

Indonesia's Ahmadiyah Push Back Against Discriminatory Laws

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Conversion Requirement for National ID Cards Prompts Protest

Indonesia's besieged Ahmadiyah religious community is fighting back.

Earlier this week, representatives of the religious minority from Manislor district in West Java's Kuningan regency filed a formal complaint against a local government requirement that they renounce their faith to obtain national identification cards, critical to accessing a range of government services. They said lack of IDs meant Ahmadiyah community members were not able to register marriages or get treatment at a local hospital. An ombudsman office representative [has criticized the ID requirement](#) as "maladministration."

The Ahmadiyah community in Manislor are victims of [routine bureaucratic discrimination](#). Indonesia's [1965 blasphemy law](#) permits only six officially protected religions: Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. All Indonesian citizens must obtain [a national ID card at age 17](#) and they are essential to apply for official documents including birth, marriage, and death certificates. Indonesian law [requires ID cards to state the holder's religion](#). That requirement bars Ahmadiyah and other officially unrecognized religious minorities from receiving national ID cards.

Indonesia's Ahmadiyah have been under threat since 2008 when the government of then-President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono signed a [decree ordering the Ahmadiyah](#) community to "stop spreading interpretations and activities that deviate from the principal teachings of Islam." Following the decree, militant Islamists launched several violent attacks against Ahmadiyah [including an attack in Cikeusik in February 2011](#) that killed three Ahmadiyah men.



During Yudhoyono's decade in power, militant Islamists with the complicity of local police and government officials forced the closure of more than 30 Ahmadiyah mosques, while other [religious minorities](#), including the Shia and some Christian groups, were also targets of harassment, intimidation, and violence.

The frequency and severity of violent attacks on religious minorities have decreased since President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo took office in 2014, and he has pledged to [protect religious minorities](#) and fight religious intolerance. But Kandali Lubis, an Ahmadiyah spokesman, told Human Rights Watch that at least seven Ahmadiyah mosques remained closed in Indonesia under the 2008 anti-Ahmadiyah decree. They include an Ahmadiyah mosque in Depok, West Java that the local government sealed on the basis of "protecting" the Ahmadis from attack by militant Islamists.

Until Jokowi abolishes regulations that discriminate against the country's religious minorities, the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia can expect more demands from aggrieved communities such as the Ahmadiyah of Manislor village that the government respect, rather than deny their rights.

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