

Aceh Conflict Monitoring Update

1st – 30th September 2007

World Bank/DSF



In September, the overall number of conflicts remained similar to last month and relatively low, and the number of violent incidents dropped significantly from the high levels recorded since March of this year, with only 14 violent incidents reported.¹ This drop is likely due to the fasting month of Ramadhan. A number of conflicts were related to favors distributed by newly elected leaders to consolidate power and reward supporters. Only one of these conflicts led to violence, an attack on the convoy of Teungku Busmadar, the Vice Bupati of Bireuen district, on September 27th. These conflicts illustrate the high degree of pressure exerted on local government by GAM/KPA and others, and reveal growing divisions within GAM/KPA. Old divisions along conflict-era ideological lines are progressively giving way to more complex and localized alliances motivated by personal interest. The substitution of ideology by greed as the dominant factor driving contemporary conflicts is also illustrated by the rise in armed crime. This led authorities to announce a one month amnesty for those who surrender illegal weapons, with a crackdown to follow. The move puts pressure on KPA, which security forces implicitly hold responsible for failing to enforce discipline within its ranks. The Update also discusses aid-related conflict. Data collected over the past six months reveals that government bodies will need to drastically improve their management of assistance funds if they want to restore public confidence. Also, a comment by Kuntoro Mangkusubroto, the Head of BRR, who said that Islamic law hinders development, led to demonstrations. This shows that religion remains a potentially inflammatory issue.

Political conflict continues, as factions struggle to cash in on dividends of the elections

On September 27th, as the Vice Bupati of Bireuen, Teungku Busmadar, was coming back from a community visit, his bus was attacked by unidentified perpetrators (see Box 1). Tgk Busmadar had previously been the target of a serious incident when a grenade exploded at his office on July 29th (see June-July Update). These attacks are likely related to pressures from elements within local GAM/KPA² over the nomination of the District Secretary (*Sekretaris Daerah – Sekda*). *Sekda* is a key position in district government, responsible for the technical implementation of public projects, including procurement and tender processes. A faction within GAM/KPA

Box 1: Attack on the convoy of Bireuen Vice Bupati

September 27th, 11:30pm, Gampong Blang village, Pandrah sub-district, Bireuen. On its way back from the Gampong Blang mosque to Bireuen, the bus carrying Teungku Busmadar and 24 other district officials was targeted by two successive stone attacks by unidentified perpetrators. Four were injured by broken glass. Several witnesses claim to have seen men carrying throwing devices in the surroundings of the village before the incident, indicating that the attacks were planned. The Bireuen Police Chief said the perpetrators had been identified, but no arrests followed.

¹ 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 analyzing 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; contact Blair Palmer at bpalmer@worldbank.org or Adrian Morel at amorel1@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.

² GAM (*Gerakan Aceh Merdeka – Free Aceh Movement*) is a former separatist movement. KPA (*Komite Peralihan Aceh – Aceh Transition Committee*) is the civil organization now representing former TNA (*Tentara Nasional Aceh – Aceh National Army*), the military branch of GAM.

pushed forward its own candidate to the position, Azhari Usman, most likely with the hope of securing political leverage and access to lucrative contracts. However, Nurdin and Busmadar preferred to appoint Dr. Nasrullah Muhammad, an outsider with no GAM affiliation.³

In Aceh Timur, nominations to administrative positions were also a prevalent issue in the ongoing dispute between the GAM-affiliated Bupati, Muslim Hasballah, and the Vice Bupati, Nasruddin Abubakar. Although not ex-GAM, Nasruddin used to be a prominent member of SIRA, an organization advocating a referendum on independence during the conflict years. On September 3rd, he questioned Muslim Hasballah's appointment of eight aides as part of a technical assistance program financed by BRR. Aside from issues pertaining to the legal status and the high level of remuneration of the team members (Rp. 21 million – US\$ 2300 - per month), Nasruddin also denounced their lack of capacity and experience, and voiced concern over the excessive influence they had since acquired over the district government.

The distribution of political rewards was also an underlying factor in the protests faced by Akmal Ibrahim, the Bupati of Aceh Barat Daya (Abdya).⁴ On September 11th and 12th, two successive demonstrations demanded that Akmal be removed from his office. This is related to the ongoing conflict between Akmal and Governor Irwandi Yusuf over a land permit signed by the latter for the oil palm company PT BAL. Akmal opposed the agreement, promising to give the land to villagers (see August Update). The demonstrators asserted that hundreds of hectares of this land are actually coveted by Akmal, members of his *tim sukses* and allies within the District Parliament, and this is the real reason why the Bupati is opposing the permit. Akmal claimed that the protests were orchestrated by members of the local elite who had approached him for favors and threatened to make trouble when he refused. Akmal is a controversial figure with many enemies, including former allies and members of his *tim sukses*, angry at his failure to honor engagements made during the campaign.⁵ Interestingly, KPA ranks are also split on this issue, and it appears that the recent demonstrations were orchestrated by an ex-GAM commander (see Box 2).

Box 2: KPA ranks in Abdya divided over support to Akmal Ibrahim

The KPA ranks in Abdya have long been divided by a split that manifested in a dispute over reintegration funds and worsened during elections (see March Update). Abdurrahman, the KPA regional head, supported one of Akmal's opponents, while Burhan supported Akmal. Now, the leaders of the two factions seem to be on better terms and supportive of the Bupati. Akmal's administration allegedly allocated Rp. 12 billion (US\$ 1.3 million) in contracts to companies controlled by KPA, and Abdurrahman sided with Akmal against PT BAL. However, as discussed in the August Update, demonstrations over the land issue revealed persistent divisions within KPA. The faction currently opposing Akmal is led by Nasir Alu, a former GAM military commander and a shady businessman. Nasir Alu played a major role in coordinating the September anti-Akmal demonstrations. He makes no secret that his main motivation is Akmal's failure to honor agreements made during the campaign. Nasir claims that Akmal promised to reward his support with seats in the district parliament and by supporting the formation of Partai GAM. According to several sources, Akmal is deliberately manipulating these splits within local KPA in order to keep them under his control.

³ According to ICG, the GAM faction opposed to Nasrullah's nomination is the western Bireuen KPA command, who felt inadequately represented in the new local government and wanted to restore the balance by securing the *Sekda* position for one of their own. Pandrah sub-district, where the attack on Busmadar's bus took place, is in western Bireuen. See International Crisis Group (2007), Asia Report No. 139, *Aceh: Post-Conflict Complications*.

⁴ Akmal Ibrahim, a former journalist, won the elections under the colors of PAN (*Partai Amanat Nasional* – National Mandate Party). He is not affiliated with GAM.

⁵ Members of Akmal's *tim sukses* who turned into enemies allegedly include Rafli Aris, a contractor who is said to have contributed Rp. 4 billion (US\$ 440,000) to Akmal's campaign, and Datok Razali, an agricultural entrepreneur and former friend of Akmal, who has claims over some of the PT BAL land.

These cases illustrate the high degree of pressure put on newly elected leaders by both supporters and powerful rivals. Failure to meet expectations or to fulfill promises made during elections can result in serious, potentially violent, tensions. Pressure is especially high in districts won by GAM/KPA, as former combatants feel entitled to a share of the benefits of recent political victories, which were gained after years of armed struggle. The grenade attacks in Aceh Utara and Lhokseumawe earlier this year (see April Update) might also have been related to similar attempts by ex-combatants to influence political decisions. This has raised public concern over the existence of a “shadow government” (*pemerintah bayangan*), with influence exerted from behind the scenes by GAM/KPA factions on their members who have obtained government positions.⁶

These pressures pose a serious challenge to good governance and need to be kept under control. In particular, GAM/KPA-affiliated political parties will have a lot to lose in upcoming general elections if current GAM/KPA leaders fail to demonstrate their capacity to govern in an efficient and transparent manner. This will be challenging, as rivalries over political power are weakening former loyalties and further exacerbating splits within GAM/KPA ranks. Old divisions along conflict-era ideological lines are progressively giving way to more complex and localized alliances motivated by personal interest. This evolution will need continued monitoring, as it will have consequences on the configuration of the Acehese political landscape in the lead-up to the 2009 elections, and on the chances for a lasting peace.

Violence drops as fasting month begins

In September, the level of conflicts was similar to that from last month, and relatively low with a total of 70 conflicts reported (see Figure 1). The number of violent incidents dropped from the high levels recorded since March of this year, with only 14 reported. This is probably primarily due to the fasting month of Ramadhan.⁷ Importantly, more than a third of violent incidents involved either GAM/KPA members, security forces or both (see Table 1).

Figure 1: Violent incidents vs. total # of conflicts, by month

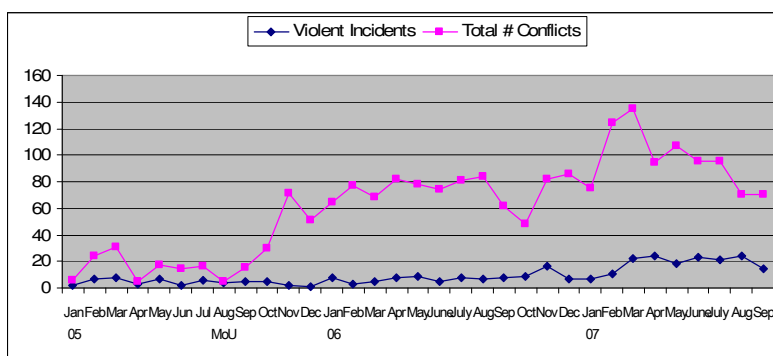


Table 1: Violent incidents involving GAM/KPA and security forces in September

Cleavage	Violent incidents
I. GAM/KPA members vs. security forces ⁸	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> September 25th, Banda Aceh. Truckloads of villagers, including KPA members, invaded and vandalized Banda Aceh police headquarters to demand the release of an ex-GAM combatant arrested for illegal logging.
II. Intra-GAM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> September 24th, Aceh Selatan. KPA members beat the leader of a local youth association (likely a KPA internal dispute resulting from tensions over a community project). September 27th, Bireuen. Stones were thrown at the vehicles of the Vice Bupati and his staff (likely due to a GAM/KPA internal dispute – see above).

⁶ The expression of *pemerintah bayangan* dates back to the conflict years. It used to refer to the power exerted by GAM in areas under its military control, sometimes comparable to a parallel administration.

⁷ For instance, anti-Akmal demonstrators in Aceh Barat Daya (see above) stated they had deliberately held low-scale demonstrations to avoid disrupting the quiet atmosphere associated with Ramadhan, but announced that more massive rallies would be organized after the Eid holidays.

⁸ Note that this incident, although it involved ex-combatants, does not qualify as a military confrontation between GAM and security forces.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> September 28th, Pidie. A KPA member was murdered by other KPA members. Motives unclear.
III. Security forces vs. community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> September 8th, Banda Aceh. A group of students of the Naval Academy (civil academy) were beaten by 15 police officers.

Rather than illustrating the persistence of cleavages inherited from the conflict era, these incidents indicate a change. Growing divisions within GAM/KPA and the involvement of rogue ex-combatants in illegal activities are not new phenomenon. However, struggles over resources now seem to have replaced ideological differences as the dominant element in tensions.

Other salient violent incidents this month included the demonstration organized by FPD (*Front Pembela Demokrasi – Democracy Defender’s Front*)⁹ in Aceh Tenggara to protest against the inauguration of the Bupati on September 1st. The demonstration turned into a riot, with 20 people injured (including six police officers). A few hours prior to the inauguration ceremony, arson attacks targeted the Aceh Tenggara Bappeda (District Planning Board) office and a Church. It is extremely unlikely that these incidents mark the end of the political conflict that pitted supporters of the incumbent Bupati against the winning contender over the past eight months (see previous Updates). Hostilities can be expected to resume after the end of the fasting month, either through violence or other means. Finally, the first weeks of Ramadhan also witnessed a resurgence of vigilante violence: three non-married couples caught romancing were beaten by community members in Aceh Barat, Lhokseumawe and Banda Aceh.

Criminality: pressure on KPA as authorities take measures to eradicate illegal weapons

Widespread concern over the rise in armed criminality¹⁰ led to a major development this month. On September 4th, Aceh authorities announced that people still in possession of illegal weapons would be given a month to turn them in without risking prosecution. After this grace period, extending from September 9th to October 9th, police and the military would start intensive sweeping operations. Police later stated that illegal weapons still in circulation had been “identified”, but refused to disclose their number. By the end of September, a total of three weapons, all in poor condition, had been surrendered.

On the same day of the announcement, a high school official in Pidie was killed in an armed robbery. The crime was quickly attributed to Si Teh, an ex-GAM combatant known as the leader of a criminal gang involved in a series of violent crimes through 2006 and 2007. Three days into the ensuing manhunt, Si Teh was killed in a police raid. Box 3 summarizes all cases of armed crime reported in September. Note that all but one took place along the east coast. Besides the Si Teh case, none resulted in deaths or injuries, and none could be

Box 3: Armed crime in September

- September 4th, Sigli. Two people armed with a hand gun robbed a high school administrator of Rp. 87 million (US\$ 9600) in salaries, and killed him when he resisted.
- September 11th, Simpang Ulim sub-district, Aceh Timur. Five people armed with M-16s robbed a truck carrying Ramadhan food worth Rp. 10 million (US\$ 1100). Four were arrested on September 29th.
- September 17th, Idi Rayeuk sub-district, Aceh Timur. Three people armed with an AK-47 robbed a villager of a motorbike and jewelry worth Rp. 14 million (US\$ 1550).
- September 29th, Meulaboh, Aceh Barat. A shop-owner was kidnapped by four individuals armed with a hand gun. He was released in Pidie on October 2nd, after being robbed of Rp. 22 million (US\$ 2400) and a cellphone.
- September 30th, Bandar Baru sub-district, Pidie Jaya. Two individuals armed with an AK-47 broke into a house and stole Rp. 2 million (US\$ 220).

⁹ FPD is an organization formed by supporters of Armen Desky, the incumbent Bupati and loser of the elections. Their involvement is suspected in the serious violent incidents in Aceh Tenggara last month (see August Update).

¹⁰ According to police data, there has been a 40% rise in the number of crime cases since the signing of the MoU in August 2005.

confidently attributed to GAM/KPA members.

Nonetheless, the death of Si Teh, together with the arrests of other ex-combatants turned criminals over the past few months,¹¹ lends further strength to the military's complaint that GAM did not surrender all of its weapons during the decommissioning phase. Although GAM did respect the provisions of the MoU by surrendering 840 weapons and was never obliged to turn in more, the current police drive puts pressure on KPA to assist in the collection of remaining arms. Ibrahim KBS, the spokesman of the organization, issued cautious statements expressing KPA's support and commitment to collaborate with authorities, but also concern that measures to crack down on crime should not scapegoat KPA members. He argued that most ex-combatants involved in criminal activities were rogue elements that had cut ties with the organization. He also questioned the lack of clear procedures to guarantee the impunity of people who want to surrender weapons, and suggested that efforts to reduce violence should also extend to cases of abuse by security forces. For example, an accomplice of Si Teh contacted Serambi to claim he had been executed by the police in cold blood; he also denied Si Teh's involvement in the September 4th murder.¹²

The rise in criminality, and involvement of former combatants in criminal activities, comes as both a reminder of the chronic unemployment in Aceh (particularly among youth) and of the shortcomings of the reintegration effort so far. The compensation funds for GAM returnees have rarely led to productive employment. However, there are other factors at work. A number of combatants - especially among those who joined during the last years of the conflict - had criminal backgrounds, and other combatants became involved in illegal activities before the MoU. Reducing crime is a difficult and complex task that will require long-term efforts to better address social needs and improve law enforcement. In the meantime, the recent drive to collect illegal weapons offers an opportunity that should be seized by KPA to demonstrate its commitment to an enduring peace, and by security forces to improve their relations with communities.

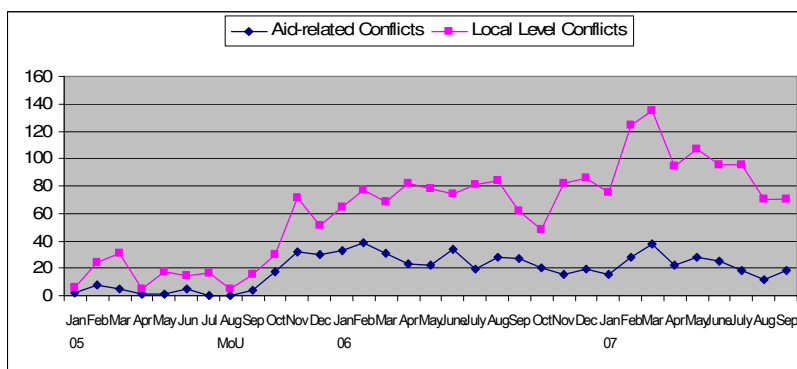
Aid-related conflict

In September, 18 aid-related conflicts were reported, which amounts to 26% of all new conflicts (see Figure 2).

As in previous months, nearly half of aid conflicts have related to BRR projects. However, aside from protests focusing on the frequently mentioned issues of late delivery, poor quality of project implementation and wasteful use of operational funds, BRR came most strikingly under fire of critics in the sensitive field of religion.

In an article published in The Jakarta Post on September 21st, Kuntoro Mangkusubroto, Head of BRR, was quoted as saying that "Islamic law [as a source of concern for foreigners and potential investors] hinders Aceh

Figure 2: Aid-related conflicts by month



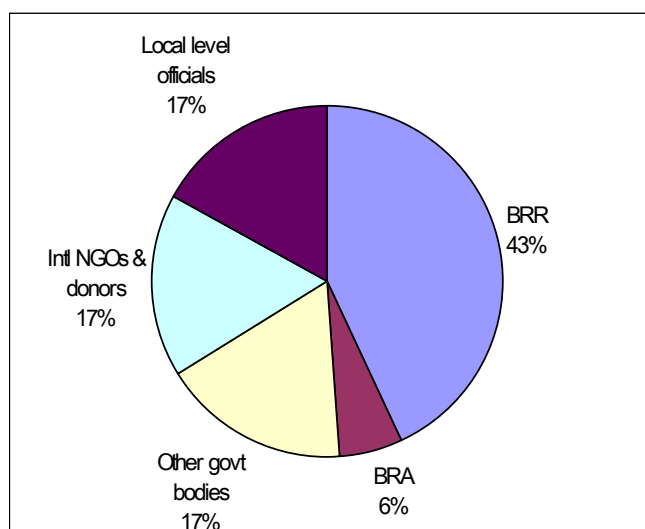
¹¹ Badruddin, a former GAM commander, and Yusuf alias Raket, a KPA member, were both arrested in Aceh Utara respectively in June and August of this year. Badruddin is a suspect in a number of armed robberies in Aceh Utara and Bireuen, including the assault of a Cardi International car in May. Raket was allegedly involved in the robbery of an Oxfam warehouse. While KPA acknowledged Raket as a member, they also underlined the weakness of the evidence gathered against him.

¹² The Pidie Police Chief reacted to this claim with the worrying statement that "robbers have no right to provide clarifications in the press". KPA did not comment on Si Teh's death, but protested against the circumstances of the arrest of Raket (see footnote 15), who was shot in the leg.

development”.¹³ On September 26th, 30 members of the Union of Indonesian Muslim Students (KAMMI) demonstrated before the provincial parliament (DPRA). They demanded that Kuntoro be summoned to provide an explanation in a parliamentary hearing. The Vice Head of DPRA promised to follow up.¹⁴ This conflict is important, as it shows that Islamic law remains a potentially inflammatory issue in Aceh. It also underlines the need for government bodies, donors and NGOs to develop programs in a way that is sensitive to local context. Regardless of how Islamic law interacts with development, it is an issue so sensitive that it is highly unlikely that any political force will take the risk to overtly challenge it before the 2009 elections.

Other organizations, including international donors and NGOs, also faced their share of complaints and difficulties. Nonetheless, it is striking that more than 80% of reported aid conflicts this month were related to the work of government bodies (BRR, BRA, line agencies and local government), or to improper interventions by sub-district or village level officials (see Figure 3). September figures are consistent with the data recorded over the past six-months, with 62% of aid conflicts from April to September focusing on government-run programs and 14% consisting of accusations against local level officials. As Aceh is undergoing a transition period where international NGOs and donors will progressively disengage and local government will have to take over responsibility for the delivery of longer-term assistance and development programs, initiatives aimed at improving the capacity, transparency and accountability of government bodies and representatives at all levels are strongly needed.

Figure 3 : Targets of grievances in September aid-related conflicts



¹³ Kamaruzzaman, BRR’s Secretary and a former senior GAM official, added that Islamic law had been introduced during the military emergency administration of the 1990s without the approval of all components of Acehese society

¹⁴ Ironically, this happened as BRR was trying to “restore public confidence” by coming clean on corruption issues. On September 9th, BRR announced that 43 corruption cases – previously submitted by BRR’s Anti-Corruption Unit to the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) - had been handed to police and the chief public prosecutor. The losses involved in the 43 cases - mostly related to drainage and irrigation works and fisheries equipment procurement - amount to a total of Rp. 18.8 billion (US\$ 2 million). As these cases were reported by BRR itself (out of a total of 153 cases investigated by its Anti-Corruption Unit) and none is related to BRR’s much criticized housing program, they probably only represent the tip of the iceberg.