

# Aceh Conflict Monitoring Update

1<sup>st</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> April 2007

World Bank/DSF



April saw a worrying increase in serious violent incidents.<sup>1</sup> A series of mysterious grenade incidents heralded a new level of political violence in Aceh, with the homes and offices of government officials targeted. Although no injuries were reported, such incidents bring serious risks of casualties and could spark cycles of violent reprisal. There are several possible explanations for these attacks but competition over resources, including the right to extort, and access to reconstruction projects and reintegration funds, are an important part of the picture. A number of other violent incidents this month continue to demonstrate the post-conflict cleavages to which we have drawn attention in previous updates. Violence again recorded a post-MoU high this month, with 23 incidents. Aside from the grenade attacks, there were a number of mob beatings of thieves, revenge attacks, and riots. The increase in violence does not at present threaten the peace process or the reconstruction effort. However, it does show that progress made since the Helsinki MoU should not be taken for granted, and that continued efforts need to be made to build sustainable peace in Aceh. Aid efforts have a big role to play here. However, there is also a risk that reconstruction and reintegration aid can contribute to problems. This update includes an overview of recent conflicts related to the work of the reconstruction agency (BRR).

## ***Political violence escalates in mysterious grenade attacks***

A series of alarming grenade attacks occurred in April (see Box 1). The attacks seemed to be intended to intimidate rather than kill, since the grenades were thrown at buildings rather than people, and no one was reported injured. Nevertheless, these attacks are a clear sign of escalated levels of political violence in Aceh. Since none of the cases have been solved, the perpetrators and motives of the attacks remain unknown. In particular we cannot yet classify them as GAM/GoI conflict incidents, and thus for this month our figures continue to show no

### **Box 1: Grenade Incidents in April**

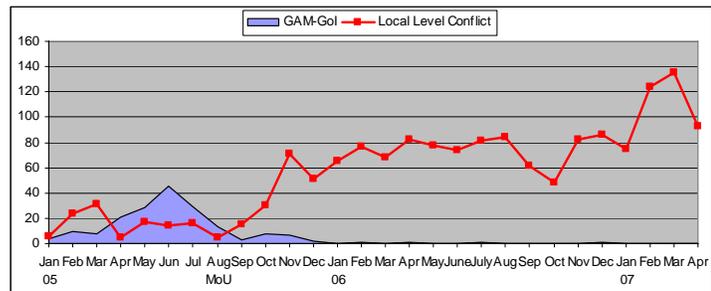
- *Offices of Aceh Utara Bupati and Lhokseumawe Mayor, April 3<sup>rd</sup>.* A box containing an active grenade was found outside the Aceh Utara Bupati's office. Included was a letter in Acehnese threatening him if he continued to "commit infractions in his duties". Another box was found 150m away, in front of the Mayor of Lhokseumawe's office, containing four bullets, a white cloth (like that used to shroud the dead) and a letter threatening him if he did not implement his campaign promises.
- *Lhokseumawe Vice Mayor's house, April 23<sup>rd</sup>.* At 7:45pm a grenade was thrown at the house of the Vice Mayor, a former GAM member. The explosion caused some damage to the house. The Vice Mayor was out of town.
- *Brimob headquarters, Banda Aceh, April 24<sup>th</sup>.* Just after midnight, a grenade was thrown at the Aceh headquarters of the police's Mobile Brigade (Brimob). Three vehicles were damaged. The attacker was believed to have ridden past on a motorcycle and thrown the grenade.
- *House of Sofyan Dawood, Lhokseumawe, April 29<sup>th</sup>.* A grenade was thrown at the house of the KPA Spokesman in the middle of the night, exploding 1.5m from the house and causing some light damage. Sofyan was in Jakarta, but his mother, wife and others were in the house. His wife said that people had come to her house to terrorize them three times in the past three months.

<sup>1</sup> As part of an analytical support program to the peace process, the Conflict and Development Program, within the World Bank Office Indonesia, is using a newspaper conflict mapping methodology to record and categorize all incidents of conflict in Aceh as reported in two provincial newspapers (Serambi and Aceh Kita). The Program publishes monthly updates and analysis of the data, complemented by fieldwork where possible, in both English and Indonesian. Updates are available on-line at [www.conflictanddevelopment.org](http://www.conflictanddevelopment.org). The dataset is available for those interested; please contact Blair Palmer at [bpalmer@worldbank.org](mailto:bpalmer@worldbank.org). There are limitations to using newspapers to map conflict; see: Barron and Sharpe (2005). "Counting Conflict: Using Newspaper Reports to Understand Violence in Indonesia", *Indonesian Social Development Paper* No. 7. Jakarta: World Bank.

such incidents (see Figure 1).<sup>2</sup>

The locations, timing, and targets of these attacks suggest that there are links between them. Three of the attacks targeted powerful KPA elites, several of whom are now governing in Aceh Utara and Lhokseumawe. A warning on April 3<sup>rd</sup> followed by an explosion on April 23<sup>rd</sup> suggests that the first warning did not have the desired effect. The timing of the Brimob grenade, just five hours after the Vice Mayor's, also suggests connection although the attack may just have been a 'copycat' of the first incident.

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



Newspaper analyses and our own interviews suggest a number of theories on who is behind the attacks and their motives. The attacks might be:

- ***Acts of provocative violence intended to destabilize the peace in Aceh***

In the wake of one of the incidents, a politician stated that the attacks may have been carried out by “parties who do not want to see peace continue in Aceh”. Certainly it is true that there are some parties who benefit more from a conflict situation than a peaceful one, and some of these groups may have the means to launch such attacks.<sup>3</sup> Yet the targeted nature of attacks suggests that those undertaking the attacks have specific economic or political goals beyond destabilizing Aceh.

- ***Acts of retaliation by armed actors (TNI and/or those previously associated with GAM)***

A second possibility is that the attacks are in retaliation to previous actions by the targeted parties. For instance, with regard to the Brimob grenade, we received unconfirmed reports that a TNI soldier was beaten by Brimob officers (in a dispute over a woman) prior to the grenade attack.<sup>4</sup> In March, there were several incidents in Aceh Utara (for example, in Nisam and Sawang) where military or police were beaten by communities. These incidents may have created a desire for revenge by the aggrieved parties against the government and/or KPA leaders who intervened to deal with them.

- ***Warnings/political messages related to struggles over resources or economic opportunities***

A third possibility, and the one perhaps most likely, is that the grenade attacks were more than just acts of revenge – that they were warnings delivered to elicit specific behaviour from the targets. This would fit with the nature of the attacks, which inflicted only material damage, when human casualties could easily have been incurred. Power struggles are currently being fought in many parts of Aceh in this time of political transition; at stake is access to resources such as

<sup>2</sup> ‘GAM-GoI incidents’ are conflict incidents where members of the two sides clash in the course of their roles as armed forces. With former GAM members becoming government leaders at the provincial level and in many districts, there is a new ambiguity in the category of “GAM/GoI conflicts”.

<sup>3</sup> In such scenarios, the security forces would be the primary suspect. However, there are also factions of KPA who have a low level of commitment to the MoU. Note that Ilyas A Hamid, the Bupati of Aceh Utara who received a grenade at his office on April 3<sup>rd</sup>, said that there were parties both inside Aceh and outside of it who do not wish the peace to hold, perhaps referring to factions of KPA/GAM.

<sup>4</sup> Notably, this incident was not reported in the provincial newspapers. It should be noted, also, that armed attacks between various elements of the security forces are by no means unheard of in Indonesia.

lucrative construction contracts, access to reintegration funds<sup>5</sup>, and the right to extort money from those implementing projects. *Pajak Nanggroe* (Aceh tax) has been an entrenched practice for some time, especially prevalent in areas such as Aceh Utara and Lhokseumawe which were under GAM control before the MoU. Efforts to halt such practices have met with mixed success (see Box 2). In particular many donors and contractors complain of extortion attempts by former GAM combatants (and others). The Aceh Utara Bupati has been vocal in forbidding extortion practices, and it is likely that he has made himself many enemies because of this.<sup>6</sup>

**Box 2: Cutting down extortion and collusion in tendering processes**

How Government and KPA leaders manage extortion and collusion will be vital both for maintaining the peace in the short term and in establishing principles of better governance. A combination of strict and impartial law enforcement, strategic and effective cooperation with KPA and other groups, along with livelihood programs to provide alternatives, will be needed. Donors can offer support in all of these areas. In order to combat extortion attempts in reconstruction projects, donors should share information on the problem, and work together to plan and implement solutions, including joint advocacy. For the Government, extortion of projects and collusion in Government tendering processes will not be prevented without a struggle. Similar interventions will be needed in order to limit illicit gains from industries other than reconstruction projects. Violent conflicts might arise if Governor Irwandi experiences success in his efforts to enforce a logging moratorium in Aceh. Conflict management strategies will need to be in place.

We do not know who was behind the attacks, and they may have all had different causes. Nevertheless, the volatile mix of high levels of poverty and unemployment, plentiful resources in the form of projects as well as natural resources, sudden shifts in political power, and residual arms in Aceh sets the stage for continued violent manifestations of struggles over resources, which may or may not be easily identified as such. High crime rates (such as those in Aceh Timur) are perhaps another indication of the existence of parties who feel excluded from other lucrative economic opportunities.

***Violence reaches another high, though non-violent local level conflict drops***

Last month's record high level of violence was topped again this month, with 23 cases recorded (see Figure 2).<sup>7</sup> The high level of violence this month reflects not only the grenade incidents but also a high number of mobbings of suspected thieves and revenge attacks (see Table 1 for an outline of the forms of violence this month). This month saw seven mob beatings of thieves, with one being fatal. In previous months vigilante attacks tended to be non-fatal beatings of *khalwat* (suspected sexual contact between non-married individuals) suspects rather than thieves. The seven revenge attacks this month came in a variety of forms - see Box 3.

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<sup>5</sup> Parties upset about not receiving a share of reintegration funds might include elements of KPA and the anti-separatist organizations, as well as surrendered GAM.

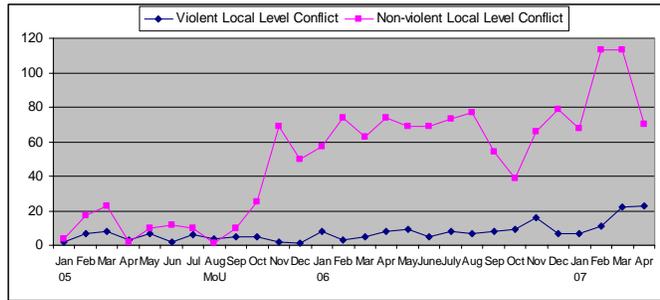
<sup>6</sup> Although many NGOs face extortion attempts, one international NGO working in Aceh Utara faced a demand for a particularly large sum. With the help of senior KPA members in Banda Aceh the extortion attempt was defeated; the Aceh Utara Bupati made vocal criticisms of extortion around this time. This occurred in the weeks before the first Aceh Utara grenade incident.

<sup>7</sup> Previously we classified 'sweeping' and arrests by vigilantes as violence even when the victims were not beaten, since the perpetrators did not have the legal right to invade homes and make arrests. We have now re-classified such incidents as non-violent, in order to restrict 'violence' to cases of physical violence to people or property (including abduction). Figure 2 has been updated to reflect this new classification.

Table 1: Types of violent local conflict in April

#	Type of violent incident
7	<i>Mob beating</i> of suspected thieves. One was fatal.
7	<i>Revenge attacks</i> , including four murders, one kidnapping, one mob beating, and one group assault with machetes.
4	<i>Political violence</i> , including three grenade explosions, and one attempted arson.
2	<i>Riots</i> , both at football games.
3	<i>Other cases</i> , including a <i>khalwat</i> beating (mob beating during arrest for <i>khalwat</i> ), the robbery of KPA chief's wife and the KPA beating by TNI (both described below).

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



The beatings of suspected thieves suggest a lack of public confidence in the legal system as well as the prevalence of desperate people willing to steal.

The revenge attacks suggest a lack of other effective methods of conflict resolution as well as a high level of frustration in Acehese society. Fights over *duku* fruit and sand remind us that resources are often claimed by the powerful and protected through violence.

Revenge attacks over pre-MoU grievances, as occurred in Langsa, suggest the need for Truth and Reconciliation work to begin, as stipulated in the MoU.

**Box 3: Revenge attacks in April**

- On April 8<sup>th</sup>, a young man was found dead in Muara Satu, Lhokseumawe. Although the case was not solved, some signs pointed to an ongoing family dispute.
- On April 9<sup>th</sup>, a group of men with machetes raided the market at Canda Muara Dua, Lhokseumawe, injuring two men. The attack was apparently in retaliation over an earlier dispute between traders of *duku* fruit.
- On April 16<sup>th</sup>, a man in Banda Aceh was killed in his home, apparently by a domestic worker, who was angry that her boss would not marry her. They were reportedly romantically involved.
- On April 19<sup>th</sup>, a man was killed in Seulimum, Aceh Besar. Police report that the killer was the victim's friend, but they had fallen out over access to sand and rock resources for construction.
- On April 13<sup>th</sup> in Aceh Singkil, the body of a rubber trader was found floating in his *perahu* boat. Two days later a suspect was arrested, who admitted killing the man out of revenge, since the victim had allegedly raped the killer's wife last year.
- April 5<sup>th</sup> kidnapping in Langsa, described below
- April 18<sup>th</sup> beating by KPA members in Pidie, described below

***Violent incidents continue to reflect societal cleavages***

Violent incidents continue to reflect enduring cleavages in Acehese society, such as that between the security forces and the community, or between the security forces and GAM/KPA.<sup>8</sup> This month there were seven incidents which reflect old conflict cleavages and which have the potential to reinforce them.

**KPA vs. TNI**

- April 22<sup>nd</sup>, Pante Bidari, Aceh Timur. A group of 10 men passing a TNI post which guarded the Exxon Mobile gas plant were badly beaten. One of the victims said that he had identified himself as a KPA member to the TNI post before entering to cut down some logs with his chainsaw. The logs were to rebuild his house, burned during

<sup>8</sup> Recent Updates have covered the February 2<sup>nd</sup> attack on the Forkab (an anti-separatist group) office in Bireuen, and the March 27<sup>th</sup> attack on the KPA office in Lhoksukon, Aceh Utara, for example. See earlier Aceh Conflict Monitoring Updates, available at: [www.conflictanddevelopment.org](http://www.conflictanddevelopment.org).

the conflict. On his way out with the wood, he and his friends were accosted and beaten by the TNI soldiers.

#### KPA vs. Community

- On April 18<sup>th</sup> in Muara Tiga, Pidie, a truck driver was beaten by several dozen men, apparently over an earlier traffic-related altercation. The attackers were described as being KPA by the victim. On April 19<sup>th</sup>, police raided the Pidie KPA office in Sigli and arrested eight suspects and found a number of weapons. On April 27<sup>th</sup> a meeting was held between Bupati Mirza Ismail, KPA, and police, with the assistance of the FKK (Communication and Coordination Forum, see below), to attempt to solve the problem using *adat* (traditional) law.

#### Security Forces vs. Community

- On March 31<sup>st</sup> in Banda Aceh, a woman was shot three times and her motorcycle stolen. The primary suspect was the victim's brother-in-law, a TNI soldier. He was caught on April 26<sup>th</sup> after deserting his unit. It appears that he thought he was shooting his wife. While not resulting from tensions between the military and the community, this event certainly will not assist in the reduction of such tensions.<sup>9</sup>

#### Anti-Separatist Groups vs. Community

- April 18<sup>th</sup>, Kuala Simpang, Aceh Tamiang. Serambi reported that people claiming to be members of PETA (an anti-separatist organization) had been fraudulently obtaining funds from villagers, under the pretext of opening bank accounts for them so they could receive reintegration funds. It was also reported that the distribution of reintegration funds to PETA in Aceh Tamiang is being investigated by police. An investigation showed that of the first stage distribution of Rp. 450 million, 75% did not reach beneficiaries.

#### Intra-Community Tensions over GAM/RI loyalties

- Six young men kidnapped a young woman in Langsa on April 5<sup>th</sup>. She was held overnight, "interrogated", and treated roughly. She reported to police, who arrested the six men. The victim claimed that the men accused her of being a spy during the conflict.

#### Other<sup>10</sup>

- April 24<sup>th</sup>, Ranto Peureulak, Aceh Timur. The wife of local KPA chief Nurul Akla was robbed at her home. Two masked men cut the power to the house, threatened her with a pistol, robbed her, and beat her. Although this might appear to be crime rather than conflict, the method and the target suggest that social cleavages may have been a factor.
- April 23<sup>rd</sup>, Redelong, Bener Meriah. Unknown parties attempted to burn down the Linge KPA office (for Aceh Tengah/Bener Meriah) at 2am. A person was seen fleeing the scene and getting into a car. One motorcycle was destroyed in the fire but the building survived.

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<sup>9</sup> This incident occurred in March but was only reported in April, thus we include it here.

<sup>10</sup> Because the perpetrators in these cases are unknown, it is difficult to classify them.

In order to deal with these cleavages, and the potential for them creating further conflict, several steps are necessary. Trust needs to be built between conflicting groups. Joint projects and forums to discuss and defuse conflicts before they escalate can be helpful. The leadership of groups (including TNI, police, anti-separatist groups, and the KPA) should also be engaged to help them maintain order and professionalism among their ranks.

The departure of AMM in December 2006 left something of a void in terms of non-partisan forums for resolving conflicts at early stages. A new body, the Communication and Coordination Forum (FKK) for Peace in Aceh, was established on April 18<sup>th</sup>, under the Indonesian Government's Aceh Desk. Its goals are to monitor and support the peace process, including addressing particular problems which arise in order to make recommendations to the Governor. It is led by Indonesia's former deputy representative to the AMM, Brigjen Amiruddin Usman, and its 18 members are from Government (national and provincial) plus three from KPA (Muzakkir Manaf, Irwansyah and Zulkifli Amin). The grenade incidents might provide it an early challenge.

***Aid-related conflicts continue; many are related to dissatisfaction with BRR***

This month 22 local level conflicts related to aid programs occurred (see Figure 3). Dissatisfaction with the work of BRR, and especially with the quality of construction by its contractors, was the subject of a number of conflicts this month. 13 conflicts were related to BRR's work (see Table 2).

Figure 3: Aid-related conflicts by month

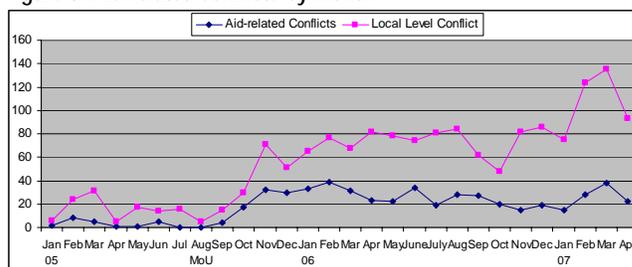


Table 2: Types of BRR-related conflict in April

#	Incident description
7	Aid recipients or NGOs protesting incomplete houses or other construction projects (irrigation, school, drainage)
2	Demonstrations against BRR
2	Meetings which turned ugly (one ended in violence)
1	The BRR verification team re-possessed a number aid houses in Banda Aceh deemed to be obtained through fraud
1	A man claiming to be a KPA leader came to BRR, angrily demanding to be awarded a tendered contract. He was arrested by KPA and turned over to the police.

Two demonstrations against BRR occurred this month. On April 9<sup>th</sup>, hundreds of IDPs led by Forak (Inter-Barrack Communication Forum) demonstrated at BRR, demanding that houses be built faster and also demanding cash grants for small businesses, school scholarships and health facilities. The next day their demonstration continued with a public no-confidence motion in BRR, signed in blood by Panji Utomo, the Forak leader. A second demonstration was held on April 19<sup>th</sup> at the parliament in Banda Aceh by Alee (Acehnese Alliance of Youth and Students), demanding that BRR be audited by an international auditor. They charged that BRR's anti-corruption section is biased and inactive, with cases only processed with intense pressure from NGOs and the community. According to Serambi, Mukhlis Mukhtar, a local parliament member, told the demonstrators that such an audit would be carried out.

Only one of these 13 conflicts turned violent. However, demonstrations against BRR have become violent in the past, and the plethora of tsunami victims who are unhappy with their housing aid, or frustrated at the lack of it, makes for a tense situation. This can be addressed by improving monitoring of completed projects, dissemination of schedules, and ensuring implementation meets deadlines.

Although most of these conflicts are related to dissatisfaction with the results of BRR projects, some are the result of BRR's efforts to monitor, or outsiders' attempts to capture, BRR benefits.

The work of the “verification team”, mentioned in Table 2, is just beginning. After issuing a letter calling on all residents to report cases of double housing allotments, Serambi reported that BRR has received 200 reports from Aceh Besar and 175 from Banda Aceh. It is clear that they have much more verification work to do, and many potential conflicts to deal with.

Many disputes about housing seem to be related to inadequate quality delivered by BRR contractors. This suggests that BRR has in many cases failed to ensure that contractors deliver on their contractual obligations; communities are complaining that their houses are without floors, without electricity, without roofs, or in an otherwise dismal condition, over a year after the contracts were awarded.

The procurement process itself has also been cited as problematic. There have been calls for BRR to be more diligent in blacklisting contractors who fail to uphold the contracts.<sup>11</sup> There are suspicions that some tender winners sub-contract projects out for much reduced amounts. This practice could lead to shoddy construction due to lack of funds, but only if inadequate supervision, and delivering full payment without satisfactory inspections, allows it.

Aggressive demands to be awarded contracts for reconstruction projects continue to be a problem. Sofyan Dawood on April 15<sup>th</sup> urged all such attempts to be reported to KPA and the police. The grenade attack on his house occurred not long after this.

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<sup>11</sup> The Bupati of Aceh Jaya requested on May 1<sup>st</sup> that the police arrest contractors responsible for unfinished houses in Keutapang village and in Calang. A parliamentary team in Nagan Raya recommended that BRR houses in Suak Puntong village be rebuilt, after the community complained about the quality. The team recommended that the contractor be blacklisted, and that BRR do more monitoring.