

# Aceh Conflict Monitoring Update

1<sup>st</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> November 2007

World Bank/DSF

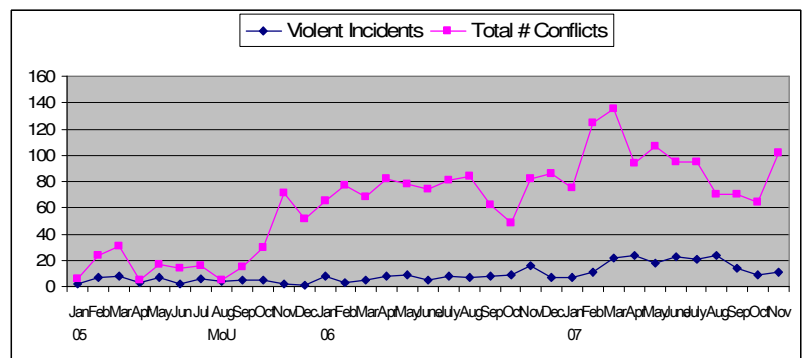


In November, the number of conflicts rose dramatically as activity resumed after the fasting month, but violence remained low.<sup>1</sup> There were 26 demonstrations, the highest number ever recorded in these Updates. The largest demonstrations took place in Aceh Barat Daya, where both supporters of Bupati (District Head) Akmal Ibrahim, and opponents, engaged in shows of force gathering thousands. A similarly confrontational situation is building up in Nagan Raya, where a coalition of civil society groups also demanded that the Bupati be removed from his office. In Aceh Tenggara, despite provincial authorities have intervened to try to end the conflict over the elections results, society remains deeply divided and the new Bupati is unable to govern. These cases underline how political stability is still fragile in Aceh. There is real potential for political conflicts to escalate into violence. Finally, five conflicts this month show persisting tensions between Aceh and Jakarta over the conduct of the peace process, and tensions between former GAM combatants and government security forces. Although the Communication and Coordination Forum for Peace in Aceh (FKK) has demonstrated its capacity to handle limited-scale but sensitive cases in a fairly efficient and impartial manner, it has yet to prove its ability to address higher profile issues and to sort out persisting disagreements over the implementation of the MoU.

## *After the Ramadhan break, the number of conflicts rises again but violence remains low*

After the low levels of conflict recorded during the fasting month, the number of conflicts rose drastically in November, with 102 incidents recorded (see Figure 1). This rise is largely due to a high number of administrative disputes; the number of political conflicts and disputes over access to resources remained stable. Violence remained low, with only 11 violent incidents recorded this month. It is still too early to determine whether the drop in violence since September is temporary, or whether it indicates that Aceh is experiencing a relative return to normalcy after the high levels of violence that marred the first half of this year. November violent incidents resulted in one death, lower than previous monthly totals.<sup>2</sup>

Figure 1: Violent incidents vs. total # of conflicts, by month



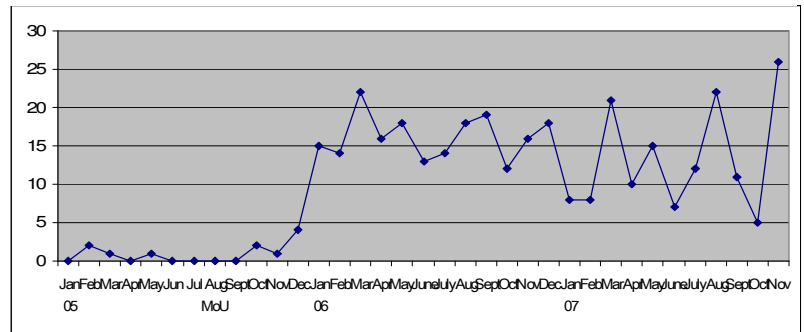
<sup>1</sup> As part of an analytical support program to the peace process, the Conflict and Development Program, within the World Bank Office Indonesia, is using a newspaper conflict mapping methodology to record and categorize all incidents of conflict in Aceh as reported in two provincial newspapers (Serambi and Aceh Kita). The Program publishes monthly updates analyzing the data, complemented by fieldwork where possible, in both English and Indonesian. Updates are available online at [www.conflictanddevelopment.org](http://www.conflictanddevelopment.org). The dataset is available for those interested; contact Blair Palmer at [bpalmer@worldbank.org](mailto:bpalmer@worldbank.org) or Adrian Morel at [amorel1@worldbank.org](mailto:amorel1@worldbank.org). There are limitations to using newspapers to map conflict; see Barron and Sharpe (2005) "Counting Conflict: Using Newspaper Reports to Understand Violence in Indonesia", *Indonesian Social Development Paper No. 7*. Jakarta: World Bank, available on the website.

<sup>2</sup> The recent high for conflict-related deaths was in June, when twelve people were killed. Since then, deaths have been relatively low, with two dying in July, two in August, three in September, and none in October.

### ***Leap in number of demonstrations, but none violent***

In November there were 26 demonstrations, the highest number on record since we began collecting data (see Figure 2). This is a significant new development. A few observations can be made about the nature of these demonstrations. First, it should be noted that none of them involved violence, which is a considerable achievement given that demonstrations in Indonesia frequently act as a “show of force”.<sup>3</sup>

**Figure 1: Demonstrations, by month**



Second, unhappiness with aid delivery and corruption allegations were the most common reasons for the demonstrations. Third, demonstrations were frequently used for pursuing a grievance when other means had already failed; only 50% of the demonstrations were about new issues. Fourth, demonstrations were spread across Aceh. Half (13 of 26) occurred in Banda Aceh, but the other half took place in other districts. Finally, students played a lead role in half of the demonstrations, with the others led by NGOs, women, pedicab drivers, or villagers. The largest demonstrations this month were those against the Bupati of Aceh Barat Daya (see next section).

**Table 1: Types of demonstrations in November 2007**

Number	Issue	Examples
7	Government projects / Corruption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community protesting the low price of land compensation given when their land was used for government offices</li> <li>• Community asking for removal of village head over corruption</li> <li>• Students protesting management of a scholarship program</li> <li>• IDPs protesting delivery of subsidized rice program</li> </ul>
7	Problems in aid delivery (including corruption)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Five of these were aimed at BRR</li> <li>• Protests aimed at the BRA over houses being given to inappropriate recipients</li> <li>• Pedicab drivers protesting corruption in an aid project for them</li> </ul>
5	Political demonstrations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two demonstrations to remove the Bupati of Aceh Barat Daya, and a counter-demonstration by his supporters</li> <li>• Demonstrations to remove Bupati of Nagan Raya</li> </ul>
4	Protests about the national high school completion exam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protests by student groups in Banda Aceh, Lhokseumawe, and Bireuen</li> </ul>
3	Other issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demanding release of political prisoners still being held</li> <li>• Supporting an end to violence against women</li> <li>• Demanding a local regulation on the arts</li> </ul>

### ***Show of force between opponents and supporters of the Bupati in Aceh Barat Daya***

In Aceh Barat Daya (Abdya), the ongoing political crisis led to a showdown between opponents and supporters of Bupati Akmal Ibrahim, who held successive demonstrations gathering thousands (see Box 1).<sup>4</sup> In addition to grievances related to the Bupati’s failure to honor his electoral promises to provide land, life insurance and development aid to vulnerable communities, anti-Akmal protesters, gathered under the banner of Koalisi Gempa, also

<sup>3</sup> Some protests are described in the newspapers as a “*delegasi*” rather than a demonstration, meaning that a group of people complained in person somewhere, usually in large numbers. Such a group will often wait at a government office all day until an official receives them; the presence of the large crowd is meant as a tactic to force the officials to act. Demonstrations, in contrast, involve placards and oration, and very often include angry yells and fence-shaking, designed as intimidation so that officials will take the protest seriously. Many officials still regard demonstrations as a provocative act, outside of normal democratic behavior.

<sup>4</sup> Background to the problems in Abdya can be found in the August, September and October Updates.

accused the Bupati of winning the elections through money politics and of misusing local budget to repay his debts to elite figures who contributed financially to his campaign.

It appears that the ongoing protests are largely orchestrated by such elite figures, including former allies of Akmal disgruntled at his failure to reward their support. In particular, businessman Rafli Aris seems to have played a key role in rallying support for the anti-Akmal cause (see Box 2). Manipulation and dirty politics are widespread on both sides.

There are strong indications that both anti- and pro-Akmal demonstrators were paid, and that many Banda Aceh journalists were paid-off to ensure proper coverage of the November 6<sup>th</sup> demonstration. Divisions along partisan lines run deeply through all components of the Abdya society, from the elite to communities and civil society.<sup>5</sup> Members of the district parliament (DPRK Abdya) are torn between pressures from both camps. So far, provincial authorities have avoided stepping in, and intense lobbying from both Akmal and his opponents is likely under way to secure support from Banda Aceh. The intervention of the provincial government seems to be required to sort out a situation that has become increasingly confrontational, and which might eventually result in violence between supporters of both camps. The arson on November 12<sup>th</sup> of the office of the new Camat of Tangan-Tangan sub-district, a member of Akmal's *tim sukses*, may be related to partisan divisions and constitute a first warning of potential escalation.

#### Box 1: Abdya political incidents in November

- *November 6<sup>th</sup>, Blangpidie.* Thousands demonstrated to demand that Bupati Akmal Ibrahim be removed from his office. Under pressure from the demonstrators, 17 out of 25 members of the DPRK Abdya signed a written recommendation supporting the Bupati's removal.
- *November 12<sup>th</sup>, Blangpidie.* Thousands demonstrated in support of Akmal. 15 DPRK members joined the demonstration, including a number of those who had previously signed in favor of Akmal's removal.
- On the same day in Tangan-Tangan sub-district, an arson attack targeted the office of the new Camat (Sub-district head), recently nominated by Akmal.
- *November 19<sup>th</sup>, Banda Aceh.* Abdya students demonstrated to demand the intervention of the provincial government.
- *November 21<sup>st</sup>, Jakarta.* GAKI (Indonesian Anti-Corruption Movement) reported Akmal Ibrahim to the KPK for misuse of the 2007 local budget.

#### Box 2: Akmal's many enemies – a diverse coalition of civil society groups, disgruntled former allies, and elite figures with vested interests

- **Koalisi Gempa (*Gerakan Masyarakat Pembaharuan Abdya – People's Movement for the Reform of Abdya*).** Various anti-Akmal groups have now joined forces under an umbrella organization, Koalisi Gempa. They include Jaringan Demokrasi Rakyat Aceh (*Aceh People's Democratic Network – JDRA*), who staged the September Anti-Akmal demonstrations, and Group 59, a group of contractors, mostly ex-combatants, who have been demanding the investigation of 208 public projects that they claim were awarded by Akmal's administration without proper tender processes (see September and October Updates).
- **Rafli Aris**, a wealthy businessman close to Lt Gen. Jose Toisutta, Commander of the Strategic Reserve (Kostrad) elite forces.<sup>6</sup> Rafli Aris loaned Rp. 4 billion (US\$ 440,000) to Akmal Ibrahim for his campaign. In return, according to Rafli, Akmal was supposed to grant him projects, but failed to honor his part of the deal. Rafli declared he intended to file a complaint with the KPK (whether failure to honor a corrupt deal can be reported as a corruption case remains to be determined).
- **Nasir Alue**, an ex-GAM military commander. Nasir Alue claims to have signed a MoU with Akmal, whereby the former would back Akmal's candidacy in exchange for the Bupati's support for the formation of local

<sup>5</sup> Note that the situation in Abdya illustrates the ambiguities of terms such as civil society (*masyarakat sipil* or *masyarakat madani*). Political conflicts in Indonesia are often accompanied by a sudden burgeoning of "civil society" organizations, some of which have unclear backgrounds and turn out to be fronts for supporters of particular elite members, groups of interest or political parties. The formation of such organizations allows for the vested interests of a few to borrow the appearance of "democratic legitimacy" associated with authentic grassroots organizations and advocacy groups.

<sup>6</sup> Jose Toisutta was TNI Operations Commander (*Pangkoops*) in Aceh during the martial law (2003-2004).

political parties (i.e. Partai GAM). Equally contemptuous of both Akmal and Rafli, his role in the November protests remains unclear.

- **H. Said Syamsul Bahri, Chairman of the DPRK Abdya.** In October, 22 out of 25 MPs passed a vote of no confidence against Syamsul Bahri, accused of authoritarianism and of misusing his position to serve his personal interest (see October Update). Some say the vote was orchestrated by Akmal Ibrahim.
- **Kompol Sumardi, Abdya Police Chief.** Formerly close to Akmal, Kompol Sumardi is said to have contributed financially to his campaign. When protests against Akmal began to gain momentum, the Police Chief submitted a “proposal” to the Bupati to cover his troops’ “extra operational expenses”, which Akmal refused to do.
- **Political figures.** Losing candidates for the Bupati seat, Fahrudin and Sulaiman, may also be involved in supporting the ongoing protests, eager to get a new shot at the position if Akmal falls. Rafli contributed financially to the campaigns of both Fahrudin and Sulaiman.

### ***Anti-Bupati protests also gain momentum in Nagan Raya***

In Nagan Raya, a very similar situation is building up. On November 19<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>, another coalition of civil society groups, Gempar (*Gerakan Masyarakat Pembaharuan Nagan Raya – People’s Movement for the Reform of Nagan Raya*),<sup>7</sup> demonstrated in Banda Aceh to demand that Bupati T. Zulkarnaini be removed from his office, in order to facilitate the investigation of several allegations of corruption and nepotism. The primary case against Zulkarnaini, the incumbent Golkar Bupati reelected last year, relates to allegations of money laundering and fraudulent campaign financing. Earlier this year, Said Jamalul Quris, former adjutant of Zulkarnaini, was sentenced to ten months of imprisonment in Medan for using forged identity papers to open an account used to store large sums of money, allegedly the campaign contributions of 15 Nagan Raya businessmen, amounting to over Rp. 8 billion (US\$ 885,000). Badan Pemeriksa Keuangan (the Financial Control Agency) also reported numerous cases of the misuse of local budget funds (APBD) during Zulkarnaini’s first mandate. The Bupati is also known for having populated key administration positions with relatives. Beyond the obvious similarities, the situation in Nagan Raya is also significantly different than that in Abdya. First, ongoing legal proceedings seem to provide Nagan Raya protesters with a stronger case for demanding the intervention of the provincial government. Second, there have been fewer indications so far of the civil society being manipulated by private interests. However, both situations have a strong potential for growing increasingly confrontational with violence possible.

### ***Political deadlock in Aceh Tenggara***

No incidents related to the political situation in Aceh Tenggara (Agara) were recorded in the November newspapers. However, investigations by World Bank researchers found strong indications that the recent relative stability, that appeared to have replaced nine months of election-related conflict (see previous Updates), is still extremely fragile. The new Bupati of Aceh Tenggara, Hasanuddin (or Sanu, as he is commonly known), faces many enemies including a hostile district parliament. His September 1<sup>st</sup> inauguration took place with heavy police protection, and was boycotted by most district parliament (DPRK) members. Since then, the functioning of the district government has been severely constrained since the DPRK refuses to meet in order to discuss the new Bupati’s proposed budget. Both the district elections body (KIP Aceh Tenggara) and the local parliament insist that the incumbent Bupati, Armen Desky, won the election, and are currently awaiting the results of a Constitutional Court case which contests the validity of Sanu’s win, announced only in May 2007 by the provincial elections body (KIP NAD) after the firing of the members of KIP Aceh Tenggara.

The conflict between supporters of Sanu and Desky runs deeply through the entire district at all levels. Many bureaucrats, contractors, and community leaders have clear loyalties one way or the other, and backlash is expected against those who supported the “wrong” candidate. As

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<sup>7</sup> Note the similarity with the name of the Abdya coalition. Gempar was formed three months ago, long before Gempa, who was first heard of on November 6<sup>th</sup>. It is obvious that the name of the Nagan Raya movement inspired that adopted by the Abdya protesters.

officials are reshuffled, those supporting Sanu are filtering upwards, and contractors may find it difficult to get contracts if their allegiances went the other way. Village heads who supported Desky may also find pro-Sanu villagers attempting to oust them. Further, many villages remain divided with tensions high. In some villages Desky supporters and Sanu supporters have become isolated communities, not attending each other's weddings, praying in different mosques, and shopping at different village kiosks.

For the most part, these rivalries run across, not between, ethnic, religious, and clan affiliations.<sup>8</sup> Although there have been no violent incidents since the inauguration, and there are signs that Armen Desky is restraining his supporters, it is unclear what will happen if he loses his court case. On the one hand, the head of the DPRK, a close Desky relative, stated that he would then support the Sanu government, and the fact that Desky and Sanu are related may mitigate against open violent conflict (Sanu's wife is Desky's cousin). On the other, Armen Desky has close links with a number of youth groups (such as IPK, Hikmatan, Pancasila Youth, and Forkab), some of whom have criminal or militia roots, and one pro-Desky village head stated that they would not allow Desky's political rights to be trampled upon. Should Desky win the court case, political conflict in Agara will continue for some time to come, as the Desky side attempts to use the decision to remove Hasanuddin and install Desky as Bupati.

***FKK successful in handling limited-scale incidents between GAM and security forces, but has yet to show an ability to address wider disagreements over the MoU***

In November, five conflicts revealed persisting tensions between Aceh and Jakarta over the conduct of the peace process, or consisted of incidents between former GAM combatants and security forces. Two of the latter led to violence, one resulting in a fatality (see Table 2).

**Table 2: Tensions over MoU and GAM/security forces incidents in November**

Conflict type	Number of incidents	Description
MoU-related issues	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>November 1<sup>st</sup>, Banda Aceh.</i> Hundreds of students demonstrated to demand the release of nine GAM political prisoners still detained in prisons of Java and Sumatra. A delegation of the Aceh provincial parliament and members of the Justice for Political Prisoners Forum (FKTNA) conveyed the same demands to the Department of Law and Human Rights in Jakarta.</li> <li>• <i>November 26<sup>th</sup>, Banda Aceh.</i> The Head of BRA, Muhammad Nur Djuli, demanded publicly that the second tranche of reintegration funds committed by the central government for fiscal year 2007 be immediately disbursed. As these funds, amounting to Rp. 450 billion (US\$ 50 million), must be spent before December 25<sup>th</sup> or returned to Jakarta, delays are jeopardizing the implementation of BRA programs such as their housing program and the economic empowerment assistance to conflict victims.</li> </ul>
GAM vs security forces incidents	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>November 16<sup>th</sup>, Aceh Besar.</i> Police seized two machines they said KPA members used to manufacture home-made weapons. After investigation, FKK ruled there was no solid case against the ex-combatants, as one machine was broken and the other had not been used for at least a year and a half.</li> <li>• <i>November 22<sup>nd</sup>, Pidie.</i> An ex-combatant turned criminal, an accomplice of Si Teh (see September Update), was killed during his arrest by the police.</li> <li>• <i>November 26<sup>th</sup>, Calang.</i> The beating of the son of a KPA member by a police officer led to revenge beatings from KPA and community members (with three police officers injured).</li> </ul>

<sup>8</sup> Both Desky and Sanu are of Alas ethnicity, in which clans are important. But clan affiliation has not determined political support; many from the Desky clan supported Sanu. Aceh Tenggara has roughly 17% Christians, mostly of Batak and Karo ethnicity living near the border with North Sumatra. These villages tended to favour Desky over Sanu, after a campaign reportedly told villagers that Sanu might cut-off their supply of palm wine and forbid them from pig farming.

None of the GAM/police incidents qualifies as a military-type confrontation, because they appear to be personal in nature. All of the cases led to accusations of excessive use of force by the police. As we have argued in previous Updates, improving the discipline and professionalism of security forces is a priority, as abuses continue to prove highly counter-productive, triggering retaliation and fuelling hostility from both ex-combatants and communities. In particular, arrests of GAM/KPA members should be based on strong evidence and follow proper operational procedures. The circumstances under which Hamdani Sulaiman, a suspect in an armed robbery case and an accomplice of the famous ex-combatant turned gang leader Si Teh, was killed on November 22<sup>nd</sup> are suspicious.<sup>9</sup> Si Teh himself was also killed during his arrest in September, just a few days after the police had named him as the prime suspect in the robbery and murder of a school administrator (see September Update). It is important to note that the Communication and Coordination Forum for Peace in Aceh (FKK) played a key role in the November 16<sup>th</sup> and November 26<sup>th</sup> cases, successfully mediating between police and GAM/KPA, defusing tensions and demonstrating its ability to handle limited-scale but sensitive incidents in an efficient and impartial manner.

However, FKK has yet to prove its capacity to address higher profile issues and to sort out persisting disagreements between Aceh and Jakarta on the implementation of key MoU provisions, such as the release of political prisoners and the reintegration funds. FKK does not benefit from the authority and wide recognition that AMM commanded. Another difficulty is GAM's inability to speak with one voice. The victory of Irwandi Yusuf in the 2006 elections has undermined Malik Makmud's legitimacy to speak on behalf of the former separatist movement. It is now unclear who the central government should negotiate with. On November 12<sup>th</sup>, a full page piece was published in Serambi by a group called Helsinki MoU Watch, with a matrix recapitulating 21 MoU provisions that, according to them, were betrayed by the Law on the Governing of Aceh (LoGA), being incorrectly implemented or not implemented at all. Helsinki MoU Watch had previously circulated a similar document on the second anniversary of the MoU. Members of the group include Nur Djuli (the head of BRA), former GAM spokesman Bakhtiar Abdullah, and two other GAM figures close to Irwandi. Unless GAM manage to overcome its internal divisions, it is likely that the negotiations over the most sensitive MoU-related issues will have to wait until the results of the 2009 legislative elections bring more clarity as to who is entitled to speak for Aceh.

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<sup>9</sup> 40 heavily-armed officers "had no choice" but to kill him as he resisted arrest and pulled out a knife.