

# The Achehese

For Peace,  
Freedom & Justice  
in Aceh

The Achehese Society of North America

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## Monthly Review

### Concern heightens about militia groups in Aceh

Activists and researchers have urged an end to the involvement of militia groups in Aceh in the operation against rebels, saying the military is virtually pitting civilians against each other. Observation by the Institute for Policy Research and Advocacy (ELSAM) cited increased mobilization of civilians by the Indonesian Military (TNI) since the "integrated operation" was launched in the province. However some villagers said they had armed themselves in self defense against the rebels, who forced them into GAM or extorted or intimidated them.

The operation was launched last year, coinciding with the declaration of martial law in Aceh on the midnight of May 18, 2003. Earlier the government announced it could no longer negotiate with GAM. After a six-month extension from 18 November 2003, the martial law is slated to end on May 19 this year.

Amiruddin al Rahab of ELSAM said the TNI had "urged the people to mark with red the houses of suspected GAM members and report their suspicions to the authorities."

"It's like letting people kill each other," Aceh-born Amiruddin told a seminar evaluating one year of military operation in Aceh. Speakers at talks held by the student association of Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University (UIN) and the Youths and Student Antiviolence Movement (Kompak), urged warring parties to return to negotiations.

Philip Vermonte of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) said if TNI did not stop recruiting civilian militia, "Aceh could end up like East Timor." Hundreds of militia groups ran amok in the territory, killing people and destroying buildings after the majority vote for independence in 1999.

Separately TNI spokesman Maj.Gen.Sjafrie Sjamsoeddin said the civilian groups were not militia but "fronts for people's resistance in an emergency". The military was requested by the local government to train and organize them, he said, "but they are not armed and are non-combatants," and their purpose was self defense.

Amiruddin suspected the use of militia — called by some the People's Protection (Linmas) — was related to the TNI's target, which Aceh's martial law administrator Maj. Gen. Endang Suwarya said was "to eliminate GAM at its grass roots".

Since the military operation began, TNI claims at least 1,300 GAM members have been killed and 2,000 other members and sympathizers arrested.

Samsidar of the National Commission on Antiviolence Against Women said the commission had "lost count" of villages now populated mainly by women and children.

The year-long military operation "has brought suffering similar to that endured under the 10-year military operation known as DOM period," which was revoked in 1999, Samsidar said. The previous operation was also aimed at the elimination of GAM, but many youths who grew up in that period were later recruited by GAM.

Meanwhile GAM spokesman Sofyan Dawood said GAM would not retaliate against civilians found to have helped the TNI should martial law be revoked. (<http://www.thejakartapost.com/detailnational.asp?fileid=20040421.C05&iirc=4>)

### Grave violations reported during election in Aceh

Several local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) reported vote buying allegedly committed by political parties ahead of the April 5 poll. The NGOs said election violations were rampant in the regencies of Southeast Aceh, Sabang and Singkil, which are considered territories loyal to the Unitary Republic of Indonesia, as well as in regencies known to be strongholds of the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) separatist group, such as East Aceh, Pidie and North Aceh.

"In Southeast Aceh, especially at a polling station in Ujung Barat village in the subdistrict of Babussalam, all ballots had been punched prior to the election day," the Aceh NGO Forum said in its report.

The NGOs said its volunteers found members of Pemuda Pancasila, a youth organization affiliated to Golkar Party, guarding the polling station which was located in front of the house of the village head.

"Voting finished at 9:30 a.m. with 100 percent of the vote going to Golkar," the forum said.

Also in Southeast Aceh, the forum reported that Golkar had distributed 50 kilograms of rice to each family living in 20 villages there. In Singkil, the forum said it found that Golkar had distributed packages of basic commodities to voters ahead of the election day.

"The package comprised rice, sugar, kerosene and palm oil," the forum said.

In Sabang, Golkar distributed free breakfast before the balloting, the report said. The forum worked with the Civil Society Alliance for Democracy (Yappika), which is led by rights activist and sociologist Otto Syamsuddin Ishak, in conducting the monitoring. At least 406 volunteers were dispatched to 20 districts across the war-torn province to observe the process before, during and after the voting.

The forum said in West Langsa subdistrict in East Aceh, the United Development Party (PPP) distributed Rp 10,000 (US\$1.17) to each voter. Pamphlets were distributed from a car in Pidie asking for support for well-known local religious leaders who were contesting the election representing PPP.

In North Aceh, most voters came to the polling stations without voter cards. They were allowed to vote upon the invitation of local poll committee members. In Singkil, two people with ID cards issued by the Medan administration (outside Aceh), were allowed to vote, the report said.

(The Jakarta Post, April 7, 2004)



A rally by Achehese and friends in Sydney demanding Indonesia military withdrawal from Aceh. Similar rallies against military approach on Aceh have also taken place in the US and European countries. In Aceh, however, opposite demand, i.e. to extend military failing-operation has been engineered by TNI and its militia groups, often by forced-mobilization of villagers ([www.antenna.nl/wvi/bi/ic/id/aceh/](http://www.antenna.nl/wvi/bi/ic/id/aceh/))

### Demonstrators Protest at Indonesian Embassy in Washington

Approximately 30 demonstrators rallied at the Indonesian Embassy in Washington mid-day April 5, marking election-day in Indonesia. Demonstrators from Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia and Washington, D.C. criticized continuing brutality in Aceh where they noted civilians are compelled to vote despite ongoing military operations and systematic abuse by the military and police of their human rights.

While the protesters' placards and chanting focused primarily on the abrogation of human rights in Aceh, there were also calls for an end to military abuses in West Papua and the Maluku, and for respect of the right of self-determination.

People traveling along busy Massachusetts Avenue at mid-day saw placards reading "The Indonesian Military Are State Terrorists;" "Achenese Under Gun to Vote;" "TNI Stop Raping Achenese Women;" "Respect The Right of Self-Determination."

### The Achehese Bulletin

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Redaksi menerima tulisan menyangkut masalah Aceh dalam *tiga bahasa*. Tulisan dalam bahasa Aceh dan berbagai bentuk tulisan dari kalangan perempuan Aceh sangat dianjurkan. Kirimkan tulisan Anda lewat e-mail. Max. 2 hal, 1,5 spasi ukuran font 12.

Bulletin welcomes articles related to issues on Aceh in English, Achehese, or Malay. Articles in Achehese and articles from Achehese women are especially encouraged. Please send articles in e-mail attachment. Max 2 pages, 1.5 space, font size Suggested participation: \$0.97 (fotocopy \$0.60 + stamp \$0.37), more generous participation, however, is welcome. Please make participation payable to Abdul Jalil and send it to the Bulletin address.

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Please circulate extensively

Munawarliza Zain, an organizer of the demonstration, described the demonstration as a moral obligation: "Acehnese at home who speak out against the oppression and brutality of the Indonesian military are silenced by imprisonment, torture, and murder—so it is incumbent on Acehnese abroad and our supporters to speak on their behalf." He contended that Acehnese did not want elections, but rather demanded a referendum on Aceh's continued association with Indonesia. He dismissed the participation of international election monitors in Aceh, under conditions of martial law noting that they only observed where the military allowed them to go.

Nate Osborne, of the East Timor Action Network which supported the demonstration, observed that the U.S. Government was not pressing the Indonesian Government to halt the Indonesian military's use of terror tactics in Aceh or West Papua, just as it had failed to protest military terror in East Timor for decades. Ed McWilliams of the Indonesia Human Rights Network, also a supporter of the event, contended that the U.S. Government's support for Indonesia's so-called "territorial integrity" was "a political device employed to deny the right of self determination."

"The U.S. and the international community," he said, "have connived to deprive the people of West Papua of their right to choose their own future for 35 years, and they are denying that same right for the Acehnese today." As for the April 5 elections, he said, "voting under martial law in Aceh or under military intimidation in West Papua is a charade. The international community should not dignify this farce by sending observers," he concluded.

(from a human rights activist in Washington D.C. April 5, 2004 as Received from Joyo Indonesia News)

#### Analisis:

#### Pemilu di Aceh: Sukses Militer-Milisi-Golkar

Seperti diperkirakan banyak orang, Pemilu di Aceh berlangsung "sukses". Sukses buat penguasa dan sejumlah elit, sukses besar buat militer, tapi jelas bukan sukses untuk rakyat Aceh. Pemilu di Aceh bahkan terlalu sukses, sehingga menjadi aneh dan menimbulkan tanda tanya bagi yang bernalar: tingkat partisipasi pemilihnya, seperti yang dibanggakan Ryamizard Ryacudu dan petinggi militer lainnya, sampai 94%! Di Amerika saja, yang dianggap kampiun demokrasi, jumlah pemilih yang mencoblos hanya sekitar 40-60% pada setiap election.

Tingkat partisipasi yang demikian tinggi bahkan tidak terjadi di wilayah lainnya di luar Aceh yang tanpa konflik. Di Aceh bahkan tidak terjadi satupun Pemilu ulang seperti di sejumlah daerah lain. Seperti dilaporkan media, hal ini hanya bisa terjadi karena mobilisasi besar-besaran oleh militer dan kelompok-kelompok milisi sejak masa kampanye. Menjelang hari pencoblosan, kelompok milisi melakukan razia di daerah-daerah dengan dalih mencari GAM sambil menyanakan KTP Merah Putih dan kartu tanda pemilih.

Tentu saja "sukses" ini memerlukan banyak korban dan pengorbanan. Yang jadi korban, siapa lagi kalau bukan rakyat kecil, terutama di daerah-daerah yang jauh dari perkotaan.

Pola "sukses" nya masih sama seperti Pemilu sebelumnya: makin jauh TPS dari Banda Aceh, makin jauh TPS dari perkotaan, makin represif suasananya, makin "sukses" Golkar dan partai-partai yang dekat dengan Orde Baru dan militer.

Ketika di Banda Aceh partai-partai yang dianggap reformis seperti PKS dan PAN menang, maka hampir semua Dati II dimenangkan oleh PPP dan Golkar, dua partai dari masa Orba.

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#### Reading, Rhymes, and Aceh Kids

by Dian Rubianty

I remember when my oldest kid went to first grade and he could not yet read, I was so worried. Even I knew it is fine and there are some kids who are not reading at the beginning of their first grade, still I felt worry about it. I discussed about that to some of my friends, especially to mothers that have kids who can read even before they are in first grade. I visited one of my friend and found her kid who was at the same age as my son already read chapter books. She shared her experience and I really appreciate it!

Now, my second one is in a pre-K or so called head-start program. I really want to have a better start for her, so she can read earlier than her brother. I hear about many people who reach success through reading, and on the other hand, I see a lot of people who can not improvise and adjust themselves to the changing world because they do not really do a lot of reading.

Apparently, there are some strategies that will help all kids to be better prepared reader.

One of those is: 'Make time to rhyme'. Here in US, we will find a lot of rhyme in the kids books like of Dr. Seuss and Mother Goose. "Rhymes, nonsense words, and repetitive refrains increase kids phonemics sensitivity," says Guinevere F. Eden, D. Phil, director of the Center of the Study of Learning at Georgetown University Medical Center in Washington D.C.

Thinking about rhymes bring my mind to the Achenese traditional house or 'Rumoh Aceh' back there in my village in Aceh, at the northern tip of Sumatra. I always remember when I was a little girl, I enjoy the times in my grandma house in school breaks, especially when grown-ups go to work in the morning, leaving the young baby and kids with their grandma. Usually, there is a swing made from 'ija kroeng panyang' (traditional long attire usually used to cover head and upper part of female body) that tied up under 'Rumoh Aceh'. Midmorning, after feeding the baby and little kids, the grandma will put them into a sleep by swinging the baby. Then she will sing very nice 'lullaby songs' which were learnt from generation to generation. These songs were transferred verbally from my great grandma to my grandma then to my mom, and now to me. And it has a very nice rhyme, like

La ilaa haa il-Allah (No God but Allah)  
Muhammad Rasulullah  
(Muhammad is His Messenger)  
La ilaa haa il-Allah (No God but Allah)  
Si nyak ubiet bak meutuah  
(Be blessed my little seeetheart)

Bak meutuah na deungon bahgie  
(Be blessed and happy)

Bak mudah raseuki Ayah ngon Ummie. (May God make it easy for your father and mother to earn)  
Jak mita.... (what they are looking for)

Di eh lajuu teunget bak bagah  
(Go to sleep, fall asleep fast)

Bak rijang rayeuk neubrie le Allah  
(May Allah grow you fast)

Bak rijang rayeuk bak lajue-lajue  
(May Allah grow you faster and faster)

Dijak bak Tengkuue (So you can go study soon)  
Jak beut Aleh-Ba... (Study Koran, Alif, Ba...)

Different people can create different songs, but every song has a very nice melody and rhyme in it. Some of the songs are about Praise the God, some about the story of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), some others about brave and spiritual knights, heroes and heroines fighting for our homeland or wellknown as 'Hikayat Prang Sabill'. There are also songs on love, beautiful motherland, and the importance of education.

A big question then hold my mind: would it be that kind of peacefulness and joy there for the Achenese kids now? I hear some reports saying that while situation in towns and cities might have been better, people in rural areas are still living in fear.

Here in US, I see how most Americans treat children so nice. The community work together to provide best schools, libraries and even station TV with good kid-shows. Villages and towns facilities, cars, buses, parks are built and provided with children needs in mind. How wonderful and joyful the childhood for most of the kids here is!

I feel sad and sorry for the Achenese kids.

They are kids too and have all the rights to enjoy their childhood. They have rights to enjoy good nutrition, good education and a lot of other good things that they deserves as a child. But the war and prolonged conflict has robbed all the joy of childhood from them.

Many Achenese kids lived and have been living in refugee camps with inadequate facilities. Coming from already poor families, many of them are malnourished. Their parents are struggling for jobs and foods very often within oppressive situation.

Education standard, has been low before the war, is getting worse during the military operation. More than 600 schools was burnt down during first months of martial law in Aceh.

Many people are worried about the bad influence of cartoon movie "Tom and Jerry" characters, showing lasting rivalry, sometimes violence and revenge between Tom the cat and Jerry the mouse. And it is just a cartoon film! Imagine what influence would the Achenese kids have, seeing and listening to the warring parties in Aceh every day and nights. The words like "shut to death" "kill that pigs", "beat them up" are often overheard by kids when the military do its sweepings in villages. Mutilated bodies are found in places passed by children. Guns and armored vehicles are now daily views in many villages. Violence atmosphere is common in many places in Aceh today. Instead of reading and explore the world full of joy, peace, and wonder, Achenese kids are trapped in refugee camps and destroyed-homes and villages.

I really miss my peaceful "gampong" (village). I miss the way my grandma sings to me. Scientists make many researches and find out about the wonderful result to rhyme to children. Is not it amazing that the Achenese elderly have already practiced it from generation to generation. I feel sad that now many Achenese babies and kids lose the chance to enjoy this beautiful rhyme, the rhyme that later on give a good start for them to be a good reader, a skill necessary to be decent citizens of the world.

(Dian Rubianty is a mother of three, live in NY)



Malnourished baby in Lamatuha, Southwest Aceh. Aceh, an oil rich and major revenue-generating region, have more than 40 per cent of its 4 million people living in poverty, mostly due to war coming hand-in-hand with rampant corruption. IDPs numbered up to 150,000. (photo: [http://www.mer-c.org/aceh\\_foto.htm](http://www.mer-c.org/aceh_foto.htm))

## Ada Timphan di State "Cowboy"

Laporan Eddy Suheri dari Texas

Dahulu mungkin kita tak pernah berkhayal bahwa kelak penghuni negara bagian Texas, USA yang lebih terkenal dengan cowboy-nya, akan merasakan makanan lezat khas Aceh seperti timphan, apam balon dan sejenisnya. Tapi pada 20 Maret lalu, semua itu bukan lagi khayalan. Tak ada yang "impossible", karena rakyat Aceh disana telah memperkenalkannya. Dan, penghuni kota Houston, Texas, pun telah melahap habis sekitar 600 timphan, beratus nagasari, apam balon dan sejenisnya.

Tentu saja ini bukan kerja ibu-ibu PKK Aceh yang dipimpin nyonya "kedua" Abdullah Puteh, sebaliknya ini adalah kerja keras tim pelaksana "Kampanje Rakjat Aceh" yang beranggogotakan para refugee asal Aceh di kota itu yang didukung Amnesty International Houston.

Lalu apa kata orang Texas setelah merasakan lezatnya timphan? "Mereka sangat kagum dengan cita rasa orang Aceh dan semua makanan yang terhidang itu pun terasa kurang" kata Tgk. Asnawi, ketua panitia KRA. Tapi ada sedikit kesulitan yang terjadi dimana panitia tidak memperkenalkan aturan dan tata cara makan timphan, sehingga beberapa diantara tamu telah memakan timphan sekalian dengan daun pisang pembalutnya. Untung saja tak sampai terjadi hal-hal yang tidak diinginkan, dan daun pisang memang selamat untuk dimakan. Jadi, ada suatu hal yang bermakna yang dapat kita ambil hikmah dari event tersebut, dimana kampanje itu sendiri tidak semestinya harus seperti apa yang biasanya terlihat dalam sebuah kampanye HAM. Dengan memperkenalkan makanan khas, adat, kebudayaan dan musik adalah kiat yang ampuh untuk mempengaruhi masyarakat luar supaya ambil tahu dan kemudian ambil peduli tentang keadaan bangsa dan perjuangan kita.

Acara ini menjadi pembuka event Aceh di Amerika untuk tahun ini, dimana Amnesty International Houston sebagai pemilik acara, mengadakan simposium tentang kasus Aceh yang memperkenalkan "duka Aceh". Dimana mereka telah membentangkan catatan panjang pelanggaran hak asasi manusia oleh Indonesia terhadap rakyat Aceh kepada rakyat kota itu.

Akibatnya, pihak konsulat Indonesia di Houston yang diundang pada malam acara tersebut terlihat sangat tidak puas dan merasa ditelanjangi. Tak urung mereka pun melancarkan protes keras kepada Amnesty, sebagaimana dikatakan salah seorang pengurusnya Deborah Lowery Adams. "But, who care!" kata perempuan yang akrab dipanggil Debby itu.

### Rekonsiliasi yang tertunda

Perlu diketahui bahwa apa yang telah terjadi di Houston pada bulan lalu sebenarnya bukan saja simposium dan ajang kampanye Hak Asasi Manusia yang diadakan Amnesty International Houston. Lebih dari itu, pihak panitia "kampanje Rakjat Aceh" yang dimotori oleh Ir. Asnawi, salah seorang kabinet pertama Aceh Merdeka, berusaha memanfaatkan Acara ini untuk mengundang para tokoh Aceh terutama di kalangan GAM. Baik itu GAM garis Malik Mahmud dan Dr. Zaini Abdullah maupun GAM garis Dr. Husaini Hasan.

Sayangnya, ide rekonsiliasi yang sebenarnya sudah menjadi tuntutan mendesak dan diperkirakan jika berhasil maka akan membangkitkan sebuah kekuatan baru yang lebih "powerful", akhirnya tak dapat dilaksanakan pada momentum yang baik itu. Besar kemungkinan bahwa kegagalan pertemuan itu disebabkan para tokoh seperti

Malik Mahmud dan Dr. Zaini Abdullah berhalangan untuk hadir. Meskipun demikian, beberapa orang dari Australia seperti Khalidin Yakob, ketua Acehness Association In Australia (AAA), Zulkarnaen, dan Tjut Zahara serta beberapa orang anggota civil society di Amerika Serikat hadir dalam kapasitas pribadi atau organisasi. Bahkan Dr. Husaini Hasan sendiri bersama Tgk. Djalil datang langsung dari Swedia.

Namun demikian, tidak berarti usaha ini tak menghasilkan apa-apa. Rekonsiliasi yang dinantikan itu memang tak menjadi, tetapi para pihak yang hadir yakin bahwa jalan menuju kearah itu semakin terbuka.

Sementara itu, walaupun pertemuan antar tokoh-tokoh tua GAM urung terlaksana, namun pertemuan internal masyarakat Aceh yang hadir pada acara itu tetap terlaksana dan setidaknya menghasilkan resolusi yang antara lain meminta masyarakat internasional melakukan pressure terhadap RI untuk menghentikan Martial Law dan operasi militer di Aceh. Juga perlunya keterlibatan UN yang lebih besar untuk menyelidiki pelbagai bentuk kejahatan kemanusiaan di Aceh.

Dalam pertemuan internal masyarakat Aceh pada hari kedua acara tersebut, Ir. Tgk. Asnawi menyampaikan laporan panitia yang antara lain menyebutkan bahwa acara itu bermaksud memberitakan keadaan Rakyat Aceh kepada rakyat USA, pameran photo-photo pelanggaran HAM dan juga memperkenalkan sejarah, adat, makanan serta kebudayaan Aceh.

### Beberapa pandangan

Dr. Husaini Hasan yang mendapat giliran pertama berbicara dalam forum kecil itu mengatakan bahwa kita perlu terus mengingat apa yang sedang terjadi di Aceh saat ini. Dimana rakyat hidup dalam kesengsaraan baik itu dari segi kehidupan ekonomi, sosial dan pendidikan. Dr. Husaini berharap kesempatan yang ada bagi kita yang diluar negeri ini jangan sampai terlewatkan, sebab itu tak mungkin terulang lagi. Adalah suatu keuntungan dengan semakin ramainya bangsa Aceh di luar negeri, maka musuh tak akan dapat memadamkan perjuangan dan menghancurkan orang Aceh.

Bahwa persoalan beda pendapat yang terjadi selama ini adalah akibat kurangnya toleransi yang tak mau memaafkan jika ada kesalahan pada masing-masing pihak. "Kita selayaknya mencontohi sistem di negara maju bahwa perbedaan pendapat dan perdebatan itu perlu ada dalam suatu negara", kata dia.

Seperti di Swedia, kata dia, disana ada parti demokrat, komunis (left party), sosial demokrat, parti Hijau dan parti Tengah. Walaupun tidak mungkin untuk bersatu pendapat dan selalu berdebat dalam parlemen, tapi jika perlu mereka dapat bersatu untuk menghadapi musuh yang sama. "Inti djih ureung Aceh pajah anggag bangsa njang saban nasib, saban agama, saboh bangsa dan sapat tateuka," kata Husaini.

Ia juga berharap pertemuan seperti itu akan dapat berlanjut dimasa mendatang. Terlebih lagi menyangkut pembinaan kader sebagai regenerasi untuk melanjutkan perjuangan.

Adapun Tjut Zahara yang datang sebagai anggota Acehness Community mengatakan bersyukur dapat bertemu kembali dengan rakyat Aceh yang datang dari berbagai penjuru. Tjut yang juga salah satu pengurus IFA menjelaskan bahwasanya ada beberapa kemajuan telah dicapai dalam tahun terakhir ini, seperti lahirnya Acehness Community di Amerika Utara.

Selanjutnya, Khalidin Yakob berpendapat bahwa semua yang dilakukan harus dimulai dengan niat yang bersih dan hati yang jernih. Lebih jauh, dia mengusulkan berdirinya satu sekretariat internasional yang established. Bahkan untuk event serupa pihaknya di Australia siap untuk mengadakannya di masa akan datang.

Tgk. Djalil yang juga orang "lama" dalam Aceh Merdeka berpendapat dimana pentingnya persatuan untuk keberhasilan mahupun kelanjutan perjuangan.

Pada akhirnya Debby Adams dari Amnesty yang menjadi pemantau dalam pertemuan itu mengusulkan perlunya strategi untuk menghasilkan tekanan dari negara-negara internasional terhadap Indonesia sebagai salah satu negara dalam community internasional.

(Penulis bisa dihibung pada: eddy@journalist.com)

## Droë keu droë teuh hai...

Dear Editor(s),

Thank you for the bulletin - I read it with a great enthusiasm. This is hopefully could be a 'hard-copy' medium where we can discuss our thoughts and hopes for a better Aceh. In line with this, I think we should also encouraged contributions of thoughts not only from our fellow Acehness, but also other non-Acehness writers who shares a common level of concern on the protracted conflict in Aceh. (There are some prolific writers that I know on the net.)

From: Henri, Turkey

*We do welcome contributions from non-Acehness, as long as it discusses about Aceh, its people, culture, economy and politics. (TAB)*

Terima kasih atas kiriman bulletinnya, saya dengan senang hati akan berpartisipasi dalam bulletin ini. Bila ada tulisan yang berkenan akan saya kirimkan. Semoga dapat menjadi tali penyambung silaturahmi. Wallhu a'lam bishawab.

Wassalam, Zul

*Kami tunggu partisipasi Saudara Zul dimanapun berada. (TAB)*

This bulletin looks great.

One thought: can you list policy recommendations on Aceh, re. CGI conditionalities, transparency for TNI's Yayasanans, ending territorial deployment of the military, a regional human rights/war crimes court advocacy etc.?

Rob, NY

*Your thought is very insightful, Rob. We are trying to do, at least, some of your suggestions as we would need more resources to realize all of it. We are also expecting contributions from other individuals and or institution on the analysis. Would you take one part of it? (TAB)*

Lewat bulletin metuwah nyo, waihai syedara lon, ureung Aceh di Amerika Utara ban mandum, pakiban mee ta "duek pikee" keu Aceh teuh si uro-dua. Mee na pakat, jeut ta peu get acara di Ithaca. Takira mantong holiday musem panas, watee aneuk miet pree sikula. Ithaca na keuh saboh teupang yang that lagak watee summer di up-state NY. Hana rugo mee neu jak saweu si uro-dua, peu lom mee na meunafaat keu kawom raya. Terutama menyangkut sikula aneuk bansa. So yang na pakat, neu kirem e-mail keu ulon tuan: smabdullah2003@yahoo.com.

Saiful, NY.

Silahkan sampaikan berita keluarga atawa komunitas Aceh lewat e-mail/surat untuk dimuat dalam Bulletin kita ini. Free!

## ACEH: A LAND OF SILENCED AND MARGINALISED VOICES

(part 2 of 2)

By: Teuku Samsul Bahri\*

### Democracy and ideas of justice versus military arrogance

When DOM status was lifted in May 1998, the student organizations and people organization had been formed, and peoples and students had spoken loudly called for human rights justice on various crime against humanity that were perpetrated by Indonesian security forces during DOM. But, there was no single efforts has been implemented, even though numbers of regulation such as TAP MPR, the highest rule of law in Indonesia, were set by parliament to solve previous human rights abuses.

In 26 March 1999, Indonesian president, B.J. Habibie came to Aceh promising that there would be no more violence in Aceh. However, at the same day, many students had to get emergency rescue because of violence that were perpetrated by Indonesian security forces to secure his visit. Violence had also happened in North Aceh, East Aceh and various massacres occurred since then, such Simpang KKA massacre. Angry with the continuing atrocities and finding a small space after 'reformasi' numbers of Acehese students' organisation worldwide held a congress. The so-called Acehese Students and Youth Worldwide Congress is a respond to any empty promises from central government and to response to military brutality and also a proof of increasing political attitude at grassroots level. And finally, on 8 November 1999, about two million Acehese gathered in Banda Aceh to attend a rally called as *referendum rally* to demand for referendum that also supported by local government and local parliament. Aceh Referendum became a collective idea in Aceh who were carried out by workers, women, students, peasants, religious community, intellectuals, etc, particularly in grassroots. In any corners of Aceh one could easily find the referendum graffiti, banner, etc. Students led referendum campaign became a popular movement.

However, from year 2000 students became military's target again. Many of students were arrested or they were swept by military when they returned to their villages. Therefore, many students had to hide their identity. Moreover, many villagers were badly forced to erase 'referendum's graffiti in the main roads and in many corners in Aceh. Once again, one more collective idea has been crushed. That was democracy idea.

Therefore, both idea whether justice or democracy have been crushed, there is no a space to talk about justice in regard to military brutalities and there is no space to talk about political rights, and peoples have not been given space to give input about economic problem and how to solve it.

### Why had armed struggle shown up?

Since 2000, many peoples have become pessimistic about justice and democracy in Aceh. Even at the grassroots level many have become pessimistic on a non-violent struggle for justice: "We do believe, to struggle for our rights must be through non violence, however, our non violence stands has been crushed, while we also need to protect our self". More recently, in many parts of Aceh, armed struggle has become more popular and GAM has gained strong support from people at the grassroots level. The once vibrant student movement has been silenced by deaths, arrests and intimidation.

In my opinion, GAM actually consist four elements, two of which are the ideological groups

which is about ten percent from the whole, who are mostly living overseas, and the victims groups who are estimated about almost eighty percent of GAM. Demands for independence in Aceh have been fuelled by years of human rights abuses and resentment over what is seen as Jakarta siphoning off wealth from Aceh's natural resources. That is why, the majority of GAM is actually victims groups.

### Fragile justice, a little achievement for peace

A peace process of sorts has been struggling in Aceh since 2000. After several unsuccessful attempts at a negotiated solution to the conflict, the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA) signed by both sides (RoI and GAM) on 9 December 2002. That was not the first agreement in order to resolve Aceh's conflict as talks has been initiated since President Abdurrahman Wahid in May 2000. A peace talk resulted in limited agreement labeled "humanitarian pause". But the cease fire did not rest on firm foundation and collapsed. The CoHA seemed, on the surface at least, to enjoy more political will to succeed.

During previous dialogues, various code name of military operation were introduced and numbers of casualties had increased compared with previous year before the accord signed. 539 peoples were killed between April and August 2001 compared to 256 killed between January and April 2001. Moreover, GAM lost its top commander, Abdullah Syafei during this period. He was shot by Indonesian security forces. Despite the discourse of dialogue in the year 2000 and 2001, there was no significant achievement in the field and was very fragile to continue. Also, GAM members were still hunted by Indonesian security force.

To implement the CoHA, three mechanisms were established: the Joint Committee on Security Modalities (KBMK) of which members are representatives from both GAM and RoI side plus HDC envoys. It tasks was to reduce tension and cessation of violence. Second body was called Joint Committee for Humanitarian Action (KBAK) to co-ordinate the distribution of funds for humanitarian, rehabilitation and development. The other one was Security Modalities Monitoring Team (TMMK) to evaluate and to investigate the violations of agreement.

As counted above, the agreement was very fragile in term of its susceptibility. The nationalist sentiment among political elite in Jakarta sharply criticized the government claiming that Aceh conflict has been internationalized.

Nevertheless, CoHA was the biggest step that have ever been agreed towards peace in Aceh. Both warring parties, however, might have forgotten that the agreement was only the first stage in a confidence building process and would be continued with "all inclusive dialogue". It was also a plan toward demilitarization phase to secure all-inclusive dialogue to make it possible for a democratic election process. Both the RoI government and GAM agreed that accord should lead to an election in 2004 and subsequent establishment of a democratically elected government in Aceh. Here, a little space for civil society was opened when both sides had agreed to allow civil society to express their democratic rights without any hindrances from either side.

Unfortunately, again, in regard to democracy and justice ideas that have been dreamt by the Acehese cannot be executed during peace process. While there was no single article in the accord that deal with human rights issues, especially the problem of crime against humanity in the past, article 2 point f of the CoHA on freedom of expression was not executed as expected because of military arrogance and police brutality.

***The peace process in Aceh failed because, First, Indonesia government did not have comprehensive proposal for peace and it caused half-hearted goodwill. Second, the mediator of dialogue did not have capacity to convince Indonesia. Third, there was third party interest, like US and Japan interests on peace process in Aceh to ensure the safe operation of Exxon Mobile. Fourth, there was competition between hard liner and moderate groups in Indonesia. Fifth, there was no public space so the Acehese can express their opinion.***

Number of peace demonstrations carried out by civil society demanding to establish demilitarization zones were cracked down by police and military.

Moreover, several civil society activists were arrested and wanted by police.

Both sides seem to be more concerned about

their ultimate goal, GAM with independent and Indonesia with state integrity. Reluctant to continue holding the accord was obvious on Indonesia side. It is apparent when, in the last minutes talk in Tokyo on May 2003, Indonesia used Joint Council meeting to self-withdrawn from peace negotiation when GAM actually already agreed to lay down their arms as long as they would be given space to do their political struggle.

The peace process in Aceh failed because: *First*, Indonesia government did not have comprehensive proposal for peace and it caused half-hearted goodwill. *Second*, the mediator of dialogue did not have capacity to convince Indonesia. *Third*, there seems to be third party interest, like United State interest on peace process in Aceh to ensure the safe operation of Exxon Mobile. *Fourth*, there was the competition between hard liner and moderate groups in Indonesia. *Fifth*, the one that might be the most crucial is that there was no public space in Aceh so the Acehese can express their opinion freely.

### One-sided peace under martial law

In her 1999 presidential campaign, Megawati had said "if I would become an Indonesia's president, I would let no more blood to drop in Aceh". However, on 19 May 2003, she declared martial law in Aceh and gave the military permission to deploy 50,000 troops to 'crush' 5,000 GAM members. The cycle of violence and repression once again returned to Aceh.

The military strategy can be understood as follows; within the first month the government strategy against GAM was to psychologically pressure the civilian population. The military operation in the villages had the following targets: to stop the distribution of logistics (food, medicine and etc) to the GAM, to persuade the villagers to give information on the whereabouts of members of the separatist movement, and to identify and punish those villagers giving support to the groups.

For the second month, the military was very successful in its psychological warfare on the villagers, and began a second strategy for "mobilization" of the villagers. The military sent letter of instruction to village chiefs, ordering them to mobilize local people to attend loyalty ceremonies where all were 'encouraged' to swear allegiance to the Republic. For the third month and the fourth month, the military mobi-

lized the villagers to establish youth organizations such as "Gerakan Pemuda Merah Putih" or White-Red Youth Movement. This organization (like militia groups in East Timor) was declared in Banda Aceh while in the district levels there are also various other militia groups.

It seems the military wants to create a new conflict: a horizontal conflict among Acehese, the military wants to show to the national and international community that the conflict in Aceh not a conflict between Acehese and the government. The military hopes that fostering horizontal conflict amongst the Acehese will subsume memory about violations committed by the military.

On the fifth and the sixth month, the military mobilized the villagers to demand that the government have to extend martial law as a grassroots aspiration. For example in Bireun district, the villagers were forced to attend rally demanding for extension of martial law, otherwise, the villagers would be beaten and arrested and then he or she has to pay to military in order to be released.

Meanwhile, all symbols of the previous peace process were destroyed while "nationalistic" banners have appeared in the city, such as "we love peace, but we do love state integrity much more" or "peace is only under national state integrity". Foreigners have been banned to visit Aceh since martial law declared, and only in December 2003 were international humanitarian NGOs given access to once again operate in the province – although numbers of organizations and their operational capabilities is extremely limited. Local NGOs and journalists can no longer operate freely: members of both have been arrested, killed and intimidated. Therefore, during martial law, the idea of peace has been destroyed; the villagers dare not to say even a single word about future peace negotiations. To speak of such things is viewed by the authorities as 'against' the Republic, and against the unity of the state – the punishment for such sentiments is severe.

Then Coordinating Minister for Political and Security Affairs Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono said democracy and human rights should not be considered the absolute goals of the Indonesian nation. Therefore, everything in Aceh has been marginalized and silenced: justice, peace, democracy, and human rights.

#### Nationalism has blinded the truth in November rain

Indonesian President Megawati Sukarnoputri has decided to extend martial law in Aceh province until May 2004 whereas at least 2,000 people have been killed in the past eight months of its implementation. The military claims around the same number have been arrested or surrendered, and that more than 470 innocent civilians have been 'accidentally' killed. Only 380 weapons have been confiscated from the separatists. Despite these facts, military declared 'successes' on the martial law operation.

National surveys conducted by the media have shown consistent support by the majority of Indonesians for the military operation in Aceh. Although many civilians have killed, nationalist sentiment has blinded most Indonesian from seeing human suffering. Also, this is a new mentality of Indonesians after East Timor gained its independent from Indonesia, and military has used that issue to trap nationalism sentiment, implicitly saying that the land is more important than its people. This analysis is true and supported by the fact that lives in Aceh taken by various brutalities have not been considered as a fact to go through the time of peaceful

solution. Instead, the death tools of innocent people have been seen as a win of change for the idea of protecting Indonesia's state integrity, and the Acehese have been perceived as an obstacle to pursue that idea.

#### Crying for peace, justice and democracy

Movement for peace, justice and democracy are never ending one in Aceh, and the Acehese have been crying and hoping the value of genuine peace, justice and democracy to be settled as part of the ending story of the darkness. Everyday, they have hoped those reality will come true before the sunrise will be erased by the sunset. The most critical point is how the peace solution will be settled to solve prolonged conflict and the voice of people will not be ignored anymore. That can only be achieved by the empowering of the third force to response to the breakdown of the peace process in Aceh. The third force here is tripartite between Indonesia government, Free Aceh Movement and Civil society. It has been well known that one of Acehese civil society elements are the young activists in Aceh with the idea of peoples calling for space of public participation on the peace process where the voices will be no longer silenced and people will be no longer marginalized.

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Malah di daerah Aceh Timur, Aceh Selatan, Aceh Tenggara, Aceh Tengah, dan dua kabupaten baru Aceh Tamiang dan Bener Meriah, Golkar marajalela diikuti partai-partai yang berbau Orba dan militer. Partai Demokrat (partainya SBY yang konon didukung Kostrad), Partai Patriot Pancasila (bentukan Pemuda Pancasila) dan PKPI (milik Edy Sudrajat dan para jendral sempalan Golkar) hanya bisa mendapatkan kursi di daerah yang paling represif dan memungkinkan mobilisasi dan kecurangan telanjang mata seperti di Aceh Tengah, Selatan, dan Tenggara. Sebagai misal, Panwaslu Aceh Tenggara melaporkan adanya TPS dimana semua kartu suara sudah dicoblos untuk Golkar. Dari TPS ini Golkar mendapatkan suara 100%, sedangkan rakyat disuruh datang hanya untuk melihat penghitungan suara dibawah penjagaan ketat segerombolan Pemuda Pancasila. Pola kecurangan lama lainnya termasuk: pengangkutan (mobilisasi) masa dengan truk dari luar daerah pemilihan, termasuk luar Aceh, anggota militer yang ikut mencoblos dengan KTP sipil, intimidasi dan *money politics* dalam berbagai bentuk. Aboepriyadi Santoso menulis di Tempo: "Tak ada intimidasi dan paksaan aparat secara telanjang, sejauh diketahui. Tapi sejumlah penduduk mengaku, menjelang hari H, ada ceramah-ceramah oleh pihak aparat dan geuchik (lurah) yang meminta penduduk nyoblos. "Kalau tidak, kami tak bertanggung jawab," kata seorang penduduk menirikan aparat. "Kalian bisa disangka orang liar," cerita yang lain. Pesannya jelas: kalau iau bukan "oknum GAM", datanglah ke TPS dan mencobloslah."

Sejumlah pengamat sudah memprediksi taktik bulus militer Indonesia. Dengan alasan bahwa Pemilu paling sukses hanya terjadi di Aceh yang berstatus Darurat Militer (DM), maka selayaknya darurat militer diperpanjang. Apalagi jajaran birokrasi sipil yang dinahkodai Abdullah Puteh, gubernur paling kejam dalam sejarah Aceh, akan mudah digeser dengan tuduhan korupsi yang sudah digulirkan. Beberapa "oknum" ulama, seperti Abu Kuta Krueng yang pesantrennya dijaga milisi, Abu Panton, dan

## P u i s i

Dari Puisi "Rencong" (Fikar W. Eda)

*Siapa saja yang datang  
kami sambut dengan tarian  
dan syair perjamuan  
pertanda kemuliaan  
Siapa saja yang datang  
kami kalungkan bunga  
salam sepuluh jari  
menjadi sebelas dengan kepala  
berbilang-bilang rencong  
dengan sarung dan tangkai  
berkilap  
tak lupa kami selipkan  
pertanda martabat  
dan keagungan  
betapa pedih hati kami  
dari Jakarta  
kalian hujamkan mata rencong itu  
tepat di jantung kami*

(Cuplikan puisi Rencong, karya Fikar W. Eda, terdapat pada sampul belakang buku kumpulan cerpen "Remuk")

segelintir ulama yang (terpaksa) dekat dengan militer meminta perpanjangan DM atas nama rakyat Aceh. Rakyat pun mulai dimobilisasi lagi untuk meminta perpanjangan DM dengan motor utama kelompok milisi.

Jadilah militer seperti "dewa penyelamat" orang Aceh: demokratis karena Pemilu dianggap sukses; anti-korupsi karena membongkar perilaku korup di jajaran Pemda Aceh dan DPRD; terlihat dekat dan didukung ulama; dibutuhkan rakyat seperti disuarakan lewat sumpah setia dan rapat akbar meminta DM diperpanjang.

Begitu hebatkah militer Indonesia? Atau demikian dungu kah kita sehingga percaya pada militer yang jelas doktrinnya tidak demokratis, korup dan suka kekerasan, tidak alim apalagi suci sebagai "dewa penyelamat"?

Yang jelas sejumlah lembaga swadaya masyarakat (LSM), seperti Cetro, Kontras, Imparsial, Aceh Working Group, Aceh Election Watch dan JARI akan membawa masalah pelaksanaan pemilihan umum (pemilu) Aceh ke Mahkamah Konstitusi (MK). Di Jakarta, Rabu (21/4), koalisi LSM ini menilai, tingkat partisipasi Pemilu yang tinggi di Aceh tidak bisa dijadikan alasan untuk memperpanjang pelaksanaan DM sampai berakhirnya pemilihan presiden Oktober mendatang. DM seharusnya berakhir 18 Mei 2004 mendatang. (Tim TAB)

### Want Free Bucks?

Write a short paragraph (no more than 30 words) about what you know, remember, or miss about Aceh. Whether you were born or have only visited Aceh once, you must have a memory about Aceh. Write it down...

You might get \$10 for just a few words you can think of. A good exercise too!

Open to every kids (age of K-12 grades) in the US. Send your writings with your name and your parents' name via mail or e-mail to The Acehese Bulletin. The winner will be announced in Vol.2 no.2 (June 2004) ([aceh\\_bulletin@hotmail.com](mailto:aceh_bulletin@hotmail.com))

## SOLIDARITY FOR ACEH

*Solidarity for Aceh is an international coalition of concerned individuals and groups who support Acehese civilians in their struggle for justice, human rights, dignity, and peace. We believe that democratization efforts in non-conflict areas throughout Indonesia should be paralleled by support for democratic decision-making by local populations within Indonesia's conflict-affected provinces, including Aceh and Papua.*

*We work in direct solidarity with non-violent pro-democracy activists within Aceh, and with diverse civil society groups in developing response networks to assist Acehese refugees in Malaysia. We also aim to build community-based support for Acehese refugees who have been resettled to third countries, including Australia, Canada, Denmark, and the United States.*

Contact: [sol4acehusa@yahoo.com](mailto:sol4acehusa@yahoo.com) (USA)  
[solidarity4aceh@yahoo.com](mailto:solidarity4aceh@yahoo.com) (Malaysia)

### ACEH: LIFE UNDER MARTIAL LAW

Aceh, on the northwestern tip of the Indonesian archipelago, has been under Martial Law since May 19, 2003, when an historic peace agreement between the Indonesian Government and the Free Aceh Movement (*Gerakan Aceh Merdeka*, or GAM) collapsed. Since then, 500,000 troops have been deployed to the resource-rich province to "hunt and crush" some 5,000 GAM rebels, who have been fighting for independence for over 25 years.

Under Martial Law, Aceh has been effectively closed to both foreign and domestic humanitarian agencies, and severe restrictions placed on the media have made the verification of human rights conditions all but impossible. The little information available is alarming:

#### Military impunity against civilians

There are numerous reports that thousands of ordinary Acehese men, women, and children have been killed, disappeared, tortured, sexually abused, and forcibly displaced by Indonesian security forces, whose brutal treatment of civilians goes largely unpunished.

#### Pro-democracy activists targeted

The remilitarization of the province has forced Aceh's emerging pro-democracy movement underground, with many non-violent civil activists targeted for their work, accused by Indonesian forces of supporting the Free Aceh Movement.

#### Destruction of livelihoods and social infrastructure

Since the current military operation began, hundreds of houses, schools, clinics, and mosques have been destroyed, and the livelihoods of Aceh's largely rural population have become increasingly insecure. Most Acehese have become cut off from basic healthcare and social services, and there are reports of widespread malnutrition and disease in the province, including starvation among displaced villagers.

#### Refugees without protection

With life in Aceh becoming increasingly unviable, thousands have fled their homeland into neighboring Malaysia, where they reside illegally, under constant threat of arrest, detention, and deportation. Malaysian support networks have received many reports that Acehese deportees have been detained, tortured, or even killed upon return to Indonesia.

For more information on Aceh:  
**Eye on Aceh** [www.aceh-eye.org](http://www.aceh-eye.org)  
**Aceh Kita** [www.acehkita.org](http://www.acehkita.org)  
**Tapol** [www.tapol.gn.apc.org](http://www.tapol.gn.apc.org)  
**Human Rights Watch** [www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org)

## SOLIDARITY FOR ACEH

### PROTECTION, EDUCATION, AND SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Through our Solidarity for Aceh fund we hope to raise support to help protect Acehese civil activists who try to continue their important work even under threat, as well as to assist Acehese refugees in rebuilding viable lives in communities outside Aceh through education and economic activities. Concretely, this means that funds raised will facilitate the following:

#### 1. Protection and security for people at risk

- Evacuations for civil activists and human rights defenders targeted for their work, as well as victims/witnesses of human rights abuse. These include in-country relocations as well as cross-border evacuations where necessary.

- Legal and non-legal advocacy for targeted activists, victims/witnesses, and refugees, both inside and outside Aceh.

#### 2. Supporting educational projects and organizing in displaced communities

- Educational activities for displaced Acehese children and adults, within Indonesia, in Malaysia, and in Acehese refugee communities abroad. This includes the preparation of educational materials, logistics, and teacher's training.

- Strengthening the efforts of Acehese to advance social justice and democratic decision-making in their communities. This included logistical support for activists and refugees to organize and attend trainings, such as human rights documentation and advocacy workshops.

#### 3. Assistance for social needs of internally displaced and refugees

- Medical attention for refugees, including treatment for malaria and dengue, minor operations, maternity care, trauma counseling, and burials.

- Supporting economic livelihood activities to rebuild community viability, such as the production of foodstuff and furniture for subsistence and sale.

(from Lillianne Fan, *Solidarity for Aceh*)

## URGENT APPEAL #1: EVACUATION FUNDS FOR TARGETED CIVIL ACTIVISTS

Solidarity for Aceh is urgently trying to raise funds to evacuate two SURA leaders who are under severe threat in Indonesia. We are in need of US\$ 700 for travel documents and passage of the two activists to a place where they can continue to live and work safely. We hope you can contribute to our efforts to support their immediate evacuation, to their protection, and the continuation of their work.

For security reasons, we are providing only partial details of the identities of the activists and why they are at risk. Further details will be disclosed only to contributors. Contributions can be sent by check to:

**Robert Jereski**  
**2, Tudor City Place, Apt 9A South**  
**NY, NY 10017**  
**USA**

As Solidarity for Aceh is in the process of incorporation, your future contributions will be tax-deductible. Thus, we encourage you to make a pledge to the Solidarity for Aceh fund today. To contribute to this specific appeal, to pledge a contribution, or for more information, contact:

**Lillianne Fan, USA Coordinator, (212) 6890388**  
**Robert Jereksi, Steering Committee member,**  
**(212) 9731782**  
**Email: [sol4acehusa@yahoo.com](mailto:sol4acehusa@yahoo.com)**

#### Background of Organization

#### **SURA: Suara Rakyat Aceh (The Voice of the Acehese People)**

SURA is a civil organization which conducts popular education and peaceful campaigns on issues of social justice, human rights and peace in Aceh. SURA's members are mostly comprised of youth (*pemuda*), religious teachers (*ulama*), and students in religious boarding schools (*santri*). The organization was founded in 1998 as an Aceh-wide movement, with branches thus far established in North Aceh, Bireuen, and West Aceh. Plans to establish SURA branches in other parts of the province were disrupted by the imposition of Martial Law on May 19, 2003.

Before Martial Law was declared, SURA's activities included the following:

- Conducted 19 popular education sessions on democracy and human rights for religious students and youth in Lhoksumawe, Banda Aceh, Bireuen, Lamno and Meulaboh.
- Human rights monitoring in North Aceh and Bireuen.
- Held a demonstration in Lhoksumawe in 1999 demanding a boycott of the elections unless calls for an end to military impunity for human rights abuses and for the holding of a referendum on Aceh's political status were addressed.
- And other pro-democracy and non-violences activities.

### Solidarity for Aceh's network includes:

#### Pro-democracy groups in Aceh

- People's Crisis Centre
- Forum Rakyat (People's Forum)
- Front Perlawanan Demokrasi Rakyat Aceh (Acehese People's Democratic Resistance Front)
- SURA: Suara Rakyat Aceh (The Voice of the Acehese People)
- SIRA: Sentral Informasi Referendum Aceh (Aceh Referendum Information Centre)

#### Refugee-support initiatives in Malaysia

- Penang Support Group for Aceh
- Acehese Refugee Centre
- Asylum-Seeker Research Initiative
- Aceh Independent Refugee Service