did not act fairly. They even characterized the post-Malino conflict as no longer between Muslim civilians and Christian civilians, but between Muslim civilians and Christian members of the security forces.

In response to an article in *Jane's Intelligence Review*, the Indonesian army issued a statement that they had examined army involvement in Poso but found no significant evidence of bias, or selling guns and ammunition. To support its assertion of neutrality, the statement noted that violence increased after the army reduced its presence in May 2002.¹⁷⁴ In mid-September 2002, TNI commander Gen. Endriartono Sutarto again denied that the military was fomenting regional violence in order to maintain political power: "If we wanted to cling to power, we don't have to do it by resorting to such methods. We would have just used our weapons. We have enough weapons, even though they are obsolete... Admittedly we could engineer anything. But it would be weak, because our budget is low." Despite this mixed message, General Endriartono went on to assert that TNI accepts the decisions of the civilian government.¹⁷⁵

While bias is difficult to prove, there were credible reports of serious human rights abuses against civilians. In some of the incidents, the motive of the abuse may have been retribution for a previous casualty rather than a close allegiance to one side of the conflict. The arbitrary arrest, detention, torture, and possible summary executions of Muslim civilians in the Mapane and Toyado incidents of late 2001 created bitter feelings in the Muslim community. Some human rights abuses that are widespread through Indonesia, such as revenge attacks after a member of a military or police unit is injured or firing live ammunition into a crowd, took on different meaning in the Poso context. After Brimob fired on a Muslim crowd on March 17, 2000, killing three, a joint statement by Muslim student and social organizations asserted that the Muslim Brimob officers had fired into the air while the Christian Brimob officers fired into the crowd.¹⁷⁶

Ineffective response

The story in Poso is primarily one of inadequate and ineffective government response. Fighters from other villages and towns, and later from other islands, were allowed to enter the conflict areas freely. There were often delays in sending additional troops, and sustained attacks on villages by both sides lasting several days were allowed to proceed unchecked. It should be acknowledged that both sides openly battled security forces at different times, and several police officers and soldiers were killed in the fighting. However, the failure to prevent, contain, or end outbreaks of violence clearly requires improvements in performance, as well as strategies for and commitment to ensuring the security of the civilian population.

Early in the conflict small interventions such as roadblocks to prevent truckloads of fighters arriving from Palu, Parigi, Ampana, or Tentena would have helped confine the problems. In fact, Muslim women and children reportedly used this tactic against the security forces themselves in the November 2001 attacks.

The second phase was addressed mainly by troops from Poso or Palu: Poso Police, Brimob from Palu, and soldiers stationed in Poso. As the conflict grew to involve large numbers of fighters and simultaneous outbreaks, it became harder to respond. The third phase saw an increase in the size of mobs, but only four

¹⁷³ "Police plan to screen outsiders entering Poso," *Jakarta Post*, October 9, 2002.

¹⁷⁴ "Indonesian Army Issues Statement Refuting Allegations Of Taking Sides In Poso," BBC Monitoring International Reports, August 30, 2002. Original from Tentara Nasional Indonesia web site. BBC translation received on the Joyo listserv, August 31, 2002.

¹⁷⁵ "Military Denies Engineering Conflicts," *Laksamana.Net*, September 17, 2002.

¹⁷⁶ "Pernyataan Bersama Organisasi Sosial Masyarakat Dan Kepumudaan Islam Sulawesi Tengah (Joint statement of Muslim social and youth organizations of central Sulawesi)," June 15, 2000.

companies of police were sent from Palu, where the Koran reading contest attended by the president and vice-president required manpower.

The report by Muslim academics on the military role identified a problem of delays in deployment. During the extreme violence of the third phase, they note that from the time of a request from the district on May 28, 2000, until deployment of 1,500 troops there was a delay of more than two weeks. They noted that the police were slow to ask for help for prestige reasons, and that once requested, the procedures were both cumbersome and poorly followed.

There are many examples where as soon as security forces arrived, fighting ceased as one or both sides fled, sometimes after many hours of fighting (e.g. at Bridge II on November 10, 2001.)¹⁷⁷ This raises the question of why battles were allowed to rage for hours or even days. During the third phase some Muslim communities were forcibly marched over several days and many kilometers by Christian attackers with no sign of the police. In November 2001 the Muslim attacks advanced village by village over several days with no effective response. According to both Muslim and Christian accounts of these incidents, police and military units pulled out and allowed the Muslims to advance.

Clashes in the fourth phase had a typical form. Rumors of an impending attack led to the massing of large numbers of combatants over several hours, some from other areas, before a "pre-emptive" attack began. Given the predictability of this form of violence, the NGO LPS-HAM observed a failure of the police to address the violence or take preventive action. They noted that the police did not make use of the numerous witnesses among the victims to carry out a meaningful investigation afterwards. The director of the NGO concluded, "Both the local administration and security authorities are not committed to creating peace and enforcing the law in an attempt to protect local people from the bloodshed."¹⁷⁸ The failure to protect victims on both sides helped prolong and deepen the conflicts as each attack brought new grievances and raised the likelihood of a revenge attack. The NGO described the violence of 2001 almost entirely as revenge attacks from aggrieved communities.

The failure to protect communities also legitimized extremists on both sides. A. L. Lateka, considered one of the leaders of the red fighters until his death in June 2000, outlined his demands in a controversial letter to the Human Rights Commission in which he regretted the failure of security forces to stop the violence, arrest suspected provocateurs, or act impartially.¹⁷⁹ Laskar Jihad was well received in July 2001 by many in the Muslim community due to a recent surge in attacks on Muslims. According to a Muslim religious leader in Palu, "Laskar Jihad wants to help Muslims so they are not massacred. We had no faith in the security forces to protect us. There were two companies six kilometers away from Kilo Nine and they did nothing."¹⁸⁰

Poor coordination between the army and the police

The underlying tension between the military and police in Indonesia escalated with the formal separation of the two institutions in 1999. Domestic security is formally the responsibility of police, but the military is better trained and equipped, and is not eager to relinquish authority. Combined with competition over economic opportunities, these tensions have produced direct confrontations in Papua, East Java, North Sumatra, and especially Maluku.

Although Central Sulawesi has not seen widespread conflict between the branches, poor coordination may have been an obstacle to conflict prevention. *The Straits Times* quoted an unnamed general disparaging the police

¹⁷⁷ "Baku Tembak di Poso, Satu Orang Tewas," *Media Indonesia*, November 12, 2001.

¹⁷⁸ LPS-HAM and Pusat Kajian Dan Pengembangan Media, "Pandangan Akhir Tahun," December 14, 2001, p. 18 and 22; Erik W. and Damar, "Government criticized over sectarian conflict in Poso" *Jakarta Post*, December 19, 2001.

¹⁷⁹ Adven L. Lateka, "Tuntutan Perjuangan," undated letter to National Human Rights Commission.

¹⁸⁰ Human Rights Watch interview, name withheld upon request, Palu. National police chief Dai Bachtiar indicated a failure to see the crucial role of law enforcement in reconciliation following the bombings in mid-September 2001: "Now is no longer the time for reconciliation but it is already time for law enforcement." "Dokumentasi Seyam Reda Dibuat di Indonesia," *Kompas Cybermedia*, September 20, 2002.

performance in Poso: “The police are obviously scared because they think it is their exclusive domain to act, but like in other instances, they have made a mess of things.”¹⁸¹

The army’s first efforts were termed Operation Cinta Damai, while the Police carried out a series of operations named Sadar Maleo. In these operations the “non-organic” army units and Brimob from outside the area are nominally put under the operational command (BKO or *Bawah Kendali Operasi*). But at one point the provincial police chief said he didn’t know what Operation Cinta Damai was and never received a letter on the BKO status. The result was poor coordination and even reports of rivalry between branches, such as in the capturing of Tibo and his two codefendants.¹⁸²

A new more integrated effort began in December 2001, just prior to the Malino accords, described as a Security Restoration Operation (*Operasi Pemulihan Keamanan*). Two battalions each of army and police were given the four sequential tasks of stopping the fighting, sweeping for weapons and people that did not belong in Poso, implementing a period of law enforcement, and then supporting rehabilitation and reconciliation. This sequence was later included in the terms of the Malino Declaration, reinforcing the perception that the declaration was a local commitment to existing government operations.

Better coordination between the branches would help. But both branches have demonstrated fundamental weaknesses in dealing with situations of conflict. And until the tensions between the two institutions are resolved and effective civilian control is established, administrative improvements will have little effect.

Lack of an Effective Justice System

The failure of police and military to prevent violence is only one part of the breakdown of order in Central Sulawesi. The vast majority of crimes went entirely unpunished and seemingly uninvestigated. In the rare cases when arrests were made, the legal processes that should have ameliorated the problem often made it worse. The weakness of the justice system and the inconsistent application of the criminal law allowed members of both groups to claim unfair treatment by the courts.

After the first phase, one prominent member of each side was prosecuted. The Protestant Herman Parimo received a long sentence, while the Muslim Agfar Patanga got only a few months. However Parimo was said to have led an attack, while Patanga was charged with circulating the letters that incited violence. Both sides complained that the other “intellectual actors” were going unpunished, and there was also little effort to prosecute perpetrators of the many acts of violence.

The second phase’s violence in April 2000 broke out while Agfar Patanga and another Muslim figure charged with corruption were on trial. According to one source, mobs actually entered the courthouse and destroyed documents, raising suspicions that the main purpose of the violence was to obstruct the prosecutions.

When the third phase broke out Agfar Patanga’s case had not yet been resolved and none of the alleged provocateurs had been arrested. These failures of the justice system allowed both sides to feel unprotected, and encouraged extremists to justify actions of violent retribution.¹⁸³ Based on statements and banners, some of the attacks by Christians in the third phase are thought to have been vigilante-style revenge after the failure to arrest Muslims responsible for the violence. The alleged targets of the ninja groups were Muslims responsible for the previous two phases who had not been arrested by police.¹⁸⁴ The legal counsel for the survivors of Kilo Nine was clear: “If the police had arrested those responsible for the riots in December 1998, we wouldn’t have had the riots in April 2000. If they had arrested the provocateurs in April we wouldn’t have had the riots in May.”¹⁸⁵

¹⁸¹ “Sulawesi strife highlights acute police-army rivalry,” *Straits Times*, December 16, 2001.

¹⁸² Mappangara, ed., *Respon militer*, footnote 31.

¹⁸³ Laskar Jihad was explicit in its linkage of judicial results and violence: “With Tibo brought to justice... Muslims will increasingly trust the government officials, but if the law enforcers are weak in resolving the Poso conflict, don’t blame Poso Muslims for resolving it in their own way.” *Berita Laskar Jihad*, November 27, 2001.

¹⁸⁴ LPS-HAM, “Pandangan Akhir Tahun,” p. 19.

¹⁸⁵ John McBeth and Oren Murphy, “Bloodbath,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, July 6, 2000.

The Tibo trial of early 2001 demonstrates the deep mistrust of the judicial process by both sides. Christians point to the atmosphere of intimidation and the unbelievable witness testimony. Muslims raise the sixteen names as an example of the failure to apprehend the “intellectual actors.” Prominent figures Patiro and Bungkundapu were reportedly questioned and released, and three others on Tibo’s list were eventually sentenced to short terms on unrelated charges. While it is not certain that all the names mentioned were in fact culpable, the lack of public information about the investigation process, including the legal status of those who were questioned, increased suspicion and frustration on both sides.

Looking at the overall record of prosecutions, both sides claim to be treated unfairly, mainly with regard to sentencing. Christians claim they have received higher sentences, ranging from the death penalty for Tibo to sentences of one to two years for weapons possession. Most of the weapons charges were made against 132 people detained near Pendolo by troops under Operation Cinta Damai. Eighty were eventually charged under the 1951 emergency law. Even within this case, defendants before the same judge received sentences ranging from one to two years for the same offense. One defense lawyer described variations in other cases, with one defendant receiving seven months for possessing 5,000 bullets while another received three years for a single bullet.¹⁸⁶

Tajwin Ibrahim of the Muslim Paralegals Association in Palu estimated there had been one hundred Muslims detained, most of them already sentenced and released after serving time. Human Rights Watch has not seen information on arrests beyond the forty-three in the Mapane case, the closest parallel to the large Christian weapons arrests. In both cases an armed group was apprehended while heading towards a clash. But the Mapane case was tainted by the mistreatment of the Muslim defendants, who successfully won their release from detention in December 2001. Christians were frustrated at the different outcomes in the two cases, many believing the Muslims were released for the end of Ramadan.

Lack of faith in the justice system is widespread in Indonesia, and many Muslim and Christian advocates attributed the discrepancies to corruption rather than bias alone. In July 2002, visiting U.N. Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers Param Cumaraswamy told the press that the situation in Indonesia was worse than he had thought, calling corruption “endemic.” The same week, a Jakarta NGO called Indonesian Corruption Watch (ICW) issued a report detailing bribery and influence at every level of the judicial process. The ICW’s year-long study concluded, “After years of letting corruption spread, it has become systemic... from the police, court administrators, lawyers, prosecutors, to judges and prison guards.”¹⁸⁷

In addition to the different treatment for similar crimes, repeated cycles of security operations in which “socialization” was followed by voluntary handovers and then sweepings meant that the same violation could be overlooked at one time or grounds for arrest at another. This made it easy for both sides to point to members of the other group who were allowed to carry weapons or escape arrest while members of their own side were detained. Many crimes have not been prosecuted at all, and where prosecutions do take place there is inadequate information provided to the public, particularly in those cases involving police or military. As early as August 2000 the press reported that twenty-nine soldiers and fifteen police had been arrested by military police, but lack of information on the outcome of such cases was a source of frustration.¹⁸⁸

Government Response

After security and legal failures, the government administration at the local and national levels accounts for the third element of inadequate response. Prior to the Malino declaration Jakarta largely ignored the conflict. The main exception, the August 2000 visit of President Wahid, was a formulaic traditional ceremony rather than meaningful dialogue. At the provincial and district levels, weak democratic structures played a role not just in generating the conflict, as discussed above, but also in its perpetuation.

¹⁸⁶ Human Rights Watch interview, name withheld upon request, Tentena, March 2002.

¹⁸⁷ “Report reveals corruption in court is organized,” *Jakarta Post*, July 23, 2002.

¹⁸⁸ Mappangara, ed., *Respon militer*, footnote 25.

The failure to help displaced persons return or rebuild was cited as one source of the prolonged conflict. A leading Muslim figure in Palu told Human Rights Watch: "If the government wasn't rotten this wouldn't have happened. If the injured parties had been rehabilitated, this would have stopped after the first phase. But officials were just looking after their own business, in Jakarta and here, too."¹⁸⁹

The provincial and district governments created a series of ineffective reconciliation efforts prior to Malino. Most were criticized for failing to involve local community, religious, and traditional leaders in a meaningful way. The first three phases were largely addressed by the standard tactic of calling traditional leaders together for an agreement. For example, the "Rujuk Sintuwu Maroso" Team was made up of traditional leaders after the peace agreement of August 2000. This effort involved dialogue and joint visits to sites of prior conflict. However, the limited focus on traditional leaders and the deep-seated mistrust limited its effectiveness.

The fourth phase saw ineffective teams of provincial figures from Palu, not stakeholders in Poso. For example, the Reconciliation Team created in 2001 under Vice-Governor Rully Lamadjido was criticized as ineffective, top-down, and a waste of time and money by provincial assembly members and others.¹⁹⁰

A joint team of provincial officials was sent to Poso to look into root causes and collect data on property left behind by displaced persons. The chair of the reconciliation team, Colonel Gumyadi, later told the *Singapore Times* that he abandoned efforts by mid-October 2001, blaming security forces for their failure to disarm the combatants.¹⁹¹ A member told Human Rights Watch that the team was considered a failure: underfunded, bombed in Mapane, thrown out of Poso, and yelled at in Tentena. He was unable to recall the names of all six members.¹⁹²

As with the courts and the security forces, the weakness of local government efforts is a problem in much of Indonesia. In Central Sulawesi, where these institutions were badly needed to establish a level of security and accountability, this weakness had tragic consequences.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

The failure of basic institutions of local government, justice, and law enforcement allowed a street fight, feeding on underlying tensions and likely provocation, to develop into a broad social conflict. Fights between youth at a market or terminal involving alcohol are common in Indonesia: there have been several recent incidents of fights between migrants and locals at Palu markets that quickly led to a day or two of fighting and destroying several houses. However, after several days, conditions returned to normal.¹⁹³ The underlying conditions of local political struggles, religious divisions, and economic tensions that fueled the conflict in Poso are unfortunately also common. But in Poso the police, the army, and the courts could not or would not restrain the ever-increasing violence. As a result, the conflict became widespread and entrenched, involving thousands of fighters and perhaps 1,000 deaths over four years. There are indications of deliberate provocation, during the early phases in particular. But the question remains, what allowed these efforts to provoke violence so effectively, and why were there no effective measures to stop it?

There were many missed opportunities, such as after the first and second phases. A commitment by Jakarta and Palu to fund rehabilitation, together with an adequate and unbiased police and military presence capable of stopping or arresting perpetrators of violence, would have greatly reduced the likelihood of future conflict. Once the violence became widespread, there were numerous attacks that took place over several days, with forced marches over many miles, with little effective response from the police. Although both sides were

¹⁸⁹ Human Rights Watch interview, name withheld upon request, Palu, March 2001.

¹⁹⁰ GKST proposed a "Total Reconciliation" format touching on culture, legal, political and economic aspects of the conflict. "Kerja Tim Rekonsiliasi Dipertanyakan," *Nuansa Poso*, July 3, 2001; "Tim Kecil Rully Dinilia Mubazir," *Mercusuar*, September 11, 2001.

¹⁹¹ "Sulawesi blames Jakarta for new violence," *Straits Times*, December 5, 2001.

¹⁹² Human Rights Watch interview, name withheld upon request, Napu, March 2001.

¹⁹³ LPS-HAM, "Pandangan Akhir Tahun," pp. 13-4.

said to have run training camps with the help of retired military, the conflict was enlarged further when Laskar Jihad, a well-armed, well-organized group of outsiders was allowed to enter the district, train fighters, and lead attacks.

Administration of justice was sporadic and inconsistent, with a handful of weapons arrests prosecuted despite the hundreds of documented deaths. Inconsistency in charges and sentencing left both sides convinced they were treated unfairly. The Tibo case, one of the few efforts to hold someone directly responsible for the deaths, was marked by a threatening environment and dubious witnesses.

Both sides feel that the Malino Declaration, despite its flaws, provided an opportunity to end an exhausting conflict. The government at last put resources and clout behind the peace process. But important questions about accountability and the status of outside groups remain unresolved. The government of Indonesia and the international community must be sure to adequately monitor and support the agreement to foster reconciliation efforts, particularly through the prosecution of perpetrators of past violence.

APPENDIX

Appendix 1: An example of the fake or anonymous letters blamed for increasing tensions. This is a translation of a letter purporting to be a secret strategy document for the Christian take-over of Poso. The letter also seeks to discredit Christian members of the armed forces.

SECRET TOP SECRET AND SECRET

Intended to be known by all levels of Christian society in Poso, that the program and final goal of the Poso Christian struggle to make a CHRISTIAN Central Sulawesi Province is the responsibility of all Christians.

For this, we are all ordered to unify our understanding for the sake of the blood of Jesus Christ, dead or alive whoever blocks our struggle we must stamp from the face of the earth. For this, the following requires attention:

Code: a red headband or armband

Call: "Jesus," answer "yes"

- a. Target: Disrupt Poso town and eliminate Islam (Muslim leaders)
- b. Pastors: Disguise as Muslim leaders (proselytizers)
- c. Houses of worship (Mosques) are not to be destroyed, because they will be useful for us, including schools
- d. Christians that are among Muslims, keep waiting there until our soldiers join together.

Main targets

1. Poso town and its surroundings.
2. Ampana and its surroundings
3. Parigi subdistrict and its surroundings.
4. Poso Pesisir subdistrict and surroundings.
5. Lage subdistrict and its surroundings.
6. Ulubongka and its surroundings and Tojo subdistrict is destined to become our base of defense, centered in Tanamawau, Buyutaripa, and PHB Gandalari and Malewa. And residents of Tojo subdistrict we will expel all Muslims
7. We force them to join and become Christian.
8. All village *imams* and religious teachers, and Muslim village heads.
9. ABRI [Indonesian army] officials, we especially watch the Muslim ones because the Christians already have the mission, in time they will become KILLERS, and for this, provide our Christian officers with services if they ask for help.

And to Muslim security forces we will give material support in the form of money so that they don't block our struggle, if needed we will give them freedom with our daughters. REMEMBER!! We can influence Muslim security forces.

Continue attacks at Malei, based on the decision of the Church council and CHRISTIAN leaders at Kelei on July 12, 2000. Once again it is submitted to the Christian community to stay on alert with weapons we already have and keep them secret. –

LONG LIVE THE INDONESIA MILITARY AND GOOD LUCK IN OUR WORK

HALLELUJAH HALLELUJAH, In the NAME OF THE BLOOD OF OUR JESUS WE STRUGGLE

Person Responsible

An. Jakarta and Salatiga Leaders

Pastor . –

(AF R.)

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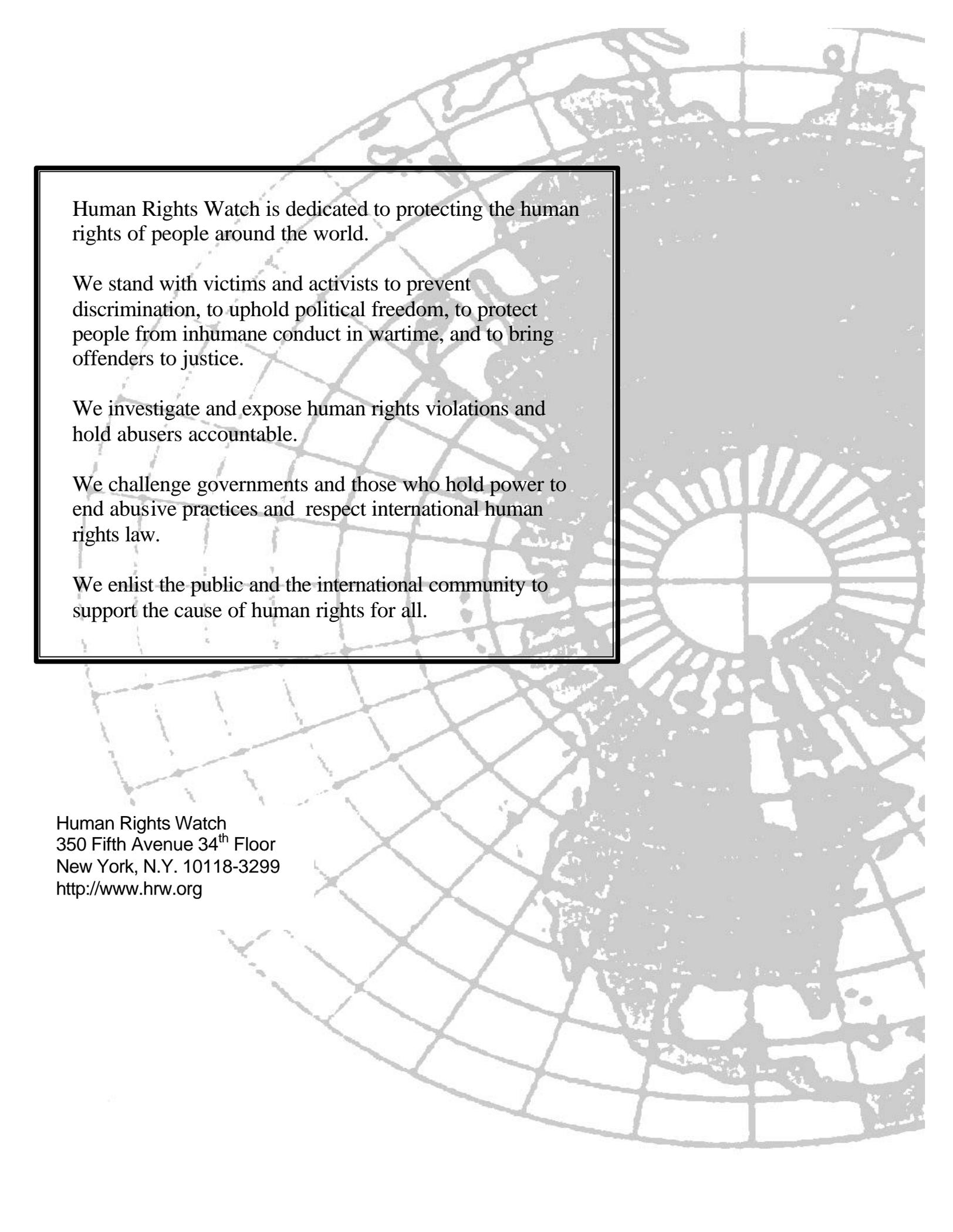
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