

# Aceh Conflict Monitoring Update

1<sup>st</sup> January – 29<sup>th</sup> February 2008

World Bank



The situation in Aceh remains on the whole safe and stable.<sup>1</sup> However, the rising levels of violence recorded since December of last year, including a number of incidents involving or targeting KPA, show that enduring peace is not yet assured. On March 1<sup>st</sup>, five were brutally murdered in an attack on the Atu Lintang KPA office, in Aceh Tengah.<sup>2</sup> This is the largest loss of life in a single conflict incident recorded since the Helsinki MoU. The massacre sparked widespread concern that it could lead to escalation and a worsening of communal tensions in the ethnically heterogeneous central highlands. Authorities, security forces and KPA have all helped to contain potential spillovers, and the peace process appears to have proved strong enough to survive its most serious blow so far. The incident occurred against a backdrop of heightened political tensions, with the reappearance of old moves to partition Aceh by creating two new provinces, ALA and ABAS. The issue shows how, while key provisions of the MoU and the Law on Governing Aceh (LoGA) are not fully agreed upon or implemented, room remains for opportunistic elites to seek advantage and for tensions to rise. Overall levels of violence remained high in January, and reached a new peak in February, with 30 violent cases. They resulted in four deaths over the two months, not including the five deaths in Atu Litang, while 47 were injured. In February, conflicts over access to resources and corruption allegations also hit a peak since October 2006, underlining the growing frustration of communities with persistent economic pressures. Disputes between rivals competing for markets, customers, or employment were especially likely to lead to violence. Finally, Partai GAM's abandonment of the name and symbols of the former separatist movement, and the creation of the Commission on Sustaining Peace in Aceh (CoSPA), show encouraging attempts at better collaboration between GAM and Jakarta, although they also underline the persistence of mutual suspicions and divisions within GAM's elite.

### ***The Atu Lintang incident: the peace process resists to its most serious blow so far***

In the early hours of March 1<sup>st</sup>, in Meurah Pupok village, Atu Lintang sub-district, Aceh Tengah, five KPA<sup>3</sup> members were killed and one seriously injured in an attack on the Sagoe Merah Mege KPA office. This is the largest loss of life in a single conflict incident since the signing of the MoU. The case drew the attention of the international media back to Aceh, and sparked widespread concern on its potential impact on the peace process.

The Atu Lintang massacre followed a smaller incident in Takengon on the previous day (see Box 1). Three KPA members were injured in an altercation with hundreds of members of the Terminal Workers Union (*Ikatan Pekerja Terminal – IPT*), an organization dominated by former anti-separatist militias, upon their arrival at a meeting to sort out a long-standing argument over control of employment at the Takengon bus terminal. Prominent militia-

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<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 and with funding from the UK's Department for International Development, 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. 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 [amorell@worldbank.org](mailto:amorell@worldbank.org). There are limitations to using newspapers to map conflict; see Barron and Sharpe (2005) available at [www.conflictanddevelopment.org/page.php?id=412](http://www.conflictanddevelopment.org/page.php?id=412).

<sup>2</sup> This incident happened in March. As such, it is not included in our count of deaths and injuries for January and February, nor in our statistics on number of conflicts and violent incidents.

<sup>3</sup> *Komite Peralihan Aceh* (Aceh's Transition Committee) is the civil organization representing former combatants of the GAM's military wing (TNA).

affiliated figures, such as Misriadi alias Adijan,<sup>4</sup> attended a meeting called by the Bupati to prevent further confrontation. The meeting took place with mass mobilization on both sides as a backdrop (see Box 1). Shortly after the crowd dispersed, the Merah Mege KPA office in Atu Lintang was attacked and torched. Four charred bodies were recovered in the ruins of the building, about 30km south-east of Takengon. A fifth body was found in a nearby well, while a sixth victim survived with serious injuries. Accounts of witnesses and survivors reported scenes of savagery, with the victims hauled from the office and massacred with machetes before their bodies were thrown in the fire.

#### Box 1: The Atu Lintang incident – chronology

- *February 29<sup>th</sup>, 10am, Takengon, Aceh Tengah.* A meeting between the Terminal Workers Union (IPT) and KPA leads to a clash.
- *Around 2pm, Takengon.* About 200 members of KPA Linge (central highlands) start to gather in Takengon.
- *Around 6pm, Takengon.* The Bupati of Aceh Tengah calls a meeting between IPT and KPA. During the meeting, a crowd gathers in front of the Bupati's office, formed of IPT members and villagers brought by trucks from various areas across Aceh Tengah. According to one witness, the vehicles of KPA delegates are vandalized.
- *Around 10pm, Takengon.* The meeting concludes with an agreement to sort out the dispute peacefully. The pro-IPT crowd disperses on trucks.
- *8pm-3am.* 13 trucks packed with KPA members from Bireuen, Aceh Utara and Aceh Timur are reported to be heading for Aceh Tengah. Four are blocked by TNI at the border of Timang Gajah sub-district, Bener Meriah. Whether other trucks reached their destinations remains unclear.
- *March 1<sup>st</sup>, midnight-3am, Meurah Pupok village, Atu Lintang sub-district.* A mob attacks and burns the local KPA office to the ground. Five are killed, one seriously injured.

A likely sequence of events is that elements of the mob that had gathered in front of the Bupati office decided to stop in Meurah Pupok and attack the KPA office on their way home from Takengon. Police denied any link between the IPT/KPA showdown and the Atu Lintang massacre. They attributed the latter to a spontaneous outburst of violence by community members with no specific affiliation. This explanation failed to smother widespread suspicions that former militias were involved.

This incident carried serious risks of escalation, with potential implications for peace:

- **Risk of retaliation from GAM/KPA against militias.** KPA immediately denounced the massacre as a provocation orchestrated by militias, and made a parallel with the attack on the Aceh Tengah Joint Security Committee (JSC) on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2003. The latter incident, almost exactly five years before the Atu Lintang case, participated to the downfall of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA) and helped trigger a resumption of the conflict.
- **Risk of reviving ethnic tensions.** Retaliations by KPA against militia could fuel communal tensions in the central highlands, where conflict-era loyalties are closely tied to ethnicity. Acehnese are a minority in this area, which is mainly inhabited by Gayo and Javanese. When militias appeared after 2000, they recruited primarily from the Javanese, while Gayo were present in both militias and GAM. Nearly all the victims of the March 1<sup>st</sup> massacre were Gayo,<sup>5</sup> while Javanese are dominant in Atu Lintang. Further violence could allow confrontation to spread beyond former combatant groups to the wider community, reviving divisions along ethnic lines and possibly resulting in population displacements. After the incident, rumors circulated that groups were already starting to migrate from the countryside to Takengon.

<sup>4</sup> Adijan is the former Head of PETA for Bener Meriah. PETA is *Pembela Tanah Air* (Homeland's Defenders), a generic denomination for anti-separatist militias.

<sup>5</sup> Four of the dead were Gayo, one was Padang, and the victim who was injured but survived was Javanese.

Given the high risk of escalation, it is encouraging that authorities, police and the KPA hierarchy all acted to contain potential spillovers. The police investigation quickly led to numerous arrests: 25 suspects were in detention as of March 13<sup>th</sup>. Moreover, there has been no retaliation thus far. Directly after the incident, KPA circulated instructions for its troops to refrain from responding to provocations or undertaking revenge attacks. Malik Mahmud himself led a meeting with all 17 KPA district commanders in Banda Aceh on March 4<sup>th</sup>. Population movements were limited to the families of the victims and, despite reports of sweepings by unidentified groups at night in the days following the incident, the security situation in Aceh Tengah seems to have returned to normal.

The actual motivations of the perpetrators have not been fully brought to light. However a number of factors seem key:

- **Conflict-era loyalty issues.** Only one victim was an ex-combatant, with the others fresh KPA recruits from a neighboring village. According to the testimony of a friend of the victims, some of the suspects arrested by the police had previously tried to intimidate them into not joining KPA. The same source clearly identified several of those arrested as local militia figures.<sup>6</sup> The investigation reports of the police and the Coordination and Communication Forum for Peace in Aceh (FKK) both cautiously avoided discussing the suspects' ideological affiliations. However, FKK's report implicitly hinted at this, noting that the KPA office was regarded as an offense to local communities, who were "from the beginning of the conflict ideologically supportive of the Republic of Indonesia and very much anti-GAM".
- **Economic grievances.** According to police and FKK, suspects and community members denounced KPA's attempts at extorting *pajak nanggroe*<sup>7</sup> from local projects and business activities, and accused them of being involved in illegal logging while forbidding villagers to cut wood for their own needs.<sup>8</sup>
- **ALA-ABAS.** Governor Irwandi Yusuf also suggested that the incident might be linked to the ALA-ABAS issue (see next section). Aceh Tengah is on the frontline of support for the partition project. Pro-ALA demonstrations were organized in Takengon throughout February, including a mass rally just two days before the IPT/KPA brawl. Such a climate probably fuelled tensions and helped revive conflict-era divisions, with KPA clearly stating its opposition to the split.

These factors appear to invalidate conspiracy theories of a well-orchestrated provocation aimed at destabilizing peace, pointing instead to another scenario, where the climate of confrontation and heightened emotions of the day, added to a wider context of exacerbated regionalist ambitions, allowed local-scale tensions and grievances to get out of control.

The main lesson of the Atu Lintang incident, however, is that the peace process was robust enough to survive its most serious threat so far. Under the most dramatic and emotional circumstances, the central and provincial governments, security forces and KPA all helped contain the incident and mitigate the escalation risks. Nonetheless, some core issues remain unaddressed. As long as group membership remains a determining factor in accessing

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<sup>6</sup> Interview with the Updates, March 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> The tax that GAM used to raise during the conflict to finance the separatist struggle.

<sup>8</sup> Note that the conclusions of FKK, a conflict mediation body dominated by representatives of the central government, put most of the blame on KPA's behavior. It remains unclear whether the accusations against KPA reported above have been properly investigated or are based mostly on the own testimonies of the perpetrators. The incident raises issues about KPA itself, especially as KPA recognized that most victims were not ex-combatants but new recruits. KPA was initially formed as an organization advocating the rights of former TNA combatants. If it does start to extend membership to other groups of people, it will affect the nature of its legitimacy and give ground to detractors who denounce its transformation into an opportunistic socio-political organization. KPA has frequently received criticism, especially in the former GAM strongholds of the east coast, for misusing its influence and leverage to secure access to economic resources, to campaign for Partai GAM, and for imposing a parallel "shadow government" administration that prevails over local authorities.

economic opportunities, and violence is recognized as a legitimate way of resolving disputes, incidents such as Atu Lintang are likely to happen again.

### **ALA-ABAS: a test of Aceh's social cohesion underlining the need for a full and timely implementation of the MoU and the LoGA**

January was marked by the sudden reappearance of the long-standing issue of the partition of Aceh with the establishment of two new provinces, Aceh Leuser Antara (ALA) and Aceh Barat Selatan (ABAS). On January 22<sup>nd</sup>, a proposed law to establish 21 new provinces across Indonesia was submitted to the national parliament (DPR). Included was the creation of ALA, which would encompass the central highlands of Aceh,<sup>9</sup> and ABAS, which would comprise the west coast districts.<sup>10</sup> Governor Irwandi Yusuf quickly voiced opposition, soon echoed by a wide range of actors, including members of the provincial and national parliaments, elements of civil society, and prominent figures across the GAM/KPA spectrum.

Annex 1 summarizes the main arguments of both supporters and opponents of the split, which revolve around socio-economic issues and the conformity of the partition with the Helsinki MoU and the Law on Governing Aceh (LoGA). The most striking concerns of the opponents relate to the ways in which it could threaten the peace process. Governor Irwandi Yusuf and a number of GAM figures issued particularly sharp statements denouncing the move as a deliberate attempt by local and national elites to destabilize Aceh's fragile transition to peace and self-government (see quotes in Annex 1).

To understand the debate fully, one must look back at the partition project's history. The ALA-ABAS idea, which has resurfaced regularly for decades, became particularly controversial when local politicians tried to revive it in the late-nineties. GAM perceived the initiative to be a strategy of Jakarta to dam the separatist movement's expansion beyond its strongholds of the east coast. Current

support to ALA province draws from the same elites who promoted the partition during the conflict, most affiliated to Golkar,<sup>11</sup> some with ties to the former anti-separatist militias.<sup>12</sup> This raised suspicion from Irwandi and GAM that the recent reappearance of the project might stem from a similar "divide and conquer" strategy, with the aim of containing the expansion of GAM's political control over the province and possibly regaining terrain lost during the 2006 elections.

#### **Box 2: ALA-ABAS - Chronology**

- *December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2005, Jakarta.* Seven Bupatis and eleven district parliaments heads declare the establishment of ALA and ABAS provinces. This declaration has no legal basis.
- *January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2008, Jakarta.* A draft law proposing the creation of ALA and ABAS is submitted for examination to the national parliament (DPR).
- *January 23<sup>rd</sup>, Banda Aceh.* Governor Irwandi Yusuf voices his categorical opposition to the split.
- *February.* Banners bearing pro-ALA and ABAS slogans are raised in the cities and along the roads of the central highlands and the west coast.
- *February 24<sup>th</sup>.* Governor Irwandi Yusuf orders police and Bupatis to take down the banners.
- *February 21<sup>st</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>, Takengon, Aceh Tengah.* Hundreds of Aceh Tengah village heads demonstrate in favor of the split. They announce their intention to travel to Jakarta to convey their claims to President Yudhoyono, and their intention to return official seals and other insignias if their demands are not met.
- *February 27<sup>th</sup>, Takengon, Aceh Tengah.* During a demonstration attended by the Bupati and Vice Bupati of Aceh Tengah and the Head of the district parliament, hundreds sign a pro-ALA banner.

<sup>9</sup> Aceh Tengah, Bener Meriah, Gayo Lues, Aceh Tenggara, Aceh Singkil and Kota Subussalam.

<sup>10</sup> Aceh Jaya, Aceh Barat, Aceh Barat Daya, Nagan Raya and Aceh Selatan and Simeulue.

<sup>11</sup> Golkar was the political vehicle of Suharto, and remains a powerful Indonesian political party.

<sup>12</sup> Including but not limited to Tagore Abu Bakar, Bupati of Bener Meriah, Syukur Khobat, Chairman of the Aceh Tengah district parliament, and Armen Desky, former Bupati of Aceh Tenggara, whose wife is one of the leading pro-ALA members of the national parliament. All are Golkar.

Besides reviving conflict-era suspicions between Aceh and Jakarta, the issue has a potential to impact on the peace in more direct ways:

- **Exacerbation of disagreements over the interpretation and implementation of the MoU and the LoGA.** This relates to discrepancies between the LoGA and MoU in two areas: the definition of Aceh borders, and the extent to which the provincial government and legislature must be involved in Jakarta's decisions regarding Aceh (see Annex 1). On both issues, opponents to the split denounced it as an outright breach to the letter and spirit of the MoU, while ALA-ABAS supporters have been arguing that partition is in conformity with the LoGA. The debate thus underlined and exacerbated the perception shared by many in Aceh, including but not limited to GAM/KPA, that the LoGA betrays key MoU provisions, especially with respect to the very concept of "self-government". The debate also raised issues about the implementation of the LoGA itself. The LoGA states clearly that laws issued by the national parliament must involve consultation with the provincial legislature. However, this provision has not been translated yet into a presidential decree.
- **Risk of reviving ethnic tensions in the highlands.** The debate has led to a volatile atmosphere which risks reviving ethnic tensions and conflict-era loyalty divides, especially between KPA and former militia in the central highlands (see the Atu Lintang incident above). This risk is much lower along the west coast, where ethnic divisions have never resulted in levels of violence comparable to the highlands.

There is still a long way for ALA and ABAS to become reality. If Commission II of the DPR validates the proposal, it still has to win a majority of the vote in the full DPR, and receive presidential approval. The parliament is divided over the issue, and it is unlikely that the President will agree to sign a law that would jeopardize a peace process of which he was a key initiator. It is also unlikely that the DPR will decide to ignore the spirit of the LoGA by refusing to consult with the provincial parliament, who will almost certainly oppose the law.

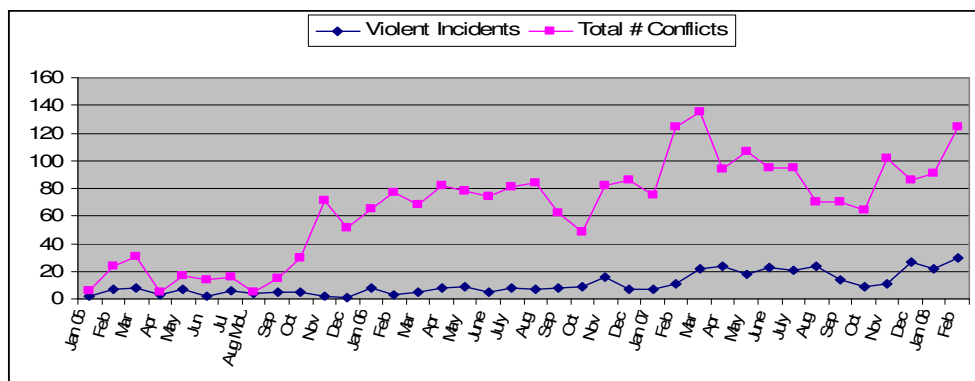
In the meantime, emphasis should be put on limiting tensions by addressing the economic grievances of ALA-ABAS supporters and issues related to the MoU and LoGA:

- Many of the grassroots and civil society supporters of the partition, especially within the pro-ABAS organizations, do not see it as an end in itself but rather as a way to draw attention to their socio-economic grievances and feeling of discrimination. There are opportunities for provincial government to demonstrate its commitment to address such existing and perceived inequities.
- The issue underlines yet again the urgency of forming a recognized and legally-mandated consultative body to allow Aceh and Jakarta to work out remaining disagreements on the interpretation of the MoU and the LoGA and undertake necessary revisions. While major points such as Aceh borders and the definition of "self-government" are not properly translated into a set of clear and unequivocal decrees, regulations and laws, conflicts and issues will continue to arise.

### Conflicts and violence on the rise

Local-level violence remained high in January, with 22 incidents reported, and reached a new peak in February, with 30 violent cases (see Figure 1). February was also marked by a steep increase in the number of total conflicts (violent and non-violent), with 123 new conflicts reported.

Figure 1: Violent LL incidents and total # of LL conflicts, by month



January and February's violent incidents demonstrate some key features (see Table 1 below):

- **Murders, shootings, kidnappings and terror attacks continued.** A shooting during the arrest of Teungku Husaini and his subsequent death in detention, were linked to the police investigation of the assassination of Teungku Badruddin (see December Update). Two other incidents, the bombing of a local NGO in Muara Batu on January 31<sup>st</sup>, and the kidnapping of a KPA *imam* in Sawang on February 12<sup>th</sup>, were attributed by authorities to retaliation attacks by Badruddin's followers. The motives of four other kidnapping cases, two murders and the shooting of a police officer remain unclear.<sup>13</sup> Proper investigation of such unexplained incidents is needed to dissipate rampant suspicions that these are provocations by parties aiming to destabilize Aceh.
- February was marked by an **unusually high number of vigilante cases** (12),<sup>14</sup> of which nine were violent. Impatience towards high levels of crime, and lack of trust in the police's capacity to adequately deal with it, are likely main factors.
- **Only one case of aid-related violence was recorded**, when a demonstration of flood victims turned violent in Aceh Tamiang on January 14<sup>th</sup>, with three injured in a clash between demonstrators and police.
- **76% of the most serious incidents (use of weapons, arson, kidnapping) occurred along the east coast**, in Pidie, Bireuen, Aceh Utara, Aceh Timur and Langsa. 40% occurred in Aceh Utara only (7 cases).

Table 1: Violent incidents in January and February 2008, per type

Number	Type	Toll
11	Murders, shootings, kidnappings, terror attacks <i>One mysterious death; two murders; two shootings; one bombing; five kidnappings</i>	3 dead 1 injured
7	Violence related to competition over resources, employment, markets	7 injured
1	Aid-related	3 injured
12	Vigilantism: <i>Ten cases of criminals beaten by a mob; two cases of moral vigilantism</i>	16 injured
3	Abuse of force by security forces	4 injured
12	Personal issues (revenge etc)	1 dead 9 injured
6	Others	7 injured

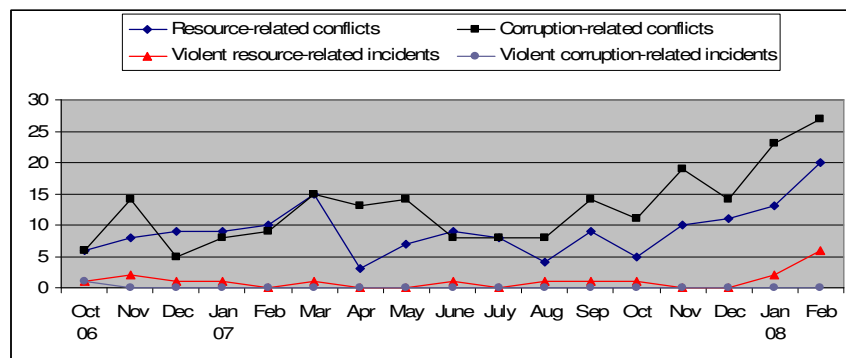
<sup>13</sup> Note that these figures do not include criminal cases. Our database only records as conflict incidents cases with sufficient indications that other factors were at play, or cases where motives remain unclear but that do not fit a purely criminal profile (for example, where nothing was stolen).

<sup>14</sup> The latest previous high in vigilante cases was in May 2007, with 13 cases reported.

***A leap in conflicts related to access to resources and corruption cases (see Figure 2 below)***

- In February, conflicts related to access to resources hit their highest level since October 2006 (20 cases). Many cases related to publicly-owned natural resources, such as land available for agricultural exploitation, with community members clashing with local authorities or private companies. Another dominant type of conflicts involved individuals or rival organizations competing over control of markets, customers or employment. In February, over 50% of this type of disputes (four out of seven) led to violence.
- Corruption-related conflicts, which have been on the rise since September of last year, also reached a new high, with 27 cases. Nearly all of these incidents consisted of complaints and protests conveyed by civil society organizations or communities to the media or relevant authorities. None led to violence.

**Figure 2: Conflicts and violence related to access to resources and corruption, by month**



***Partai GAM issue settled, and new mediation body created***

On February 25<sup>th</sup>, Partai GAM announced that it would change its name to Partai Gerakan Aceh Mandiri (Party for a Self-Governed Aceh), abandoning the reference to freedom (*Merdeka*) in the former separatist movement’s name. Partai GAM also abandoned use of the GAM flag as its banner. This should resolve a long-standing issue between the political party, led by Muzzakir Manaf, Head of KPA,<sup>15</sup> and Jakarta, who denounced the use of GAM’s name and symbols as a proof that GAM/KPA had not renounced independence (see October 2007 Update). It also overcomes the last legal obstacles to the legalization of the party, which now seems on the track to become one of the major contenders of the 2009 elections.

The breakthrough happened shortly after a high-profile meeting between Partai GAM’s leading figures and representatives of central government, mediated by Interpeace, in Makassar on February 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup>. There are signs that tensions between GAM factions (Malik Mahmud and the ‘old guard’ on one side, Irwandi and the ‘young turks’ on the other) played a role in Partai GAM’s struggle to retain the use of the name and flag. Following the Makassar meeting, Ibrahim KBS, KPA’s spokesman, said the talks had allowed Partai GAM to identify factions “speaking on behalf of GAM” and “voices from the provincial government’s leadership”, who had approached Jakarta and questioned Partai GAM’s legitimacy in order to serve their “personal political ambitions”.<sup>16</sup> Soon afterwards, Irwandi issued a number of press declarations saying that he opposed the central government regulation 77, 2007, which forbids the use of GAM’s symbols by local parties, on the ground that he had not been previously consulted and that it represented a breach of the spirit of the MoU. These statements may also have been intended to allay Partai GAM’s suspicions, allowing to an agreement to change the name and drop the symbols.

<sup>15</sup> Malik Mahmud, former GAM’s Prime Minister and the initial Head of Partai GAM, was replaced by Muzzakir Manaf by mid-February. Malik Mahmud, the holder of a Singaporean passport, does not have the Indonesian nationality. This represented another obstacle to the legalization of the party.

<sup>16</sup> Harian Aceh, February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2008.

The days following the Makassar meeting were also marked by the creation of a new conflict mediation body, the Commission on Sustaining Peace in Aceh (CoSPA). Modeled on the Commission on Security Arrangements (CoSA) mediated by the Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM), CoSPA aims to become a forum allowing the major stakeholders of the peace process to discuss and address conflict incidents and MoU-related issues. Supported by Irwandi, CoSPA include FKK's ranking representatives of the central government, with GAM represented by figures close to the Governor: Nur Djuli, Bakhtiar Abdullah, Muksalmina, Teuku Hadi, Sofyan Dawood and Shadia Marhaban.<sup>17</sup> KPA refused to participate, although it also denied that this was an indication of a rift within GAM. In the words of Ibrahim KBS, "we don't sleep under the same roof, but we share the same dreams".<sup>18</sup>

In conclusion, both the solution of the Partai GAM issue and the creation of CoSPA represent encouraging attempts at better collaboration between GAM and Jakarta, although they also reveal the persistence of mutual suspicions and rivalries within GAM's elite. Although CoSPA should be welcomed, its efficiency will certainly be diminished by KPA's refusal to come onboard. The coexistence of parallel channels of negotiation between Jakarta and different factions that all claim to speak on behalf of GAM (Irwandi's people with CoSPA, and Mahmud's people with initiatives such as the Makasar summit), remains one of the main obstacles to addressing in an efficient and timely manner remaining MoU and LoGA issues.

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<sup>17</sup> Note that most of them are also members of the MoU Helsinki Watch (*Tim Pemantau MoU Helsinki*), which has been advocating a revision of the LoGA.

<sup>18</sup> *Harian Aceh*, February 19th, 2008.

## Annex 1 – The debate over ALA and ABAS – Major lines of argumentation and quotes

Pro	Contra
<i>Socio-economic arguments</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The ethnically heterogeneous population of the central highlands and the west coast suffers from discrimination by the provincial government in terms of allocations of funds, access to public services and development programs.</li> <li>Governor Irwandi Yusuf focuses his attention on the former GAM strongholds of the east coast, where GAM has seized political control.</li> <li>The split would allow ALA and ABAS direct control of a higher share of the budget allocation from central government (DAU), resulting in improvement of public services, infrastructure and social welfare.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poverty and low levels of development are not limited to the central highlands and the west coast, but a concern in all districts across Aceh.<sup>19</sup></li> <li>If improving public welfare is the objective, a split is not the solution. District governments should rather focus on ensuring a more efficient and transparent management of the existing budget allocations.</li> </ul>
<i>MoU and LoGA-related arguments</i>	
<p>The partition is in accordance with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The LoGA geographic definition of Aceh borders as limited by the Malacca Strait, the Indian Ocean and the border with Sumatra Utara (Article 3).</li> <li>Article 5 of the LoGA: Administrative partitions (<i>pemekaran</i>) in Aceh follow existing Indonesian regulations.</li> <li>Article 8 of the LoGA: Draft laws by the national legislature regarding Aceh must involve consultation with the provincial legislature.</li> </ul>	<p>A partition of the province would constitute a breach to the following provisions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.1.4. of the MoU, which acknowledges the borders of Aceh as of July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1956. It also raises questions with regards to the following provisions:</li> <li>1.1.2. C and 1.2.4. of the MoU: Decisions of the national legislature regarding Aceh must be taken in consultation with the Aceh legislature, and until 2009, decisions from the latter must be approved by the Governor.</li> </ul>
<i>Quotes</i>	
<p>Irwandi Yusuf, Governor of Aceh: "I will oppose (the split) with all my strength to preserve the integrity and peace of Aceh. Only itchy and ill-minded elites support the split. Aceh is Aceh, period" (Serambi, 01/24/08).</p> <p>Fauzan Azima, former TNA commander for Wilayah Linge: "If (some elites in) Jakarta continue to play tricks in Aceh, there is a chance it will trigger the resumption of conflict" (Harian Aceh 02/27/08).<sup>20</sup></p> <p>TAF Haikal, Spokesman of the South-Western Coast Caucus (KPBS), one of the leading pro-ABAS organizations: "The idea of the split is born from the people's sentiment of injustice. If the benefits of development were shared in a fair way, there would be no reason for splitting" (Serambi 01/24/08).</p> <p>Iwan Gayo, Spokesman of ALA's advocacy committee (KP3ALA): "Irwandi can fight in order to separate Aceh from Indonesia so it becomes one of the 200 or so independent countries in the world. But then, he has to consider ALA's struggle to become one of the 33 provinces of this country" (Harian Aceh, 01/26/08).</p>	

<sup>19</sup> The World Bank's Poverty Assessment shows that the poorest districts in 2004 (poverty incidence above 30%) were Aceh Barat, Aceh Tenggara (over 40%), Nagan Raya, Aceh Barat Daya, Gayo Lues, but also included Aceh Timur (above 40%), Langsa and Aceh Utara. Poverty levels dropped significantly in almost all districts by 2006, with the sole exception of Aceh Tenggara.

<sup>20</sup> In the same statement, Fauzan Azima also said the Jakarta elites backing ALA-ABAS received support from the Indonesian intelligence services (BIN).