

Aceh Conflict Monitoring Update

1st June – 31st July 2007

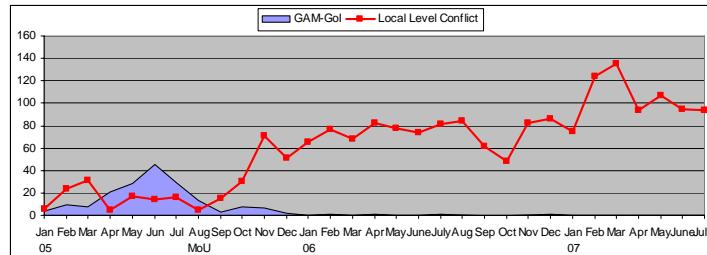
World Bank/DSF



Political conflicts in June and July indicated tensions both between GAM and the Government of Indonesia (GoI) as well as within GAM itself.² The decision by the GAM party to use the GAM flag as their symbol led to tensions. The Bupati elections in Bireuen in June were marred by several violent incidents, culminating in a grenade attack on the house of the newly inaugurated vice-Bupati in July. The attack remains unsolved as do all nine other grenade incidents from recent months. In June, 95 local level conflicts were recorded, of which 23 were violent; for July the totals were 94 local level conflicts and 21 violent incidents. This level of violence is higher than in the first eighteen months post-MoU. More worrying is the high death toll from this violence – June saw the highest death toll from conflict since the MoU, with 12 deaths. While this violence appears to be incidental and criminal rather than coordinated and ideological, and does represent a vast improvement over the pre-MoU conflict period, it does show the need for continued monitoring and a better understanding of the new forms of violence. Aceh remains relatively peaceful but previous tensions do remain and new forms of violence could become increasingly frequent if ignored. This update discusses political conflict, vigilante attacks, and violent incidents which demonstrate continuing distrust between the police and local communities. Finally, we discuss several prominent forms of non-violent conflict, including aid-related conflicts.

GAM/GoI and Intra-GAM tensions: GAM flag dispute and Bireuen bombing

Figure 1: GAM-GoI and local level conflicts by month



No conflict between GAM and GoI occurred in June and July (see Figure 1). However, tensions did arise during a dispute over whether the new local party called “Party GAM” would be allowed to use the GAM flag as its symbol. Party GAM has been set up in anticipation of contesting the 2009 legislative elections as a local party, as permitted under the Law on Governing Aceh (LoGA). The party, while stating that their name is not an acronym referring to the Free Aceh Movement, has nevertheless been using the movement’s flag. Banda Aceh police requested that the party remove the flag from their office, since as a military symbol it is not in line with the MoU. Party members agreed to cover up the flag, pending official approval of the party’s status by Indonesia’s Department of Justice and Human Rights. Use of

¹ This Update covers both June and July. We did not manage to produce an Update for June due to staff holidays.

² As part of an analytical support program to the peace process, the Conflict and Development Program, within the World Bank Office Indonesia, is using a newspaper conflict mapping methodology to record and categorize all incidents of conflict in Aceh as reported in two provincial newspapers (Serambi and Aceh Kita). The Program publishes monthly updates and analysis of the data, complemented by fieldwork where possible, in both English and Indonesian. Updates are available online at www.conflictanddevelopment.org. The dataset is available for those interested; please contact Blair Palmer at bpalmer@worldbank.org. There are limitations to using newspapers to map conflict; see: Barron and Sharpe (2005). “Counting Conflict: Using Newspaper Reports to Understand Violence in Indonesia”, *Indonesian Social Development Paper No. 7*. Jakarta: World Bank.

such symbols seems to be a strategy to acquire the support of pro-GAM Acehnese, who will have to choose between several different local parties claiming affiliation with GAM in various ways, rather than explicitly to antagonize the Indonesian government. For this reason it is likely that some GAM factions oppose the use of the flag by this party; the dispute about the flag (and future conflicts about who represents GAM) reflects intra-GAM competition as being increasingly important in driving tensions, in contrast to the conflict period where the GAM-GoI cleavage dominated.

The Bireuen elections, held on June 25th, led to considerable tensions during the campaign period and the immediate aftermath, and several cases of intimidation and violence (see Box 1). Tensions were partly due to the fact that there were three competing candidates affiliated with GAM/KPA; one Bupati candidate (Nurdin) and two Vice-Bupati candidates. With GAM/KPA having done so well in the elections last December, it is not surprising that more than one candidate wanted to recruit a Vice-Bupati from KPA's ranks.

A KPA spokesman suggested that the grenade attack was intended to intimidate the new district government, and may have been carried out by parties who fear the impending "cleaning" of the bureaucracy which is planned under Nurdin. However, like all the grenade attacks of April-May this year, this attack remains unsolved, and the motive here could just as easily be related to internal power struggles within the KPA.

Box 1. Political conflict in the Bireuen Bupati elections

- June 14th. The house of a Vice-Bupati candidate was soaked with gasoline and oil, in either an aborted arson attempt or a threat.
- June 16th. A campaign vehicle for the eventual winner, Nurdin AR, was shot up by unknown attackers while it was parked and empty.
- June 20th. A member of Nurdin's "success team" was sent a package with a dead chicken and a threatening letter.
- July 29th. The most serious incident occurred when a grenade exploded at the office of the new Vice-Bupati, Busmadar. The building was damaged but no one was injured.

Political conflict will likely continue to result in frequent incidents in the coming months, especially in districts where new Bupatis and old legislatures have to work together. However a violent incident in Nagan Raya showed that political conflict is present even in districts where the incumbent Bupati was re-elected. On June 14th a member of the Nagan Raya parliament was beaten by two men following a traffic incident. The parliament member, Zuhri, alleges that it was a politically motivated attack, given that the same men had recently come to look for him at his office. Zuhri has apparently been a vocal critic of the Bupati, and recently testified in a money laundering trial involving a man alleged to be the Bupati's adjudant. Members of the parliamentary team formed to investigate the incident also received threats and intimidation; ten members of parliament said they were afraid to come to work. The District Police appear to have concluded that the incident was not planned or political, but after parliament members presented their evidence to the Provincial Police, the Provincial Police took over the investigation from the District Police so that it could be "more transparent".

High levels of violence continue; conflict deaths reach a post-MoU high

We recorded 95 local level conflicts in June and 94 in July. Violent incidents stood at 23 for June and 21 for July – among the highest levels of violence since the MoU (see Figure 2). More worrying, though, is the number of deaths related to conflict. Although the number of violent incidents has remained relatively constant at about 20 per month since March 2007, the number of deaths resulting from these conflicts has gone from zero in March up to 12 in June. This is the highest monthly total since July 2005, before the MoU was signed (see Figure 3). Before June we

had recorded a total of 39 conflict deaths since the MoU, giving a monthly average of 1.8. June's total is thus more than six times this average. In July only two deaths were recorded, raising the hope that the June total was an anomaly.

Figure 2: Violent and non-violent local conflicts by month

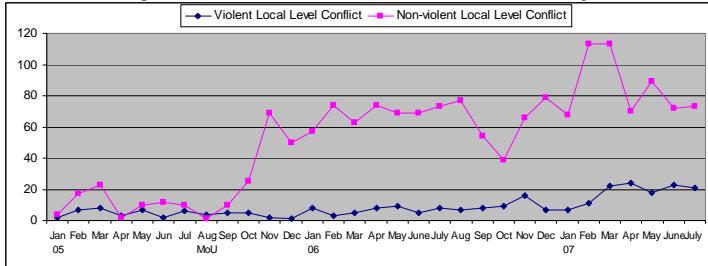
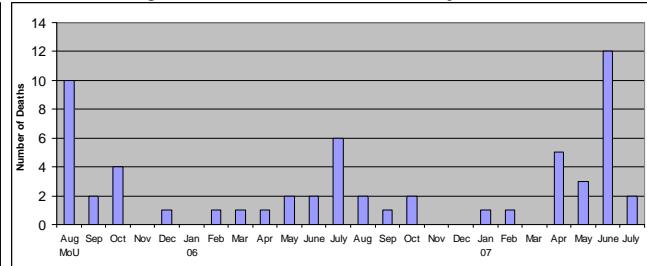


Figure 3: Conflict-related deaths by month



The 14 deaths in June and July resulted from a number of different types of conflicts (see Box 2). Importantly, over half of these killings were related to struggles over resources.³

Box 2: Conflict-related deaths in June-July

Resource-related Killings (7 deaths)

- *June 1st, Aceh Barat.* A villager was killed by a group of rubber plantation workers, apparently in retribution for theft of rubber from the plantation. Villagers responded by beating a plantation worker later that day. The situation caused considerable ethnic tensions as many of the plantation workers, including the killers, were from North Sumatra.
- *June 15th, Kota Langsa.* Aceh Kita reported that four local fishermen were killed when their trawler was deliberately run down by a rival boat from North Sumatra. An eyewitness reported that the perpetrator kept running the swimming men over until they failed to resurface. Two victims were KPA members; a KPA spokesman said that this was the third such killing.
- *June 30th, Aceh Utara.* A suspected thief of livestock was beaten to death by a crowd of villagers.
- *July 16th, Pidie.* A farmer was killed by unknown assailants, allegedly over a land dispute.

Domestic Incidents (2 deaths)

- *June 28th, Lhokseumawe.* A security guard was shot to death by his girlfriend.
- *July 17th, Aceh Utara.* A man attacked his family, killing his infant daughter. His family said he had become "disturbed" over the past two years.

Other Incidents (2 deaths)

- *June 16th, Pidie.* An elementary school teacher was killed by three men, allegedly in retaliation for a charge of witchcraft which was made by the victim
- *June 24th, Aceh Singkil.* A goat herder was killed, apparently by his own employer.

Unknown Motives (3 deaths)

- *June 1st, Bireuen.* A young man was killed by two assailants at his house.
- *June 3rd, Bireuen.* A former GAM combatant and his family were attacked by unknown assailants at home. One child died. The man was later arrested in connection with a number of robberies, as were another 17 men at the hospital who claimed to be his bodyguards. The car belonging to the NGO CARDI, which had been stolen on May 23rd, and was recovered the next day, after the suspect told police where to find it.
- *June 6th, Aceh Selatan.* A village preacher was killed by unknown assailants.

The increased level of violence comes as a reminder that in post-conflict situations not only do old tensions remain (see below) but new tensions may also emerge. New forms of democratic

³ Box 2 places beatings of suspected thieves under the category "resource-related", since the killings ostensibly seek to protect the community's resources. However, when we discuss violence below, we include both vigilante attacks and resource killings as categories, and list thief beatings within the former.

decision-making are taking place, and political competition is managed by institutions which are still weak. There is a danger that, for example, frustration with a weak justice system combined with patterns of violence from the conflict period could result in many disputes being settled violently. Strategies for justice sector reform are needed, and conflict sensitivity needs to be built into all development initiatives in order to anticipate such risks. Resource-related disputes in particular need to be taken very seriously, and need to be better handled by both informal and formal justice mechanisms.

The types and numbers of violent incidents are described in Table 1 below. The most frequent type of violent incident was vigilantism, with 12 incidents, nine of which were violent. In previous months we have described various types of vigilantism – most prominent are attacks on suspected thieves, witches, and *khalwat* (sexual contact between non-married individuals) offenders. Table 2 provides a summary of vigilante incidents for the current months.

Two cases of abuse during *khalwat* arrests are particularly worrying. This is not the first reported case of gang rape by young men ostensibly carrying out *khalwat* raids; rape and sexual abuse have been reported on a number of occasions and other cases have likely gone unreported. Besides beatings and rape, victims face the possibility of being blackmailed to provide large amounts of money so that their “sin” is not reported. Police and *wilayatul hisbah* (*sharia* police) have not tried to prohibit vigilantes from carrying out *khalwat* arrests, although they do exhort vigilantes to avoid violence. If untrained young men continue to be allowed to make such arrests, abuses of this power will also continue.

Table 1: Types of violent incidents for June and July

#	Type of incident
9	vigilante attacks
8	fights
7	arson or vandalism of buildings and property
5	revenge attacks
5	killings and beatings for unknown reasons
3	political violence
3	kidnapping (usually over debt)
2	resource killings
2	domestic incidents

Table 2: Types of vigilante incidents for June and July

#	Type of incident
4	“Sweeping” incidents by religious groups seeking to prevent immoral behavior at entertainment venues and beaches. One turned violent when the patrons and owner of the café resisted the actions of the mob. A fight broke out, and the KPA arrested several of the <i>santri</i> (youths from Islamic boarding school) and handed them over to police.
4	Beatings of suspected thieves. Two of the victims died.
2	Beatings for other reasons (victims were a man who had forced his wife to have sex with a neighbor, and a man suspected to be an intelligence agent).
1	<i>Khalwat</i> beating and blackmail (victim was a police officer).
1	<i>Khalwat</i> beating and rape (male victim was beaten, female victim was gang raped by three perpetrators).

In previous months we have argued that pre-MoU tensions continue to manifest in post-MoU Aceh in incidents of local conflict which pit certain old adversaries against one another. In June and July, six violent incidents further demonstrated the cleavage between the police and the community – see Box 3. The police were the perpetrators in some of these cases and victims in others. People remain suspicious of the police and military, their intelligence activities and their presence in villages. The police should continue to try to improve their image in Aceh by curtailing the illegal activities and influence-peddling of officers, and avoiding the excessive use of force. Violent incidents have occurred on a number of occasions when police or military did not announce their arrival in villages (for instance the incidents in March in Alue Due and Lhok Meureubo).⁴ In addition, security sector reform (SSR) should be considered an important part of the peace process. The police, and the peace, would

⁴ See the March Aceh Conflict Monitoring Update, available at: www.conflictanddevelopment.org.

benefit from having high profile SSR activities, the results of which can be seen and experienced by the public.

Box 3: Incidents involving police vs. community

Six incidents this month involved violence carried out by police or violence towards police. The six incidents this month were spread across Aceh, suggesting that this kind of violence is not particular to previously high-conflict areas. Some beatings of police occur when police were caught in a *khalwat* situation (one incident this month) or when undercover officers were suspected to be robbers (see below), but it is likely that resentment also drives these incidents. The two most important cases this month are described here:

- *June 9th, Aceh Utara.* A 16 year-old boy was shot dead as he rode a motorcycle past a police checkpoint. Police said he wouldn't stop, and was found to be carrying marijuana, a knife, and four AK47 bullets. His family members protested the killing as excessive and unnecessary. The KPA said it smelled like a cover-up, since the police used the conflict-era tactic of implying that the victim was a combatant. The KPA said the victim was a schoolboy and had never joined GAM. The FKK (Communication and Coordination Forum for Peace in Aceh) investigated the case, finding that there was indeed marijuana and a knife, but that the bullet found was just a casing used as a keychain ornament. Police say they fired two warning shots before firing at the boy but a witness said they heard only a single shot.
- *June 21st, Trienggadeng, Pidie Jaya.* Two police officers were beaten in Rawasari village. Police claim that they were there to look for marijuana smokers. The KPA stated that villagers were worried because they saw two men in plain clothes, carrying rifles and wearing masks, who had not reported to the village head when they entered the village. Suspecting the men to be robbers, villagers asked them to remove their masks, and when they refused, beat them. Two villagers (at least one was a KPA member) were later arrested, after which a contingent of about 100 villagers went to the police station to demand their release. The KPA insist that many villagers beat the men, not just the two arrested.

Non-violent conflicts over government hiring, bureaucratic reshuffling, aid, and human rights

Non-violent conflict should not necessarily be considered a problem; every society has conflict, and the fact that conflict is dealt with non-violently is positive. If non-violent conflicts are not dealt with effectively, however, they can escalate into violence. Tracking non-violent conflicts can thus assist in identifying where more efforts need to be made in resolving and preventing conflicts which arise, before they erupt into violence. In this section we discuss four types of conflict which occur frequently in Aceh but have as yet rarely become violent: conflicts about government tendering and hiring, disputes over bureaucratic reappointments, conflicts relating to aid, and those regarding human rights abuses of the past.

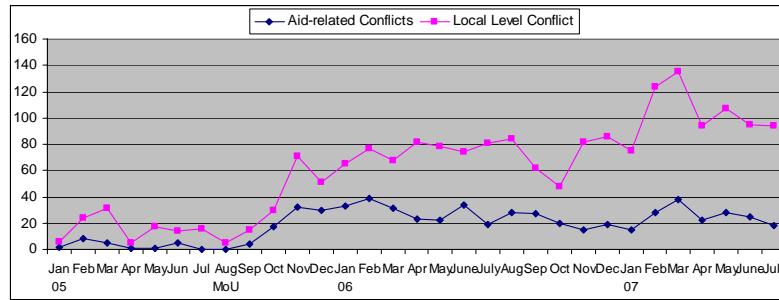
June and July saw a series of conflicts related to *procurement processes and the hiring of government workers*. Contractors protested procurement processes in Aceh Selatan and Banda Aceh saying that bids were insufficiently checked and that overpriced bids won. The annual hiring of government workers also led to many protests. Hiring processes were protested by midwives in Aceh Tamiang, teachers in Aceh Timur, and nurses in Aceh Besar. This also applied to positions in high schools and universities; an NGO protested corruption in the allocation of school seats in Kota Langsa, and university students in Banda Aceh protested about the selling of degrees. Improving governance and the rule of law in Aceh will require improvements in government procurement and hiring practices, since these are two key arenas where elites spread favours to their supporters (or to those who pay). If resources are distributed only to those close to elites, the sense of grievance among the deprived may continue to threaten the peace.

Several conflicts occurred when new Bupatis *reshuffled bureaucrats*. In Aceh Besar a bureaucrat sued the Bupati over his reassignment, and in Nagan Raya 26 bureaucrats did the same. In Aceh

Utara a dispute broke out over the removal of a *geuchik* (village head), and in Aceh Timur an ex-Bupati was removed from the position of BRA head, which led to another conflict. Expect this kind of conflict to continue. On the positive side there are no signs yet of elites mobilizing supporters to violence to support their protests.

Figure 4: Aid-related conflicts by month

We have tracked *conflicts involving aid* over the past months. Aid assistance was implicated in 25 conflicts in June and 18 in July (see Figure 4). Most of the aid-related conflicts focused on BRR (the Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Agency) or BRA (the Aceh Peace Reintegration Agency). Conflicts involving BRR raised similar issues as in previous months: the lateness of aid, the poor quality of houses, and charges of corruption and mismanagement. The road to Calang continued to be blocked intermittently by those with land claims not yet dealt with by BRR. The head of BRR admitted that there was corruption within BRR, but the staff in question were not fired, according to Gerak, an anti-corruption NGO.



Conflicts involving *reintegration funds* also took place. Allegations of corruption of BRA funds came to light in Aceh Barat. On July 30th conflict victims from Bener Meriah and Aceh Tengah went to Banda Aceh and occupied the parliament building for 13 hours, demanding that the mismanagement of BRA funds for housing aid in those districts be investigated. These incidents serve as reminders that reintegration has not been dealt with well so far; many former combatants and victims do not have the support they need, lack livelihoods and sometimes houses. Social aspects of reintegration have also been largely neglected.

A number of protests and demonstrations called for the establishment of a *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (TRC), as mandated in the MoU. On June 14th a coalition of NGOs representing conflict victims in Aceh Timur pressured the government to establish a TRC and a Human Rights Court to deal with past human rights abuses, saying that “the MoU doesn’t make us forget”. On June 19th conflict victims from Aceh Utara and Lhokseumawe called for a TRC, having formed an organization to struggle for this agenda. On July 23rd some 500 demonstrators demanded for the same thing in Banda Aceh. Expect these kind of protests to continue although they are unlikely to turn violent.

Dealing with the human rights abuses of the conflict period will, however, require more than a Truth Commission. The new era of political freedom in Aceh may empower victims to come forward demanding not just truth and reconciliation but justice more broadly defined. In July a series of protests brought one case to light (see Box 4). The New Order regime allowed its cronies to seize land and resources from the poor and powerless, with military backing if necessary. Military-backed land seizures are one way in which conflict and poverty are mutually sustaining. Building a sustainable peace in Aceh will require not only establishing the rule of law so that these abuses no longer occur, but also investigating and providing justice for those cases which have already occurred and which are continuing to deprive Acehnese of access to Aceh’s rich resources.

Box 4: The Bumi Flora Case

In July, people from six villages in Aceh Timur launched protests about the seizure of their lands in the early 1990s. The Bumi Flora company holds deeds for 8300 hectares, to be used for oil palm and rubber plantations until 2024. However, villagers claim that 3400 hectares of this land was theirs, and was taken from them by force. After they refused the meagre compensation being offered, the protestors claim that the company then used the military to intimidate them into accepting. If they protested, they were at risk of being accused as rebels (and thus enemy combatants). When a farmer's organization resisted the land seizures in 1991, its three leaders were murdered.

On July 3rd, thousands demonstrated at the Aceh Timur parliament, under the banner of Forjerat (Forum of Community Struggle over Land) with the support of the Banda Aceh Legal Aid Foundation. They demanded that their lands be returned and Bumi Flora be put on trial. Bumi Flora, for its part, denied having seized land, saying that they paid compensation. Ironically they invited the protestors to "solve the problem in a peaceful and civilized manner – not with demonstrations".