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Religious Freedom in Indonesia: The Case of the Ahmadiyah

Bernhard Platzdasch

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN INDONESIA: THE CASE OF THE AHMADIYAH¹

Abstract

This article explains the controversy over the legal status of the Islamic Ahmadiyah sect, put into the larger context of the question over religious freedom and tolerance in today's Indonesia. It covers the disproportional influence of Islamist civil society groups on the Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono government and the government's intervention in religious and social affairs despite Indonesia supposedly being a secular state. It argues that in dealing with the Ahmadiyah issue, the government has been yielding to Islamist pressure because of concern of a backlash by Muslim electorates. It also suggests that the deeper cause for the problems of the Ahmadis are the inconsistencies within Indonesian law, which is not clear-cut and absolute in its protection of religious freedom as is often erroneously claimed. It further highlights that most Muslim leaders from mainstream Muslim organizations tended to be firm in supporting those laws inimical to full religious freedom and legal recognition of Ahmadiyah.

Ahmadiyah (full name: *Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at* [Ahmadiyah Muslim Community], also known as Qadiyaniah) is a religious movement founded by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (15 February 1835 - 26 May 1908) in Qadian in Punjab, India, in 1889. Like mainstream Islam, Ahmadiyah teachings are based on the Qur'an and the Hadith (account of the words and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad). Like mainstream Muslims, Ahmadis observe the five pillars of Islam: the belief in a single creator and Muhammad's prophethood, the five daily prayers, alms, fasting and — in theory — the pilgrimage (Ahmadis are banned from visiting Mecca in Saudi Arabia). Ahmadiyah has a central authority in Caliph Mirza Masroor Ahmad. He is based in London and the fifth successor of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad.

The main issue that separates Ahmadis from other Muslims is the question of whether there can be other prophets after Muhammad. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad claimed to

have fulfilled the Qur'anic foretelling of the return of Jesus Christ and the world reformer at the end of times (known as the Mahdi, literally "The Guided One"). The Qur'an, verse 61:6, speaks of a successor to Muhammad, whose name is Ahmad.² The question of prophethood is the main reason that Islamist conservatives and many mainstream Muslims perceive Ahmadiyah as a distinctive faith outside Islam. A second charge is that the movement has its own holy book, named Tadzkirah, and, thirdly, that Ahmadiyah has its own holy sites in the Punjabi towns of Qadiyan and Rabwah (unlike mainstream Muslims' Mecca and Medina). Many Muslim organizations, therefore, believe that Ahmadis should be forbidden from referring to themselves as Muslims.

Doctrinally, Ahmadiyah stands in the line of other reformist Islamic movements promoting the adaptation of its teachings to the circumstances of a particular time and place in order for Islam to remain significant and progressive. In 1914, the movement split into two schools: the Ahmadiyah Muslim Community and, a much smaller wing, the Lahore Ahmadiyah Movement. The two streams differ in their interpretation of Ahmad's status. The Ahmadiyah Muslim Community is often thought to perceive Mirza Ghulam Ahmad to be a prophet but one who is subordinated to Muhammad. It further holds the Qur'an, as it was received by Muhammad, to be the final message of God for mankind. The Lahore Ahmadiyah Movement sees its founder more strictly as a religious reformer, thereby conforming to the mainstream Islamic view that there can be no prophet after Muhammad.

Other controversial Ahmadiyah beliefs are the denunciation of *jihad* (holy war) as physical struggle, except in the case of extreme persecution against Ahmadiyah members. Ahmadis perceive Islam as an inherently non-violent religion that has to be propagated through peaceful means only. Unlike other Islamic and religious movements, it does not have distinctively political ambitions and militant streams. Another contentious aspect of Ahmadiyah teachings is the belief that Jesus Christ had survived the crucifixion after which he had emigrated to Kashmir in India. Ahmadis believe Jesus to be buried in Srinagar, Kashmir's capital, under the name of Yuz Asaf.

In Asia, there are sizeable Ahmadiyah populations in India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Indonesia. In India, Ahmadis have legal status. The Pakistani government has identified Ahmadis as a non Muslim religious minority, which means

they are forbidden to refer to themselves as Muslims. But they are permitted to vote in elections. Ahmadiyah is banned in Saudi Arabia where their followers are classified as heathen (*kafir*). Ahmadiyah is also banned in Brunei and Malaysia. In Indonesia, there has long been heated debate over Ahmadiyah's status.

The much more dominant Ahmadiyah stream is the "Muslim Ahmadiyah Community" or Jama'ah Ahmadiyah Indonesia in Indonesian (JAI, from here on "Ahmadiyah"). The Ahmadiyah Lahore is based in Yogyakarta with a small contingent in Jakarta. The records of Ahmadiyah's strength in Indonesia vary greatly. Ahmadiyah itself claims up to half a million members. Indonesia's Ministry of Religion gives a much smaller figure of 50,000 to 80,000 members. Ahmadiyah bases in Indonesia are the Sukabumi, Kuningan and Garut districts in West Java, and the North Sumatran city of Medan. Smaller Ahmadiyah communities exist in South Sulawesi, West Sumatra, Lombok and West Nusa Tenggara (International Crisis Group 2008, fn 3).

Ahmadiyah's history in Indonesia goes back to 1925 when two preachers, Maulana Ahmad and Mirza Wali Ahmad, arrived in the Javanese city of Yogyakarta. They were welcomed by the local Muhammadiyah branch and permitted to speak at the organization's 13th National Congress.³ A year later, another preacher arrived in the North Sumatran region of Aceh and began to promote Ahmadiyah's teachings. Soon, however, Indonesia's main Muslim organizations such as the traditionalist Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), the modernist Muhammadiyah, and the Masyumi political party, declared Ahmadiyah to be "deviant" [*sesat*]. In 1929, a Muhammadiyah National Congress for the first time stated this view officially. Similarly, NU's fifth National Congress in Pekalongan in 1930 proclaimed Ahmadiyah as being outside Islam (Purwanto 2008, p. 252). Such repudiation tended to differ from the official position of the Indonesian state. In 1953, the government declared Ahmadiyah as a lawful organization. Significantly, despite the repudiating stance of Indonesia's main Muslim organizations, Ahmadiis faced little open hostility from mainstream Muslims and, for the most part, lived unperturbed amongst other religious communities.⁴

1980 marked an important turn in the history of Ahmadiyah in Indonesia. It was the year when the Indonesian Ulama Council or Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) issued a *fatwa* (legal ruling based on Islamic law) declaring Ahmadiyah as deviant [*sesat*] and outside Islam.⁵ MUI was established with the endorsement of former

President Soeharto. It comprises *ulama* (Islamic scholars) from a mixture of Muslim organizations, including NU and Muhammadiyah. This gives the erroneous impression that MUI's *fatwas* have greater influence on the Muslim community compared to those of individual organizations.

A summit of Indonesia's so-called "Coordinating Board for Monitoring Mystical Beliefs in Society" or Badan Koordinasi Pengawas Aliran Kepercayaan Masyarakat (usually abbreviated as Pakem or Bakorpakem) backed and reemphasized MUI's ruling.⁶ Importantly, Bakorpakem pointed out that the *fatwa* had a basis in the constitution as it was related to Law No.1/PNPS/1965, which regulates the "Pencegahan Penyalahgunaan atau Penodaan Agama" or the "Prevention of the Misuse or Desecration of Religion". The first paragraph of this law reads:

Every person is prohibited from deliberately speaking about, recommending, or lending support to interpretations of a religion that is adhered to in Indonesia [i.e. Indonesian religions], or participating in religious activities that are similar to those of a religion, interpretations and activities, which deviate from the central teachings of that religion.⁷

Bakorpakem then called on President Soeharto to act in accordance with MUI's *fatwa* by prohibiting Ahmadiyah as it was within his authority to dissolve a syncretist sect, known in Indonesia as *aliran kepercayaan*. The government, however, paid no heed to the call.

Next to MUI, the other organization leading the campaign against Ahmadiyah has been the Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengkajian Islam or "Institute for the Study and Teaching of Islam" (LPPI). LPPI is a small Jakarta-based research institute funded with Saudi Arabian money. Particularly dedicated to the struggle against "deviant" sects has been the director of LPPI, Amin Djamaluddin. Djamaluddin, a respected conservative scholar of Islam, has also been active in MUI. He is also a member of the conservative-reformist "Islamic Association" (Persatuan Islam or Persis) and Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia or "Indonesian Islamic Propagation Council" (DDII). Another pioneer in the anti-Ahmadiyah campaign was DDII's journal Media Dakwah and, in particular, DDII journalist Hartono Ahmad Jaiz. In 1990, Ahmadiyah filed and won a lawsuit against the Media Dakwah journal.⁸ It had featured an

illustration of Ahmadiyah's founder, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, wearing a turban that was sporting a cobra motif. LPPH activists were among a large crowd of protesters who tried to attack the Ahmadiyah headquarters in the village of Parung in the district of Bogor, south of Jakarta, in 2002 (International Crisis Group 2008, p. 14).

In Djamaluddin's view, the book believed to be religious scripture for Ahmadis, the *Tadzkirah*, contained many Qur'anic verses that had been "marauded, distorted and extended" (Djamaluddin 1992, p. iii; Jaiz 2002, pp. 60-63). He likes to argue that if any book or piece of music was protected from being distorted and altered, the same must apply for the Qur'an, which unlike the other works, is believed by Muslims to be the word of God. In a meeting with Bakorpakem on 18 January 2005, Djamaluddin made the following analogy: "If someone distorted the anthem Indonesia Raya and then sang it on 17 August, that is, on Indonesia's National Day, what would you think of that?" (Djamaluddin 1992, p. 106). And further:

Herein lies the problem: [if] people distort the National Anthem, surely the police will arrest them. But it is tolerated if people distort the holy Qur'an; the police doesn't arrest them. It is therefore appropriate that the Muslim community destroys the mosques and the houses of Ahmadiyah people, because the security forces don't act justly and don't pay attention to the demands of the Muslim community.

(Ibid.)⁹

Ahmadis dispute this charge. They hold that the term "Tadzkirah" was Djamaluddin's own invention, first mentioned by him in a 1992 publication. What existed was a compilation of revelations and dreams Mirza Ghulam Ahmad had received during his lifetime, which, however, only existed in book-form since 1935, that is years after his death in 1908 (Suryawan 2006, pp. 61-63).

Indonesian Muslim organizations' repudiation of Ahmadiyah must be seen in the context of Ahmadiyah's position in the wider Muslim world. The 1980 MUI ruling was basically a copy of a decree issued earlier in Saudi Arabia. Almost exactly a year after MUI issued its first *fatwa*, the Embassy of Saudi Arabia submitted a letter to Indonesia's Ministry of Religion, referring to what it called a "decision of the

world's highest mosque committee [the World Mosque Council]" to ban Ahmadiyah. The Embassy pointed to the:

[...] opposition of the Muslim community against the destructive activities of the Ahmadiyah. [Ahmadiyah] is a destructive group that uses Islam as its vehicle to mask its putrid [*busuk*] objective which goes against Islam. The most obvious [of these violations] is the claim of its leader to be a Prophet and [thus the] rejection of Muhammad... Qadianiah [that is, Ahmadiyah] collaborates with imperialists and Zionists and other parties which oppose Islam. These parties use Ahmadiyah as a tool to destroy...the Islamic faith.¹⁰

The Embassy further declared:

[T]he decisions and the recommendations of the World Mosque Council ...entirely confirm what had been established by [the] research bureau...of the Saudi Arabian kingdom: this group [Ahmadiyah] is deviant and misleading [*sesat dan menyesatkan*]. And [the World Mosque Council] recommends issuing a fatwa which declares Qadianiah [Ahmadiyah] to be outside Islam... It is, therefore, hoped that the [Indonesian] Ministry [of Religion] ...undertakes appropriate actions to ban the activities of the [Ahmadiyah] and explains its deviant and heathen nature to the religious people of Indonesia. (Ibid.)

A "recommendation" of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) dating back to 1976 gives a broader idea of the global, political, dimension of the Ahmadiyah question. The document refers to Ahmadiyah's origins in British India:

Qadianiyah [Ahmadiyah] is a sect that is extremely destructive, that makes Islam its motto in order to veil its malicious aims. The most obvious [points] of its difference with Islam are a) Its leader claims to be a prophet, b) the text of the Qur'an is altered, c) there is no jihad. Qadianiyah is the golden offspring of English imperialism and it did not emerge other than with the protection of this imperialism. Qadianiyah deceives the concerns of the Muslim community

and it supports imperialism and Zionism. It works together with forces that oppose Islam, which struggle to destroy and distort the Islamic faith...¹¹

The OIC, then, banned Ahmadiyah during a conference in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, in December 1985.¹² Saudi Arabia has a big influence on OIC, and is believed to have played a vital role in this decision.

In 2000, Ahmadiyah caliph Mirza Thahir Ahmad visited Indonesia and met with NU leader and then President Abdurrahman Wahid. It was the first visit by the highest Ahmadiyah authority to Indonesia. Given Abdurrahman's wide network among non-Muslims and Islamist perceptions of him as a Zionist ally, the visit automatically fuelled suspicions of a plan to make Indonesia a hub for Ahmadiyah activities. Ahmadiyah's critics sometimes claim that the Ahmadiyah headquarters in England aimed to make Ahmadiyah Indonesia the largest Ahmadiyah community in the Muslim world.¹³ The proof was the increase in the number of Ahmadiyah branches. In 1989, Ahmadiyah had 150 branches in Indonesia; in 1999 the number had risen to 228 and to 300 in 2008.¹⁴

The year 2005 came as another turning point in Ahmadiyah's history in Indonesia, as MUI issued a second ruling on the basis that "up to now Ahmadiyah still attempts to spread its beliefs in Indonesia even though a fatwa from MUI already exists and [despite] the prohibition of its [Ahmadiyah's] existence".¹⁵ MUI again claimed that the "endeavors to spread Ahmadiyah beliefs have triggered uneasiness [*keresahan*] in the Muslim community". The *fatwa* then held that it was:

Highlighting again the MUI...1980 fatwa which holds that Ahmadiyah stands outside Islam, [is] deviant and misleading, and that Muslims who follow it have abandoned Islam [*murtad*].

(Ibid.)

It further stated that:

The government has the responsibility to prohibit the spreading of the Ahmadiyah faith everywhere in Indonesia, to dissolve the organization and to close down all the places of its activities.

(Ibid.)

MUI's ruling explicitly referred to the OIC conference in December 1985 cited earlier, again highlighting the international dimension and political significance of the Ahmadiyah controversy. Underscoring the finality of Muhammad's prophethood remains the key issue in the quarrel with Ahmadiyah. The *fatwa* quotes the Qur'an, verse 33:40, which informs that Muhammad is the last of the prophets. It reads: "Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but [he is] the messenger of Allah, and the seal of the Prophets..." (Ibid.; Ali 1999, p. 1069).

Significantly, MUI has enjoyed much greater political clout in the Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono-led government than during the New Order.¹⁶ Most of MUI executives in recent years have been conservative Islamists, including its chairman Ma'ruf Amin.¹⁷ The greater political clout of MUI in the Yudhoyono administration is to an important extent due to the President's open endorsement as he seems to perceive MUI as representative of the Muslim community. Between 2005 and 2007, Yudhoyono appeared in two major MUI summits in which he expressed his support for MUI's campaign against "deviant" Muslim sects. What is more, MUI chairman Ma'ruf Amin was appointed a member of the Dewan Pertimbangan Presiden or Presidential Advisory Council (DPP), which advised the President on the Ahmadiyah issue.¹⁸ By allowing MUI to become more influential, the government appears to be responding to the current trend toward conservatism in Indonesian Islam; a trend it has opted to embrace and co-opt in the hope of better controlling it.¹⁹ This policy has significantly added to the constant sense of threat under which many Ahmadiis live today.

Several prominent Muslim leaders from the liberal Islamic camp rejected MUI's second *fatwa*. Among them were: NU leader Abdurrahman Wahid; the co-founder of the Jaringan Islam Liberal or "Liberal Islamic Network", Ulil Abshar Abdalla; the Director of the International Centre for Islam and Pluralism, Syafii Anwar; and Dawam Rahardjo, a noted economist and prominent Muhammadiyah member.²⁰ They, like others before, argued that the Indonesian constitution promised freedom of religion.²¹ Another argument was that actions against Ahmadiyah were in breach of regulations on Human Rights (Law No. 39/1999). Others pointed out that Ahmadiyah held legal status as it was registered by the Department of Religion on 2 March 1970 and by the Social Department on 15 May 1970.²² It is also registered as a

“mass organization” (*ormas*, Law No. 8/1985). Among all the registrations, however, the most significant is said to be the one with the Department of Home Affairs (Law No. 5/1985).²³

Pressure on Ahmadiyah began to mount further from mid to late 2007 onwards. Paramount in the campaign against Ahmadiyah leading to MUI’s second *fatwa* and ever since has been what the International Crisis Group termed an “interlocking directorate of radical movements in the metropolitan Jakarta area and beyond” (International Crisis Group 2008, p. 15). Leading among these groups have been the aforementioned LPPI, the Front Pembela Islam (FPI) or Front of the Defenders of Islam, the Forum Umat Islam or Muslim Community Forum (FUI), DDII, the Forum Umat Ulama Islam (Islamic Scholars’ Ulama Forum or FUUI) and Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI).²⁴ Members of these organizations tend to be connected through holding more than one membership at the same time. The secretary general of Forum Umat Islam (FUI), for example, was HTI deputy-chairman Mohammad al-Khaththath. The chairman of FUI is Mashadi, a DDII member and a founding member and former MP of Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (Justice Prosperity Party, PKS, then Partai Keadilan, Justice Party or PK), now Indonesia’s leading Islamist party. Many FUI leaders are, at the same time, active in MUI and Dewan Dakwah. FUI founding member Kholil Ridwan, another long-time campaigner against Ahmadiyah, is at the same time a member of DDII, a member of MUI’s executive board, and head of the *fatwa* board of FUUI.²⁵

The campaign against Ahmadiyah has turned both more intense and more hostile in recent years. Hizbut Tahrir has been proudly acting on a self-prescribed non-violent platform. It has, however, shown few qualms about building an enduring alliance with the more militant FPI, whose members have regularly carried out raids on nightlife spots, churches they declare to be constructed illegally, and Ahmadiyah-owned property. FPI activists, in turn, have provided the security personnel for FUI demonstrations (International Crisis Group 2008). FPI, FUI and Hizbut Tahrir leaders were present at a gathering that took place on 14 February 2008 in the city of Banjar in West Java, which had an anti-Ahmadiyah agenda.²⁶ The event was also attended by the Majelis Mujahedin Indonesia or “Indonesian Mujahidin Council” (MMI).²⁷ The speakers were Abu Bakar Bashir from the MMI, Mohammad al-Khaththath (FUI and

Hizbut Tahrir) and Sobri Lubis, secretary general of the FPI. The most notorious part of the event was Lubis' sanctioning the killing of Ahmadiyah members. Lubis said:

[...] We say we urge the Muslim community to wage war against Ahmadiyah. Kill Ahmadiyah wherever they are, my brothers! God is great! Kill, kill, kill, kill!... This is self-defense. They destroy the faith, it is no longer sacred [the life of Ahmadis]... it is already permissible [*holol*]... already permissible! This is no joke [*bukan main*]... it is permissible to shed the blood of Ahmadis. Later we will be said to have violated human rights. To hell with the Human Rights declaration; cat piss, the Human Rights declaration!²⁸

At the same time, Islamist groups such as FUI, LPPI and MUI (mostly through Amin Djamaluddin) intensified their lobbying efforts in parliament, with the Ministry of Religion, the Attorney General's office and other policy-makers. Their efforts bore fruit when their call for a ban on Ahmadiyah got the specific attention of a parliamentary commission. Overall, Islamist conservatives have been more active and astute than pluralist Muslims in creating and cultivating networks among the bureaucracy in order to achieve their objectives.²⁹

Under increasing pressure from its critics and the government, on 14 January 2008 the leadership of Ahmadiyah eventually issued a statement consisting of twelve clarifications that were to shed a more favorable light on the movement's beliefs. It was meant to lend evidence to the avowal that Ahmadiyah was part of Islam on the basis that its members believed in the Qur'an and the prophethood of Muhammad.³⁰ The statement declared that the Ahmadiyah community had "from the beginning believed in and voiced the *shahadah*", which consists of the vow that "I confess that there is no God other than Allah and Muhammad is His Prophet". More importantly, the second point of the statement held that: "From the beginning, we, the Ahmadiyah community, have believed in the final prophethood of Muhammad". The text further described Mirza Ghulam Ahmad as a "teacher...and mentor who inspired his disciples to strengthen Islamic proselytisation (*dakwah*) and Islamic teachings, as conveyed by the Prophet Muhammad". It further highlighted that Ahmadis believed and followed solely the teachings of the Qur'an and the traditions of the prophet (Sunna). The Tadzkirah was "not Ahmadiyah's holy book but a series of notes about

Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's spiritual experiences which were collected and made into a book titled *Tadzkirah* by his followers in 1935...³¹

The document was then handed over to the Bakorpakem, which in its assessment stopped short of calling for the dissolution of the Ahmadiyah whilst declaring that it would monitor the activities of Ahmadiyah on the basis of the twelve points. Around the same time, MUI and DDII declared Ahmadiyah's statement as null and void as it did not clearly refute that it perceived Ahmad as a prophet. DDII also argued that other points in the statement contradicted the teachings to be found in Ahmadiyah books (Purwanto 2008, pp. 256-57). The distinction between Muhammad as Islam's prophet and Mirza as "teacher" was futile as such an avowal ignored the fact that Mirza's prophethood was a deeply ingrained belief among Ahmadis. Facing ongoing protests from these organizations, the Ministry of Religion finally formed another team to re-assess whether and if so, to what extent, the Ahmadiyah leadership and followers put into practice the assertions of its statement.

In mid-February 2008, the parliamentary commission assigned to the Ahmadiyah question issued its own report, calling on the government to ban Ahmadiyah. It argued that the government's toleration of Ahmadiyah had led to the proliferation of syncretist movements (*aliran kepercayaan*) which would go against Islamic teachings. The report further referred to MUI's first *fatwa* from 1980 and continued that:

Ahmadiyah is deviant and misleading; it therefore must be immediately dissolved.... A presidential order is required instantly to dissolve Ahmadiyah and to declare it as being barred perpetually.... The case of Ahmadiyah has to be solved instantly together with the Minister for Religion...³²

After three months of deliberation, Bakorpakem then issued a separate assessment. In this it described Ahmadiyah as "still deviant" and called on the Minister for Religion, the Minister for Home Affairs and the Attorney General to stop all activities of Ahmadiyah.

However, what brought the Ahmadiyah controversy really into the public eye was a march organized by the "National Alliance for Freedom of Religion and Faith" (Aliansi Kebangsaan untuk Kebebasan Beragama dan Berkeyakinan, AKKBB) at

Jakarta's National Monument square to celebrate the commemoration of Pancasila (the date was 1 June 2008).³³ The procession aimed to draw attention to religious tolerance issues by proclaiming that Pancasila was the ideological basis for religious freedom and tolerance and that the actions of Islamist conservatives were endangering that freedom. Prior to the event, the organizers had issued a declaration which broadly addressed religious freedom but also made specific mention of Ahmadiyah. Ahmadiyah's opponents, however, distorted the event subsequently as having been a show of support solely for Ahmadiyah. AKKBB's handout addressed the vital question of what is often seen as the constitutional promise of religious freedom in Indonesia. It held that:

Indonesia guarantees religious freedom to all its citizens. This is a human right guaranteed by the constitution. It is also the core of 'Unity in Diversity' which is the fundament of our Indonesian-ness. However, lately there has been a group of people who wish to stamp out this human right and threaten [our] diversity [...] They even use violence, as in their actions against followers of Ahmadiyah who have been living in Indonesia since 1925, and who have lived peacefully side by side with other Indonesians. Eventually they will insist on their plan to replace Pancasila, Indonesia's national doctrine, ignoring the constitution, and destroying that fundament of our togetherness. We call on the government [and] on [our] MPs not to fear the pressure that endangers this Indonesian-ness.³⁴

On the day of the march, an Islamist umbrella group calling itself Laskar Komando Islam or "Defenders of Islam Command" under the leadership of Munarman and FPI Chairman Habib Rizieq Shabib appeared at the square and assaulted the marchers, beating up several prominent NGO Muslim leaders. Munarman subsequently said that the attack was related to AKKBB's media advertisement cited earlier.³⁵ He followed the particular logic that mainstream Muslims were threatened by Ahmadiyah.³⁶ This view is often shared by government officials. They argue that Ahmadiyah mosques should be closed in order to forestall "anarchic activities" by local Muslims, thereby taking pre-emptive actions against the victims rather than the aggressors.

Many Muslim organizations and individual leaders demanded the dissolution of FPI following the assault. Particularly vocal were individual branches of NU. On 3 June, 58 Islamists, including FPI leader Habib Rizieq Shahib were arrested in a police operation involving 1,500 officers. Most FPI members were released shortly afterwards but Rizieq and seven others remained in police custody. Rizieq was sentenced to 18 months in prison. Laskar Komando Islam leader Munarman went on the run.³⁷

Ahmadiyah's reaction to the assault was noticeably muted. Some Ahmadis sought asylum at foreign embassies.³⁸ But they were unwilling to appear in the court trials against FPI members that followed. Their stance arguably reflected the pacifist, passive tradition and the obedience toward authorities, which Ahmadiyah had shown in the past.³⁹ It was certainly related to the fact that Ahmadiyah has had few representatives and little lobby power with the higher echelons of the Indonesian bureaucracy. What is more, Ahmadiyah could expect little backing from the mainstream media which has been rather reluctant to discuss the topic. It certainly did not want to be seen as pro-Ahmadiyah.

The Government's Islamic Favoritism

On 9 June 2008, the government finally issued its verdict on Ahmadiyah. It contained five "considerations" and seven "decisions". Two "considerations" are of particular interest as they pay tribute to the claim of religious freedom in Indonesia. The first point declares that:

The right to practise one's religion is a human right that must not be reduced in whichever situation; every man is free to adhere to his respective religion and worship in accordance with his religion and belief...⁴⁰

The second paragraph, however, poses an important qualification to the first statement. It basically quotes the 1965 law on "blasphemy" mentioned earlier (p. 4):

Every person is prohibited from ... speaking about, recommending, or lending support to interpretations of a religion that is adhered to in Indonesia [i.e. Indonesian religions], or participating in religious activities that are similar to

those of a religion, [and] which deviate from the central teachings of that religion.

The “decisions” point in the same direction as the second “consideration”. The second, third and fourth of these “decisions” are the most significant. The first point basically reiterates the second “consideration” cited above. The second point then

...warns and orders followers, members, and/or board members of Ahmadiyah Indonesia, for as long as they refer to themselves as Muslims [*mengaku beragama Islam*], to stop spreading interpretations and activities that deviate from the central teachings of Islam, that is, the spreading of the view which acknowledges that there is a prophet fully versed in all teachings after the Prophet Muhammad.

The subsequent third section determines that breaching the above order will result in sanctions “in accordance with the set regulations of the legislation”. Here, the government appears to say that Ahmadiyah members face five year jail terms on charges of “blasphemy” if found guilty of “participat[ing] in religious activities that are similar to those of a religion, [and] which deviate from the central teachings of that religion”, and “spreading of the view which acknowledges that there is a prophet fully versed in all teachings after the Prophet Muhammad”. But, while obviously referring to law No.1/PNPS/1965, the decree makes no explicit mention of it. The final paragraph of the decree orders Muslims not to resort to any violent actions against Ahmadiyah members. It was issued on the same day another demonstration of Islamist groups against Ahmadiyah took place in front of the Presidential Palace.

Several conclusions can be made based on an analysis of the decree. It left the legal status of the Ahmadiyah unresolved. It banned Ahmadiyah from proselytization but not from internal activities, thus leaving its members in a legal limbo. Government officials have struggled to make sense of the decree’s ambivalence, usually without much success. Attorney General Hendarman Supandji, one of the three signatories, for example, said it would “in essence order Ahmadiyah members to stop their activities [but] there is no banning of Ahmadiyah”.⁴¹ The decree is, the pluralist Wahid Institute opined, “the safest path the government could take between

those protecting and those demanding the disbanding of Ahmadiyah”.⁴² It contests Ahmadiyah’s position as part of Islam but does not deny the right of Ahmadis to practice on the implied proviso that Ahmadiyah forms its own religion (i.e. denounces Islam). But this is an unworkable proposition as many aspects of Ahmadiyah’s religious practice are the same as those of mainstream Muslims.

It remained at the same time unclear which activities the decree outlaws. Ahmadiyah leaders like to argue that the wording (of the second “decision” cited above) merely prohibits its members from teaching that Muhammad is not the final prophet. Other aspects of Ahmadiyah teachings were not mentioned specifically in the decree; hence, according to these Ahmadiyah leaders, they were not banned from being spread and taught.⁴³ In a press release following the issuance of the decree, the Ahmadiyah leadership went even further, arguing that “the [decree] does not prohibit, suspend, or dissolve Ahmadiyah Indonesia but [only serves] as a warning [*semata-mata peringatan*]”.⁴⁴ It, however, did not elaborate what the warning referred to.

Others have argued similarly that the decree does allow Ahmadiyah members to continue carrying out their activities as long as they follow mainstream Islamic teachings. This would at the same time mean that Ahmadis are still permitted to pray in their mosques. Ahmadiyah can continue to exist in Indonesia and its followers are allowed to worship in their homes and mosques, but they must not preach or try to convert others, Vice President Jusuf Kalla said, seemingly confirming such an interpretation.⁴⁵ Not surprisingly, Ahmadiyah critics like MUI Chairman Ma’ruf Amin have rejected the provision that Ahmadis were still permitted to adopt Islamic attributes after forming their own religion (International Crisis Group 2008, fn 31).

Rather than only raising concerns about its content, critics also expressed doubt regarding the legal validity of the decree. Significantly, it was not issued by the President’s Office and was not signed by the President. Instead, it was released jointly by the Attorney General’s office, the Ministry of Religion and the Ministry of Home Affairs, and signed by the respective ministers and the Attorney General.⁴⁶ It therefore only has the status of a Joint Resolution (Surat Keputusan Bersama, SKB). An SKB had earlier been recommended by the Bakorpakem, the body attached to the government and enforced with the task of monitoring mystic and syncretist religious movements and organizations. The parliamentary commission dealing with

Ahmadiyah and Islamist conservatives, however, had both called for a “Presidential Resolution” known as Surat Keputusan Presiden or SKP to dissolve Ahmadiyah.

Ahmadiyah leaders have described the government’s decision to issue the decree as a Joint Resolution [SKB] and not through the President’s Office as an “exquisite maneuver” [*permainan cantik*]. It was giving proof of the government’s determination to please broader Muslim constituencies whilst trying to avoid a complete fallout with Ahmadis and other pro-Pancasila parties.⁴⁷ The government’s stance is reflected in the result of surveys such as the Setara Institute and Indonesian Survey Institute (LSI). They show that a majority of people support its conservative approach toward religious matters, as it would avoid controversy.⁴⁸

According to Law Number 8/1985, it is the Ministry of Home Affairs that has the authority to revoke the registration of a “mass organization” (*ormas*). However, during the constitutional amendments in 1999, this law was ratified by a new regulation (No. 29) which allocates the authority to dissolve or to suspend an organization to the President.⁴⁹ What is more, legal experts such as prominent lawyer Adnan Buyung Nasution and former State Secretary Yusril Ihza Mahendra have argued that, being issued as a “Joint Resolution” [SKB], the decree had no legal basis. They were referring to Law No. 10/2004 which regulates the formation and legal sources of laws and establishes their internal hierarchy (Pembentukan Peraturan Perundang-Undangan).⁵⁰ In its press release Ahmadiyah made a declaration in line with this view. It held that: “We very much deplore the SKB that has been issued, by bringing back to mind that a SKB does not exist in our legal system which has already been reformed”.⁵¹

Responses to the government’s SKB decree varied. In Cianjur (West Jakarta), Makassar (South Sulawesi) and Lombok, Ahmadiyah mosques were closed down by local authorities following threats from local Islamist groups.⁵² Elsewhere local governors joined Muslim leaders in issuing their own “joint statements” calling for a ban of Ahmadiyah. These statements were then submitted to the local governments. In Bogor, twenty Islamic organizations submitted such a “statement” to the city’s mayor. The local authorities rejected the plea, arguing that only the President was authorized to issue a ban.⁵³ South Sumatra was the first and remained the only region to issue a formal ban on Ahmadiyah in September 2008.⁵⁴ This is despite the fact that local governments have the right to issue regulations to maintain public order, but have no

authority to interfere in religious affairs directly.⁵⁵ The question then became whether local authorities can make a convincing case that Ahmadiyah activities were a potential threat to public order.

Critics of the government's SKB also argued that by ordering a stop to activities that went against central interpretations of Islam, the government had interfered in the personal lives of Indonesians. By deciding what a "proper" definition of Islam is, the government, they held, had thus abandoned what was supposed to be a neutral stand on religion.⁵⁶

Ahmadiyah's predilection to avoid open conflict again was shown in the reaction to the decree. Its leaders held that Ahmadiyah "respects the decree but doesn't follow it", signaling a mixture of compliance and resistance. They held that while the decree had made missionary efforts more difficult, it would still continue, though in a more passive and cautious manner. Yet other Islamic organizations further reduced contacts with Ahmadiyah following the decree and its leaders were no longer invited to events held by these organizations.⁵⁷

Police records to safeguard Ahmadiyah members from persecution following the decree remained mixed. The police have been facing a similar predicament as the mainstream Muslim organizations. While the police's task is protecting citizens regardless of their religious orientation, by giving the impression of protecting Ahmadiyah, they face the danger of being labeled as being pro-Ahmadiyah and thus anti-Islam.⁵⁸

Between anti-Ahmadiyah Sentiment and pro-Pluralist Appearance

All of Indonesia's main Islamist parties — PKS, Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (Unity Development Party, PPP) and Partai Bulan Bintang (Crescent Star Party, PBB) — have, not surprisingly, joined the call for dissolving Ahmadiyah. This is in spite of the fact that PPP has a considerable number of Ahmadhis among its members.⁵⁹

It is important to note that while the Islamist parties' stance reflected their opposition to Ahmadiyah teachings, they also believed that their vocal attacks on Ahmadiyah will get them sympathy not only from Islamists but also from many mainstream Muslims. This was particularly important ahead of the parliamentary elections in April 2009 during which Islamist parties had sought to foster their Islamic credentials. They were afraid of a voter backlash, if Muslims perceived them to be

neutral or hesitant on the question of Ahmadiyah's status. However, when casting their vote at national ballots, Indonesian Muslims have been shown to consider bread and butter issues rather than religious concerns. As a result of PPP's call for a ban, many Ahmadiyah votes went to the victorious secular-nationalist Democrat Party.⁶⁰

The official positions of the large Muslim mainstream organizations were naturally more vague and guarded than the blunt repudiation by the Islamists. The central NU leadership has tried to steer clear of the matter as far as possible. Internally, however, most leaders maintained their resolute stance that Ahmadiyah should be banned if it continues to claim the 'Islam' label. In 2005, NU leaders had argued, similar to the conservatives, in favor of a ban that the Ahmadiyah question has to be assessed through faith [*akhidah*] and not on the basis of democracy and human rights.⁶¹ In September 2005, following a forum, the central leadership of NU again issued a statement declaring Ahmadiyah as deviant on the basis that it did not acknowledge Muhammad as the final prophet (Purwanto 2008, pp. 254-55). Aside from theological reasons, NU also clearly had a self-interest in the Ahmadiyah case because it would like to control Ahmadiyah's valuable assets. But rather than confronting Ahmadiyah and calling for a ban of the group, many NU leaders have pledged to attempt to bring Ahmadiis "back to the true Islam". Wary of issuing a *fatwa* on its own, NU has pointed to MUI's two rulings (1980 and 2005) as having already given clarification on the status of Ahmadiyah as outside Islam.⁶² To some extent, NU's public dealing with the issue also seems to depend on who is holding the chairmanship. NU Chairman Hasyim Muzadi called on the government "to solve" the Ahmadiyah case without elaborating. On the one hand, he blamed the government's hesitant stance for the spread of syncretist beliefs; on the other hand, watchful not to put doubt on NU's pro-pluralist credentials, he stopped short of calling for a ban of Ahmadiyah.⁶³

Other NU leaders did not agree with the leniency that some of its most prominent leaders displayed in public. When NU expressed support for the 1 June 2008 marchers in Jakarta, NU's East Java branch protested on the basis that Ahmadiyah was not Islam and should therefore not be defended.⁶⁴ In Cirebon, NU was one of five Islamic organizations declaring their support for a ban on Ahmadiyah. The others were Persis, Persatuan Umat Islam (PUI), Matlaul Anwar and Muhammadiyah.⁶⁵ Critics in NU held that objecting to a ban on Ahmadiyah would

contradict previous NU resolutions that had declared Ahmadiyah to be “outside Islam”.⁶⁶ Overall, it appears that, being under greater public scrutiny NU’s central leadership has been more guarded in commenting forthrightly on the Ahmadiyah issue than local branches whose stance seemed to be more straightforwardly repudiating.

Muhammadiyah bore some similarities with NU. Like NU, Muhammadiyah leaders tend to favor a soft approach and dialogue instead of confrontation. A number of local Muhammadiyah leaders, however, rejected such a dialogue and flatly declared Ahmadiyah to be forbidden by Islam [*haram*]. An example was Muhammadiyah’s branch in Bogor, the location of Ahmadiyah’s headquarters.⁶⁷ At the same time, prominent Muslim leaders have appeared to adjust their statements in accordance with the organization they represent at a particular point in time. In 2005, Muhammadiyah chairman Professor Din Syamsuddin said Ahmadiyah should form its own religion, disaffiliated from Islam, if its followers continued to perceive Mirza Ghulam Ahmad as a prophet.⁶⁸ But when Din Syamsuddin held the position of a senior MUI executive, he was one of two signatories of MUI’s 2005 *fatwa* on Ahmadiyah.⁶⁹ When he was chairman of MUI, NU’s prominent leader Sahal Mahfudh signed a petition sent to the ministers of Home Affairs and Religion, the Attorney General and the head of the police, requesting them to “immediately take steps to ban [*melarangkan*] Ahmadiyah in Indonesia, to terminate the organization’s legal status [*mencabut legalitas organisasinya*] and to take up decisive legal steps against the leadership and distributors of Ahmadiyah [teachings]...”⁷⁰

The Claim of Religious Freedom Revisited

As made clear in the previous discussion, human rights groups and pluralist Muslims have widely used the argument that banning Ahmadiyah would contravene the 1945 constitution which is based on Pancasila on the basis that the constitution and Pancasila guaranteed freedom of religion. Following the attack on Ahmadiyah property at Parung, for example, they reiterated in a press release the common argument that “limiting and obstructing religious freedom breaches Indonesia’s national foundation and the constitution”.⁷¹

In fact, Indonesia’s constitution and laws are deeply ambiguous and selective on the question of a religious freedom that is absolute.⁷² There are two categories of

laws and regulations: Those clearly in favor of religious freedom and others that put up restrictions on this freedom and which discriminate against particular religious interpretations. The constitution appears to guarantee religious freedom in various sections. One of these sections is the First and Second Article of Paragraph 28. The First Article reads: “Every citizen has the right to follow his/her religion and worship according to his/her beliefs...” The Second Article reads: “Every citizen has the right to freedom to adhere to his/her beliefs, ... according to his/her conviction (*hati nurani*)”. Paragraph 28 I (1) reaffirms the previous points, reading: “The right to live, the right not to be maltreated, the right to free thought..., the right to practise religion, ... is a human right that cannot be reduced under any circumstance”. Hence, this section guarantees religious freedom, defined as a human right. Paragraph 28 I (4), then, defines the government’s responsibility as: “The protection, progress, implementation, and fulfillment of human rights are the responsibility of the state, in particular the government”.

Paragraph 28 J (2), however, makes an important qualification of the previous section. It holds: “In carrying out his or her right[s] and freedom, every citizen has the responsibility to abide by the restriction[s] set out by laws with the sole aim to guarantee the consideration and respect for the right[s] and freedom[s] of other citizens and to fulfill a just cause [*tuntutan yang adil*] in accordance with moral consideration, religious values, [public] security, and public order in a democratic society”.

This last section thus establishes limitations to religious expression. As the Wahid Institute points out in its report: “In short, by means of this paragraph, religious beliefs can be desecrated if a group perceives its human right of practicing [its] religion and belief to be disturbed by the existence of the [other] religion and belief”.⁷³

Aside from the sections on human rights, there is the constitutional Paragraph 29 on “religion”. The First Article holds: “The state is based on (the belief in) The One Almighty God”. And the Second Article holds: “The state guarantees the freedom of every citizen to follow his/her religion and to worship in accordance with his/her religion and belief”. As argued before, in practice, this affirmation of religious freedom can be put under the qualification of Law No.1/PNPS/1965 on the Prevention of Misuse or Desecration of Religion.

Interestingly, the wording used in the government's decree (SKB) against Ahmadiyah basically reiterates the wording of Law No.1/PNPS/1965 (cited earlier). This shows the enduring importance of Law No.1/PNPS/1965 as it qualifies several pro-religious freedom paragraphs in the constitution. Together with Paragraph 28 J (2) cited above, Law No. 1 effectively renders authority to the state to determine what the proper key aspects of a religion are, and which ones are not.⁷⁴ Syncretist beliefs and unorthodox sects such as the Ahmadiyah can be charged in line with Paragraph 28 J (2) and Law No. 1/PNPS/1965, as disobeying central teachings of one of the recognized religions.⁷⁵ The initiative for a judicial review of the latter has been a long-time agenda of Ahmadiyah and its associates in AKKBB. In July 2009, a draft has been prepared but not submitted.⁷⁶

Tellingly, the critics' argument on why Ahmadiyah should be banned by the government has given much consideration to the directives in the Indonesian constitution rather than merely following doctrinal standpoints. In the doctrinal part of the argument, Djamaluddin referred to a section in the Qur'an that pro-pluralist Muslims and scholars sympathetic to them often used to back up Islam's supposed pro-pluralist disposition:

Ahmadiyah is a matter of throwing Islamic teachings and its holy book into disorder. [It is] not merely a matter of religious freedom. This is also what is meant by the Qur'an, verse 2: 256 which holds: 'There is no coercion in religious matters'. This verse does not mean that there is freedom of throwing into disorder [*mengacak-acak*] the Islamic faith.

(Djamaluddin 2008, p. 107)

With regard to constitutional regulations, Djamaluddin wrote:

What the 1945 constitution, Paragraph 29, First and Second Article and Paragraph 28 E, First Article guarantee is the freedom of religion and to [...] worship in accordance with this religion and belief. It does not give the freedom to throw into disorder [*mengacak-acak*] existing religions at one's own will and in accordance with one's own personal wishes... If a group proclaims itself as belonging to a religion (Islam) whose existence in the

Indonesian state has already been declared as legal, and then produces teachings which are in conflict with that religion already declared as legal by that state, [it means that] it does not belong to the beliefs and convictions whose existence and activities are guaranteed by that state, as it is stated in Paragraph 29, First and Second Article and paragraph 28 E of the 1945 Constitution.

(Djamaluddin 2008, pp. ii and iv)

Postscript

Hostilities and attacks against Ahmadiyah mosques and properties resumed in mid- to late 2010. In response, NU and Muhammadiyah officials repeated earlier calls on Ahmadiyah to “leave Islam” and dismissed a review of Law No.1/PNPS/1965.⁷⁷ Minister of Religious Affairs Suryadharma Ali (NU) called in parliament for a ban of Ahmadiyah arguing that the incidents were consequences of the failure of the Ahmadiyah to adhere to the existing decree. While his government has maintained its resolute stance on Ahmadiyah, President Yudhoyono himself has continued to play it safe when it comes to addressing the issue, in line with the President’s pattern of avoiding speaking out on controversial matters. At the time of writing (early 2011), officials from a wide range of parties called on parliament to readdress the issue with a large majority appearing to back a formal ban on Ahmadiyah. This suggests that the June 2008 decree might not remain the final word on the matter.

Conclusion

From the case of the Ahmadiyah, it appears that the Yudhoyono government has been caving in to Islamist pressure when dealing with issues that it believes to have the support of a large number of Muslims. Due to the dominant position of Islam in Indonesia and a trend toward conservatism, the government has seen more at stake when it comes to issues involving Islam as compared to other religions. It has therefore impinged on religious freedom by issuing the June 2008 decree, effectively ‘half-banning’ Ahmadiyah, and by its ongoing support for Law No.1/PNPS/1965. However, while it cannot afford to offend the sensitivities of large sections of the Muslim community, the government also showed keenness to be seen as safeguarding the guarantee of religious freedom that many Indonesians associate with Pancasila.

Echoing this predicament, the public positions of mainstream Muslim leaders on the status of Ahmadiyah have often been cautious despite a firm refusal to consider Ahmadiyah as being part of Islam . They also have sometimes displayed a hands-off attitude when speaking for a Muslim organization with pluralist credentials (NU and Muhammadiyah) whilst calling for a ban of Ahmadiyah when speaking on behalf of a conservative body (MUI).

With the SKB decree, the government issued a regulation it perceived to be a solution minimizing any harmful fallout but which was in fact an easy way out that did not tackle the actual problem and, as a result, failed to sustain Indonesia's claim to protect religious pluralism. It was another example of the President's frequently irresolute leadership style. The government basically allowed Bakorpakem to corner it on the Ahmadiyah issue, with little or no opposition from the President or Attorney-General Hendarman. Underlying the SKB's ambivalence and unclear legal status, conservative groups have continued to press the President to issue another decree through his office.⁷⁸

The deeper problem is that the Indonesian constitution is not absolute in its protection of religious freedom. It *de facto* reserves a special position for Islam. This is reflected in the first Pancasila principle of The One-All-Powerful God, reiterated in the First Article of Paragraph 29 on "religion". It is also reflected in Paragraph 28 J (2) and Law No. 1/PNPS/1965 which outlaw unorthodox interpretations of the religions acknowledged by Pancasila. In effect, this merely concerns Islam. As a result of this domination, the government has inadvertently assumed an active role in the religious lives of Indonesians.

At the same time, there tends to be a discrepancy between existing regulations and laws and the situation on the ground. The government's decree against Ahmadiyah is not merely of debatable legal validity, there has also often been little political will to implement it. However, a shaky legal platform remains, which can be exploited if the circumstances make it politically beneficial to certain factions.

NOTES

1. I wish to express my gratitude to Mubarik Ahmad, The Wahid Institute, PT One Earth Media, the Yayasan Indonesia Damai, Maya Safira Muchtar, chairman of the Gerakan Integrasi Nasional or National Integration Movement, and Amin Djamaluddin from the Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengkajian Islam (LPPI) for their kind assistance in making material available to me. I also wish to thank Dr Greg Fealy for his comments on an earlier draft.
2. The verse reads: “And remember, Jesus, the son of Mary said: “Oh Children of Israel! I am the messenger of Allah, sent to you, confirming the law (which came) before me, and giving glad tidings of a messenger, to come after me, whose name shall be Ahmad, but when he came to them, with clear signs, they said: “this is evident sorcery!” (Ali 1999, p. 1461).
3. Muhammadiyah, founded in 1912, is Indonesia’s largest reformist Islamic organization.
4. For example, a visit of Mirza Mubarak Ahmad, the nephew of the Ahmadiyah founder, to Ahmadiyah communities in West Java in July 1981 went ahead without major disruptions. For the history of Ahmadiyah in Indonesia, see Zulkarnain (2005).
5. The verdict was made during a MUI summit held between 26 May and 1 June 1980.
6. Bakorpakem consists of representatives from the Attorney General’s office, the National Intelligence Board (Badan Inteligens Negara, BIN), the police and the Department of Religion.
7. “Penetapan Presiden Republik Indonesia Nomor 1 Tahun 1965 Tentang Pencegahan Penyalahgunaan dan/atau Penodaan Agama” <http://hukum.unsrat.ac.id/uu/penpres_1_1965.htm>.
8. DDII is the main legatee of the Masyumi. Masyumi was Indonesia’s largest Islamist party in the 1940s and 1950s.
9. Also Interview, Amin Djamaluddin and Dr Hoedaifah Koeddah, Jakarta, 2007. In the interview, Hoedaifah (LPPI) used Shakespeare’s plays as an example.
10. The document is named “Kementerian Luar Negeri Kedutaan Besar Saudi Arabia Jakarta, Nomer 8/1/10/B374/1401, tanggal 6/5/1981”, reprinted in Laporan Investigasi (Jakarta: LBH and Kontras, no date), pp. 153-54. In the text, Ahmadiyah is treated synonymously with Qadiyaniah. Underscoring the importance of the letter, Amin Djamaluddin (2007, pp. 138-139) also quotes it.
11. “Penjelasan Rabitah Alam Islami Mengenai Keputusan dan Rekomendasi Konperensi Organisasi-Organisasi Islam di Dunia yang Diadakan di Makkah Al Mukarramah Tanggal 14 s/d 18 Rabiul Awwl 1394 H”, reprinted in Djamaluddin (2007, pp. 128-29).
12. The OIC is an association of 56 Islamic states promoting Muslim solidarity in economic, social, and political affairs. Indonesia has been a member since 1969.
13. See the section “Rencana Jahat Ahmadiyah Pusat di Inggris Menjadikan Indonesia sebagai Pusat Ahmadiyah Dunia” [“The Malicious Plan of the English Ahmadiyah Center to Make Indonesia the Center of Ahmadiyah in the World’], in Djamaluddin (2007, pp. 15-26).

14. The first two figures are from Djamaluddin (2007, p. 106). The third figure is from “HM Amin Djamalduddin [sic] ‘Kita ditipu Mentah-Mentah”, *Tabloid Republika – Dialog Jumat*, 18 January 2008, p. 5.
15. Musyawarah Nasional VII Majelis Ulama Indonesia Tahun 2005: Keputusan Fatwa Majelis Ulama Indonesia Nomor: 11/Munas VII/MUI/15/2005 Tentang Aliran Ahmadiyah”.
16. Soeharto endorsed MUI’s formation in 1975 mainly in order to co-opt Muslim leaders.
17. Mah’ruf was in the 1970s head of NU’s Religious (Syuro) Council.
18. The council also included pro-Ahmadiyah lawyer Adnan Buyung Nasution. It always remained deeply divided over the Ahmadiyah question.
19. Confidential remarks by a member of the Presidential Advisory Council. Interview, Jakarta, August 2008.
20. In 2002, the Forum Ulama Umat Indonesia (FUUI) issued a notorious death *fatwa* against Ulil Abshar Abdalla.
21. “Gus Dur tolak Fatwa MUI”, *Radar Cirebon*, 30 July 2005.
22. “Serang Ahmadiyah Pelanggaran HAM”, *Pikiran Rakyat*, 22 August 2005.
23. Email interview, Mubarik Ahmad, 7 July 2009. The interviewee is head of Ahmadiyah’s Public Affairs Unit.
24. The Bandung-based FUUI comprises many DDII and Persis leaders. FUI was established in August 2005.
25. He has also been a founding member of KISDI, an influential Islamist group in the late New Order, and Partai Bulan Bintang (PBB, Crescent Star Party), Masyumi’s main successor party in the post-New Order years.
26. Hizbut Tahrir’s al-Khaththath was later forced out of the organization by the central leadership for his role in facilitating violent assaults against Ahmadis.
27. MMI is an umbrella group of several militant Islamist groups. It was established by Abu Bakar Bashir, once emir of Southeast Asia’s largest jihadist Islamist group, Jemaah Islamiyah.
28. In the original Indonesian:
 [K]ami nyatakan kami ajak umat islam ayo mari kita perangi ahmadiyah, bunuh Ahmadiyah dimanapun mereka berada saudara! All Ahuaakbar! Bunuh, bunuh, bunuh, bunuh!... ini namanya bela paksa. Lu ngerusak akidah gw, udah bukan halal lagi udah... udah holol... udah holol. Bukan main... Ahmadiyah halal darahnya untuk ditumpahkan, nanti dibilang melanggar HAM, persetan kitab HAM, tai kucing kitab HAM!
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ikolHPcTFzc> features Sobri Lubis advocating the killing of Ahmadiyah members; the website indonesiamatters.com has the full speech. Bashyir resigned as Amir of MMI soon after.
29. Around the same time, Syamsi Ali, Imam of New York’s biggest mosque, said that Ahmadiyah should establish its own religion and no longer call itself Muslim. “Deklarasikan Ahmadiyah sebagai agama baru”, *Terbit*, 12 January 2008.
30. “Ahmadiyah: Kami bagian dari Islam”, *detikcom*, 15 January 2008.
31. “Penjelasan Pengurus Besar Jemaat Ahmadiyah Indonesia (PB JAI) Tentang Pokok-Pokok Keyakinan Dan Kemasyarakatan Warga Jemaat Ahmadiyah Indonesia”, Jakarta, 14 January 2008.

32. "Catatan Audiensi Komisi VIII DPR-RI Dengan Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengkajian Islam", 18 February 2008. The document was signed by Hilman Rosyad Syihab, deputy chairman of the Commission VII and a member of PKS.
33. The AKKBB consists of forty NGOs.
34. Handout titled "Mari Pertahankan Indonesia Kita", Jakarta, 10 May 2008. The document contains the names of almost 300 community leaders, intellectuals and journalists, among them Professor Amien Rais, Anand Krishna, Professor Azyumardi Azra, Dr Djohan Effendi, Goenawan Mohamad, Mustofa Bisri and Abdurrahman Wahid (both NU), Professor Dawam Rahardjo, Mochtar Pabottingi, Professor Taufik Abdullah, Todung Mulya Lubis, Ulil Abshar Abdalla and Yenny Zannuba Wahid. Unity in Diversity or Bhinneka Tunggal Ika is the motto affiliated with the Pancasila.
35. The Wahid Institute, "Waiting for the Demise of the FPI", Monthly Report on Religious Issues, June 2008, p. 1.
36. Quoted in "Munarman: Jika tidak siap perang, jangan menantang", *Kompas*, 1 June 2008.
37. Ironically, Munarman was previously chairman of the secular Yayasan Bantuan Hukum Indonesia (Indonesia Legal Aid Foundation, YBHI). He later recorded a video declaring he would turn himself in on the condition that the government suspended Ahmadiyah. After the government issued its decree on Ahmadiyah, Munarman reported to a Jakarta police station and was subsequently jailed.
38. Both the Australian and German consulates in Bali rejected the pleas. The Wahid Institute, "Waiting for the Demise of the FPI", p. 8.
39. Interview, Maya Safira Muchtar, Jakarta, 13 April 2009. The interviewee is the chairman of the Gerakan Integrasi Nasional or National Integration Movement.
40. "Keputusan Bersama Menteri Agama, Jaksa Agung, dan Menteri m Negeri Republik Indonesia Nomor: 3 Tahun 2008, Nomor: KEP-033/A/JA/6/2008, Nomor: 199 Tahun 2008 Tentang Peringatan dan Perintah Kepada Penganut, Anggota, Dan/Atau Anggota Pengurus Jemaat Ahmadiyah Indonesia (JAI) dan Warga Masyarakat".
41. The Wahid Institute, "The Government has Failed", Monthly Report on Religious Issues (no date), p. 12.
42. Quoted in The Wahid Institute, "The Government has Failed", p. 1.
43. Interview, Zafrullah Ahmad Pontoh, Jakarta, 13 April 2009. The interviewee is an Ahmadiyah leader and preacher (*mubaligh*) based in Jakarta.
44. "Siaran Pers", PB Jemaat Ahmadiyah, 10 June 2008. This is a press release.
45. "Ahmadiyah can worship, Kalla says", *The Jakarta Post*, 11 June 2008.
46. These were Muhammad M. Basyumi as Minister of Religion, Hendarman Supandji as Attorney General and Mardiyanto as Minister of Home Affairs.
47. 1 Interview, Zafrullah Ahmad Pontoh, Jakarta, 13 April 2009.
48. 1See, for example, the survey "Toleransi Sosial Masyarakat Perkotaan" by the Setara Institute, 29 November 2010: 60.9 per cent of respondents said they could "not accept" (*tidak menerima*) Ahmadiyah. On the question what the government should do about Ahmadiyah, 45.5 per cent said "disbanding", 20.7 per cent said "limit its expansion" (*dibatasi perkembangannya*) and only 6.1 per cent opted for "protecting its existence" (*dijamin keberadaannya*). 52.1

- per cent of respondents supported to “fight against deviating sects”. <http://www.setara-institute.org/sites/setara-institute.org/files/reports/101129-setara-id-101129-toleransiurban-grafik.pdf>.
49. Email Interview, Mubarik Ahmad, 7 July 2009.
 50. “State cannot meddle in private religious beliefs”, *The Jakarta Post*, 28 April 2008.
 51. “Siaran Pers”, PB Jemaat Ahmadiyah, 10 June 2008.
 52. The Wahid Institute listed eleven incidents between 9 June (issue of the decree) and 20 June 2008. “The Government has Failed”, pp. 10-11.
 53. “Ditolak Muspida, Ormas Islam menyegel markas JAI”, *Pikiran Rakyat*, 5 August 2005.
 54. “Ahmadiyah banned in S. Sumatra amid pressure”, *The Jakarta Post*, 2 September 2008. There are at least 600 Ahmadiyah followers in the province, including 200 members in Palembang, with nine mosques in cities and regencies.
 55. The Wahid Institute, “Pornography Bill Controversy”, Monthly Report on Religious Issues, September 2008, p. 6.
 56. The Wahid Institute, “The Government has Failed”, p. 12.
 57. Interview, Mubarik Ahmad, Jakarta, 14 April 2009.
 58. Interview, Maya Safira Muchtar, Jakarta, 13 April 2009.
 59. Interview, Mubarik Ahmad, Jakarta, 14 April 2009.
 60. Ibid.
 61. “Sudah lama, Ahmadiyah bukan Islam”, *Pikiran Rakyat*, 22 August 2005.
 62. “PBNU: Ahmadiyah Aliran Sesat”, *Republika*, 8 September 2005.
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 70. Letter by MUI (headquarters), No. B-398/MUI/IX/2005, dated 10 September 2005, reprinted in Djamaluddin (2007, pp. 162-63).
 71. “Press Release: Pernyataan Sikap atas Tindak Kekerasan Atas Nama Agama Terhadap Jemaat Ahmadiyah Indonesia (JAI)”, 18 July 2005. The group acted under the name Amanat Cirebon which stands for “Anti-violence in the name of Religion and God Societal Alliance”. Among the signatories were local NU branches and the alumni organization of the HMI (Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam or Islamic Students’ Association).
 72. For a similar argument, see my “Religious Freedom isn’t an Absolute”, *Today*, 13 June 2008, and The Wahid Institute, “Laporan Tahunan The Wahid

Institute Pluralisme Beragama/Berkeyakinan di Indonesia: Menapaki Bangsa yang Kian Retak”, 2008.

73. The Wahid Institute, “Laporan Tahunan”, p. 7.
74. Ibid, p. 10.
75. Interestingly, a press-related law reiterates this requirement. Law number 40 1999 (Second Chapter, Paragraph Five, Article 1) reads: The national press has the obligation to report and comment by respecting religious norms and societal ethics on the basis of benefit of the doubt”. Quoted in “MUI protes Majalah Tempo”, *NU online*, 2 June 2008.
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78. In March 2009, various Islamist organizations again demonstrated in front of the Presidential Palace, demanding a Presidential Decree to dissolve Ahmadiyah. This time they threatened to boycott the 2009 general elections if not responded to.

About the author

Bernhard Platzdasch is a Visiting Research Fellow at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) in Singapore. His work focuses on Islam, politics and inter-religious relations in Indonesia. Email: platzdasch@iseas.edu.sg

GLOSSARY

AKKBB: Aliansi Kebangsaan untuk Kebebasan Beragama dan Berkeyakinan,
National Alliance for the Freedom of Religion and Faith

Bakorpakem: Badan Koordinasi Pengawas Aliran Kepercayaan Masyarakat,
Coordinating Board for Monitoring Mystical Beliefs in Society

DDII: Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia, Indonesian Islamic Propagation Council

DPP: Dewan Pertimbangan Presiden, Presidential Advisory Council

DPR: Indonesian parliament

Fatwa: legal ruling based on Islamic law by an Islamic scholar (*ulama*)

FUI: Forum Umat Islam, Muslim Community Forum

Jama'ah Ahmadiyah Indonesia (JAI): Ahmadiyah Muslim Community, larger wing of
Ahmadiyah, including in Indonesia

Jihad: holy war

Kafir: heathen, unbeliever

Lahore Ahmadiyah Movement: smaller Ahmadiyah wing

Law No.1/PNPS/1965: on the Pencegahan Penyalahgunaan atau Penodaan Agama,
Prevention of the Misuse or Blasphemy of Religion

LPPI: Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengkajian Islam, Institute for the Study and Teaching
of Islam

MUI: Majelis Ulama Indonesia, Indonesian Ulama Council

NU: Nadlatul Ulama, largest traditionalist Islamic organization in Indonesia

OIC: Organization of the Islamic Conference

Persis: Islamic Association

PKS: Partai Keadilan Sejahtera, Justice Prosperity Party; largest Islamist party in
Indonesia

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