

Aceh Conflict Monitoring Update

1st July – 31st August 2008

World Bank

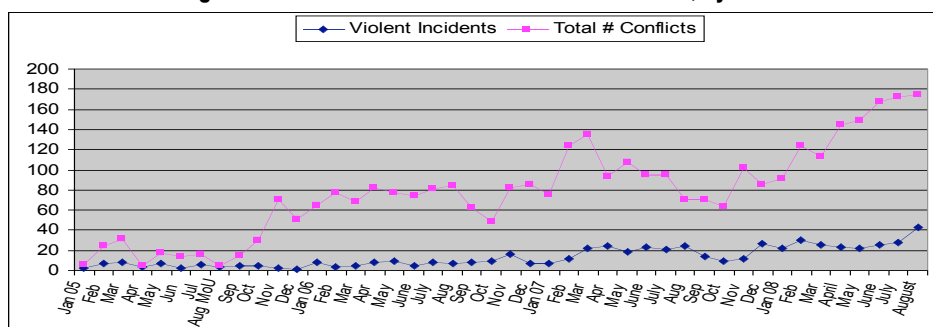


As the campaign for the 2009 elections started on July 12th, the number of violent incidents increased sharply, with 43 cases in August, by far the highest level since the tsunami.¹ This leap was partly attributable to cases of vandalism of political party banners. While these cases have been relatively harmless so far, they are symptomatic of more widespread intimidation. This is contributing to a climate of tension that could lead to more serious clashes, as illustrated by a recent series of attacks against GAM/KPA²-backed Partai Aceh figures and offices in September. Preparation for the elections was marked by legal squabbles between the provincial parliament and national institutions, rooted in wider disagreements between Aceh and Jakarta over the interpretation of the LoGA and the extent of Aceh's self-government. A shooting in Beutong, Nagan Raya, in July sparked fears that peace might be threatened on another front, with the alleged presence in Aceh of networks of rogue ex-combatants willing to resume the armed struggle for independence. The level of support such groups command among the wider population, and ex-combatants in particular, remains extremely weak. However, the potential exists for support to rise if those who come to power do not address the needs and grievances of the electorate. A peak in corruption cases was registered in July and August, after parliamentary approval of the provincial budget marked the beginning of the "season of the tenders". Finally, despite concern generated by the kidnapping of an INGO security guard in Banda Aceh, armed crime figures experienced a sharp drop.

A sudden rise in violence as the 2009 election campaign begins

In July and August, the number of conflicts remained high with respectively 172 and 175 new conflicts reported (see Figure 1). Violence rose dramatically in August with 43 cases reported (70% greater than the average monthly total from January to July 2008). This sudden leap coincided with the beginning of the electoral campaign and the subsequent rise in political tensions (see section on elections below).

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



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 updates available online at www.conflictanddevelopment.org. The dataset is available for those interested; contact 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.

² The Aceh Transition Committee (*Komite Peralihan Aceh* – KPA) is the civil organization formed to represent former combatants from GAM's military wing (TNA).

Table 1: August's violent incidents

Type of issue		# of cases	%	Toll
Vandalism of campaign material		12	28%	1 injured
Attacks involving ex-combatants	<i>Against GAM/KPA</i>	1	4.5%	5 injured
	<i>Against ex-militia</i>	1		1 dead
Dispute over resources		4	9%	1 excavator arsoned
Aid-related		1	2.5%	1 injured
Vigilantism	<i>Moral vigilantism</i>	3	21%	2 injured
	<i>Punitive actions against thieves</i>	6		5 Injured
Discoveries of dead bodies (motive of murder unclear)		3	7%	3 dead
Personal issues (revenge)		12	28%	4 dead, 9 injured
TOTAL		43	100%	8 dead, 23 injured, 1 arson

Table 1 categorizes August's violent incidents. In previous years, celebrations of Indonesian Independence Day on August 17th have been marred by cases of national flags being pulled down and replaced with GAM banners. This year there were no reports of "merah-putih" flags being removed, and GAM colors were already (legally) flying high, as Partai Aceh banners dominated the landscape along Aceh's east coast. However, many elections-related flag incidents occurred. Twelve of August's 43 violent cases (28%) involved vandalism of political party banners. These cases resulted in minor material damage and almost no harm to individuals. (One person was injured when KPA members beat up a village head caught red-handed removing Partai Aceh banners in Aceh Tamiang). As the elections draw closer, this type of incident is likely to increase in number, with the potential for escalation into more serious forms of violence.

The number of other types of violent conflict in both July and August was also high (with 28 and 31 cases recorded, respectively) and led to a high number of fatalities: 11 in July and 8 in August.³ Among the most serious cases were a shooting in Nagan Raya and the assassination of a former anti-separatist militia member in Aceh Utara (see section on the Beutong case and the "anti-MoU" threat). They also included an attack on a KPA guesthouse by a mob in Banda Aceh on August 23rd, during which four were injured. This incident appears to have been triggered by a personal dispute over a girlfriend, but could also involve KPA internal tensions between Banda Aceh-based elements and outsiders.

Legal struggles and widespread intimidation mark the launching of the electoral campaign

The campaign for the 2009 general elections began officially on July 12th. Six local political parties will run for the first time for the provincial and district legislatures (DPRD and DPRD), along with 38 national parties (see Box 1 below). GAM/KPA-backed Partai Aceh is expected to secure a large number of seats in the provincial parliament and in many districts. The number of political conflicts rocketed in August, with 39 cases reported (a 160% increase on July figures). 70% of all political incidents were directly related to the elections. Table 2 shows a breakdown of elections-related conflicts in the past two months. Prominent issues were legal struggles between the Aceh parliament and Jakarta over the implementation of the elections and widespread intimidation in the field.

Table 2: July and August's election-related conflicts

Type of issue		# of cases	% of total
General legal / administrative issues		7	19%
Issues related to the registration of candidates (<i>caleg</i>)		5	13%
Tensions between political parties	<i>Vandalism of campaign material</i>	12	42%
	<i>Other forms of intimidation</i>	4	
Political parties internal issues		8	21%
Others		2	5%

³ An average of four fatalities a month was recorded from January to June 2008. The previous high was June 2007, when twelve deaths were recorded.

The preparation of the elections was impaired by two legal disputes opposing Aceh-based institutions with Jakarta. The first relates to articles 13 and 36 of *Qanun* (local law) No. 3, passed by the Aceh parliament in June, which says that candidates of local and national parties have to pass a Koran-reading test. The Home Affairs Department contested the right of the DPRA to rule on national parties and demanded the withdrawal of article 36. The provincial parliament refused, arguing that the *Qanun*'s legitimacy is rooted in provisions in the LoGA which guarantee the Islamic character of Aceh.⁴

The second issue relates to the formation of the local Election Supervisory Committee (Panwaslu). Again, the provincial parliament and national institutions found themselves at odds on whether local or national regulations should take precedence. *Qanun* No. 7, passed last year, says that Panwaslu should be composed of five members proposed by the DPRA. On the other hand, national law No. 22 2007 stipulates that there should only be three members, picked by the national Election Supervisory Committee (Bawaslu) from the six proposed by the Provincial Elections Commission (KIP). Again, the DPRA argued that *Qanun* No. 7 originates from provisions of the LoGA.

The Aceh parliament has refused to change its positions on both issues. Koran-reading tests were organized for all candidates in September. A compromise appears close on the Panwaslu issue, whereby KIP will submit to Jakarta the same candidates already selected in June by the DPRA, although it remains unclear how many of them will be inaugurated. The latter issue is of particular importance for the smooth implementation of the elections. Panwaslu is responsible for oversight of the electoral process and for investigating complaints, including intimidation reports (see below). Failure to inaugurate Panwaslu very soon could lead losing contenders to contest the legitimacy of the election's outcome.

Both legal disputes were rooted in the wider issue of the interpretation of the LoGA provisions. A Partai Aceh-dominated local parliament could further compound existing disagreement between Aceh and Jakarta over the scope of Aceh's "self-government". While such disagreements are not in themselves bad, failure to make progress may lead to rising resentment, in both Jakarta and Aceh.

The beginning of the electoral campaign was also marked by widespread intimidation in many areas. In addition to banners being vandalized, threatening text messages were sent to supporters and officials of political parties. Only one case of physical intimidation – against the family of a PKS candidate in Aceh Utara – was reported, but undoubtedly many other cases that occurred were not reported or made public. Partai Aceh (PA) supporters are widely regarded as being behind much of the intimidation. Most reported cases occurred in the GAM strongholds of the east coast. In these areas, Partai Aceh supporters spread the word that "PA

Box 1: Local political parties and the 2009 elections

Clause 1.2.2 of the Helsinki MoU grants Aceh-based local political parties the right to field candidates for next year's elections to the provincial and district legislatures. In May, twelve local political parties were legally recognized. On July 7th, the provincial Independent Election Commission (KIP) announced that six fulfilled the legal requirements to run in 2009: Aceh's Party (*Partai Aceh - PA*), the People's Party of Aceh (*Partai Rakyat Aceh - PRA*), the Independent Voice of the Acehnese People Party (SIRA), the Safe and Prosperous Aceh Party (*Partai Aceh Aman Sejahtera - PAAS*), the Unified Aceh Party (*Partai Bersatu Aceh - PBA*), and the Aceh Sovereignty Party (*Partai Daulat Aceh - PDA*). Local parties represent a serious challenge to national parties such as Golkar, PPP, PAN and PKS who have previously dominated Aceh's legislatures. A number of national party figures have already defected to local ones. The PBA is led by PAN politician Farhan Hamid, a member of the national parliament. A landslide takeover by local parties might set a precedent and generate similar claims in other Indonesian provinces (and perhaps resistance from Jakarta to allow local parties elsewhere). In 2006, after the right to field independent candidates for local executive elections was first granted to Aceh, the Constitutional Court proposed to extend it nationwide.

⁴ Article 36 (on national parties) was initially included in the local law under pressure from the powerful PPP, PKS and PAN parliamentary fractions, each a major Islamic national party. PRA and SIRA, both secular-leaning local parties, stated that if article 36 were withdrawn, then article 13 should also be voided to avoid having different standard for local and national parties.

must not lose” (*tidak boleh tidak menang*) and that people who do not intend to vote for PA should “go back to Java”.⁵ KPA’s leadership acknowledged the problem, but has done little to effectively enforce discipline. However, PA itself has also been a target of vandalism and hostile propaganda.⁶ In Aceh Timur, text messages were circulated associating PA with “communists”. In Langsa, banners reading: “Supporting separatism is destroying peace” were hung across the city. KPA has openly denounced these provocations as part of a covert smear campaign run by security forces. Other local parties have also been affected.

Intimidation not only threatens the legitimacy of the poll results but also contributes to a climate of heightened tensions and mutual suspicion that could lead to more serious confrontations. As this Update was written (mid-September), a grenade exploded at the house of Muzzakir Manaf, Head of KPA and Partai Aceh, two PA offices were arsoned in Lhokseumawe and Aceh Timur, and a grenade was lobbed at a third one in Bireuen, all over the course of seven days. Adnan Beuransah, PA’s spokesman, blamed these incidents on former anti-separatist militias, and denounced them as an attempt to disrupt the elections (the attacks will be discussed in more detail in the next Update).

In August, all local political parties, and the large majority of the national parties’ local branches, responded positively to an invitation from the Commission on Sustaining Peace in Aceh (CoSPA) to participate in a Forum for Good Relationships between Parties’ Candidates for the 2009 Elections (*Forum Silaturrahmi Partai Politik Peserta Pemilu 2009*). On September 12th, members of the Forum publicly signed an oath in front of the Baiturrahman mosque. They committed to abide by electoral regulations, to refrain from intimidation and money politics, and to accept the results of the polls. However, the ceremony was marked by the regrettable absence of Partai Aceh, whose delegates attended from a distance but chose not to take the oath.⁷

The Beutong Incident and the “anti-MoU” threat

On July 15th, four people suspected of planning criminal activities were killed in a shoot-out with the security forces in Beutong sub-district, Nagan Raya. Another member of the group surrendered. Automatic weapons were seized along with GAM banners. The police identified the group, whose members originated from Aceh Timur, Aceh Utara and Bireuen, as part of a larger criminal network involved in a series of armed robberies and kidnappings along the east coast and in the central highlands.

However, word swiftly spread, spurred on by statements from KPA figures, that there was a political dimension to the activities of the gang. Before the shooting, they had reportedly talked to villagers about how the GAM mainstream had betrayed the separatist struggle, and bragged about planning assassinations and other actions against KPA and Partai Aceh. Governor Irwandi Yusuf went further, claiming he had personally received death threats, and alleging that the group benefited from

Box 2: KPAMD and MP-GAM

The organization Irwandi Yusuf referred to as FDKA is actually the Preparatory Committee of the Free Democratic Aceh (*Komite Persiapan Aceh Merdeka Demokratik- KPAMD*). The Committee is closely associated to the Free Aceh Movement Government Council (MP-GAM), a GAM splinter group formed in 1999 as a result of a power struggle within the movement’s exiled leadership, and led by Husaini Hasan, a former GAM cabinet minister. In January 2006 in New York, KPAMD issued a declaration acknowledging the success of the Helsinki MoU in bringing peace to the province. However, the declaration also stated the organization’s commitment to pursue the struggle for independence and to “carry out all the necessary steps to achieve this aim”. [The full text of the declaration is accessible online on KPAMD’s website: www.freeaceh.com]. KPAMD’s network extends to the Acehnese diaspora in the US, Australia, Sweden, Norway, and Malaysia. It is also allegedly recruiting in Aceh among frustrated ex-combatants. Its supporters are commonly referred to as “GAM Husaini”, from the name of MP-GAM’s leader.

⁵ Text messages forwarded to the Updates’ team and interviews with civil society.

⁶ PA was the target of six reported cases in Bireuen, Aceh Timur and Aceh Tamiang. PKS comes second, with five cases, then SIRA (three), PRA and PIS (one each).

⁷ For a more in-depth analysis of elections and other political issues, see International Crisis Group (2008) “Pre-Election Anxieties in Aceh”, available online at www.crisisweb.org.

the support of the Democratic Front for the Independence of Aceh (FDKA), an international network of exiled GAM aiming to continue the armed struggle for independence (see Box 2).

Box 3: Tgk Badruddin and *Pasukan Peudeung*

Tgk Badruddin, known for his strong anti-MoU stance and his hostility to KPA, was also accused of a number of criminal acts, including the commandeering of a car belonging to the NGO Cardi in May 2007. KPA is allegedly responsible for his assassination, which sparked a number of retaliatory attacks earlier this year (see December 2007 and January 2008 Updates). Wearing black veils and carrying swords, Badruddin's followers, known as *Pasukan Peudeung* (the Sword Force) are reputed for intimidating NGOs operating in Sawang, disrupting public order, and vandalizing Partai Aceh banners. Claiming to represent the true army of Aceh (*TNA asli* – the real TNA), their professed – and somewhat confused – political views closely associate separatist ideology and *jihadi* influence. Lately, they have reportedly harassed NGO female workers who do not dress “properly”.

Similar allegations about links with FDKA/MP-GAM had also been made about late Teungku Badruddin, a former GAM military commander from Sawang, Aceh Utara, who was assassinated in December of last year (see Box 3). On the day following the Beutong incident, the alleged new leader of Badruddin's followers, Tgk Brimob, was arrested by the Bireuen police as a suspect in a number of kidnappings. The investigation of the Beutong case suggests loose personal affiliations between the two groups. Elements of the same network were later identified as being responsible for the assassination of a member of Berantas, a former anti-separatist militia, in Cot Girek, Aceh Utara, on August 26th.

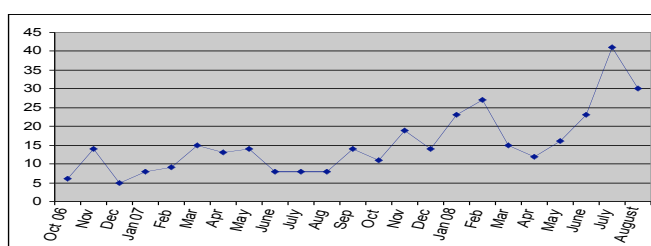
Feedback from the field suggests that “GAM Husaini” (see Box 2) have been gaining ground in parts of Bireuen, Aceh Utara and Aceh Timur, thriving on the simmering frustration and feeling of abandonment of many ex-combatants (hence the expression “GAM *sakit hati*”, or “bitter GAM”). However, the threat represented by “anti-MoU” groups should not be overstated. Although KPAMD/MP-GAM are opposed to the terms of the current peace agreement, there is scant evidence that they are planning to start a new armed rebellion in the province. The idea would be received with little enthusiasm by the large majority of the Acehnese population, who enjoy the benefits of peace. Ibrahim KBS, KPA's spokesman, has suggested that groups involved in violent incidents are merely criminal gangs who use ideology to provide a glamorous justification to their actions. Governor Irwandi has also stated that such groups are too loosely organized, and command too little support, to present a serious threat to the peace process. With regards to Sawang's *Pasukan Peudeung*, interviews conducted by the Updates' team with Tgk Brimob and local KPA figures over the past months leads to the impression that they are little more than a youth gang whose anger and frustration are rooted in poverty and unemployment rather than ideology.

Similar concerns over poverty and unemployment are widespread among ex-combatants, but the large majority of them nevertheless stay committed to peace and to the KPA, especially at a time when the expectation of further political victories is sparking new hopes. Whether the appeal of calls to renew the armed struggle will gain or lose ground in the future will depend a lot on how local government and the new legislatures manage to fulfill expectations.

A surge in corruption-related cases, as the “season of the tenders” begins

The number of corruption-related conflicts leapt dramatically over the past two months, with a peak in July when 41 cases were reported (a nearly three-fold increase compared to monthly totals from March to June).

Figure 2: New corruption-related cases, from October 2006 to August 2008



This jump occurred after the 2008 provincial budget (APBD) was approved in June. The Rp 8.5 trillion (US\$ 940 million) budget includes Rp 3.5 trillion (US\$ 390 million) in Special Autonomy Funds (*Dana Otsus*), of which a large share is to be channeled to districts to finance local government projects. This is a time of increased activity for both province and district-level line agencies (*Dinas*) and contractor companies as the “season of the tenders” begins. This is also a time of opportunities for personal enrichment, backroom deals, and increased pressure on officials as bidders exploit patronage networks to secure profitable APBD-funded contracts. Table 1 shows the most prominent corruption issues in July, when the highest number of cases was recorded.

Table 3: Main types of corruption-related cases, July 2008

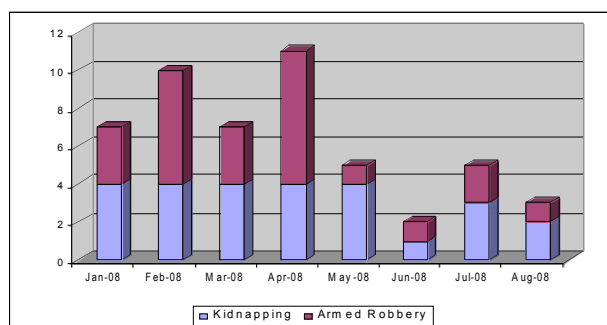
Type of issue		# of cases	% of total
Issues about contracts & contractors	<i>Tenders</i>	5	12%
	<i>Complaints over project implementation</i>	7	18%
Corrupted officials	<i>District government, Line ministries (Dinas)</i>	12	30%
	<i>Village officials</i>	4	10 %
	<i>Others</i>	5	12 %

In the current pre-elections context, it is important to keep in mind that corruption is in part a product of the patron-client relationships that dominate Acehese (and indeed Indonesian) politics. Individuals and parties gather financial support by selling favors and promises of preferential access to wealthy supporters, who in turn feel entitled to press for payments of these debts once their protégés are in power and money starts flowing. Better enforcement of existing regulations on campaign financing would be a useful step in limiting clientelism in the 2009 elections and therefore motivation and opportunities for corruption in the future.⁸ Over the past two years, there have been significant pressures from some in KPA on GAM-affiliated officials to secure contracts and other benefits. If as expected PA makes serious inroads into local legislatures, pressure will only increase for a proportion of state resources to be captured by business interests linked with former GAM.

Crime: the kidnapping of an INGO guard raises concerns, but armed crime drops

On August 26th, the security guard of a Save the Children house in Banda Aceh was kidnapped and a Rp 100 million (US\$ 1,100) ransom was demanded for his release. It was the first kidnapping for ransom targeting an international NGO. Coming after the kidnapping of seven Chinese nationals working for the private sector in April, and the explosion of a grenade at Save the Children’s Bireuen office in May, this new case has led to concerns among some in the international community. A kidnapping of a member of the Updates team in September increased worries. However, these incidents remain isolated. The number of serious armed crimes appears to have decreased sharply over the past few months (see Figure 3). Nevertheless, caution – and close monitoring – is important.

Figure 3: Armed robberies and kidnappings in 2008



⁸ See an upcoming report by the Conflict and Development program: Samuel Clark and Blair Palmer (2008). “Peaceful Pilkada, Dubious Democracy: Aceh’s Post-Conflict Elections and their Implications”, *Indonesian Social Development Paper* No. 11. Jakarta: World Bank. Soon available online at www.conflictanddevelopment.org