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# **REPORT OF THE LIVING LETTERS TEAM VISIT TO INDONESIA**

*17 - 24 July 2008*

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## ***Members of the Team***

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# **International Ecumenical Peace Convocation**

**Kingston | Jamaica | 2011**

## **Report of the Living Letters Team Visit to Indonesia**

In the context of the programme on Decade to Overcome Violence, the World Council of Churches organized an ecumenical team visit to Indonesia from 17 to 24 July 2008. The ecumenical delegation was sent to Indonesia as "living letters" to express the solidarity of the WCC fellowship worldwide.

The visit to Indonesia, which has been facilitated and coordinated by the Asia Regional Relations Office of the World Council of Churches with the cooperation of the Persekutan Gereja di Indonesia (PGI) – Communion of Churches in Indonesia was organised with following aims:

- to express solidarity with the Churches and communities in the places where they live in the midst of conflicts and violence;
- to learn about the current situation, peace and reconciliation efforts and ministry of churches and local communities;
- to share experiences from the churches and the contexts of the different participants of the delegation;
- to strengthen the relations with Indonesian churches by way of expressing a message of peace from the World Council of Churches and its constituencies around the world;
- To facilitate and assist the churches to be involved in the process towards the IEPC and the Declaration for Just Peace.

### **The Context in Indonesia**

Indonesia, the world's Fourth most populous nation, is also the country with the largest number of Muslims in the world. Its people are spread over a vast archipelago and their diverse culture and traditions intermingled over the years and nurtured a sense of community feeling among them for centuries. This sense of common feeling that guided the leaders of the independence movement to fight against colonialism. Indonesia's trans-ethnic character and nationalism ultimately led them to attain the independent and sovereign state of Indonesia on 17<sup>th</sup> August 1945. During the first twenty years, the country was led under the leadership of Sukarno. Indonesia provided leadership for the Non Aligned Movement for many years under Sukarno's leadership and strengthened its position at the international level. However, on the domestic front, Sukarno's economic policies and 'guided democracy' created unrest and discontent among the people. An abortive coup in 1965, blamed on the Communist Party of Indonesia, led to Sukarno's downfall. General Suharto, who led the Armed Forces of Indonesia in the successful crackdown on the Communist Party of Indonesia, was formally replaced Sukarno. Suharto ruled the country for three decades. Under Suharto, the military came to dominate almost all sectors of civil and political life. The military's power and influence spread from the highest legislative body to trade, commerce, industry and down to the level of the village chief. In May 1998, protests and rioting forced President Suharto out of office. Vice President B J Habibie subsequently assumed the Presidency and the "New Order" era was succeeded by the so-called *reformasi* - "Era of Reform". Since then the Republic of Indonesia was stricken by violent and

protracted conflicts in different areas. Communal violence has erupted along ethnic and religious lines in several parts of Indonesia over the years. These conflicts appear to have intensified since the era of *reformasi*, in Indonesia, after the fall of the Suharto regime. Divisions within Indonesian society along ethnic, religious, and social lines largely created by the consequences of years of authoritarian rule seem to have been exacerbated by political reforms as well as rise of religious extremism and militancy. These conflicts potentially have a number of serious implications for Indonesia and the region.

### **State Ideology of *Pancasila***

The Indonesian state ideology, *pancasila*, was affirmed by Sukarno in 1945 and it forms the basis of the Indonesian Constitution. The word itself is derived from two Sanskrit words, "*panca*" meaning five, and "*sila*" meaning principles. These five tenets of the philosophy are: Belief in the one and only God, Just and Civilized Humanity, The unity of Indonesia, Democracy guided by consensus arising out of deliberations amongst representatives, Social justice for the whole of the people of Indonesia.

*Pancasila* was affirmed by Sukarno in 1945 and it forms the basis of the Indonesian constitution. During the time of Suharto, *Pancasila* became much more clearly the state philosophy and great amounts of propaganda were put out to drive the message home. However since the fall of Suharto, the ideology of *Pancasila* has been under threat with few standing up to defend it from the assaults of radical and militant Islamic groups. Although the successive presidents Abdurrahman Wahid, Megawathi Sukarnoputri and the current President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono have been warning people that abandoning the *Pancasila* state ideology for narrow religious or ethnic-based ideologies will only jeopardize the unity and diversity of the nation, radical, militant religious groups have been forgetting the fact that the *Pancasila* was a compromise reached by the nation's founding fathers, who had realized that Indonesia was a country made up of people from different faiths and many ethnic groups.

Since the fall of Suharto, especially starting from 1999 until Indonesia witnessed the most intense communal violence of Indonesia's period of democratization. In many parts of the country religious fanatics and militias waged a brutal religious war which claimed many lives. The conflict culminated in ethnic cleansing along lines of religious identity, with thousands of people fleeing their homes during the devastating and violent conflicts in different parts of the country. The post Suharto era witnessed violent religious and communal conflicts in regions and provinces such as

### **Members of the Team and Areas visited**

The WCC Living Letters Team visited Indonesia from 17 to 23 July 2003. The members of the team were

Prof. Dr. James Haire , executive committee member of the Christian Conference of Asia; director of the Public and Contextual

Theology Research Centre and the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture (Canberra, Australia); Uniting Church in Australia

Rev. Vanessa D. Sharp, executive board member of the Presbyterian Health Education and Welfare Association (PHEWA), Presbyterian Church (USA)

Mr Yoonsuk Sol, general secretary of the national federation of PCK youth; Presbyterian Church of Korea, South Korea

Dr Monika Lude, executive secretary for ecumenical learning, Association of Churches and Missions in South Western Germany (EMS), Germany

Ms Beatrice Mukhtar-Mamuzi, volunteer in Christian education, youth and music ministries; Episcopal Church of the Sudan

Rev. Gomar Gultom, executive secretary of Diaconia Cluster, Communion of Churches in Indonesia

Ms Norita Yudiet Tompah, executive secretary of Koinonia Cluster, Communion of Churches in Indonesia

Dr Mathews George Chunakara, WCC programme executive for Asia and Human Rights

Ms Maria Baile Rubio, WCC Regional Relations for Asia project assistant

Mr Peter Williams, WCC Visual Arts Coordinator

After a general introduction and orientation in Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia, the members of the team divided into two groups in order to visit different regions.

The first group travelled to Poso (Central Sulawesi) and from there to Kupang in the western part of the Timor Island, capital of the Indonesian province of East Nusa Tenggara. The province has seen a considerable influx of refugees and deportees following the independence referendum in East Timor in 1999.

The second group paid visits to Ambon, Molucas, from there to Ujung Pandang and then to West Papua, where tensions between the traditional Christian majority and Muslim migrants arriving from other Indonesian islands have led to "the emergence of new, exclusivist groups in both religious communities.

### **Poso, Central Sulawesi**

The Central Sulawesi is one of the most economically backward regions of Indonesia, with bulk of the population relying on fishing and farming. The area has been virtually neglected in Jakarta's economic development plans and has a high level of unemployment. Communications are poor. Poso, for instance, has no airport. Troop reinforcements have to land at Palu then travel by road for four hours to reach Poso.

As in other areas of Indonesia, the economic decline in 1997-1998 heightened social and political tensions in Central Sulawesi, which were then exploited by both local and national leaders. The Christian community constitutes about 60 percent of the population. Since Indonesian independence, local politics has been dominated by factional wrangling over business interests and power. The tensions sharpened as a result of Jakarta's policy of transmigration, under which large numbers of mainly Muslim people were settled in outer provinces such as the Sulawesi.

Fighting between rival armed gangs was sparked in 1998 by a drunken brawl between Muslim and Christian youth gangs. Outbreaks of violence continued, fuelled in part by clashes between Christians and Muslims in the neighbouring Maluku. Due to the lack of law enforcement and the lack of authorities that could control the outbreaks, the conflict spread from place to place. The undercurrent was mainly because of the struggle for power and competitiveness between Christians and Muslims to become chiefs of the residencies and because the political leaders used the religion as a source of division to create the conflict and as a provocation for different groups.

Following the fights in May 2000, hundreds of people, mostly Muslims, died. This prompted the Islamic fundamentalist group *Laskar Jihad* to dispatch hundreds of its militia to the region in July 2000. *Laskar Jihad*, which is based in Java and led by *Ja'far Umar Thalib* and Christian militia groups in the area, including one known as the Red Force fought openly. The radical group provided Muslim paramilitary troops with AK-47s, grenade and rocket launchers, bulldozers and tanker trucks and launched "a scorched-earth campaign", destroying dozens of Christian villages and pushing 50,000 refugees into the Christian majority lakeside town of Tentena. Both fought ruthless in their methods, Christians and Muslims alike went into hiding to avoid being the victims of revenge attacks.

The members of the Living Letter Team attended a worship service with the members of a congregation of Tinulele's church in the capital city of Central Sulawesi still mourn the loss of their beloved pastor. The concrete wall behind the altar of the Church still bears marks from two bullets just three inches to the right of a framed cross-stitch portrait of Jesus Christ.

Four years ago, on 18 July 2004, the two bullets were among those fired from an assassin's automatic rifle which ended the life of Rev. Susianti Tinulele, who had just finished preaching during an evening worship service. Tinulele, 28, was one of a growing number of women pastors in Indonesia.

But they see a "greater message" from that evening's tragedy – how to live their faith in Christ despite all violence. That message must have something to do with "how we could practice our discipleship" because what happened "couldn't even compare to the sufferings of Jesus Christ on the cross," says, Desyiranti Tengkende in a written testimony.

Tengkende, who was only a ten-year old girl then, lost an eye during that fateful evening. She was among four injured during that shooting by a masked sniper positioned at the main door of the church. The church was filled with more than 500 mostly young parishioners. The assassin was

accompanied by three other men who all fled on two motorcycles after the incident. In her testimony in Bahasa language she shared how, by further strengthening her faith, she overcame the trauma she suffered.

Rev. Jetrosan Rense, the church's current pastor, stated "the death of Susianti strengthened us to move forward and serve others, replacing our hatred, anger and fear with love and compassion to build brotherhood and sisterhood among us". Some other members of the Congregation also shared how the spirit of forgiveness and leap of faith and through God's grace and guidance that they have learned to cope with that tragedy".

Ms. Kupa, mother of three children, told the team about another tragedy – the 26 October 2006 assassination of her husband, Rev. Irianto Kongkoli, the then Synod general secretary of the Christian Church in Central Sulawesi, two years after Tinulele's killing. Kupa, a policewoman, told the delegation how she sees hope in her three children, two of whom have chosen to follow in the footsteps of their late father by enrolling in seminary. "I have to stretch my salary as a policewoman because the Synod has no funds to pay for the pension of my late husband, but with God's help my eldest son will be graduating in a year or so", she said.

The violence in Central Sulawesi essentially had run its course before the government authorities intervened. Authorities did not try to suppress the well-armed Laskar Jihad and other irregular forces but sought to mediate an agreement between the combatants. In January 2007, the police launched operations, reportedly driving away teachers of radical Islam in Poso who came from Java, and arresting perpetrators of jihad-related crimes without any backlash, at least up to this time.

With the relative peace in Poso, Christian and Muslim leaders have sought to pick up the pieces from the rubble of the conflict by renewing ties, establishing dialogues and rebuilding what they said was a long tradition of cooperation between members of the two faith communities. While understanding the conflict situation, the members of the delegation also learned about the situation that how the Christian and Muslim communities have worked toward peace in the past years. Before the conflict started in Poso, the culture of cohabitation and mutual assistance between Muslims and Christians was already in place, even with common celebrations in which traditions from both cultures were respected and adapted. The area and its people were affected with the conflict. But ultimately their capacity for peaceful cohabitation, tolerance and openness to dialogue and willingness to working effectively towards the healing of memories helped them to overcome the tensions and conflicts. The situation has improved much since.

Some indicators of this improvement have been pointed out as the fact that one could now observe a higher attendance of Christian students in Muslim areas and vice versa or that the Christians come to the market in Poso, where the majority of the population is Muslim. Muslims and Christians are living together in villages and towns. The efforts to try to intensify interfaith dialogue have been initiated and facilitated by the Forum on Communication between Christians and Muslims.

During a meeting with the first Chairman of the Christian Church of Central Sulawesi Synod Rev. Ishak Pule, he told the delegation that "the conflict has challenged us to teach young Christians to learn and understand more about Islam in order to avoid Islamophobia (fear of Islam). It is this lack of understanding that separates us from one another." Pule added that after the conflict had subsided both Christian and Muslim leaders instituted what is called the Communication Forum for Religious Harmony which continually seeks to promote dialogue and understanding between the two faith communities.

A Muslim leader Abdul Malik Syahadat, who now chairs the interfaith Communication Forum, revealed during a meeting and conversation with the members of the ecumenical delegation that "what happened in Poso was not an issue of religion. Unfortunately, some people have politicized religion, using it for the wrong purpose." He further added that "all people of Indonesia want to be safe and in peace. So let us now work towards peace and harmony."

Haji Yahya Mangun, another Muslim leader and secretary of the Forum, who was also present at a meeting at the office of Rev. Pule, told the delegations that there are already "signs towards normalcy and stability in Poso, but an immediate concern are how to convince those who left Poso to return and rebuild their lives". According to Mangun, the number of police personnel dispatched to Poso has been reduced from 235 in 2003 to only 12 since 2006 indicates a trend toward normalisation."We actually had a culture of working and living together and helping each other," he added. He cited how Christians and Muslims would help each other in farm work and in religious feasts, sharing food together because Christians knew what types of food were appropriate for their Muslim brethren. Mangun is among the Muslim leaders who seek to rekindle this history of cooperation between members of the faiths. With such desire, and having instituted mechanisms for dialogue, the signs of tolerance and co-existence are evident in Tentena. On 28 May 2005 someone bombed Tentena's public market, killing 22 people, mostly Christians. Today, Tentena is peaceful and there are at least visible signs of peace and reconciliation. On Sunday, 20 July, members of the Living Letters team were awakened by the early Morning Prayer from a Muslim mosque and a lively choir from a Christian church, all mixing it up with crowing roosters as the sun rose over Tentena.

Rev. Ishak Pole explained that it is the situation of economic backwardness that makes the population vulnerable now, prone to violence and struggle for power. People are being easily manipulated or lured with financial benefits to involve them in communal hatred and violence. As many refugees who have already been able to relocate in their respective areas in this region need economic assistance to build up their lives and improve their living conditions.

The efforts and achievements of the church and the Muslim groups are remarkable and the situation is progressing as both communities are trying to overcome hatred and tensions. The Christian and Muslim leaders who welcomed the delegation in Tentena left the group with the symbol of a rainbow to represent a multi-religious Poso.

## **Kupang, West Timor**

The situation in Kupang, West Timor in the island of Nusa Tenggara Timur is different from other conflict situation in the country. The situation is that the conflict between the displaced East Timorese who have been staying in West Timor and are registered as Indonesian citizens. In the island of Nusa Tanagra Timur (Timor), the interreligious conflict is especially between Catholics and Protestants. Most Catholic bishops, pastors, brothers and nuns as well as Islamic religious leaders are settled in Flores, whereas most Protestant preachers, bible teachers and Sunday school teachers tend to be settled in West Timor and Sumba. Since religion in NTT is intertwined with ethnic rivalry for control of strategic executive and legislative positions at the provincial level, it inevitably contains undertones of religious rivalry.

However, one of the main problems of the region of West Timor, which was also visited by the delegation, is the conflict between many displaced East Timorese who have established themselves in community land owned by locals whom they had previously appropriated illegally and the local communities. The relocation programmes proposed by the Indonesian Government are often not convenient for the East Timorese displaced communities, who prefer to be considered as Indonesians, since they concern badly-communicated areas or unfertile lands, but they are also afraid of losing the assistance and infrastructures that local people or NGO's provide for them where they currently are and are not motivated to develop their own businesses. In the area of Kupang, where the delegation was staying, it is estimated that there are approximately 10,000 East Timorese displaced people. Although the East Timorese refugees arrived in Kupang almost ten years back, still the problem exists as there are several of them have settled down in West Timor without any assistance of support, but with the support of the local people. "We really have to help address the problem of refugees because some of them have become so dependent on donor assistance that they no longer want to relocate or engage in livelihoods," Malelak-de Haan explained the situation to the Team members. She said some refugees also would intrude into the lands of locals and this creates tension. Kupang alone has 4,000 remaining refugees. In the beginning, West Timor had 29,000 refugees. But some returned to East Timor and some resettled in West Timor. About 10,000 refugees in West Timor have yet to be resettled

Other main challenges for NTT are to obtain clean drinking water and to combat malnutrition. Organisations such as the Alpha Omega Foundation, supported by GMIT (The Evangelical Church of Timor), who hosted the visit of the delegation, have put in place a programme in which they work together with the World Food Programme to distribute food and are organizing trainings according to the demand from the villages on farming in dry conditions, health motivation, rural appraisal, community building, gender analysis, small business development or seminars and community dialogue.



In NTT, there are some of the poorest congregations in Indonesia, and the poorest in this congregation are women and children. The GMIT is active by supporting a schooling foundation established in 1956 which manages 459 schools in the province; a foundation for micro-projects which has been operating for twelve years and has the goal of creating a credit union to be able to serve more professionally, and a programme for food and agriculture amongst others.

The delegation also had the opportunity of discussing the situation with Rev. Ina Ngefar-Bara Pa, of the Timore Evangelical Christian Church, who was living in East Timor and came back to West Timor during the crisis. She has been engaged in a mission to establish a programme to support women in conservative congregations. She was accused of wrecking homes and her programme was perceived by many as pornographic, but she is now working with reproductive health, HIV/AIDS issues that start coming to the surface in the region and issues such as options to abortion and domestic violence. She also runs a shelter for battered women and pregnant teenagers.

In West Timor, as in other areas of the country, the number of women pastors increases and, in some cases, women outnumber men in theology schools and congregations, but gender discrepancy remains and it is difficult for women to reach leadership positions. The Living Letters Team during the visits to various parts of Kupang observed how the churches were working side by side with their communities and those of other faiths to bring peace and the improvement of all people. Unlike other regions visited by the Living Letters team, West Timor has seen no shootings in recent years. However, the people are affected with numerous other problems due to lack of food, drinking water and irrigation for farming. The province does not receive enough rain and many have to brace themselves each year for what they call the "hungry months" of October to December when they have no crop to harvest. Such poverty can also create situations of potential conflict, such as when large numbers of refugees arrived from East Timor following violence during the 1999 independence referendum. The refugees needed to be properly relocated lessening the burden on the already impoverished residents of West Timor. The Protestant Evangelical Church in Timor (GMIT) is among those addressing potential roots of conflict for refugees and local residents. Dr Sofia Malelak-de Haan, director of the GMIT-supported Alpha Omega Foundation told the members of the Living Letters Team. She said, "among other goals, our programme aims to prevent conflict". During the team's visit to the West Timorese city of Kupang, Malelak-de Haan and her staff toured them around the foundation's four-hectare training centre, which doubles as a demonstration area for small-scale fishery and integrated farming. The foundation has embarked on education programmes for refugees and community folk, Malelak-de Haan said. The training teaches how to resolve conflicts and how to develop livelihoods such as small-scale fish farms and crop production which integrates poultry and livestock-raising.

The Foundation also has programmes on community health care and nutrition concerns, HIV and AIDS, gender issues, and environmental woes. Pastor Ina Ngefar-Bara Pa of the GMIT's Koinonia congregation told the ecumenical visitors about her work on domestic violence, teenage pregnancies, reproductive health concerns, as well as the issue of HIV and AIDS. At a meeting with the GMIT executive board they learned about the church's response to the literacy needs of young people in the province as well as its micro-finance programme for farmers and fishing folk. All these projects and programmes to engage people will ultimately help to reduce potential tensions among communities. In other words, the Church through this ministry sees it as a conflict preventing efforts when communities affected with poverty and starvation which leads to violence in its various forms.

### **Ambon, Maluku**

North and South Maluku are two Indonesian provinces in the region formerly known as the Spice Islands. The region has a population of around 1.8 million, around half of which is Christian and half Muslim. Since 1999 the region has been shattered by Christian -Muslim conflicts. While the conflict is ostensibly between two religious groups, the heart of the problem for this conflict was due to struggle between groups for economic and political power. This competition was set against a background of the breakdown of traditional societal structures and an increasing distrust of the central government. It has been a known factor that the experiences of Malukan Christians and Muslims differed markedly in the late colonial period. Christians were favoured for positions of authority under the Dutch colonial administration. This preferential treatment was undermined with the arrival of the Japanese during World War II, who tended to favour Muslim groups. The relative political power of the two groups was thereby reversed.

However, while there had been occasional isolated incidents of violence between the communities, a relatively peaceful coexistence had been maintained through a system of traditional beliefs emphasising ethnic similarities rather than religious differences. Through the system of *pela gandong*, a village of one religious denomination would be paired with another of different faith. In response to inter-communal tension, representatives of each community would convene and reach some form of reconciliation. This meeting would be followed by a community wide ceremony involving apologies and more widespread reconciliation. However the system of *pela gandong* was undermined by a number of factors throughout the independence era beginning in 1949.

After the Indonesian independence, Christian support for an independent Republic of the South Moluccas (RMS) and the ensuing struggles between RMS soldiers and the Indonesian state, alienated Muslim communities and undermined the *pela gandong* system which they long cherished. Throughout the Soekarno and Soeharto eras, large numbers of transmigrants, primarily Butinese, Bugis and Makassarese from Sulawesi, settled in the Maluku Islands, especially in Ambon. These new communities were uninvolved in the *pela gandong* system, and the

introduction of new ethnicities and religious groups into the region undermined the traditional beliefs and authority of traditional elites.

At the same time, the primarily Muslim transmigrant communities came to dominate local government and business, causing some Christian groups to perceive themselves as increasingly disenfranchised and vulnerable. In Ambon, Christians saw both an increasing number of business opportunities exploited by Bugis and other migrants at the expense of Christian traders, along with civil service positions being increasingly taken by both 'local' and transmigrated Muslims. The impact of the removal of traditional structures of peaceful coexistence exacerbated by competition between groups for economic and political power, especially in Ambon City. While these groups defined themselves in terms of religious denomination, a number of analysts argue they are more realistically seen as hierarchical networks of interdependent groups from street gangs through to high level government officials. Lines of patronage from Jakarta through to Ambon seemed to have utilised inter-religious tension in order to retain influence in the economic and political spheres. As rumours spread regarding the other group, these connection networks became increasingly anxious and militant. With each case of violence, negative perceptions by each group of the other seemed confirmed, and once serious conflict emerged, violence quickly escalated. In North Maluku, plans to split the province into two also led to economic and political competition. While violence may have initially been over material gains, with the absence of the system of *pela gandong* and negative perceptions held by each community, conflict quickly spread with little institutionalised means for its arrest.

Following a fight between a Christian bus driver and a Muslim passenger in Ambon City in January 1999, violence quickly erupted. It was initially between Muslims from Sulawesi and Ambonese Christians, but soon continued between a variety of Muslim and Christian communities. By August the fighting had spread to North Maluku, where government plans to divide the province into two had resulted in competition between the Muslim Makian and Christian Kao groups. Communication between islands and the flow of refugees served to spread the conflict throughout the region. Since the incident in the bus terminal in Ambon, the Maluku region has seen a continuous succession of outbursts of violence in which over 5000 people died.

The introduction of a militant Islamic militia group, the *Laskar Jihad*, into the conflict in May 2000 severely worsened the situation. Following the Christian massacre of around 500 Muslims in the district of Tobelo on Halmahera Island, calls emerged in Jakarta for strong action to protect Maluku Muslims. Despite President Wahid's command not to leave Java, 2000 members of the Yogyakarta based *Laskar Jihad* departed Java for Maluku. Within a month, the group orchestrated an attack on the village of Duma north of Tobelo in which at least 200 Christians were killed. The presence of the *Laskar Jihad* in the province considered the primary reason for the continuing violence there. At the same time President Wahid could not prevent violence. His commands for the security forces to prevent the *Laskar Jihad* travelling to Maluku were ignored. Inadequate

policies and implementation, and declining military structures undermined attempts at halting the conflict. There were reports at that time that those "factors have been epitomised by the increasing evidence that the military has itself been involved in numerous attacks". It became clear at that time "primarily Muslim personnel became involved in clashes with Christian militias, and Christian police officers often fought alongside Christian militias against Muslims". In showing its inability and/or lack of will to protect the various communities involved in the violence, the Indonesian Government proved that it lost a great deal of credibility with those communities. This factor greatly increased the difficulty of finding a long-term solution to the conflict. While attempts at reconciliation had been made such as the meeting of 1500 representatives of communities, violence continued in the region and dozens of Christians were reported killed in Ambon.

### **Church in the midst of conflicts**

The remains of flattened buildings at the Christian University of the Moluccas in Indonesia are a grim reminder of conflict during 1999-2004. While the members of the delegation was taken to the old campus where the university buildings were located, the faculty members of the Christian University explained the communal carnage which killed hundreds of Christians and Muslims and millions of dollars worth of property was destroyed in a tragedy which more sober leaders and members of both faith communities regret.

"The conflict only made all of us losers," says Rev. Dr Margareta Hendriks-Ririmasse, Vice Moderator of WCC Central Committee, who hails from the Moluccas city of Ambon. She explained to the group how they made efforts to rebuild the Christian University because 90 percent of all buildings were burned down during the conflict.

The city of Ambon, formerly the economic hub of the Moluccas, was effectively partitioned, with indigenous Ambones Christians occupying one end of the town and Muslims the other. During that time the legal systems were stopped and in the areas under its control, the Laskar Jihad implemented its version of Islamic law. In March 2001 in Ambon, Laskar Jihad leader Ja'far Umar Thalib presided over the stoning to death of a man accused of adultery. Ja'far was briefly arrested for his role in the execution, but was released after protests by some sectors of the Muslim community.

### **Women Peace Makers**

During the conflict, women and youth from both communities came forward as peace-makers. While the government was responding to the conflict with armed might and mediation talks, grassroots Christian and Muslim women in Ambon were collaborating to help restore what Hendriks-Ririmasse shared with the group, a long tradition of mutual help and cooperation between the two faith communities. "Muslims and Christians actually had a long tradition of being each other's keeper," explained Hendriks-Ririmasse. Until the conflict erupted in 1999, two or three villages - whether Muslim or Christian - would bind together under a

pact in which all villagers regarded themselves as blood brothers or blood sisters. Tying in with this tradition, Hendriks-Ririmasse along with other Christian and Muslim women sought to restore peace in Ambon. In August 1999, they established the Caring Women's Movement, which, aimed to prevent violence starting from the marketplace and grassroots communities through education and understanding each other's beliefs.

"By understanding better our Christian and Muslim faiths, we can outgrow and overcome undercurrents of prejudice, which often trigger conflict," was the experiences of the local community which was explained by Hendriks-Ririmasse.

### **Young Ambassadors for Peace (YAP)**

The members of the Living Letter Team met with a group of Young Ambassadors of Peace who belong to Christian and Muslim communities. With the success of the Caring Women's Movement in grassroots peace-education, Joy Balazo, a Filipino origin peace activist from the Uniting Church in Australia, contacted the women's group leaders and together they established in 2004 a Young Ambassadors for Peace Centre in Ambon. The Young Ambassadors for Peace composed of Christian and Muslim youths would first undergo peace-building workshops during which they would live together for at least a week to build or renew trust among themselves. Towards the end of each workshop, young participants draw up plans for community development projects related to agriculture and home-based industries such as sewing, carpentry and other income-generating activities in which the youth can work together as productive members of the community. Many of the leaders of the Young Ambassadors for Peace were once recruited as combatants during the conflict. A group of YAP who gathered at a small centre of the YAP explained to the international ecumenical delegates that how young people could work together for lasting peace not only in Ambon but even in neighbouring provinces and regions.

### **Muslim students at Christian Seminary**

During a dialogue with members of the faculty and students of the Christian university, the members of the delegation were told that six Muslim students just graduated in Christian theology from the Christian University of the Moluccas. The Christian University is run by the Protestant Church of the Moluccas. The head of the Christian University told the delegation that "we also invite Muslims to teach at our university on Islamic studies, and through this exchange, we are actually encouraging and cultivating openness and pluralism." To both Christian and Muslim leaders, one antidote to extremism is education. Through educational exchanges, students are being moulded as agents of reconciliation and harmony in a religious conflict affected society. The teachers of the Christian University of the Moluccas were on the opinion that "It is only through education that we, Christians and Muslims, can respect our differences. Through education, we can stop thinking of others as objects of Christianization or Islamization. The goal of education is not to proselytize but to respect each other's faith and so we become more open and tolerant." Professor James Haire who was a missionary in Indonesia and a professor at the Theological Seminary in Halmahera for

thirteen years shared with same opinion of the value of such efforts in an Islamic society where mutual tolerance and mutual respect to each others religion and faith are nurtured.

### **Growing concern of introduction of Islamic Shariah Laws**

During a meeting with the leadership of WCC member church A meeting at the residence of the Moderator of the Church Gereja Protestan Sulawesi Selatan (GPSS) Rev. Fin Sopamena in Ujung Pandanag, a group of church leaders expressed their concern about the move by Islamic groups to introduce Sharia laws in various provinces and also the new restrictions imposed at the local and provincial levels against churches. They quoted the statement of a key leader of Indonesia's largest Muslim group, the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI), who said that since 214 of the 240 million people of Indonesia are Muslims, it makes sense to adopt sharia to govern every aspect of life.

Various efforts in all these years to amend the Constitution of 1945 to include sharia have failed. However, supporters of Sharia are now using provincial laws as their entry point. Provincial governments are increasingly using local bylaws—*Peraturan Daerah or Perda*—to introduce *Sharia* principles. The easiest Perda to issue is the compulsory wearing of Muslim dress in government schools or offices, regardless of the person's religion. Muslim dress includes the *baju koko* for men and the *jilbab* and *rok panjang* (headscarf and long dress) for women. Sixteen of 32 provinces in Indonesia have now implemented some form of Sharia at the district level. The province of Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam, more commonly known as Aceh—and sometimes as the "Verandah of Mecca"—has formally adopted Sharia. Under Sharia, Muslim Acehnese are forbidden to attend churches or convert to Christianity.

Another province, West Sumatra, calls itself the "Verandah of Madina." Here, evangelism is forbidden and evangelists who violate that ruling can be sentenced to imprisonment. Muslim leaders on the island of Sulawesi, long affected by inter-religious violence, are also pushing for the implementation of Sharia law.

A Congress of Indonesian Muslims, the Kongres Umat Islam Indonesia recommended that Sharia law be adopted as the ultimate solution for Indonesia's problems.

The Congress drew up a 14-point resolution, called the "Jakarta Declaration." The declaration recommended adopting a dual economic system, both conventional and Sharia-based, throughout Indonesia. Every bank in the country has now been encouraged to develop Sharia banking services. It also suggested the government to revise Indonesia's criminal law, the Kitab Undang-Undang Hukum Pidana (KUHP), to reflect Sharia law. To speed up this process, a KUHP bill was drafted by a committee and presented to parliament. The committee acknowledged that some Sharia principles were included in the bill, and said the new bill was designed as a tool for "social engineering" to improve society. Many Christian leaders believe it is only a matter of time they introduce the bill into law. The KUHP bill has had a remarkably low profile in its passage

through parliament, keeping public discussion and objection to a minimum.

The Congress also suggested changes in religious education, as mandated by the National Education System Law, which made it compulsory for all religious schools to provide religious education for students of other faiths. Under this law, Christian schools with a certain quota of Muslim students were required to provide Muslim worship facilities and an appropriate religious instructor.

### **Islamic Scholars for Moral Movement**

Many Christian leaders in the country where the members of the team visited expressed their views that there are several positive signs. For example the statements and the urge by some Muslim leaders that shedding the stigma of Islamic terrorism will be only effective through a moral movement, not confrontation. An outstanding leader of the largest Muslim organization in the country, Nahdhatul Ulama (NU) Dr. Hasyim Muzadi, who participated at the WCC Assembly in Port Allegre made a statement during the visit of the Team which was brought to the attention of the Living Letters Team members. In his statement, Dr. Muzadi told the Muslim clerics that "don't think terrorism benefits Muslims. It will only strengthen the stigma. If Muslims truly want to uphold Sharia, they need to see the context of the pluralism of the country, and to see substance over symbolism. In pluralistic countries, it is not so simple to impose Sharia law. We have to be careful, otherwise, it will backfire. The more important thing is to impose a moral movement and build understanding among people. Because Sharia won't mean a thing if there's no law enforcement in the country."

### **Restrictions on Christian Worship**

During the visit, the members of the LLT were told that churches are still being destroyed or forced to close. A total of 966 churches have been burned or closed down since 1945. The highest number of church closures or burnings occurred in the Maluku—a total of 180; followed by West Java, which lost 132 churches. East Java lost 91, while Central Sulawesi lost 51. These are the still the areas most wracked by inter-religious conflicts. In West Java, it is very difficult to build new churches or obtain permits to use existing buildings for Christian worship. West Java was the center of the Darul Islam/ Islamic Indonesia Army rebellion, which began in 1950 and lasted for about 12 years. Strong Islamic views are still prominent in the region, and as a result, less tolerance is shown to churches. Certain laws, which set guidelines for regional autonomy, granted governors and mayors the power to close down churches. Christians also need official permits before they can build churches or worship in rented facilities. However, the government of West Java has granted permits to just four percent of the 1,965 congregations in the province, leaving the remaining 96 percent vulnerable to closure at any time.

The situation is not helped by a lack of unity among Christians. For example, a Letter of Decision issued by the governor of West Java dictates

that a church can only be built if there are a minimum of 20 Christian families living in the neighborhood. The requirement for a minimum of 20 families has led to "sheep-stealing," where pastors try to attract people from other churches in order to build up their own congregations as a precursor to applying for a building permit.

### **Situation in West Papua**

West Papua lies at the far eastern edge of the Indonesian Republic, on the border with Papua New Guinea. The province, with a population of around 2 million, ranked one of the least developed provinces in Indonesia is paradoxically a region rich in natural resources. Yet, despite West Papua's abundant natural bounty, 80 % of the Papuans are living in poverty. The earlier name of this region was Irian Jaya, but the name preferred by the original Melanesian Papuan inhabitants was West Papua. During the process of decolonisation, Indonesia claimed the province on the basis of its successor status to the sovereignty of the Netherlands East Indies. However, the Netherlands did not hand over administration of the province until an agreement in 1962. Following an interim administration by the United Nations Temporary Executive Authority (UNTEA), the administration of Papua was transferred from UNTEA to Indonesia in 1963, under the condition that the government conducts a referendum involving the indigenous population.

In 1969 through an 'Act of Free Choice', 1026 Papuan leaders chosen by Jakarta voted unanimously for the province to become part of the Republic of Indonesia. Many Papuans claimed that this act of 'self-determination' had been forced upon the Papuan people through coercion, and was therefore not valid. Elements of resistance against Jakarta rule soon emerged, most notably the Organisasi Papua Merdeka (OPM). Papuan grievances gradually deepened as the policy of transmigration encouraged by Jakarta which changed the demographic face of West Papua over the decades. Large numbers of migrants from over-populated Java, Bali and elsewhere have arrived in the province in the last three decades, and now they constitute a sizeable portion of the West Papuan population. These migrants have often been more highly educated than the indigenous population, and have therefore got preferential treatments in employment in major sectors in the province, especially in the provincial capital Jayapura. Competition for land and resources also largely due to transmigration, which is a major reason for tension in West Papua.

Exploitation of the natural resources intensively in the province by non Papuans has been increasing. The US-based Freeport Company was allowed to be operational by President Suharto in 1967, and established its gold and copper mine. Today, it is the world's largest gold mine on the Grasberg site. This is yet another reason for protest by Papuans. In addition to this, the Papuans have numerous other grievances against Jakarta and the mining companies operating in the province, including the destruction of spiritual landmarks and local forms of subsistence, and the use of a range of extrajudicial measures designed to quell protest against the mine. There has also been little compensation for the use of land under customary ownership. Papuans have in addition only a few years



back been employed by the mining company, and very few Papuans are given positions of authority on the site, at the same time the majority of higher positions are given to Javanese settlers and other non-Papuans. This discrimination therefore comes to feel by the Papuans marginalised from the political and economic mainstream of the province.

The Papuans feel that the policy of transmigration have resulted in an identity crisis for them in their own ancestral land. This accumulated frustration over the years resulted in turn led to calls for independence by the Papuans. The differences associated with Melanesian ethnicity and Christian religion have provided an identity element to the independence movement, perhaps increasing the intractability of the conflict. Papuans have also felt that the central and local governments have done little to develop the Papuan communities in the same manner as those of the *transmigrasi*. According to the local Social Affairs Department, approximately 40 per cent of the Papuan population is living in poverty in remote areas where government aid does not reach. Many Papuans claim that there exist systematic human rights violations by the Indonesian authorities in response to the Papuan struggle, including killings, rape, arbitrary detention, torture and intimidation which were started in Suharto era.

After the Soeharto era, when President Wahid was in power, he took a comparatively liberal approach to the West Papuan independence movement. In the attempted implementation of a form of autonomy for the province, Wahid introduced various non-coercive measures to obtain the support of the Papuans. Wahid announced in January 2000 that the province would be renamed Papua, although this legislation was rejected by both the People's Consultative Assembly and the People's Representative Council. He also allowed the raising of the Morning Star independence flag in the province, allowed and funded a West Papuan Congress in May 2000, and met Theys Eluay, the head of the Papuan independence movement leader in March 2001. President Wahid's attempts at a peaceful resolution of the West Papua problem were however unsuccessful for a number of reasons. The leaders of the West Papuan independence movement rejected the form of autonomy offered by Jakarta, arguing it was more a means of streamlining Jakarta's management of the province. Many Papuans felt that based on past experience, there was little to suggest Jakarta's offers should be treated with anything more than cynicism. President Wahid's approach to the province was also poorly planned and implemented, a fact that has not induced confidence or support amongst either the Papuan population or within political circles in Jakarta.

Many Indonesian politicians and military figures also had deep-seated concerns regarding the granting of significant autonomy to West Papua. Unlike East Timor, Irian Jaya (Papua) has consistently been recognised internationally as legitimately under Indonesian sovereignty, and the secession of the province would therefore signal the partial fragmentation of the Indonesian state. On a more material level, the Freeport Mc Morran Company, sitting on the world's richest goldmine in the province, is the republic's largest single taxpayer. The complete loss of this revenue is not

acceptable to many in Jakarta. For these reasons West Papua is unlikely to be relinquished with the relative 'ease' associated with East Timor in 1999.

During the conversations and dialogue with Papuans the Living Letter Team members observed that a climate of fear undeniably prevails in West Papua, especially for defenders engaged with the rights of the Papuan communities to participation in governance, control over natural resources and demilitarization of the province. The situation of human rights activists and their legitimate activities for the protection of human rights continue to be under threat from the military. There were several cases reported of incidents involving arbitrary detention, torture, harassment through surveillance and human rights defenders had been threatened with prosecution by members of the police and the military. It was alleged that when human rights advocates had attempted to register their complaints, that had been denied and they had been threatened. Instances of excessive and disproportionate use of force when policing peaceful demonstrations were also reported from time to time.

Several religious leaders with whom the delegation met with expressed their serious concern on the role and activities of the Indonesian military. They opined that the policy of establishing military posts in order to increase the presence of military armed force posts, Indonesian Navy posts and Indonesian Air Force posts in all regions of Papua has disturbed the peaceful lives of Papuans in their own land. The military personnel appointed do not understand the native West Papuan culture and use militaristic approach in dealing with the Papuans. The military personnel used separatist issues to deal with any Papuans who are critical of the military. Militarism has entered and destroyed the civilian's ways of life by forming militias such as the "Red and White front."

### **Division of West Papua Province and its implications**

The process in Indonesia of carving provinces and districts into smaller administrative units, known as *pemekaran*, has mostly been driven by local elites eager to gain access to power and wealth. It often fails to deliver on the promise of improved governance and services. When it occurs in conflict areas, it also has the potential to aggravate communal and ethnic tensions. The Indonesian government's plan to divide the West Papua into five provinces by 2009, namely West Papua, Cendrawasih Bay, North Papua, Central Mountainous Papua and South Papua was opposed by majority of the Papuan People. The clamour for *pemekaran* in Papua is especially problematic as it exacerbates two of the core grievances of the indigenous community: a stepped up military and police presence and the influx of non-Papuan migrants. It also tends to intensify competition among tribal elites, particularly when new districts are dominated by two or three main tribes or clans.

The government's plan is that the division of West Papua will be made after getting approval from a Papuan People's Council that will be setting up to represent three social elements in Papua -- traditional leaders, religious leaders and women. According to the government, the establishment of the council is a consequence of a 2001 special autonomy

law given to Papua that gives it greater power to manage its own affairs. According to the law, the council must facilitate the aspirations of Papuans and help guarantee the protection of their human rights and find solutions for any disputes on rights issues. The council, however, is not to serve as a political body but simply be a cultural representative of Papua that will accommodate religious and cultural leaders to express the people's aspirations. The plan to divide Papua into five provinces came up less than three months after the Constitutional Court annulled a controversial 1999 law dividing Papua into three provinces -- Papua, West Irian Jaya and Central Irian Jaya. The court determined the law violated the Constitution and contradicted the special autonomy law for Papua. Under the decision, Central Irian Jaya Province, which had not been officially established, could not be set up. The court, however, confirmed the establishment of West Irian Jaya Province as it has been factually effective, including by the establishment of its local government, local legislative council through the 2004 legislative election and administrative apparatus. As a result, Papua has been split in two -- Papua Province and West Irian Jaya Province.

The law to divide Papua Province led to a clash between supporters and opponents of the law in 2007, leaving two people dead. Non-Papuans, who mostly come from Java and South Sulawesi, are mostly supporters of the government's decision to divide Papua. Following the unrest, the implementation of the law was indefinitely delayed except for West Irian Jaya, which was established as a separate province with little opposition from its residents. But many Papuans in Central Irian Jaya oppose the division plan, saying it violates the 2001 special autonomy law for Papua.

Papuan Religious Leaders Describe Special Autonomy Law of 2001 as a "total failure that has brought disaster and the destruction of the native West Papuans future." The religious leaders also described central government's decision to divide West Papua into new provinces and districts as illegal, specifically, in violation of the Special Autonomy Law. These actions have, they contended, divided tribes, failed to create new employment opportunities and failed to advance human resource development. Instead, they described these externally driven efforts as "money-oriented." Prominent Papuan Intellectuals also Oppose National Parliament Bill to Divide-up West Papua and they have expressed strong opposition to a bill in the national Parliament that would create new provinces in Papua. They argue that the Bill was opposed by a majority of Papuans who have not been consulted about the action. The proposal was in contravention of Law No. 21/2001 on Papua's special autonomy and the 2004 regional administration law, which recognized the province's uniqueness in terms of ethnicity, culture and territory. The division would likely incite horizontal conflicts among numerous tribes and local cultures in the future. One of the proposed newly created provinces has great potential in mining, agriculture, forestry and tourism and another proposed new province would also be home to U.S. copper and gold mining company PT Freeport McMoran Indonesia. The Papuan People's Assembly (MRP) also opposes the proposed formation of the new provinces, which it said violated the 2001 special autonomy law for Papua. That law requires the MRP's consent to any new province formation.

## **Islamisation in Papua**

While the indigenous predominantly Christian, Melanesian Papuans are still the majority in Papua -- although only barely decades of government-sponsored transmigration has made the province of West Papua majority Javanese Muslim. The Christian ethnic Papuans expressed their concern that legalising its status as an autonomous province distinct from Papua, will effectively consolidate West Papua's Islamisation and establish it as a vassal of Jakarta. This unconstitutional and unilateral act is a betrayal of the Papuan people and a violation of the 2001 Special Autonomy Law which was designed to bring confidence, peace and stability to Papua, as well as cultural and religious liberty protection. It will only further exacerbate the frustration, anger and despair of the indigenous Papuans who are helpless to prevent their unique and precious land from being exploited, Islamised and dismembered.

While complaining about the appalling abuse of power and human rights violations by Indonesian military and government which gets so little attention in international media or international forums, the West Papuan church leaders also vocal on how the governments of "Christian" West themselves abandoned the Papuans for political expediency and economic gain. The Papuans turned from shamanism once and became Christians through Western missionary efforts. However, Papua is now being Islamised and the Papuan people are facing all sorts of persecutions and violations of their rights and dignity was the concern of several Papuan leaders.

Papua now consists of two autonomous provinces: the majority Javanese Muslim province of West Papua, and the majority Melanesian Christian province of Papua. Papua has been divided against the will of the Papuans. As the Indonesian government has acted in bad faith towards the Papuans, how can this advance peace, confidence and stability in Papua is the question raised by the Papuans. The consequences are enormous: it marks the end of Special Autonomy Law 21/2001. Papua is being Islamised and plundered while the ethnic Papuans predominantly Protestant Christians are being robbed, abused and marginalised.

The analysis of Elizabeth Kendal an expert on Papuan people's struggle and ethnicity is shared by many Papuan intellectuals and activists that, there is no reason to assume Jakarta will take any actions in favour of the Papuans. With the oil and gas-rich province of West Papua thus secured as a vassal of Jakarta, it will surely only be a matter of time before copper and gold-rich Central Irian Jaya is likewise secured. In fact Jakarta could continue this process of land division and law revision until Papua is little more than a poor and remote outpost for displaced and dying Papuans; an outpost that would ultimately be deemed non-viable.

### **Concerns expressed by the Church leaders**

During a meeting with the members of the Synod of GKI, West Papua and meeting with the representatives of Ecumenical Council in West Papua, the members shared the same grievances and concerns.

The root of the problem of transmigration programme sponsored by the 1965-1998 Suharto government had encouraged other Indonesians to migrate to West Papua in order to make the Papuans, who had long been fighting for independence, a minority in their own territory. The post-Suharto government stopped the transmigration programme, but it could not stop waves of other Indonesians seeking to do business in West Papua, again tilting the economic scale to the disadvantage of less educated, largely illiterate Papuans. With the continuing spontaneous immigration of mostly Muslim traders, the population now is about 2.4 million, with about 1.4 to 1.5 million West Papuans, most of whom belong to churches such as the Christian Church of West Papua or the Indonesian Christian Church (GKI), a WCC member.

As the Church leaders spoke with a united mind, their voices touched various aspects of their struggle for life and survival. For forty years we have been struggling for justice. The Indonesian government may claim that they gave us something to eat or drink, but how about our human dignity? Our status as indigenous people and Christians are not recognised and supported in our land. We followed and supported the constitutional rights of autonomous regions, but what we could not understand was that what the Indonesian government tried to carry out in the name of autonomy, which is not clear to us. What we need is support to our lives, protection of human rights and human dignity of the indigenous West Papuans. What we need is only single province in West Papua instead of dividing it into several smaller provinces and regencies. Although the Papuans are rich as their land is rich with natural resources, our people still do not know how to read or write. They have not enough food, enough clothes, and medicines. If there are more new provinces and districts, means there will be more people coming from outside Papua to run the government and administration as our own people are not capable of doing it by themselves over the years of subjugation and exploitation. So outsiders will come and they will run the show and benefit from it and not the Papuans. As this trend will continue, the number of Papuans will be soon less and the indigenous people will be marginalised. Although the idea of autonomy was promoted in reality more backwardness was added to the life of indigenous Papuans.

As the church leaders have been lamenting in various ways about their plight, more and more stories about their vulnerable situation was shared in front of the ecumenical delegation. The land of Papua is incredibly rich with natural resources, but the irony is that the Papuans are very poor as their income is taken out from West Papua to other parts of Indonesia. Last year, seven trillion Rupiah worth of revenue was taken out from West Papua by the Indonesian government, but only 3 trillion Rupiah was spent for West Papua. That means, not even half of the revenue income was spent for the Papuans. For example, until now there is not even a single good hospital in the province. Very little money is being budgeted and spent for health of Papuans. The highest percentage of HIV AIDS affected people in Indonesia are among the indigenous West Papuans. The poor Papuans have no way to sell their agricultural products at the same time, the Javanese Muslim merchants who arrive with little money can flourish

by doing business as their interests are protected by the government. Every week, around 6000 Javanese Muslims arrive in boats in West Papua. These kind of uncontrolled migration only leads to a situation of Papuans are being marginalised by the Javanese.

While the increasing militarisation and human rights violations adding more tyranny to West Papuans, rapid rise of Islam is changing the demographic landscape in the province. The Churches in West Papua is branded as a separatist organisation by the government and the military. We are being seen as the agents of the Free Papua Movement. Any protest against the human rights violations is seen as a separatist movement or militant activity. On 16 March 2006, during a demonstration by students in Freeport area a policeman was killed, but large numbers of Papuans were arrested and imprisoned. The son of former Moderator of GKI Rev. Corranus also was arrested and imprisoned .He died in prison on 17 February 2007. This was serious setback for the moderator of the church and he also died later.

Although the government plans to divide the province, we the GKI decided to remain one and not divide according to the provincial division. During the meeting with the leaders of the West Papuan Ecumenical Council, they said "we are same as people of Macedonia. We Christians are in deep trouble. It is very good that you came to our midst. This is the time we need your prayers. We want to live the way you live in your own countries".

They narrated stories of how West Papuan children are being sold to Muslim traders from other parts of Indonesia who come in boats for trade. The Papuan children who are taken away from Papua are brought up as Muslims in other parts of Indonesia. A representative of the Roman Catholic Church attended the meeting said that "when Papuan children cry for help, Christians in other parts of Indonesia is not supporting to our cause".

The lack of support for Papuan struggle from the side of Christians in other parts of Indonesia was heard the delegation as a matter of serious concern. At the same time, urgent intervention by the international community especially from the ecumenical family members also was requested by the West Papuan Church leaders who belong to 44 churches in West Papua who are members of the Ecumenical Council in West Papua.

### **Meetings in Jakarta**

Back to Jakarta, the main priority of the delegation was dialogue with the Indonesian government and debriefing at PGI headquarters. The members of the team met with the Executive Committee of the PGI at the headquarters of the PGI in Jakarta. They briefed the members of the executive committee about their impressions of the visits, concerns expressed by the church leaders in various parts of the country.

The members of the team met with the Coordinating Minister for People's Welfare of the Republic of Indonesia, Aburizal Bakrie, and with the

Director General for Information and Public Diplomacy of the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, Andri Hadi.

The other side of the coin of the Indonesian democratization process in some regions such as West Papua, where the government does not seem to be able to prevent the migration of population from other Indonesian provinces who set up businesses with West Papuan natural resources and take up positions as bureaucrats and public servants, with the consequent marginalization of indigenous Papuans, was particularly discussed with the Coordinating Minister for People's Welfare of the Republic of Indonesia, Aburizal Bakrie, and with the Director General for Information and Public Diplomacy of the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, Andri Hadi.

On behalf of the Team, the head of the delegation Prof. James Haire conveyed following observations / message to the government officials:

- The sense of stability now in areas such as the Moluccas (Maluku), including Ambon, and Central Sulawesi, despite the fact that there remain a small number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in both areas.
- The sense of trauma felt by the Papuan people because of the rapid modernisation of Papua, with the influx of people from other parts of Indonesia into Papua as a result of the democratisation of the Indonesian economy.
- The concern felt by the people of Papua that the further administrative division of Papua into further provinces might mean further spontaneous influxes of non-Papuan people into the area, with the result that the Papuan people might feel more marginalised.
- The fear among the Christian community, especially in South Sulawesi, at the implementation of "shariah" law by the local and provincial governments, despite the fact that "shariah" law was not permitted under national law, and that these regional attempts to introduce "shariah" law were being challenged by the national government.
- The poor health care, low literacy rate and poverty of the Papuans despite the gold, copper and timber that have been extracted and continue to be extracted in the province is a matter of concern.
- This situation of gross and systematic human rights violation is a great cause for anxiety and anguish for the Christian Church of Papua because its members have yet to recover from the trauma of massive human rights violations".
- "As Indonesia democratizes and undergoes reform, and thus experiences the free movement of population from other provinces into Papua, an irony is that these factors unintentionally tend to marginalize the indigenous Papuans.
- As the root of the problem is a transmigration programme sponsored by the 1965-1998 Suharto government. It had encouraged other Indonesians to migrate to West Papua in order to make the Papuans, who had long been fighting for independence, a minority in their own territory.

We are most grateful to the national ecumenical council in Indonesia, *Persekutuan Gereja di Indonesia* (PGI), and its General Secretary Rev. Dr. Richard Daulay and all other PGI staff who made the visit possible by providing their assistance and knowledge to the group during the visit.