

# Aceh Conflict Monitoring Update

1<sup>st</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup> May 2007

World Bank/DSF



The mysterious grenade attacks that began last month continued with four new incidents reported in May; this brings the total number of grenade incidents to nine.<sup>1</sup> The May attacks targeted the offices and homes of government figures, as in April, but most occurred in the central highlands rather than on the east coast. While all of the attacks remain unsolved, it is suspected that competition over resources, including development projects and illegal logging, is the primary issue at stake. This month, 107 incidents of local level conflict were recorded. Of the 18 violent incidents, several demonstrated ongoing social cleavages. Most alarming were two cases of abduction. These incidents demonstrate a continuing lack of trust between ex-combatants and other parties which needs to be further addressed. This Update also discusses aid-related conflicts and vigilante incidents, the latter including several alarming forms of abuse during vigilante arrests for *khalwat* (suspected sexual contact between non-married individuals) offences.

## ***Political violence continues with more mysterious grenade attacks***

April's alarming series of grenade attacks continued into May, with two explosions and two more incidents where the devices did not explode. One of the non-exploding devices may have been intended as a warning but the other was apparently meant to detonate (see Box 1 for details). Thankfully, no injuries were reported. All incidents, from this month and last, remain unsolved. Because the actors and motives are not clear, we do not classify these cases as

### **Box 1: Grenade incidents in May**

- *May 3<sup>rd</sup>, house of DPRD (local parliament) head, Sigli, Pidie.* A bomb with a timer was found in a fish pond in the front yard. The bomb seems to have been meant to explode, but when it was thrown over the fence it landed in the pond, and was rendered inactive. Sigli police said they had received an anonymous phone call saying that there was a bomb at the DPRD head's house. Two men were arrested near the scene, but were later released.
- *May 14<sup>th</sup>, 11:50pm, DPRD (local parliament) building, Redelong, Bener Meriah.* A powerful grenade explosion damaged the building but caused no injuries. After the explosion, witnesses say they saw a car speeding away from the scene. The Bupati of Bener Meriah, H. Tagore Abubakar, subsequently called for the re-activation of civilian militias which were active during the conflict period.
- *May 15<sup>th</sup>, just after midnight, office of Camat (Sub District Head) of Bies, Aceh Tengah.* A grenade bounced off the door and then exploded, damaging the building and a number of vehicles, but causing no injuries. The office was full of staff who were working on a proposal for a BRR project. A witness said he saw two men on a motorcycle speed away from the scene.
- *May 15<sup>th</sup>, office of Camat of Pegasing, Aceh Tengah.* A deactivated smoke grenade was found in front of the office.

<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.

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

In May, three of the four grenade incidents took place in the central highlands (the other incident took place in Pidie). Interviews with local informants suggest that struggles over economic resources, particularly control of aid funds and illegal logging, are likely to be a

primary cause of the central highland incidents, as we suggested was also the case for the April incidents in Aceh Utara and Lhokseumawe. However, the political context in the highlands differs from that of the east coast. In the highlands, the pro-Indonesia militias are stronger than GAM/KPA, and KPA-affiliated candidates did not win the local elections. The weakness and factional nature of KPA in Bener Meriah was mentioned by informants as a possible factor in the attacks. KPA leader (and losing Bupati candidate) Fauzan Azima has departed for a new job in Banda Aceh, and local KPA members are said to be divided and pessimistic about their futures. There are also said to be tensions between the police and KPA after an NGO, a number of whose employees are KPA members, helped to expose police involvement in illegal logging.

The timing of the incidents in Bener Meriah and Aceh Tengah seems to indicate more than one attacker; the distances are too great to cover in the short interval between the two explosions. As elsewhere in Aceh, elements of KPA, surrendered GAM, and members of anti-separatist organizations have not managed to access reintegration funds. There may also be security forces and bureaucrats whose profits from illegal logging are under threat. It can be expected that a lack of cohesion in KPA will continue to lead to conflicts, as will struggles over access to lucrative projects and logging resources. The real possibility for aid projects being implicated in such cases reinforces the need for transparent procurement procedures, which can lessen collusion and encourage losing bidders to accept results. For disputes over illegal logging resources, donors supporting anti-logging initiatives should be aware of the conflict potential. Further research and mapping of the methods, parties, and networks involved in logging would help in this regard.

***Violent incidents reflect societal cleavages; kidnappings indicate lack of trust***

May saw an increase in local level conflict, with 107 incidents (see Figure 2). Of these, 18 involved violence. This is a drop from last month, but violent local conflict is still at significantly higher levels than was the case last year.

Violent incidents continue to reflect enduring cleavages in Acehese society. This month several

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

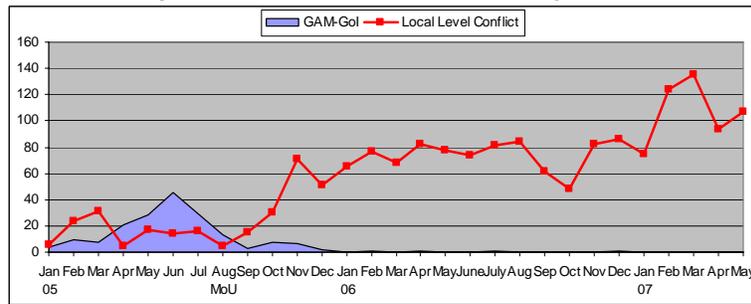
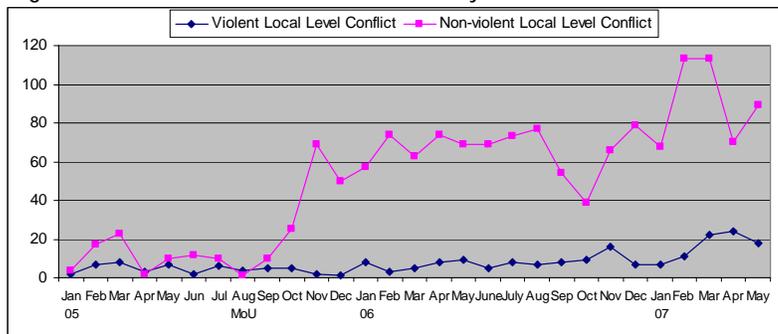


Figure 2: Violent and non-violent local conflicts by month



<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’.

incidents occurred which highlight, and have the potential to exacerbate, tensions between groups such as the KPA, security forces and the community. These incidents are presented in Table 1.<sup>3</sup>

Table 1: Pre-MoU cleavages manifesting in post-MoU conflict incidents for May

Cleavage	Incidents this month
GAM vs. GoI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Kidnapping and torture, May 31<sup>st</sup>, Lhokseumawe.</i> Aceh Kita reported that a construction worker was abducted by four men using a car. Handcuffed and blindfolded, he was taken to an unknown location and held for five days. While in captivity he was tortured with hot metal, electric shocks, and beatings. The victim has served jail time in the past for assisting GAM. He reported that his torturers asked him for the location of GAM's weapons store.</li> <li>• <i>Procurement dispute, May 8<sup>th</sup>, Aceh Barat Daya.</i> A controversy erupted over KPA's demand to be given preferential treatment in the awarding of BRR contracts. The Aceh Barat Daya police chief responded by saying that tenders are open to anyone, and that KPA should not try to intervene in the tendering process.</li> </ul>
Anti-separatist groups vs. community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Community arrest, May 19<sup>th</sup>, Pante Kuyun, Aceh Jaya.</i> Community members arrested a youth for having a pistol, and handed him over to the KPA. The youth was identified as a surrendered ex-combatant who had signed up with a "certain organization".</li> </ul>
GAM vs. community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Kidnapping, May 13<sup>th</sup>, Sabang.</i> Two men reported having been taken captive by three KPA members. They were held for ten days, and say they were forced to admit to having plotted to kill the Sabang KPA head. After the incident was reported, the three perpetrators were arrested by police; they stated that they kidnapped the victims in order to prevent them killing the KPA chief.</li> </ul>
Security forces vs. community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Beating, May 19<sup>th</sup>, Nagan Raya.</i> After a minor traffic incident with the wife of a Brimob officer, a member of the Aceh parliament was later stopped as he drove past a police station, and then beaten by a Brimob officer.</li> </ul>

The two kidnappings are particularly alarming. Last month the spectre of retaliatory settling of pre-MoU scores was raised by a kidnapping in Langsa.<sup>4</sup> One strength of the peace process has been the near absence of such revenge-seeking incidents. This positive record needs to be maintained by quickly dealing with those incidents which do occur. Initiatives to build trust between KPA and the security forces are particularly needed in previous GAM strongholds; a dangerous lack of trust contributed to the Nisam and Sawang incidents in Aceh Utara in March.<sup>5</sup>

#### ***Aid-related conflicts continue***

This month 28 local level conflicts, more than one quarter of the total, were related to aid programs (see Figure 3). Of the 28 aid conflicts, 11 were related to the work of BRR. Figure 4 gives a breakdown of the types of aid-related conflict for May. The three most prevalent issues in aid delivery are the lateness of delivery, corruption (allegations), and problems with contractors.

Several incidents represent a new type of threat to the aid community. On May 23<sup>rd</sup>, a Canadian Red Cross vehicle was reportedly stopped as it passed through Kuto Baro village on the way to Calang. The CRC workers were forcibly taken to the village meeting hall and asked to set definite dates for when they would build promised houses. After four hours, and with the intervention of the Vice Bupati they were permitted to continue their journey. This "forced negotiation" represents a new level of pressure to meet community expectations about aid.

<sup>3</sup> See the November 2006 Update for more information on these cleavages. All updates are available at: [www.conflictanddevelopment.org](http://www.conflictanddevelopment.org).

<sup>4</sup> See the April 2007 Update.

<sup>5</sup> See the March 2007 Update.

Figure 3: Aid-related conflicts by month

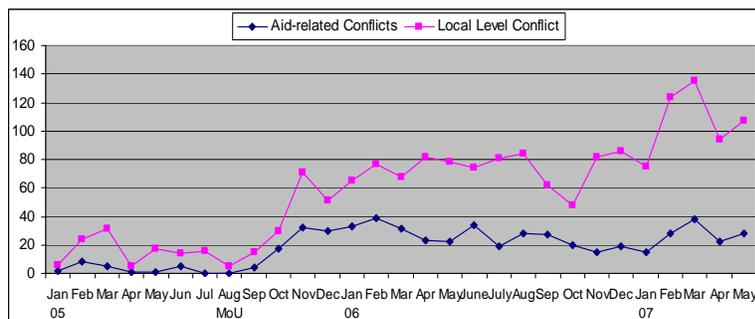
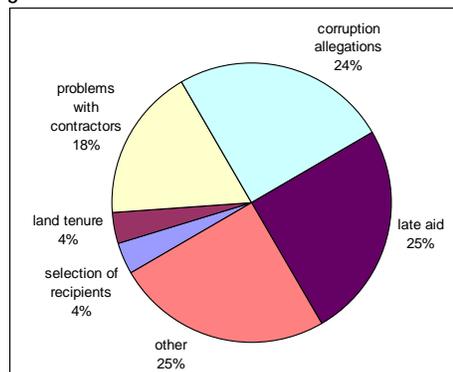


Figure 4: Breakdown of aid-related conflicts for May



More alarming, three cases of armed robbery targeted aid funds this month. On May 23<sup>rd</sup> in Sawang, Aceh Utara, a group of men stopped a CARDI car, attempted to extort Rp. 30 million (US\$ 3300) from the staff, and stole the car when the money was not forthcoming. Two other armed robberies seem to have been aimed at stealing reintegration funds. Staff from the Sawang, Aceh Utara, office of the WB/GoI's Kecamatan Development Project (KDP) were robbed in two separate incidents on May 7<sup>th</sup> and May 11<sup>th</sup>.<sup>6</sup> Both incidents involved armed aggressors wearing facemasks and riding a black RX King motorcycle with no license plates. KDP staff assist in disbursing reintegration funds through the BRA-KDP program for conflict victims; the victims believe that the robbers were hoping to steal such reintegration funds. Increasingly, Aceh Utara, and Sawang sub-district in particular, is becoming a more dangerous place for development work.<sup>7</sup> KDP Project staff have on several occasions faced extortion at the hands of ex-combatants, and believe that there a number of ex-combatants who are not in the KPA structure, and who are not answerable to KPA leaders, and involved in the robberies.

**Vigilantism: abuses of khalwat power**

This month there were 13 vigilante incidents, six of which were violent. Only two of these were beatings of suspected thieves, a drop from last month's high level of seven. The vigilante incidents this month were of several different types. Together, they show a number of risks associated with vigilante action.

On two occasions, groups of men, suspected to be *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) students, forcibly split up gatherings. The first was a prayer session; the other was a recreation excursion. Such vigilante actions represent the

**Box 2: Abusing *khalwat* power**

- *Khalwat blackmail, Batee Tunggai village, Aceh Selatan, May 28<sup>th</sup>.* A young couple sitting together at the beach were accosted by six young men, who accused them of *khalwat*, and threatened to report them unless they paid Rp. 2.5 million (US\$ 280). The male victim went to get the money while the perpetrators held the female victim at the beach. All six men were subsequently arrested by police. Upon investigation, police said that three of the men were KPA members, and that they admitted to having carried out such blackmail many times.
- *Khalwat video, Lhok Nga, Aceh Besar, May 25<sup>th</sup>.* A video was distributed on mobile phones and the internet, showing a young couple being forced to carry out sexual acts by a group of about 15 men. It appears that the men had caught the couple in a *khalwat* situation, and then, threatening to report to their parents and to the press, forced them to perform for the camera.

<sup>6</sup> These incidents did not appear in the newspapers; the victims did not report to police after having been threatened by the robbers.

<sup>7</sup> Another robbery of BRA-KDP staff occurred in Seunoddon, Aceh Utara, in March, where robbers succeeded in stealing Rp. 62 million in project funds. See the March 2007 Update.

introduction of thug tactics into negotiations about proper religious behavior. In Pidie, a man was killed after being accused of practicing black magic, perhaps showing the desire to blame somebody for current misfortune. In two cases this month, youth carrying out vigilante *khalwat* raids were reported to have committed crimes (see Box 2 for details). These incidents underline the vulnerable position in which people are placed when vigilantes are allowed to take on policing duties.

Finally, *khalwat* arrests conducted by WH (*shari'ah* police) themselves caused controversy. On May 5<sup>th</sup>, in Aceh Tamiang, seven WH officers were taken hostage by a group of 50 people after having arrested a young couple for *khalwat*. The perpetrators demanded the release of the young couple, saying they were frustrated that a local parliament member who was arrested for *khalwat* and sentenced five months ago has still not been caned (the member is still appealing his sentence). The WH officers were released after a few hours, after freeing the young couple. This incident shows that citizens are anxious to ensure that WH power is not merely used to oppress the poor and powerless.