

Aceh Conflict Monitoring Update

1st March – 30th April 2008

World Bank

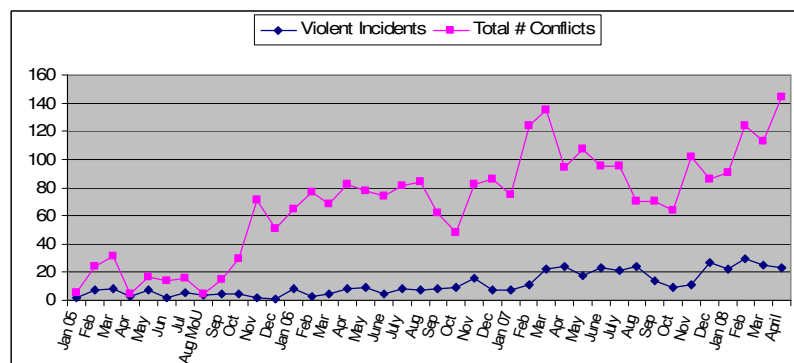


The number of conflicts reached a new peak, mostly due to an increasing number of administrative disputes, while violent incidents remained high, with 25 cases reported in March and 23 in April.¹ Besides the March 1st Atu Lintang massacre, discussed in the last Update, a number of violent cases, including the kidnapping of seven Chinese nationals in Gayo Lues on April 27th, again raised concern over the impact of crime and sporadic violence on Aceh's development. Long-standing political conflicts further developed. As Partai GAM, recently renamed Partai Aceh, managed to overcome the last obstacles to its legalization, its branch offices were targeted by a number of incidents. These cases emphasized the need for security forces to refrain from interfering in politics, and highlighted the transformations the party must make to demonstrate its commitment to basic democratic principles. Mobilization in favor of the formation of ALA and ABAS provinces continued, but suffered a political blow when Governor Irwandi Yusuf convinced a leading figure of the ALA movement, Iwan Gayo, to lead a new government agency. Aid-related conflicts remained consistent with previous months' figures, but revealed that these conflicts tend to endure longer and lead more frequently to violent incidents. This was illustrated by the wave of protests over BRR's housing rehabilitation assistance, which led to an unprecedented number of demonstrations and was marred by two cases of violence. Core reconstruction and reintegration issues need urgent attention in order to prevent growing dissatisfaction from leading to more violence.

Conflicts on the rise, violence remains high

Local-level violence has been rising rapidly since August 2005, and reached its highest levels over the past six months. However, such incidents are less likely to result in deaths as compared to violence during the conflict period.

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

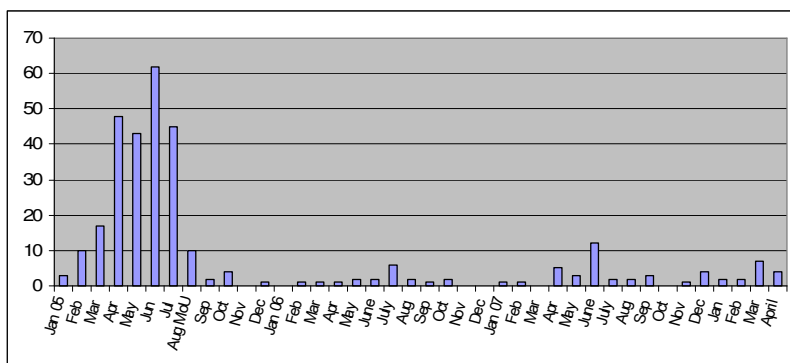


The number of local-level conflicts reached a new peak in April, with 144 new conflicts reported. This leap was mostly due to an increased number of administrative disputes, including complaints over the management of public funds and procedures and access to

¹ 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. The dataset is available for those interested; contact Blair Palmer at bpalmer@worldbank.org or Adrian Morel at amorel1@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.

public services. The number of violent incidents remained high, with 25 cases reported in March and 23 in April (see Figure 1). Violence resulted in a relatively high number of casualties, with seven deaths in March, the largest loss of life in a single month since June 2007, and four in April. Five were killed in the March 1st Atu Lintang massacre, the deadliest single conflict incident since the signing of the Helsinki MoU (see the January-February 2008 Update for an analysis of this incident). However, Figure 2 shows that the scale of casualties in post-war Aceh remains remarkably lower than it was before the signing of the peace treaty, when exchanges of fire between Indonesian armed forces and GAM were still occurring sporadically.

Figure 2: Number of deaths, by month



Kidnappings and murders: “mysterious” incidents continue to raise concern over crime and security in post-war Aceh

In March and April, three unrelated incidents drew particular attention:

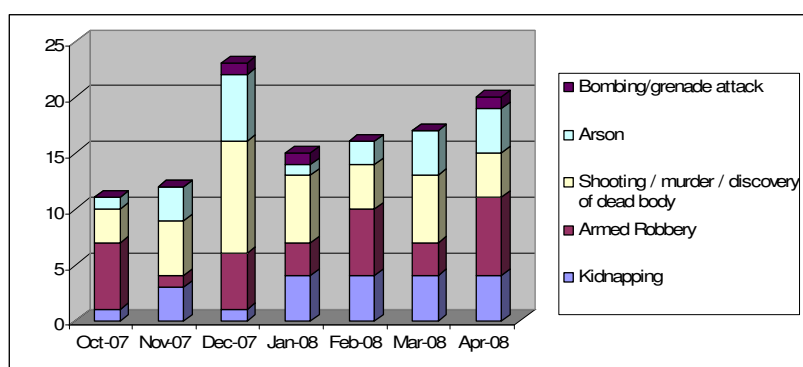
- ***The kidnapping of Mukhlis Gayo.*** On March 13th, Mukhlis Gayo, former candidate for Bupati in Aceh Tengah, was kidnapped in Takengon. The kidnappers abandoned their victim when stopped by police in Bireuen. The identity of the victim led to suspicion of possible connections with the ALA/ABAS issue² or to the theory of a retaliatory action undertaken by elements of KPA - the civil organization representing former combatants of GAM’s military wing- after the March 1st Atu Lintang massacre (see January-February Update). Mukhlis Gayo is the brother of both Iwan Gayo and Bener Meriah’s Bupati Tagore Abubakar, two leading figures of the ALA movement known for their pro-Jakarta loyalties during the conflict. However, the police investigation concluded rapidly that the kidnapping was motivated by ransom. The silence of the pro-ALA elite, who cautiously avoided politicizing the case, also seems to invalidate the theory of a revenge action by KPA.
- ***The killing of Ujang Ardiansyah.*** In the early hours of March 29th, a military police officer, Ujang Ardiansyah, was shot and killed by two individuals on a motorbike as he was driving a car near the Lhong Raya Stadium, Banda Aceh. Among the passengers of the car were another military police officer and two KPA members, one of whom fled the scene right after the incident. Despite the heavy-handed response by police and the military, perpetrators have not been identified and the motive of the crime remains unclear. Sources quoted by the press indicate Ujang might have been the victim of a settling of scores related to drug trafficking (*shabu-shabu*: crystal metamphetamine), with both military officers and KPA members involved in the traffic.
- ***The kidnapping of seven Chinese nationals in Gayo Lues.*** On April 27th, seven Chinese nationals and one Indonesian were kidnapped by armed men in Pining sub-district, Gayo Lues, while conducting an investment survey for an Indonesian mining company.

² The formation of two new provinces, Aceh Leuser Antara (Aceh’s central highlands) and Aceh Barat Selatan (west coast).

Perpetrators demanded Rp 300 million (US\$ 33,200) as ransom. After two hostages were released the next day, all were finally freed on April 29th, after half the ransom was paid. No arrest was made.

The above incidents once again raised concern over the impact of increasing levels of armed crime and sporadic violence on foreign investment and the economic development of the province. During the first four months of 2008, 16 kidnappings (an average of one per week), 19 armed robberies and 20 shootings and murders were reported. The April 27th kidnapping of seven Chinese nationals was the first such incident targeting foreigners since the signing of the MoU. Figure 3 shows the evolution of the number of armed crime cases and other forms of violent incidents over the past seven months.³ From December 2007 to April 2008, 66% of armed robberies and kidnappings, and 50% of all the above types of violence, occurred in Aceh Utara and Aceh Timur alone (including Lhokseumawe and Langsa cities).

Figure 3: Armed crime and other forms of violence (# of cases), from Oct 07 to April 08



Another source of concern is extortion, *pajak nanggroe*,⁴ and intimidation and threats by contractors to secure tenders. This issue was brought to attention by the decision of the company Pacific Oil and Gas, on April 4th, to momentarily stop its activities in Aceh Timur, following intimidation by a contractor allegedly linked to KPA.

KPA has repeatedly issued public statements condemning crime and extortion, and renewed its commitment to collaborate with security forces. It would be a mistake to conclude hastily that ex-combatants are responsible for all crime and violence, or, on the other hand, to overestimate the capacity of KPA's leadership to actually enforce discipline in the field. In the words of the Head of the Coordination and Communication Forum for Peace in Aceh (FKK): "most of the ongoing crime and violence in Aceh is now rooted in economic grievances, not politics. In itself this is an improvement, but one concern is the increasing divide between GAM/KPA elite and the rank-and-file who did not benefit as much from the economic windfalls of peace".⁵

Partai GAM faces challenges in the field

In April, Partai GAM's branch offices became the target of a number of incidents (see Box 1). According to the Department of Law and Human Rights in Banda Aceh, the long-standing issue about Partai GAM's name and symbols was settled in February when the party changed its name to Partai Gerakan Aceh Mandiri (see January-February 2008 Update). Partai GAM is required to display its name logo on offices under official regulations. However, the April 5th incident shows that Partai GAM's claim to the legacy of the former separatist movement continued to catalyze tensions. The decision in May to change the party's name a second time

³ Our monthly count of violent incidents, as in Figure 1, excludes crime, such as kidnappings for ransom and armed robberies, which are not considered as a form of conflict.

⁴ The tax raised by GAM during conflict years to finance the separatist struggle. The term is still in use to refer to cuts out of private and public projects demanded by GAM/KPA elements.

⁵ Interview with Brigadier General Amiruddin Usman, Banda Aceh, May 27th.

to Partai Aceh might help to prevent further incidents. The case also raises questions regarding the role of security forces and their duty to abstain from interfering in politics.

The actual motives of the April 21st presumed arson and the April 18th protests in Singkil remain unclear. However, the behavior of Partai GAM supporters was sometimes met with hostility from communities. On April 21st, the party's leadership received reports that villagers from some areas in Aceh Utara were coerced into surrendering their identity cards to bolster party membership. On May 22nd, Partai GAM was finally legalized, along with eleven other local political parties. In order to prevent incidents from disturbing the course of next year's election and offering room for Jakarta to raise further objections to GAM's participation in local politics, the party needs to enforce discipline among elements that might resort to using intimidation tactics.

Box 1: Incidents related to Partai GAM

- April 5th, Kota Langsa. Dozens of police officers force the staff of Partai GAM's branch office in Langsa to remove the party's logo from the front of the building.
- April 18th, Singkil. Community members protest against the presence of the Aceh Singkil branch office of Partai GAM.
- April 21st, Serbajadi, Aceh Timur. In the early hours, the Peunaron Partai GAM branch office burns to the ground. Although police says the cause of fire was accidental, arson is suspected.

ALA/ABAS mobilization continues, Governor creates a new agency

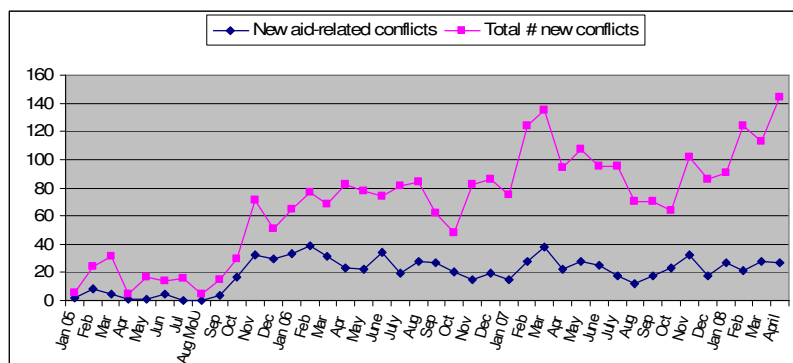
Mobilization in favor of the formation of ALA and ABAS provinces (see January-February Update) continued in March and April. From March 18th to 24th, 430 village heads from Aceh's central highlands demonstrated in Jakarta. On April 10th, 300 village heads from Bener Meriah threatened to boycott the 2009 elections and to close down local representations of national parties.

However, the ALA cause suffered a significant blow when Governor Irwandi Yusuf managed to convince Iwan Gayo, one of the leading figures of the ALA advocacy committee (KP3ALA) and the coordinator of the Jakarta demonstrations, to head a new government agency: the Special Committee for the Development of Disadvantaged Areas (KKP2DT). The agency will need to demonstrate clear vision and strategy if it is to efficiently address the social and economic grievances of Aceh's disadvantaged areas and to defuse continued tensions in the ethnically heterogeneous areas of the central highlands and the west coast.

Aid-related conflicts result in more incidents, with violence occurring more frequently

In March and April, the number of new aid-related conflicts remained consistent with previous months' figures, with 28 and 27 new aid conflicts reported (see Figure 4).

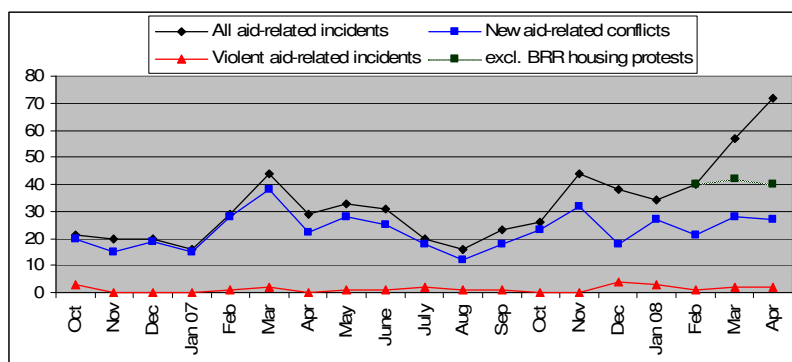
Figure 4: New aid-related conflicts and total # of new conflicts, by month



However, March and April's aid-related conflicts are remarkable in that they confirm trends observed since November of last year:

First, *aid-related conflicts tend to result in a higher number of incidents*. Although the number of new aid conflicts remained similar to previous months, the number of incidents stemming from these conflicts increased dramatically, reaching peaks of 57 incidents reported in March and 72 in April (see Figure 5).⁶ This leap is linked to the wave of protests and demonstrations related to BRR’s housing rehabilitation program (see section below). 15 and 32 incidents respectively were related to this single conflict alone in March and April. However, even when not taking into account the BRR protests, Figure 4 shows that the average gap between the number of conflicts and the number of resulting incidents has significantly increased since November of last year. This shows that aid-related conflicts tend to endure longer and are becoming more difficult to solve.

Figure 5: Aid-related conflicts, incidents and violence by month, from October 2006 to April 2008



Second, *although very few aid-related conflicts lead to violence, the frequency of violent aid-related incidents has significantly increased over the past five months*. Aid-related conflicts are usually expressed without violence. They typically start with complaints voiced through newspapers or directed to relevant authorities, and sometimes lead to demonstrations when they cannot be resolved by other channels. However, a total of four aid-related violent incidents were reported in March and April (see Table 1). Since December of last year, the average monthly rate of aid-related violent incidents is three times higher that it was during the period from October 2006 to November 2007 (2.4 compared to 0.85).

Table 1: Aid-related violent incidents, March and April 2008

Date	Location	Description
March 7 th	Meuraxa, Banda Aceh	An argument between community members over a BRR Housing program turns into a fight between youth.
March 14 th	Seunuddon, Aceh Utara	Community members “commandeer” six vehicles as a result of a disagreement with Dutch INGO Cordaid over a housing program.
April 17 th	Banda Aceh	During a demonstration over BRR’s housing rehabilitation program, a youth threatens to detonate a grenade if the crowd does not disperse. He avoids beating only by seeking refuge into a nearby house. The youth later appeared to be mentally disturbed.
April 24 th	Lhokseumawe	During a demonstration over BRR’s housing rehabilitation program, a motorist insults the demonstrators, saying they are “communists”. He is injured in the resulting beating.

It is remarkable that all March and April violent aid-related incidents were related to housing issues. Besides, three out of four were fights between community members, pertaining from increased social tension generated by the protests. This points to a dangerous potential for grievances over core needs left unaddressed to spill over and impact on social cohesion.

⁶ We tabulate both the number of *conflicts* and *incidents* each month. A conflict over a plot of land, for example, might involve several incidents such as a protest, a demonstration and a blockade. We code this as three incidents but one conflict.

Protests and political stand-off over BRR's housing rehabilitation program

March and April were marked by the unprecedented wave of protests and demonstrations raised by the decision announced by Kuntoro Mangkusubroto, BRR's Head, on March 5th, to reduce allocations for the 2008 round of its housing rehabilitation program to Rp 2.5 million (US\$ 275) per unit, instead of Rp 15 million (US\$ 1660). Kuntoro argued the decision was motivated by budget shortfalls and the fact that houses that were rehabilitated two years ago with Rp 15 million per unit needed more repair as compared to the houses that have not yet received assistance but have already been partially rehabilitated by their owners. Beneficiaries and civil society quickly mobilized to denounce this change in policy, and also questioned the transparency and accuracy of BRR's data collection and claims verification process. Protests and demonstrations rapidly spread from Aceh Barat, Pidie and Aceh Singkil to other areas and culminated when hundreds of tsunami and earthquake victims from the west coast traveled to Aceh on April 2nd and demonstrated repeatedly in front of the BRR headquarters over the two following weeks. Throughout March and April, 21 demonstrations were held in Banda Aceh, Aceh Barat, Lhokseumawe, Aceh Singkil, Pidie and Kota Subussalam. Two rallies were marred by violent incidents (see section on violent aid incidents above). The issue also led to a political stand-off, with Governor Irwandi Yusuf and members of the Aceh parliament taking sides with the demonstrators and pressuring BRR to reconsider the amount of allocations (see Box 2).

Box 2: Protests against BRR's housing rehabilitation program in March and April – highlights

[21 demonstrations related to this issue were reported from March 11th to April 26th – This box only summarizes main events]

- *April 2nd*. About 300 victims from Aceh Barat and Nagan Raya travel to Banda Aceh and demonstrate in front of the BRR headquarters on April 4th.
- *April 5th, Banda Aceh*. Governor Irwandi Yusuf and the Chairman of the provincial parliament (DPRA) sign a recommendation demanding that BRR revise data and claims and set the amount of allocations at Rp 15 million / unit.
- *April 7th, Banda Aceh*. Demonstration at BRR headquarters, marked by increasing tension.
- *April 11th-12th*. Sayed Zakaria, Chairman of Aceh's parliament, and 34 other members denounce BRR's policy as a breach to presidential decree number 30, 2005, which set the minimal allocation for housing rehabilitation at Rp 10 million / unit, and accuse BRR of lying on budget shortfalls.
- *April 17th*. Governor Irwandi Yusuf files a complaint against BRR with the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK).

Meanwhile, the negotiations between the Aceh Reintegration Agency (BRA) and Jakarta over funding seem to have reached a deadlock. An audit of BRA's programs by the provincial branch of the Financial Control Agency (BPKP) pointed out a range of wrongdoings in the management of reintegration funds, including corruption allegations. Governor Irwandi Yusuf and Head of BRA, M. Nur Djuli, reacted firmly by encouraging relevant authorities to investigate the cases. However, it is likely that the audit's findings will result in further difficulties for BRA to secure funds from Jakarta. After failing to obtain a second tranche of Rp 450 billion (US\$ 50 million) in 2007, BRA has so far received none of the funds committed by the central government to fund 2008 programs, resulting in a *de facto* freeze of all activities.

Both BRA's dire financial situation and the confrontation between provincial government and BRR over the housing assistance issue show lack of trust in the relations between local and central institutions. Better collaboration is critical to ensure a smooth handover of the responsibility of both reconstruction and reintegration programs from Jakarta to local authorities.