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Indonesia: Deep Distrust in Aceh as Elections Approach

I. OVERVIEW

Tensions in Aceh are high as elections approach, although they have receded somewhat from a peak in mid-February. The murders of three former combatants of the Free Aceh Movement (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka, GAM), other shootings and numerous grenade attacks over the last two months – all with unidentified perpetrators – have set the province on edge, and there remains a risk of sporadic, low-level violence before and after general elections on 9 April. Disputes over the results, with 44 parties competing for seats in district, provincial and national legislatures using a new and complicated system of voting, are also likely. There is little danger in the short term of violence escalating out of control, let alone a return to armed conflict, but the underlying causes of the tensions are not just election-related and need to be addressed if peace is to be preserved in the long term.

The crux of the problem is the mutual fear and loathing between GAM and the Indonesian military (Tentara Nasional Indonesia, TNI), based partly on perceptions carried over from the conflict and partly on actions since. The police have been relegated to a minor role, but enhancing their professional skills, such as criminal investigation – not just their community relations approach – is essential. The challenge for Acehnese civil society, the Indonesian government and donors is to put in place programs that change behaviour first, so that confidence-building measures have some foundation to build on.

Many in the TNI are convinced that GAM has not changed its goals, only its tactics, since the 2005 Helsinki agreement ended armed conflict between them. They believe that GAM still is committed to independence, despite repeated denials by the top leadership, and that it reneged on a commitment to dissolve itself after Partai Aceh was established. Many, both in Aceh and Jakarta, believe it continues to constitute a potential threat to the unity of the republic, particularly if Partai Aceh candidates win control of key district legislatures and enough seats in the provincial parliament to have a dominant voice. GAM, for its part, sees the military as its principal opponent and encourages the perception that all attacks on its members or offices are somehow linked to the TNI, even when many over the past three years have been the result of internal friction.

The military's fears are misplaced, despite the campaign rhetoric of some Partai Aceh members. The problem with many GAM members is that they are using democratic means not to push for independence, but to acquire access to spoils. This has turned an organisation that was always decentralised into a fractured association that, while ready to unite in the face of a serious threat, is composed of small units out for themselves. The former guerrillas, now called the Aceh Transition Committee (Komite Peralihan Aceh, KPA), still use a modified version of their old hierarchical structure, but power is locally concentrated, and in some areas at the village or sub-district level, the KPA has replaced some functions of the civilian government.

Arms are not in short supply among ex-combatants, but the KPA's power is not from weapons so much as from the implicit threat that comes from past history, its links with elected GAM officials and its own unaccountable status. Extortion continues to be rampant. All available evidence suggests that far from working toward independence, most KPA members are interested more than anything else in getting their fair share of post-conflict benefits. As an organisation which seems to consider itself above the law, the KPA is a problem – but one that many countries struggling with the after-effects of an insurgency would recognise.

The solution, in addition to patience, employment and targeted civil society efforts, is better law enforcement. Good policing is required, not more soldiers deployed in villages, but the police in Aceh have been singularly ineffective. Various reasons have been advanced: lack of training, insufficient numbers, family ties, economic collusion and even fear. Donor funding has focused on human rights and community policing, but professional skills remain in extremely short supply. A new provincial police commander with a good reputation, appointed in late February, may be able to help, but meanwhile, the military, with its own perceptions and priorities, not to mention unmitigated contempt

for the police, has moved into the vacuum and become the dominant security force.

A strong speech by President Yudhoyono in late February in Banda Aceh, the provincial capital, was widely interpreted locally as a warning to the regional military commander to take a less hardline approach. Whether or not there is a causal link, the TNI since has gone out of its way to make examples of soldiers who violate military ethics or the law, holding a widely publicised court-martial of a subdistrict commander and his men for pulling up Partai Aceh flags in one case and dismissing a district military intelligence officer accused of physical abuse of a Partai Aceh cadre in another. Such actions are welcome but do not erase concerns about the TNI's non-neutral stance towards the party.

The election climate exacerbates the uneasy relationship among GAM/KPA, the Indonesian military and the police, but the problems are long-term. The trouble is that the depth of the challenge is being recognised just as most international donors, finished with their post-tsunami reconstruction, are pulling out of Aceh. Four years after the peace, they are needed more than ever.

II. THE GAM CONGLOMERATE

The institution at the heart of Aceh's post-conflict political development is GAM, but over time it has become less of a single structure and more like a sprawling, somewhat dysfunctional conglomerate with several different heads.[1] It now comprises at least four components: GAM, KPA, Partai Aceh and parts of the local government.

A. GAM

Geurakan Acheh Meurdeka (the Acehnese spelling of GAM), is headed by Malik Mahmud, its former "prime minister" and the man who signed the Helsinki Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on its behalf.[2] Other members of the former "cabinet", including Zaini Abdullah, former foreign minister, and Zakaria Saman, former defence minister, serve as a kind of executive council for the conglomerate, but there is no GAM structure below them – it has been subsumed by the KPA. Although there are many ordinary GAM members in Aceh who are not KPA members, they do not necessarily look to Malik Mahmud for leadership.

Malik Mahmud presides over important ceremonial occasions like the return of Hasan Tiro, GAM's founder, in October 2008; high-level discussions about implementation of the Helsinki agreement; discussions with Vice President Jusuf Kalla or former members of the Indonesian government's MoU negotiating team; or meetings, as in February 2009, with Martti Ahtisaari, former Finnish president and Nobel laureate, who brokered the agreement. Malik is very protective of his relationship with the Indonesian government and has no interest in confrontation. When Hasan Tiro came, Malik went out of his way to make sure his speeches, delivered with top provincial military and police officers present, included references to the new era of cooperation that the MoU had ushered in and how the bitter past was over.

Malik, however, is acutely conscious of the divisions in GAM and his own precarious position as head of a structure that has less and less need for him. If GAM dissolved, he would have no role left vis-à-vis the Indonesian government and lose the last bit of authority he wields over the fractious membership. His problems are exacerbated by the fact that he is not an Indonesian citizen (nor is Zaini Abdullah or Zakaria Saman) and spends more of his time in Malaysia and Singapore.[3] The idea that four years after the peace, the Indonesian government is still dealing with non-citizens who maintain foreign addresses is an ongoing irritant, particularly to the military.

B. KPA

The Aceh Transition Committee (Komite Peralihan Aceh, KPA) is led by Muzakkir Manaf, former commander of the Aceh National Army (Tentara Negara Acheh, TNA), GAM's armed wing. KPA was originally set up in December 2005, the new manifestation of TNA, without the weapons but with an essentially unchanged

[1] For earlier Crisis Group analyses of Aceh see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°81, *Indonesia: Pre-Election Anxieties in Aceh*, 9 September 2008; Crisis Group Asia Report N°139, *Aceh: Post-conflict Complications*, 4 October 2007; and Crisis Group Asia Briefings N°61, *Indonesia: How GAM Won in Aceh*, 22 March 2007; N°57, *Aceh's Local Elections: The Role of the Free Aceh Movement (GAM)*, 29 November 2006; N°48, *Aceh: Now for the Hard Part*, 29 March 2006; N°44, *Aceh: So Far, So Good*, 13 December 2005; and N°40, *Aceh: A New Chance for Peace*, 15 August 2005.

[2] Prior to the Helsinki agreement, GAM designated Malik Mahmud as "prime minister in exile, State of Acheh".

[3] Malik Mahmud carries a Singaporean passport and has permanent residency in Sweden. Zaini Abdullah and Zakaria Saman are Swedish citizens.

structure. The KPA has evolved into a broader organisation, in some areas recruiting new members, in others incorporating both former military and civilian GAM members and becoming in effect a shadow government. In many areas it controls the selection of village heads and continues to collect what used to be called *pajak nanggroe*, effectively war taxes to finance the guerrilla effort. Now the taxes are collected in the name of providing for widows and orphans and others left vulnerable by the conflict, but there is rarely any accounting and non-payment is not an option.[4]

It is no longer clear what the "transition" in its name refers to, as it is looking more and more like a permanent body. (One KPA leader said the transition would be over "when all the provisions of the MoU have been implemented".[5]) Outside major urban areas, few people make a distinction between GAM and the KPA but they are nevertheless separate entitities. KPA members have become heavily involved in business, especially infrastructure projects, often securing contracts from GAM-affiliated officials at the provincial and district level.[6] This has led to competition and disputes, sometimes violent, among members themselves.

As a forthcoming study on the KPA shows, post-conflict distinctions also have emerged at the local level among those who stayed fighting until the end ("KPA Meudong"), the group with the highest status and most access to benefits; those who left active fighting to take a supportive role in urban areas in Aceh, Indonesia, or even overseas ("KPA Hijrah"); and those who surrendered or actively joined Indonesian military operations ("KPA Peulikot"). Many of the latter are now members of an anti-GAM organisation called Communications Forum of the Nation's Children (Forum Komunikasi Anak Bangsa, FORKAB).[7]

C. PARTAI ACEH

Partai Aceh was founded by Malik Mahmud in 2008 to contest the 2009 elections and is formally led by Muzakkir Manaf.[8] The leadership is dominated by Malik loyalists and they have warned the rank and file against provocative actions. But at the local level, Partai Aceh is controlled by the KPA, with members more likely to follow the lead of their former commanders, not the party elite. Party financing appears to be strong judging by the sea of red Partai Aceh flags and candidate posters across much of the province. In Bireuen, GAM-linked businesses are expected to give 20 per cent of their profits to Partai Aceh coffers and there may be similar arrangements in other areas.[9]

Partai Aceh dominates the political scene along much of the east coast and is expected to garner a major share of the vote in these districts. In its strongholds, KPA members have often prevented other parties from campaigning, removed their flags or threatened their candidates.[10] In areas where Partai Aceh is weak, such as Central Aceh and Bener Meriah, its own candidates, offices and posters have been targets.[11] In January and February 2009, attacks and threats against the party and its candidates increased, one factor in the rise in tensions.

Partai Aceh also has a far better information network, developed during the conflict, than its competitors; it is one area where all the components of the conglomerate work together. As soon as an incident happens, GAM members with contacts in the media, NGO and diplomatic community send out text messages with the details. Other parties, including those that have been the subject of Partai Aceh intimidation, lack such extensive networks and are not as media savvy. The moves against Partai Aceh are real and should be taken seriously, but its own actions against competitors are sometimes under-reported.[12]

[4] "Penelitian Analisa Dinamika KPA dan Penggalian Kebutuhan Masa Damai", Community Transparency Initiative and Acheh Society Development, draft report (forthcoming, 2009).
[5] Crisis Group interview, Darwis Jeunib, Bireuen, 7 February 2009.
[6] For a detailed study, see Edward Aspinall, "Combatants to Contractors: The Political Economy of Peace in Aceh", *Indonesia*, no 87 (forthcoming, April 2009).
[7] Community Transparency Initiative, op. cit.
[8] For a discussion of the controversies over its founding (it was originally going to be called Partai GAM), see Crisis Group Briefing, *Indonesia: Pre-Election Anxieties in Aceh*, op. cit.
[9] Community Transparency Initiative, op. cit. GAM-linked businesses include those owned by KPA members and those that have secured government contracts for projects through alliance with influential KPA members.
[10] Candidates in Bireuen of Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (PKS), the Islamist party, are among those who have had trouble with Partai Aceh intimidation, while Golkar members, in North Aceh, have reported similar problems. Crisis Group interviews, political parties and NGO fieldworkers, Bireuen and Banda Aceh, February 2009. See also "Pesona Ditebar, Teror Didapat", *Modus Aceh*, Minggu I, February 2009.
[11] The information section of the KPA, Wilayah Lige (Lige Region) prepared and circulated a document dated 17 February 2009 entitled "List of Violations of the MoU Helsinki in Bener Meriah District" ["Daftar Kejadian Pelanggaran MoU Helsinki di Kawasan Kabupaten Bener Meriah"] including incidents from July 2008 through February 2009.
[12] See Appendix B for a partial list of incidents.

Not all of Partai Aceh's candidates are GAM members, in part because it has tried to recruit better-educated sympathisers to make up for the lack of higher education among many of the KPA rank and file.[13] Nor have all KPA and GAM members joined Partai Aceh. Most are supportive, but membership of the organisations is not identical. (One GAM leader, Sofyan Dawood, was reported to be seriously considering joining the campaign team of President Yudhoyono.)

Reports that local members of Partai Aceh are continuing to use pro-independence rhetoric in their campaigning come not only from the military but from other local parties and non-governmental organisation (NGO) fieldworkers who have directly observed their campaigns.[14] The message from senior GAM leaders that such talk is no longer acceptable clearly has not filtered down, but this should not be cause for undue alarm. Internal discipline is not the conglomerate's strong suit, and Jakarta might have more reason for concern if it were. Irwandi Yusuf, the GAM leader elected governor in 2006, Muzakkir Manaf and even Hasan Tiro have said that the MoU is final; Irwandi in two op-eds dismissed any suggestion that a Partai Aceh victory and control of the provincial parliament would lead to a referendum on independence from Indonesia.[15] Now that Acehnese have regained control of their lives, it is also not at all certain that a referendum would have popular support. No one wants to see conflict resume, and that includes the vast majority of the ex-combatants.

D. CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT AND THE BUREAUCRACY

Many officials elected in the 2006 local elections and a few district polls thereafter are members of GAM but not the KPA. This includes the governor and the heads or deputy heads of nine districts, as well as other districts where the non-GAM district head was elected with GAM support – in Pidie Jaya, for example. Because of the political and economic clout these officials wield, some of those in the higher echelons of the civil service have been drawn into their circle. Together these individuals form another part of the GAM conglomerate.

Governor Irwandi is the most prominent figure, a man distrusted by the military but fiercely committed to seeing promises made by the Indonesian government in Helsinki fulfilled. Unlike many other GAM elected officials, he is also considered incorruptible. His performance as governor has been criticised, in part because he is forced to spend so much time addressing demands from disgruntled ex-combatants and putting out political fires caused by internal feuding and GAM behavior in the field.

A deep rift between Irwandi and Malik Mahmud developed before the 2006 local elections, and while it has eased, divisions remain. Irwandi distanced himself from the formation of Partai Aceh and until March 2009 had not taken an active role. In early March, however, he formally requested and received a leave of absence from the ministry of home affairs to campaign.[16]

E. DECENTRALISED AND FRACTIOUS

The GAM conglomerate does not have anything remotely approaching a centralised command structure. No single leader commands the loyalty of all components. Malik Mahmud may head GAM in name and as the signatory to the MoU remains its chief as far as the government is concerned, but many in the KPA and the civilian government structure look more to Irwandi. More importantly, for the average ex-combatant or GAM supporter, loyalties to former commanders turned KPA members at the local level are often more important than those to anyone in the provincial capital, Banda Aceh, let alone Sweden, where Hasan Tiro resides. It is also at the local level where feuds, business rivalries and distinctions between the haves and have-nots in terms of reintegration benefits are felt most deeply – as noted in the discussion below on outbreaks of violence.

There is not even unity in terms of dialogue with the central government. The initial channel after the European Union-led Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM) departed in December 2006 was supposed to be the Forum for Communication and Coordination (Forum Komunikasi dan Koordinasi, FKK).[17] It was designed

[13] For example, Rizal Fahlevi is a Partai Aceh candidate from Bener Meriah, running for the district legislature. He was a student in Medan for the last years of the conflict and never joined GAM; he now runs a mobile phone shop.

[14] See, for example, "Banyak Preman Politik Mengimingkan Merdeka", *Harian Aceh*, 25 February 2009.

[15] Irwandi Yusuf, "Pemilu Aceh Harus Berjalan Damai", *Serambi Indonesia*, 24 February 2009.

[16] "Gubernur dan Wagub Ajukan Cuti Kampanye", *Serambi Indonesia*, 9 March 2009. Irwandi and his deputy were among nineteen regional officials from across Indonesia to request pre-election leave.

[17] FKK was set up through a decision of the Minister for Political, Legal and Security Affairs, No. 31/2007. It was formally inaugurated in April 2007. See "FKK Desk Aceh Lanjutkan Pengawalan Proses Perdamaian", 19 April 2007, at

as an all-Indonesian, low-profile successor to the AMM, in particular taking over its role of investigating security-related incidents, with a direct link to the Aceh desk in the Coordinating Ministry for Political, Legal and Security Affairs in Jakarta. Initially composed of representatives of the Indonesian security agencies and the KPA, the KPA pulled out early on, and the FKK became an all-government body. In February 2008 a new forum, the Commission on Sustaining Peace in Aceh (CoSPA), was convened to enable discussions between the FKK and GAM. While Governor Irwandi and others close to him have taken part in CoSPA, it has been systematically avoided by Malik Mahmud.[18]

Malik and his inner circle see the so-called MoU Roundtable, which beginning in mid-2007 has been run by an international NGO called Interpeace through its local partner, the Indonesian Peace Institute (IPI), as their channel to the government. The Roundtable, which involves former members of both government and GAM negotiating teams, is portrayed by its founders as being the legitimate "heir" of the Helsinki process, aimed at securing full implementation of the MoU, but it has no formal or official status, is not trusted by the military, and and no one close to Irwandi participates. The officials who take part are all personally close to Jusuf Kalla, and if Kalla ends up out of government after the presidential elections in July, the Roundtable's effectiveness as a dialogue forum could be severely undermined. Thus, while the CoSPA and the Roundtable were set up for different purposes, they are each made weaker as dialogue forums by the existence of the other. Anything agreed to in CoSPA has no bearing on those who see themselves as the apex of GAM; anything agreed to in the Roundtable does not necessarily represent the views of Irwandi and his associates.[19]

www.nad.go.id/index.php?option=isi&task=view&id=2516&Itemid=2.

[18] Likewise, a forum of political parties created in December 2008 to promote a peaceful election was effectively stillborn because Partai Aceh, again under Malik's leadership, would not participate.

[19] Some Acehnese analysts have suggested that in principle, the idea of two forums, one for security, one for high-level discussions on MoU implementation, could work, but only if they are more integrated than CoSPA and the Roundtable appear to be.

III. THE TNI IN ACEH

The TNI, with some 15,000 troops in Aceh, remains highly suspicious of GAM's intentions.[20] This suspicion is based on GAM's failure to dissolve itself, its continued use of the word "Merdeka" (independence) in its name, the number of guns in the hands of ex-combatants, and the rhetoric of some of its members in the field – as carefully documented by intelligence personnel. The TNI's concerns are both short-term, about the possibility of violence in the lead-up to the elections, and longer-term, about how GAM will behave if it wins control of the provincial and district legislatures.

A. MORE VISIBLE THAN POLICE

To address the short-term concerns, the Iskandar Muda regional military command based in Banda Aceh has deployed hundreds of men down to the village level. Contrary to the concerns of NGOs in Banda Aceh that these are additional troops and thus in violation of the MoU, this appears to be a redeployment of soldiers already based in Aceh to areas considered potential problems.[21] Teams of five to seven men began setting up posts in different areas of Aceh in December and January, and more intelligence personnel reportedly have also been assigned.[22] The military's concerns about security during the election have also been a pretext for its seeking substantial additional funding at the district level, including to cover trucks, equipment, meetings, and food and pocket money for troops – all items which should be covered from Jakarta.[23]

[20] Article 4.7 of the MoU specifies that the TNI will have 14,700 troops in Aceh. See "Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the Republic of Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement", at www.aceh-mm.org/download/english/Helsinki%20MoU.pdf.

[21] In mid-March 2009, however, short text messages were circulating about military trucks coming up the Medan-Banda Aceh road at night, full of soldiers. The information was impossible to verify and there could be several plausible explanations, even if true. But messages like this contribute to the general tension.

[22] In Bener Meriah, the newly deployed soldiers were from infantry battalion 113, stationed in Bireuen. Local contacts pointed out that Bener Meriah should be covered by infantry battalion 114, not 113, but the men in question were "organic", that is, based in Aceh, and therefore not a violation of the MoU. Crisis Group interview, political party contact, Bener Meriah, 28 February 2009. Re the enhanced intelligence presence, the evidence is anecdotal but persuasive. Crisis Group interviews, district officials, February 2009.

[23] Crisis Group has supporting documents in its possession dated February 2009.

The appearance of new village-level military posts coincides with a new obligatory night watch patrol for all men that went into force in January or February in different parts of Aceh. In some areas, the patrol was back for the first time since the military emergency in 2003-04.[24] In Kutacane, South East Aceh, it began 15 February; one source said he thought it came from an order from the provincial military command to all village heads. In Bireuen, it began in January at the instruction of the police. In Central Aceh, it started in late January; one man whose turn has come up twice said the frequency varied with the population, but in his village, his turn came around every 26 days, with six persons per post.[25]

The enhanced security extends to the national level. In late February, the TNI commander, General Djoko Santoso, said in Jakarta that the TNI had several contingency plans if the security situation in Aceh worsened. "We will deploy local soldiers to help the police secure elections proceeding in Aceh", he said, then added, "We have no plans to bring in troops from outside the province".[26] The army chief of staff went further, saying fifteen combat units had been readied to deploy if there was a political decision to do so; he stressed that the army would not take such a decision on its own.[27] The situation in Aceh was the subject of a briefing by the National Intelligence Agency (Badan Intelijen Negara, BIN) to Komisi I of the Indonesian parliament on 25 February. Defence Minister Joewono Soedarsono said the TNI would only intervene if the police requested their assistance or if the situation went beyond the ability of the police to control.[28]

In the field, however, the impression since late 2008 is that the TNI has taken the dominant role in internal security, eclipsing the police. Observers tie the rise in visibility to the July 2008 appointment of Major General Soenarko, an officer from Kopassus, the army special forces, as regional military commander. Soenarko's more aggressive stance was exemplified by three high-profile arrests made of senior KPA leaders, most notably in late September 2008 when after a soldier from the East Aceh district military command was kidnapped by suspected ex-combatants, troops arrived at the homes of KPA leaders Tgk Sanusi Muhammad and Ridwan Abubakar alias Nek Tu accusing them of responsibility.[29] It is true, as the military has argued, that the criminal code authorises citizens to arrest anyone in the act of committing a crime, but the actions of the military have gone beyond that, to acting on the basis of their own surveillance or intelligence and then turning the suspect over to the police.

In late January 2009, the district military commander in Bireuen, Lieutenant Colonel R. Suharto, sent a letter to his police counterpart, copied to the provincial military and police commanders and several others, listing seven incidents involving Partai Aceh members, some of them extortion, others election-related intimidation. By asking him to follow up, the commander seemed to be implying, "We're doing the job, and you're not".[30]

In an incident on 11 February widely covered by the press, a KPA member named Iswandi bin Abubakar was stopped by two men in plainclothes in Digul Meriah Jaya village, Bener Meriah, and asked for his identity card. He was then told to report to an army post down the road, manned by soldiers of the 113 infantry battalion. They asked to see his mobile phone and his wallet, and in the wallet, they found a KPA membership card. He was accused of being GAM, then told to unbutton his shirt, whereupon he was beaten and his face burned with lighted cigarettes. The subdistrict military commander Captain Elfin Junaidi arrived, and asked Iswandi to investigate whether a Partai Aceh candidate from Bener Meriah, Joni Suriawan, had a weapon. Captain Junaidi then handed him a phone and told him to speak to the head of intelligence at the Bener Meriah district command. The intelligence officer told Iswandi that if he was willing to cooperate, the safety of his family would be guaranteed. He hung up, and Iswandi was allowed to go. The military denies any wrongdoing.

The following day in the same area, the military stopped a group of Partai Aceh sympathisers at 9.00 pm ostensibly to check vehicle documents. Party member Dahlan Rasyid was the leader of the group, but others with him were also reportedly kicked and punched.[31] The

[24] Crisis Group interview, Takengon, 27 February 2009. In other areas, the patrols continued through the AMM's tenure.
[25] Crisis Group interview, Takengon, Central Aceh, 28 February 2009.
[26] "Military warns of increased tension ahead of Aceh polls", *Jakarta Post*, 24 February 2009.
[27] "Parpol Besar Redam Separatis di Aceh", *Serambi Indonesia*, 24 February 2009; and "Panglima TNI Perkirakan Aceh Menghangat", *Harian Aceh*, 24 February 2009.
[28] "Parpol Besar Redam Separatis di Aceh", *Serambi Indonesia*, 24 February 2009.
[29] See "Penculik Kpoda Sjaiful ditangkap", http://koalisi-ham.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=436&Itemid=33. One of the suspected kidnappers, a KPA member, was arrested on 31 October 2008.
[30] Komando Resor Militer 011/Lilawangsa, Komando Distrik Militer 0111 Bireuen, Letter Nomor B/67/1/2009, 30 January 2009.
[31] The information on Iswandi and the others comes from press reports of a press conference called by Partai Aceh in Banda Aceh on 15 February at which Iswandi's written statement was read, and Dahlan Rasyid and five others appeared.

Central Aceh military commander said the post was being run jointly by the police and military commands of subdistrict Timang Gajah, Bener Meriah, and that no ill-treatment took place; witnesses say there were no police present.[32]

The Iswandi incident is particularly revealing because it strongly suggests an intelligence operation in which the police are playing an almost non-existent role. In February, the then provincial police commander Inspector General Rismawan said 1,000 military troops had been assigned to assist the police search for weapons, in an effort to address Aceh's soaring crime.[33] Military officers in Banda Aceh point to the continued commission of armed crimes by ex-combatants as evidence that GAM hoarded many guns at the time of the decommissioning, despite having turned in the 840 weapons specified in the MoU. The military also claimed that new weapons were showing up in GAM hands. It remains unclear how much the military are acting at the behest of the police and how much they are in fact acting on their own without explicit instructions from their civilian counterparts.

While some funding for TNI operations is covered from Jakarta, some is reportedly being raised locally, through pointed requests from the district military commanders to district heads (*bupati*) that funding to secure the election should be incorporated in the district budgets. One *bupati*, whose budget had already been approved, was planning to provide some funds and simply "correct" the figures when the budget comes up for review next July. The military commander did not specify an amount, and the *bupati* had not decided how much he would give.[34]

B. LONGER-TERM CONCERNS

The military's concerns about GAM go far beyond the elections; they are less worried about pre-election violence than about the impact on Indonesian territorial integrity if Partai Aceh wins a significant number of seats in April, thus adding legislative power to the executive positions it already holds, not to mention the strength of the extra-governmental KPA.

Several military officers interviewed used GAM's failure to dissolve itself after the MoU as evidence of its bad faith. The dissolution was not specified in the MoU but it was a demand repeatedly brought up by the Indonesian side to the AMM. On 4 December 2006, in a meeting attended by Aceh Monitoring Mission chief Peter Feith, Indonesian TNI representative Gen. Bambang Darmono, Indonesian negotiator Sofyan Djalil, Malik Mahmud and Zaini Abdullah, GAM agreed to disband "as soon as possible" after forming a political party – and announced this to the press shortly afterwards.[35] In his visit to Aceh on 23 February 2009, President Yudhoyono reiterated, "The term 'DOM' [area of military operations] and the term 'GAM' no longer exist. We have moved beyond that, we are all Indonesians".[36]

But for Malik Mahmud and others, GAM *does* still exist, the December 2006 agreement notwithstanding. The military points out that he still regularly uses GAM letterhead, as do some KPA leaders when demanding money from provincial government offices.[37] In the eyes of the government, including Jusuf Kalla, the use of GAM symbols is prohibited by the MoU, although what the document actually says is that the use of GAM's "military insignia and symbols" are banned.[38] The continued use of the "M" word, *merdeka*, particularly grates, as it implies that GAM's determination to separate from Indonesia remains unchanged.

Many of the military's concerns were exacerbated by the visit of Hasan Tiro in October 2008. It was his first return to Aceh in 30 years and from the organisers'

"Pengurus PA Hadirkan Korban Kekerasan di Bener Meriah", *Serambi Indonesia*, 15 February 2009.

[32] "Dandim 0106/Aceh Tengah: Tak Ada Penganiayaan Warga Oleh Tni/Polri", *Serambi Indonesia*, 19 February 2009.

[33] "Pimpinan Parpol Risaukan Kondisi Keamanan di Aceh", *Harian Aceh*, 9 February 2009.

[34] Crisis Group interview, one of Aceh's district heads who requested anonymity, Jakarta, 4 March 2009.

[35] The agreement is mentioned in the notes of the final meeting of the Committee on Security Affairs (COSA), the forum set up by the AMM, with GAM, Indonesian military and AMM participation, to discuss security-related issues and resolve disputes. Point 3 of the minutes of the 2 December 2006 meeting states: "In a private consultation held prior to the COSA meeting, it was agreed that 1) a government regulation on local political parties will be enacted before the end of the year after which GAM will have six months to transform itself into a political party; and 2) that GAM will dissolve the movement as soon as possible thereafter".

[36] "Damai Aceh dalam NKRI Sudah Final", *Serambi Indonesia*, 24 February 2009.

[37] The issue of GAM letterhead became a major issue during Hasan Tiro's visit to Aceh in October 2008. Vice President Jusuf Kalla was originally scheduled to meet Tiro when he arrived in Banda Aceh from Malaysia, but the meeting fell through, according to the press, when Malik arranged for an invitation on GAM letterhead signed by Tiro to be sent to Kalla. Kalla was offended and refused to come. See "Tersinggung, JK Batal Bertemu GAM", 10 October 2008, at www.inilah.com/berita/politik/2008/10/10/53942/tersinggung-jk-batal-bertemu-gam/. The vice president later met Tiro in Jakarta.

[38] MoU, Article 4.2.

point of view, a roaring success. His main message, read out on 11 October by Malik Mahmud (Tiro himself is too infirm to say more than a few words at a time), was unequivocally supportive of the peace process and he went out of his way to thank President Yudhoyono and Vice President Kalla.[39] Nevertheless, the total control exercised by GAM loyalists over the visit, to the exclusion of the Indonesian government security apparatus, was seen by the military as a harbinger of things to come. Libyan-trained ex-combatants, many of them from Malaysia, formed the first ring of his security; the police were nowhere to be seen. Access to events at which Tiro appeared was also so tightly controlled by Malik Mahmud's group that even senior GAM members were not allowed through without GAM-issued badges.

The reason for the visit seemed straightforward: Tiro expressed a desire to return to Aceh before his death, and given his poor health, he clearly does not have much time left. But the timing of the visit coincided with election season, and Tiro's homecoming served as a launching pad for Partai Aceh's campaign. Its posters in some areas outside Banda Aceh now feature pictures of Tiro sitting on an ornate chair that looks like a throne, surrounded by Mahmud and the local GAM elite. To the military, the posters alone are proof of an unreconstructed independence organisation.

Even more distressing from the military's point of view is that the GAM name and the letterhead continue to be used by "foreigners", not just the Malik Mahmud group, but other groups based in Sweden, Malaysia and New York that oppose the MoU as a sell-out to Indonesia. Some of these are associated with a faction known as MP-GAM that long ago broke with Hasan Tiro, but some officers in the regional military command lump them together, apparently unaware of any distinction. (They may also be unaware of the shadowy links of some MP-GAM personnel to Indonesian intelligence in the past.) [40]

The military also makes no distinction between the armed criminal gangs of ex-combatants that operate completely outside the KPA command structure, and the tacitly sanctioned extortion activities that go straight to the heart of the KPA organisation. In East Aceh, for example, one source close to GAM said that "90 per cent" of the criminal activity was being carried out by ex-combatants, out of feelings of "disappointment" (*kekecewaan*) that they had not received their share of post-conflict spoils.[41] Many were close to the late GAM commander Ishak Daud, killed in September 2004 during a military operation. East Aceh was one of the main centres for GAM's weapons acquisition, including from gun mafias in southern Thailand, and the military believes that more weapons have been retained there than anywhere else in Aceh. These weapons are now being used, not to fight for independence, let alone revive any unified guerrilla force, but to acquire money through extortion, robbery and other illegal activities. Even piracy has increased: in the most recent incident, a Singaporean ship was boarded on 19 February 2009 by a group of armed ex-combatants from East Aceh. They released the captain and crew only after receiving a ransom payment of Rp.1 billion ($100,000).[42]

From the military's perspective, the continued use of weapons by ex-combatants, regardless of their current affiliation, serves as a warning that at some stage in the future, GAM could re-emerge as an armed force, this time with all the political and economic power they have amassed behind them. Indeed, one explanation given by a military officer for the prominence of the military over the police in Aceh these days is that the military is the appropriate organisation to counter another military force; the police have no capacity to do so.[43]

The military and GAM look at the MoU very differently. For GAM, every provision of the MoU represents an absolute commitment. It was in exchange for the promises contained in that document that the rank and file were persuaded to abandon armed struggle – a huge concession. Its leaders see GAM as having kept up its side of the bargain, while the Indonesian government has fallen short.[44] The military sees GAM as having

[39] For text of the speech, see "Inilah Amaran Wali Nanggroe Hasan Tiro", *Modus Aceh*, Minggu II, October 2008.

[40] One such link was through Arjuna, a Libyan-trained GAM commander who went over to the government side before being murdered in 2003. Don Zulfahri, an MP-GAM leader, himself gunned down in Malaysia, apparently by GAM, in 2000, denied in a 1999 interview that Arjuna was a member, but said Arjuna had approached him about joining forces. Archives of apakabar@radix.net, "Wawancara mp.gam@yahoo", www.library.ohiou.edu/indopubs/1999/11/26/0020.html.

[41] Information made available to Crisis Group from a Jakarta-based journalist , 7 March 2009.

[42] "Gerombolan Bersenjata Rompak Kapal Singapure, Minta Tembusan 1 Miliar", Surya online, 27 February 2009.

[43] Crisis Group interview, Banda Aceh, 25 February 2009.

[44] For example, the military's prominent role in internal security runs counter to Article 4.10 which says flatly "Organic police forces will be responsible for upholding internal law and order in Aceh", especially when the role of the military under the MoU was supposed to be relegated to "external defence" (Article 4.11). This was changed in the 2006 Law on Governing Aceh, however, to "national defence" and the military was given responsibility for "protecting and defending the intengrity and sovereignty of the Unitary State of the Indonesian Republic" (Chapter XXV, Article 202(2). The MoU and the Law on Governing Aceh also both provide for

violated the spirit of the MoU by retaining weapons and continuing to use GAM symbols. But more importantly, many in the military seem to see the MoU as an agreement which may have given away too much, brought foreigners into the process and is in any case history, having been superseded by the 2006 Law on Governing Aceh. For them it also has no special status: commitments made by GAM in face-to-face meetings, as with the promise to disband, are just as important as anything reached in Helsinki. For GAM, anything outside the MoU is secondary. This difference in perception provides another ongoing irritant in relations.

C. COURT-MARTIAL IN ACEH

The military nevertheless remains sensitive to accusations that it is not a neutral party in the elections. In North Aceh in early March, a court-martial was held of seven soldiers accused of taking down Partai Aceh flags. In the end the commander and his men were given a stern warning and removed from their positions. It was an important message, but it was unclear how it would affect soldiers' behaviour elsewhere.

It was GAM that raised the issue first. On 3 March, its members circulated a text message widely, saying, "Information from the field: On Monday 2 March, about 400 Partai Aceh flags in subdistrict Simpang Keuramat, North Aceh, were pulled out and stomped on by about ten members of the TNI's subdistrict military command led by Zainal on the instructions of their commander, First Lieutenant Erwin".

The message left out a key fact: a few days before the soldiers acted, flags of all other parties except Partai Aceh had been pulled up in Simpang Keuramat, a GAM stronghold. The message was clear: one party and one party only was in charge.[45]

The soldiers reacted by pulling out the Partai Aceh flags, allegedly based on an agreement among parties in the subdistrict that if the banners or flags of one party were removed, all would be taken down. Partai Aceh denied there was any such agreement. On 5 March, Lieutenant Erwin and six of his men were tried in an emergency court martial set up in the district command in Aceh's second largest city, Lhokseumawe. He was accused of having given an order relating to removal of the flags without coordinating with other subdistrict leaders.[46] The prosecutor asked the district military commander, acting as sole judge, to sentence Erwin to fourteen days. But after hearing the defence and the argument about the alleged agreement, the commander and his men instead were reprimanded and transferred out of Simpang Keuramat.

The court-martial was a useful corrective to a decidedly non-neutral stance by the TNI towards Partai Aceh. But the TNI was only accused of not coordinating with other agencies. NGOs pointed out that by law, responsibility for law enforcement during the election period rested with the election oversight body, Panwaslu, the police and the attorney general's office – not the TNI.

IV. THE POLICE

The police are the third institution after GAM and the TNI that has a role to play in securing the peace, both prior to the elections and in the long term. The MoU specified that Aceh would have 9,100 "organic" police, ie, those permanently stationed in the province. It proved to be far too few, and more were added, with GAM's agreement, before the 2006 local elections. The total is now some 13,000, but many even in fairly senior ranks are poorly educated and even more poorly trained in policing skills, in a place where the crime rate has risen. Many of the more serious incidents are linked to ex-insurgents – as well as to a post-conflict influx of gangs from the large city of Medan in North Sumatra who may have no link whatsoever to GAM. Police believe that only a small percentage of crimes involving ex-combatants are reported; of those that are, few are solved.[47]

A. APPROACH TO THE KPA

Local military officers, who like their counterparts elsewhere in Indonesia have only disdain for the police, believe that police failure to stand up to KPA members or other ex-combatants involved in crime is a result of collusion, which in some cases is true but in others is based merely on the assumption that family links produce bias. They point, for example, to the fact that Governor Irwandi's younger brother is the

a human rights court and commission on truth and reconciliation, which have not been established.

[45] Crisis Group interview, Lhokseumawe-based journalist, 5 March 2009.

[46] "Turunkan Bendera Parpol: Danramil Dekenakan Hukuman Disiplin", *Serambi Indonesia*, 5 March 2009.

[47] For an analysis of Aceh's crime problems and statistics on arrests, see Aryos Nivada, "Analysis Kriminal Menjelang Pemilu", unpublished article, Acehnese Civil Society Task Force, 2009.

deputy police commander of East Aceh, as if sibling ties alone are proof of obstruction of justice.[48] The failure of the police in North Aceh to go after a notorious GAM splinter group called Pasukan Peudeung (Troops of the Long Swords) may be better evidence of collusion.[49]

Another factor is simply lack of skills. A district police commander, one of the few with a university education, said, "I'm the police chief, but I'm also in effect my own head of intelligence, operations and investigations", because the level of training of his subordinates is so low.[50] He is more concerned about the narcotics trade than he is with GAM misdeeds (unless they also related to drug trafficking), and unlike the military, sees reintegration as a long-term problem that requires patience with ex-combatants who have little education, do not understand the MoU, and are going to do and say things that are inappropriate unless they are made to understand that there are limits they cannot cross. His approach to first-time offenders is to warn them, perhaps hold them overnight, and only take a harsher line for repeated violations.[51] But what might be seen as an enlightened stance to outsiders is seen by some inside Aceh, including the military, as dangerously naïve or worse. That this man has one of the best records in the province for solving serious crimes is immaterial.

One positive development that may give a new boost to professionalism in police ranks is the appointment of a new provincial police commander, Adityawarman on 23 February 2009. An ethnic Minang from West Sumatra, he replaces Rismawan, an Acehnese, who was widely seen by the military as being too close to Governor Irwandi and the GAM leadership. Adityawarman was police commander in Maluku at the time of the Loki attack in May 2005, when a group of extremists attacked a post of the paramilitary police, Brimob, in Loki, West Ceram, off the coast of Ambon. The perpetrators were quickly found, prosecuted and tried, and in the process, almost all those responsible for major unsolved crimes of the previous three years were identified and arrested as well. In that case, there was an element of luck as well as determination in finding the perpetrators so quickly, but it is the determination that will be widely welcomed in Aceh.

B. VIOLENCE BY "UNKNOWN PERPETRATORS"

The most important test for the new police chief will be whether he can find the killers of three KPA/Partai Aceh members murdered execution-style in February. The three killings raised tensions dramatically, especially because of the widespread assumption among GAM members and many others in Aceh that the military was behind them. But all of the victims seemed to have multiple enemies, and it was not at all clear a month later who the perpetrators were or whether indeed the killings were linked.

On 2 February at 11.30 pm, Dedi Noviandi alias Abu Karim was shot at close range and killed as he sat in his car. He was secretary of the KPA in Bireuen, a high-profile position, but he was a man with many enemies. He had been a contractor before he joined GAM in 1999-2000 and returned to his old profession after the peace, but there were soon allegations of financial improprieties. In 2006-2007, he fell out with the local GAM leadership, apparently at least in part over money, and drew closer to FORKAB. He later mended fences and by 2008 was back in good standing with the KPA. Shortly before his death, he was accused by the Bireuen district military commander of threatening two former GAM members.[52] Accord-

[48] Crisis Group interview, Iskandar Muda regional command, 7 February 2009. There is no indication whatsoever that the Irwandi family connection is a factor in failure to prosecute crimes.

[49] Pasukan Peudeung is the local term for the group, based in Sawang, North Aceh. Its members call themselves TNA (Acehnese National Army) to distinguish themselves from the KPA and underline that they are still fighting for independence; they believe that GAM under Malik Mahmud sold out to the Indonesian government. They have been responsible for numerous armed robberies and kidnappings but the North Aceh police failed to make any arrests, amid widespread suspicions that they were protecting the criminals. One of the ringleaders was only arrested after he went across district lines and kidnapped a businessman in Bireuen. He was then pursued by the Bireuen police, who arrested him. The same group also kidnapped and briefly held Adrian Morel, a World Bank staffer, and his driver in late September 2008.

[50] Crisis Group interview, district police commander who requested anonymity, 8 February 2009.

[51] Ibid.

[52] In a letter dated 30 January, Lt. Col. Suharto wrote to the district police chief asking him to follow up on various cases of intimidation or criminal activities by GAM and ex-GAM members. He noted that on 7 December 2008, Abu Karim had approached two FORKAB members named Mayidin and Khairuddin and tried to force them to rejoin GAM/KPA and support Partai Aceh, threatening to kill them if they refused. See Komando Resor Militer 011/Lilawangsa, Komando Distrik Militer 0111 Bireuen, Letter Nomor B/67/1/2009, 30 January 2009. Both Mayidin alias Vanden and Khairuddin alias Mayor were former members of Abu Karim's combat unit within GAM. They surrendered in 2003 after martial law was declared and became informants for the army, (Tenaga Bantuan Operasi, TBO), providing information on Abu Karim's

ing to one source, the two men had been in business with Abu Karim and had rival claims to an area where he obtained gravel and sand for his construction business.[53] The killers thus could have been anyone, and it is not at all clear that the motive was political. But few in Aceh will believe that until the murderers are found.

About twelve hours after Abu Karim was murdered, on 4 February, another KPA member Mohammed Nur was killed and a friend seriously wounded when gunmen on motorcycles stopped their car and opened fire on the Banda Aceh-Kreung Raya road in Baitussalam subdistrict, Aceh Besar. Nur was also a businessman involved in hauling sand and gravel for the construction business; he reportedly owned a fleet of eleven dump trucks. Officials in Banda Aceh said the killers had been identified and were linked to the business but there was not yet enough evidence to make an arrest.[54]

Then, on 12 February 2009 Taufik alias Benu, 35, head of the Partai Aceh post in Ujong Kalak village, Johan Pahlawan subdistrict, West Aceh, was killed by a gunman who shot through the window of his house. He was killed around 4.00 am after returning from hanging up party banners at various locations in the Meulaboh area. His wife is a Partai Aceh candidate for the district legislature. He shared a house with a man named Hendri, who was present when the shooting occurred and has been intensively questioned by the police, in the belief that he might have evidence leading to the killers. As of mid-March, however, no suspects had been identified.

The similar style of the three killings, the fact that the three men were linked to GAM, and the obvious hostility of the TNI to GAM and Partai Aceh led many to conclude that the military was responsible. Ibrahim KBS, the KPA spokesperson, issued a statement saying the KPA knew that there were various parties trying to use provocation and terror so that Aceh would erupt again, but it would not be provoked. "We know these parties want us to retaliate so Aceh will return to conflict, but we will restrain ourselves".[55] He meant the military.

The killings also generated real fear among prominent GAM members, some of whom believed they were intended as a form of intimidation to discourage candidates from running or warn voters against choosing Partai Aceh. One man who had been with the guerrillas at the height of the conflict said:

> For the first time, I'm frightened. This is different than before. We were hunted, but we were the ones who observed, we were the ones who were waiting for them. Now we're free, but we're the ones who are targeted. Now they're waiting for us.[56]

His very genuine fear, however, should not obscure the fact that with the complexity of current politics in Aceh, there are all too many possibilities for motives and murderers.

C. THE CASE OF MUHARRAM

Police say the main reason the killers remain free is that witnesses are afraid to come forward with information, particularly if it implicates a KPA member. They point to how the case against Muharram, head of the KPA in Aceh Besar, fell apart when witnesses withdrew their testimony.

In late December 2008, Muharram was accused of kidnapping a man named Nazaruddin, an ex-combatant, because of his failure to repay a Rp.35 million ($3,500) debt, and holding him for eight days in a 2 by 2.5 metre cell with iron bars in a warehouse in Lhoknga, Aceh Besar. Like many KPA members, both men were involved in the construction business, and Muharram had loaned Nazaruddin equipment as well as cash. He reportedly thought that by holding Nazaruddin, he could force his family to come up with the money. A text message from Nazaruddin to a friend led to a joint military-police team going to the warehouse and securing his release.[57]

group. Local gossip also suggested he owed money to someone in the military. Crisis Group interviews, Banda Aceh and Jakarta, February 2009.

[53] Crisis Group interview, GAM official, Banda Aceh, 7 February 2009.

[54] Crisis Group interview, Banda Aceh, 24 February 2009.

[55] "Korban Penembakan Masih Kritis", *Serambi Indonesia*, 6 February 2009.

[56] Crisis Group interview, Banda Aceh, 7 February 2009.

[57] Nazaruddin said he had met Muharram by chance in Banda Aceh on 14 December, and Muharram invited him into his car. They drove to Lubuk, Aceh Besar, where Nazaruddin was turned over to four others. They took him to the warehouse and took his hand phone, so that he could not contact anyone, including his family. Muharram came by later and questioned him about the money and hit him a few times. After three days, Nazaruddin was allowed to call his family to ask them for help in paying off the debt. On 21 December, a visitor came, and he managed to get a text message to a friend, Muzakkir Daud, who went to the police. Later that day, a joint team of the district military command and police went to the warehouse and released Nazaruddin. Police then arrested Muharram and three others. ("Ada Muharram di Poltabes", *Modus Aceh*, 10 Jan-

By the time the trial began in mid-January, the victim had withdrawn his complaint, saying that he and Muharram had forgiven each other, and other witnesses were reluctant to testify. The prosecutor had little to work with, although the trial continued. On 3 March, he asked for five months on the grounds that Muharram had provided a place where Nazaruddin was detained; the final sentence was likely to be even less.

Senior military officers in Aceh use this case as an example of how KPA intimidation prevents people from testifying, and therefore why the three killings are unlikely to be resolved any time soon.[58] In the Muharram case, while it was clear some witnesses thought better about testifying, there were also intensive efforts behind the scenes by GAM officials to prevent an internal conflict from spreading beyond the men involved.

D. ONGOING VIOLENCE

Sporadic non-lethal violence has continued in the lead-up to the campaign. On 11 March, five people were wounded, two of them seriously, when two men on a motorcycle threw a grenade into a coffeeshop called "Reintegration". The restaurant, in Simpang Alue Kala, Muara Satu, Lhokseumawe, was festooned with Partai Aceh flags. On 12 March, a Partai Aceh candidate in Simeulue was severely beaten by a group of soldiers; their commander was placed in detention and dismissed from the army a few days later.[59] Another Partai Aceh candidate was reportedly shot at from a car, as he was returning home with his wife on a motorcycle. A bullet reportedly hit his foot but he was not seriously injured. On 17 March a smoke grenade was tossed into the yard of the UNICEF office in Lamlagang, Banda Aceh, but the pins had not been removed, and it caused no damage. A resident of Pidie district said individuals designated by other parties as witnesses for the vote-counting were being systematically threatened by Partai Aceh members, raising fears that they might not show up on election day.[60]

Worried about the possibility of further violence, the national police chief on 11 March announced that he was sending two companies of the paramilitary police, Brimob, to provide additional security for the polls. He stressed that the reinforcements were not to be stationed in Aceh and would be withdrawn after the elections.[61]

Even so, violence continued. On 20 March, Tumijan, an ethnic Javanese member of Partai Aceh, was found dead in the waste-dumping area of a palm oil plantation two days after he disappeared in Nagan Raya district. His throat had been cut. He reportedly had recruited many Javanese into the party.[62]

V. ELECTION MONITORS

The high level of tensions in the lead-up to the elections suggests a need for blanketing Aceh with election monitors in April, but it is not going to happen. There will likely be only a handful, partly because of the reluctance of the Indonesian government to invite international monitors.[63] But it is also the shortsightedness of major bilateral donors, who could have planned for and funded the deployment of thousands of experienced domestic monitors and failed to do so in the belief that the major domestic monitoring organisation had sufficient resources (it did not) or because they wanted to send a signal to Indonesia about their faith in its democracy.[64] The

uary 2009.) Immediately the GAM public relations machine went into overdrive. Muchsalmina, KPA spokesman in the area and himself a well-known former commander, told the press that Nazaruddin had not been kidnapped. Nazaruddin owed Muharram money and had promised to pay him back by July 2008. On the day Nazaruddin was allegedly kidnapped, he had met Muharram as the latter was about to leave for a Partai Aceh meeting and had pleaded to be allowed to work off the debt. He had given his phone to Muharram as collateral, Muchsalmina said, and as for the place he had stayed in the warehouse, it only looked like a cell. (See "Kasus Penyanderaan Delapan Hari", *Serambi Indonesia*, 24 December 2008.) According to Muchsalmina, everything that Nazaruddin had said was designed to entrap Muharram, who had only treated the man with kindness, as evidenced by his willingness to loan the money in the first place. While the GAM rebuttal was disingenuous, it did seem that the army and some intelligence elements were eager to befriend Nazaruddin – and were therefore all the more taken aback when the case collapsed.

[58] Crisis Group interviews, Banda Aceh, 9 and 25 February 2009.

[59] "Ekses Penganiayaan Warga, Danintel Kodim Simeulue Dicopot", Waspada, 16 March 2009.

[60] Crisis Group telephone interview, Banda Aceh, 16 March 2009.

[61] "Mabes POLRI Kirim Dua Kompi Brimob Tambahan ke NAD", Media Indonesia online, 11 March 2009.

[62] "Anggota Tim Sukkses PA Ditemukan Tewas Digorok", *Serambi Indonesia*, 21 March 2009; and short text message from source in Banda Aceh, 20 March 2009.

[63] The EU had hoped to field a team but the Indonesian foreign ministry never issued a formal invitation that would make it possible. In the 2006 local elections, the EU had some 80 foreign and 200 local observers in place.

[64] In 1998, for example, the Asia Foundation assisted in the formation of the People's Voter Education Network (Jaringan Pendidikan Pemiliah Rakyat, JPPR) which in local elections beginning in 2005, fielded some 60,000 observers at the village level.

Indonesian government is particularly sensitive about singling out Aceh as a focus for monitors. "If there are observers, they should be in the national context, not specifically Aceh, because Aceh is no different from other provinces of Indonesia", an official of the Coordinating Ministry on Political, Legal and Security affairs said.[65] This stance is part of the problem: for Acehnese, the MoU makes clear that Aceh is *not* simply another province of Indonesia, but one with a special status; the official's remark illustrates the gulf in perceptions between Jakarta and Banda Aceh.

Debate over international monitors took centre stage with the visit of Martti Ahtisaari in late February. When asked about the issue at a meeting at Syiah Kuala University, Ahtisaari pointed out that both parties to the MoU had agreed to international monitors in the context of local elections, which he said was understood by the negotiators to mean both the elections for governor and district heads in 2006 as well as the first legislative elections involving local parties – in other words, the April 2009 poll. He said monitors could strengthen the credibility of the election and help prevent conflict. He also noted that President Yudhoyono in a meeting with Irwandi on 23 February had agreed to visas on arrival at the airport in Banda Aceh, although the president said at the time that he would have to raise it with the foreign ministry.[66] But the short answer to the question, "Will there be international monitors in April?" he said, was "Yes".[67]

But as of mid-March, it looked as though more informal visits from Jakarta-based diplomatic staff would have to do instead. While local parties and some national party representatives in Aceh are enthusiastic about international monitors, and indeed believe their presence is a critical guarantor of a fair process, not everyone sees them in a positive light. One Acehnese police officer said it was better not to have them, "so they didn't do in Aceh what the Australians did in East Timor".[68] Some members of the Indonesian parliament also expressed concern that international monitors might have their own political agenda.[69] The politics of election monitors are complicated by the fact that the most ardent advocates are from various components of GAM and local advocacy NGOs, thereby strengthening the suspicions of the military and conservative nationalists.[70]

One reason the idea of international monitors has strong support in Aceh is that no one seems to have faith in the official Election Oversight Committee (Panitia Pengawasan Pemilu, Panwaslu), which was only formed at the provincial level in December and at the district level in mid-February.[71] Staffing of some of the subdistrict offices remained incomplete as of early March, and officials doubted they would have the funds to reach into remote areas.[72] Given the newness and complexity of the election system this year, the likely technical problems would be enough to warrant monitors, even if the political climate were less heated.[73]

The more serious problems will likely not be on election day itself but in the days and weeks after the results are announced. Many of the smaller parties do not have the resources to send witnesses to remote polling places as the law allows, leaving the bigger and better-funded parties, including Partai Aceh, to observe the counting. Some in the military fear a potentially destabilising show of force if Partai Aceh wins big; others are just as worried by Partai Aceh not doing quite as well as they expect, in which case they could make accusations of fraud. Monitors could be a calming influence, but they should be domestic as well as international. In any case, the question may be moot: it looks highly unlikely that there will be any significant outside monitoring in place.

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[65] "RI Tak Respon Pemantau Asing, UE Batal Pantau Pemilu di Aceh", *Harian Aceh*, 2 March 2009. The official in question was TNI Lieutenant General Rumolo R. Tampubolon.

[66] "President Janjikan Visa Kunjungan Langsung untuk Aceh", *Medan Bisnis*, 24 February 2009.

[67] "Asing Pantau Pemilu Aceh", *Globe Journal*, 25 February 2009.

[68] Crisis Group interview, 7 February 2009. The officer was referring to a belief widespread among more conservative members of the Indonesian security forces that Australia had a long-standing political agenda to see East Timor independent and managed to achieve its objectives through the United Nations in 1999.

[69] "DPR Desak Pemantau Asing di Aceh Diawasi", *Kompas*, 3 March 2009.

[70] One retired general raised concerns about Martti Ahtisaari's ongoing role because of his support for Kosovo independence. "Pertemuan Wakil RI-GAM di Finlandia Harus Diwaspadai", Detiknews.com, 8 January 2009.

[71] For an analysis of the less than stellar role played by the oversight committee in Aceh's local elections in 2006, see Samuel Clark and Blair Palmer, "Peaceful Pilkada, Dubious Democracy: Aceh's Post-Conflict Elections and Their Implications", World Bank, Indonesian Social Development Paper No. 11, November 2008. The report contains a number of useful recommendations for strengthening election mechanisms and local governance.

[72] "Panwaslu NAD terima 28 kasus pelanggaran", Waspada online, 6 March 2009; and "Pengamanan Pemilu kawasan pedalaman kurang", Waspada online, 7 March 2009.

[73] For the first time ever, thanks to a constitutional court decision in December 2008, seats for legislative candidates at all levels will be determined by popular vote, not by the rank in party lists determined by the party leadership.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

As political tensions have risen in Aceh, hostility between GAM and the TNI is at its highest point since the MoU was signed. The central government has taken some useful steps: the visits in late February of President Yudhoyono and Martti Ahtisaari came just at the right moment to deliver a strong message to all parties that there is no going back from the MoU. The new police commander also appears to be well-chosen.

All parties, however, need to take concrete measures that will restore some modicum of trust. The GAM conglomerate needs to do more to control its own ranks, particularly in terms of curbing extortion and illegal levies. It is not enough to say the police are free to arrest violators; a strong and enforceable message needs to be given from the top. Rhetoric about commitment to the MoU and the Indonesian state rings hollow when the rhetoric in the field is different and when the use of old symbols, whether or not permitted by the MoU, acts as a red flag to a bull. GAM also needs to understand the depth of the backlash it is generating in Jakarta by ignoring its promise to dissolve.

The Indonesian military needs to do more to support the peace process, including by ensuring that whoever serves as regional commander starts from the premise that the MoU is the essential foundation of peace in Aceh, and that Partai Aceh and the KPA are legal not clandestine organisations. If the GAM leadership needs to control its own ranks, so does the TNI, in terms of preventing abuse and extortion. It would also be useful for TNI officers to examine case studies of other countries dealing with the after-effects of insurgencies, so they understand that genuine reintegration of former guerrillas may take a generation.

Better policing is key. The police need to be seen as professional law-enforcers rather than corrupt and passive bystanders to serious crime. They also need the professional skills to take back control of internal security in Aceh from the TNI. More than ever the international community needs to support police reform, but it needs to move beyond training in human rights and community relations and focus as well on solving crimes, particularly those committed by and against ex-combatants. More useful than two companies of extra paramilitary police for Aceh would be a few top-flight criminal investigators to provide on-the-job training for district police commands, under the supervision of the new provincial commander, in areas where serious crimes remain unsolved.

Civil society has a huge role to play, in demanding accountability from the KPA and TNI, getting citizens to demand more from elected officials, and refusing intimidation from any party. Some Acehnese take it as an insult that recommendations for preserving the peace are made to officials in Jakarta or the international community. “Do you think we don’t have the capacity to keep the peace ourselves?” one young Acehnese woman asked an international forum recently. Her reaction is heartening, in the sense that Acehnese are determined to prevent a return to conflict. But it would still be useful for international donors, who are rapidly scaling back their work in Aceh, to revisit their priorities. The peace remains a work in progress, and continued work in the governance, legal reform, anti-corruption, human rights and community development sectors can help strengthen it.

If the short-term goal is to get through the election with a minimum of violence, another is to get both sides to understand that distrust as deep it is in Aceh today is dangerous – and get the peace process back on track.

Jakarta/Brussels, 23 March 2009

APPENDIX A

MAP OF ACEH

APPENDIX B

PARTIAL LIST OF ELECTION-RELATED INCIDENTS IN ACEH

24 October: PKS candidate, Erna, from Geulanggang Rayek Kec. Kutablang, Bireun, was approached by two Partai Aceh members, and warned not to put up PKS flags in her village. She refused, saying everyone had the right to display party insignia. The next day, two other youths came up to her, threatened to slit her throat and burn her family's house if she continued to put up PKS flags. When she answered them back sharply, they tried to yank the PKS pin off her headscarf, ripping it in the process. PKS reported the incident to the police.[74]

27 October: Death threat against Z. Bawadi, head of Partai Demokrat office in Kec. Samalanga, Bireuen, by Ismail, ex-combatant.[75]

7 December: Death threat against two FORKAB members allegedly by Abu Karim, secretary of KPA Bireuen. (Abu Karim later killed on 2 February 2009.)[76]

17 December: M. Ali, head of Partai Demokrat for Bireuen, was approached by two ex-GAM, demanding Rp.500 million ($40,000). When he did not produce it, the two punched him, but M. Ali managed to pull out a knife and the two fled. M. Ali went to the police and the next day received a threatening text message from the two men.[77]

14 January: Muchtar bin Ben Bulang, a candidate from Partai Aceh Aman Seujahtera (PAAS) had returned home from distributing PAAS calendars in a coffeeshop in Teupin Raya area of Kreung Jangko village, Glumpang Tiga, Pidie, when he was approached by three men on a motorcycle led by a man named Murdani and two others. Murdani is the local KPA leader, formerly local commander (*panglima sagoe*) of Teupin Raya; the other two were Partai Aceh members. Murdani called Muchtar a dog, threatened to kill him, and said he had been warned twice against his party activities. Murdani then asked for the remaining calendars and said if Muchtar did not turn them over, he and his friends would ransack Muchtar's house. Later, a Partai Aceh member, one of Murdani's men, entered the house and removed all the calendars, amid further death threats. The incident was reported to the local police.[78]

21 January: Someone tried to burn a small pick-up truck belonging to KPA Simpang Tiga, Redelong, Bukit, Bener Meriah at 3.00 am behind the KPA office. The fire was quickly extinguished by KPA members in the office, without serious damage to the vehicle.[79]

22 January: Golkar office in Bireuen attacked with a grenade by unidentified perpetrators in the early monring around 4.45 am. The Korean-made grenades were brought by two men on a motorcycle.[80]

26 January: Regional Partai Aceh office in Meunasah Mancang village, Samudera subdistrict, North Aceh was shot at by unidentified perpetrators at around 3.15 am. No one was hurt, but windows were shattered.[81]

28 January: Two Partai Aceh members from Jangka Bireuen, Mukhtar Murat and Syafian alias Tgk Aceh, went around trying to force to people contribute between Rp.100,000 and Rp.200,000 ($8-$16) to buy Partai Aceh flags, and if they didn't want to pay up, warned they should leave Aceh.[82]

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[74] "Oknum PA Serobot Jelbab Kader PKS", http://pksaceh.org/node/228.
[75] Letter from Dandim 0111/Bireuen.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid.
[78] "Pesona Ditebar, Teror Didapat," *Modus Aceh*, Minggu I, February 2009.
[79] "Mobil KPA Linge dibakar", *Waspada*, 22 January 2009.
[80] "Kantor Golkar digranat", *Harian Aceh*, 23 January 2009.
[81] "Kasus Granat Kantor PA, Polres Lhokseumawe Minta Bantuan Tim Labforkrim Poldasu", *Harian Aceh*, 29 January 2009.
[82] Letter from Dandim 0111/Bireuen.

1 February: A grenade was found near the car of Sabang mayor and GAM member Munawar Liza. He told the press the pin had been taken out and replaced with a red rubber band. Police were investigating.[83]

2 February: Murder of KPA leader Abu Karim, see report text. (Not clear if election related.)

3 February: Murder of KPA members M. Nur and wounding of Zakaria Daud, see report text. (Not clear if election related.)

11 February: Military personnel harassed Iswandi Abubakar for having a KPA membership card, and burned him with lighted cigarettes, Bener Meriah.[84]

12 February: Murder of Partai Aceh member Taufik alias Benu.

19 February: Around 11.30 pm a group of armed men wearing masks and plainclothes searched the home of Sukiman, a Partai Aceh candidate, in Pantan Lues, Timang Gajah, Bener Meriah. He was not home at the time.[85]

20 February: A grenade thrown around 3.40 am at a Partai Aceh campaign post (pos pemenangan Partai Aceh) run by Ligadinsyah on Jalan Yos Sudarso, Blang kolak 2, Bebesen, Takengon, Aceh Tengah. No one injured and no serious property damage.[86]

25 February: Partai Aceh reports to the election oversight body in Blangpidie, Aceh Barat Daya, that more than 1,533 flags and banners of Partai Aceh have been vandalised in the subdistricts of Babahrot, Kuala Batee, Jeumpa, Susoh, Blangpidie, Tangan-Tangan, Lembah Sabil, Suaq Setia and Manggeng.[87]

28 February: Two offices of Partai Aceh in Aceh Jaya were burned. Dewan Pimpinan Sago in Kecamatan Panga and Posko Desa Lhok Kruet in Kec Sampoinet. Reported to police and election oversight body.[88]

11 March: Five people wounded, two seriously, when two men on a motorcycle threw a grenade into "Reintegration" coffeeshop in Muara Satu, Lhokseumawe.[89]

20 March: Tumijan, an ethnic Javanese member of Partai Aceh, was found dead in the waste-dumping area of a palm oil plantation two days after he disappeared in Nagan Raya district. His throat had been cut. He reportedly had recruited many Javanese into the party.[90]

[83] "Mobdin Wali Kota Diganjal Granat", *Indopos*, 3 February 2009.
[84] "Pengurus PA Hadirkan Korban Kekerasan di Bener Meriah," *Serambi Indonesia*, 15 February 2009.
[85] Text message from GAM.
[86] Ibid.
[87] "Panwaslu Abdya Terima Laporan Pengrusakan Atribut", *Serambi Indonesia*, 27 February 2009.
[88] "Dua Kantor Partai Aceh di Aceh Jaya Dibakar", *Serambi Indonesia*, 1 March 2009.
[89] "Warung Kopi Digranat, Lima Orang Luka Serius", *Kompas*, 12 March 2009.
[90] "Anggota Tim Sukses PA Ditemukan Tewas Digorok", *Serambi Indonesia*, 21 March 2009; and short text message, 20 March 2009.

APPENDIX C

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP

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Crisis Group's international headquarters are in Brussels, with major advocacy offices in Washington DC (where it is based as a legal entity) and New York, a smaller one in London and liaison presences in Moscow and Beijing. The organisation currently operates nine regional offices (in Bishkek, Bogotá, Dakar, Islamabad, Istanbul, Jakarta, Nairobi, Pristina and Tbilisi) and has local field representation in eighteen additional locations (Abuja, Baku, Bangkok, Beirut, Cairo, Colombo, Damascus, Dili, Jerusalem, Kabul, Kathmandu, Kinshasa, Ouagadougou, Port-au-Prince, Pretoria, Sarajevo, Seoul and Tehran). Crisis Group currently covers some 60 areas of actual or potential conflict across four continents. In Africa, this includes Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Liberia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Uganda and Zimbabwe; in Asia, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Burma/ Myanmar, Indonesia, Kashmir, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, North Korea, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Taiwan Strait, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan; in Europe, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Georgia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Russia (North Caucasus), Serbia, Turkey and Ukraine; in the Middle East and North Africa, Algeria, Egypt, Gulf States, Iran, Iraq, Israel-Palestine, Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Yemen ; and in Latin America and the Caribbean, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Haiti and Venezuela.

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WORKING TO PREVENT CONFLICT WORLDWIDE

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