

# Aceh Pilkada Dynamics Update

11 November – 5 December 2006

Forbes Damai/DSF



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ACEH



The upcoming *pilkada* (local executive) elections are a crucial part of the Helsinki peace process. Understanding Aceh's post-conflict elections are crucial to ensuring their success. The electoral process itself and outcomes also provide insights into what Aceh's longer-term transition from violent conflict to peace will look like politically. As part of a joint UNDP-World Bank elections study, sponsored by the Decentralization Support Facility (DSF), *Forbes Damai* (Aceh Joint Forum for Peace) will disseminate regular updates as a way of summarizing and documenting *pilkada* dynamics and developments. This Update primarily presents findings from UNDP/World Bank field visits to eight districts<sup>1</sup>, *pilkada* conflict monitoring of four local newspapers (Aceh Kita, Aceh Rakyat, Serambi, and Waspada) conducted during November, as well as information from local contacts.<sup>2</sup>

## Summary

The start of campaigning has seen an increase in violent election-related incidents. However, barring a few cases, former conflict-related cleavages have not re-emerged in election-related disputes demonstrating that the overall commitment to the peace process is strong. Instead, local tensions and election dynamics seem to vary widely between districts – and this is likely to mitigate against province-wide conflict. The majority of campaign-related incidents relate to turf scuffles between campaign teams. The running of two KPA/GAM-affiliated gubernatorial candidates, and an attack on one of them, has exposed internal divisions within KPA/GAM. Although it does not look like widespread internal KPA/GAM conflict will disrupt the election, isolated clashes between supporters of both tickets are likely to continue.

Preparations for the elections by KIP and Panwas have been rushed and inadequately financed in many areas. Panwas, in particular, has been crippled by a lack of funds and personnel which could compromise oversight on polling day. In general, candidates rely on their *tim sukses* as well as political party networks, party-affiliated/national youth groups, backing from religious leaders or networks, and loyal government officials to deliver votes. In most district races, the main contenders appear to be former office-bearers, including *ex-bupati*, backed by big, well-resourced parties who have always won in those areas. This could be due both to resources for campaigning and to the fact that people actually know who they are. If money politics determines the outcomes, this trend will raise questions about the quality of the elections even if they are conducted peacefully.

## I. OVERALL PILKADA DYNAMICS

### *Pilkada-related conflict incidents drop then rise again*

The number of conflict incidents dropped dramatically in the second half of October only to return to 18 and increase to 27 incidents in the first and second halves of November respectively (see

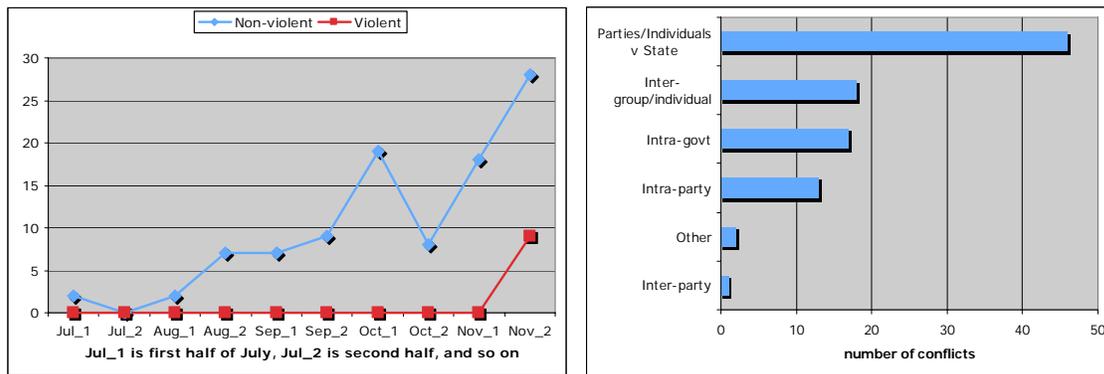
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<sup>1</sup> These districts were Aceh Barat, Nagan Raya, Aceh Tengah, Bener Meriah, Aceh Jaya, Pidie, Aceh Utara, and Aceh Timur.

<sup>2</sup> The *Pilkada* conflict monitoring dataset tracks conflict incidents as reported in regional newspapers. There are limitations to using newspapers to map conflict. For more analysis of the methodology see: Patrick Barron and Joanne Sharpe (2005). "Counting Conflict: Using Newspaper Reports to Understand Violence in Indonesia", *Indonesian Social Development Paper* No. 7. Jakarta: World Bank.

Figure 1). The decline at the end of October is probably the result of the end of the Ramadan Idul Fitri holidays and due to the fact that newspapers did not publish from 24 to 26 October. Less positively, the first violent *pilkada*-related incident occurred on the 19 November, followed by additional violent incidents from 22 November onwards as campaigning got underway on 25 November (see summaries below).<sup>3</sup> Those actors involved in conflict incidents have shifted as candidates have been finalized (6 November) and campaigning has began. Both intra-government and inter-party incidents have remained stable, whereas the number of party/individual versus state, and inter-group/individual disputes has increased, the latter jumping from six to 17 incidents in one fortnight (see Figure 2). Intra-party incidents remain stable with conflicts centered around disputes within campaign teams (*tim sukses*) or between campaign workers and candidates.

Figure 1: *Pilkada*-related conflict incidents by fortnight Figure 2: Main actors involved in *Pilkada*-related conflicts



Source: UNDP/WB *pilkada* newspaper dataset

### ***Incidents involving inter-group/individual actors most violent***

Of the nine violent disputes recorded by the newspaper monitoring dataset in the last two weeks of November, eight involved inter-group/individual actors with one other involving parties/individuals and the state. In most cases, those responsible were identified as “*orang tak kenal*” (unidentified assailants). Here we describe these nine cases as well as several others encountered during fieldwork.

- **19 November, Banda Aceh.** The National Indonesian Youth Committee (KNPI) held a debate between gubernatorial candidates at the Swiss-Belhotel in Banda Aceh that was broadcast live on national television. The event turned violent when two KIP commissioners arrived to stop the event as official campaigning had not begun.
- **22 November, Bireuen.** Days later, a more serious incident took place when Humam from the H2O candidature<sup>4</sup> and his bus were attacked. Unconfirmed reports indicate that a group of Irwandi-Nazar KPA/GAM supporters were responsible and that the incident may be connected to Malik Mahmud’s visit to Aceh and his support for the H2O ticket. Indeed, in most districts of Aceh with the exception of Pidie, there exists strong disapproval of Hasbi and the Sweden-based GAM leadership’s decision to field a GAM-affiliated candidate under a national party and as a deputy governor.
- **24 November, Pidie.** A man was brutally beaten in an election-related incident.
- **28 November, Pidie.** A member of the Golkar candidate’s *tim sukses* was kidnapped on the 28 November and subsequently released unharmed the next day. The victim is a member of the

<sup>3</sup> The latest incidents are not yet included in our *pilkada* conflict monitoring dataset, which runs until 30 November.

<sup>4</sup> The gubernatorial ticket of Humam Hamid and Hasbi Abdullah has adopted the nickname of H2O, meaning “Humam-Hasbi-OK!”.

local parliament and the head of the Forkab, an organization understood to consist of those previously involved in anti-separatist activities. Unconfirmed reports suggest the matter may not be election-related but to do with personal debt issues.

- 25 November, Banda Aceh. *Serambi* reported the destruction of one *bupati* candidate's campaign material. The matter was not reported to Panwas.
- 26 November, Bener Meriah. KPA/GAM-affiliated candidate Fauzan Azima's campaign posters were torn down by members of TNI Battalion 114 according to witnesses. The incident has been reported to the Bener Meriah Panwas.
- 25, 26 and 29 November, Lhokseumawe. Newspapers reported three separate incidents involving the burning of gubernatorial candidates' billboards in Lhokseumawe. Golkar candidate Malik Raden appears to be the most commonly targeted.
- 29 November, 1 & 3 December, Aceh Tengah. A number of incidents involving the main contender for the *bupati* race, Mahreje from Golkar, and his campaign team, took place. On 29 November, Mahreje's campaign workers came to blows with a rival's *tim sukses* over who had the right to paste candidate stickers in Lut Tawar *kecamatan*. In a separate incident on 1 December, Mahreje assaulted a member of his own campaign team for failing to deliver sufficient numbers of supporters when he was campaigning in Jagung *kecamatan*.<sup>5</sup> Tensions between Mahreje and his *tim sukses* escalated when he discovered on 3 December that a coordinator was also working for the H2O ticket, leading to a scuffle and to the coordinator's dismissal.
- 30 November, Bireuen. Supporters of the PAN-PKS gubernatorial candidate were physically ambushed (*dihadang*) and prevented from attending a campaign rally. The head of *tim sukses* was reported to have forgiven the assailants.
- 1 December, Aceh Selatan. The *bupati* reported that several village heads in three *kecamatan* and at least one *camat* had been threatened and told to ensure the success of a particular gubernatorial ticket. As a result, one village head had already handed in his letter of resignation whilst others were afraid to report for work or had temporarily left their villages.
- 3 December, Aceh Utara and Pidie. A member of the Azwar Abubakar-Nasir Jamil (PAN-PKS) *tim sukses* was beaten in Aceh Utara and 30 kg of campaign stickers stolen. Similarly, in Pidie, a group stopped a woman distributing Azwar-Nasir publicity material, threatened her, and destroyed the material.

#### ***Local political cleavages likely to result in isolated incidents in the lead-up to election day***

The UNDP/World Bank fieldwork, conducted in eight districts, turned up a range of localized dynamics that are causing or are likely to generate tensions as election day approaches. For example, in Pidie electoral competition between two main candidates has resulted in high levels of voter mobilization through various political and social networks, whereas in Nagan Raya several candidates are seen to represent particular Islamic sects or historical polities. In Aceh Utara, religious leaders (*ulama*) are split between two pairs of candidates causing one religious leader to send out a circular openly endorsing one candidate who is also an *ulama*. In Bener Meriah, where two anti-separatist leaders and a former GAM military commander are running for office, the anti-separatist leaders have turned on each other; *putra daerah* credentials or local identity politics have become a more potent issue than former conflict-related identities.<sup>6</sup> In many districts, former

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<sup>5</sup> The incident on the 29 November had not (yet) been reported in provincial newspapers when the *pilkada* conflict monitoring dataset was compiled.

<sup>6</sup> “*Putra daerah*”, literally “sons of the soil”, is the key political identity issue that has emerged from Indonesia's recent decentralization process. It is manifest across Indonesia in movements to form new provinces and districts based on local identities as well as in political contests where *putra daerah* candidates are portrayed as local champions defending local interests against “outsiders”, even though the outsider in question may live in the neighboring district.

*bupati* and office-bearers who are contesting the elections have been accused of stacking the local bureaucracy with their supporters.

These tensions and cleavages are likely to result in serious localized conflict and even violence, and in some cases already have done so. However, their source in a range of local and quite disparate tensions suggests that widespread province-wide conflict is unlikely. Barring a few incidents, former conflict-related cleavages have not re-emerged in election-related disputes or incidents of violence, demonstrating that overall commitment to the peace process is strong. That said, the maintenance of security strongly depends on the response of various groups, particularly the police and TNI, but also KPA/GAM. In Aceh Utara, lingering hostility between police at the sub-district level and GAM is apparent and minor clashes between both sides have already affected the electoral process with members of the local police being rowdy and disruptive when KPA/GAM campaign workers were trying to meet villagers.

There are two policy implications. To date the police and military have shown a relatively professional attitude in their preparation and handling of election security. It is crucial that this continues and that certain rogue elements are not tempted or allowed to take advantage of and manipulate such incidents. For similar reasons, rapid and accurate information on such isolated incidents will be important. Where they do occur, they need to be quickly investigated and explained to the public in order to prevent a domino effect.

#### ***Electoral competition has magnified leadership rifts within KPA/GAM***

KPA/GAM's transition from a military movement to a political organization has occurred quickly and in a somewhat ad hoc manner. The organization seems to have little funding and its leadership is displaying generational as well as Aceh-based versus Sweden-based cleavages.<sup>7</sup> The decision whether to field KPA/GAM-affiliated candidates and who this should be has magnified differences within the organization and culminated in the running of two KPA/GAM-affiliated gubernatorial candidates. However, despite this leading to intra-KPA/GAM tensions in the field, the leadership split at the provincial-level (or *wilayah* in the KPA/GAM vocabulary) has largely not been replicated at the district(*sagoe*)-level. For example, in Aceh Timur, where two KPA/GAM-affiliated candidates are contesting the elections, one has declared himself to be independent of KPA/GAM and is not using KPA/GAM resources and the *sagoe* structure. Recent fieldwork indicates that most district KPA/GAM leaders have tended to back one of two gubernatorial candidates. Almost all local KPA/GAM leaders support Irwandi-Nazar with the exception of those in Pidie, where the local leadership and KPA/GAM-affiliated *bupati* candidate staunchly supports the H2O ticket. In Nagan Raya, where the KPA/GAM leadership support the Irwandi-Nazar ticket, one of two GAM-affiliated candidates is also supporting the H2O ticket.

Although unthinkable only one year ago, the potential for internal KPA/GAM conflict was demonstrated with the attack by Irwandi supporters on Humam in Bireuen on 22 November. Similarly, H2O campaign teams have been prevented from using *sagoe* resources to promote their ticket in Bener Meriah. Although a clear indication of disillusionment within the ranks and dysfunctional leadership within KPA/GAM, it does not look like widespread internal KPA/GAM conflict will disrupt the election. On 28 November, KPA central and regional branches made a formal announcement declaring non-partisanship in the elections. Nonetheless, a list of GAM-endorsed candidates obtained on 30 November from Munawir Liza Zein, the KPA spokesman, clearly identified Irwandi and Nazar as the KPA/GAM gubernatorial ticket. Thus it seems highly likely that isolated clashes between supporters of both tickets will continue.

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<sup>7</sup> The latest ICG report provides an insightful analysis, ICG (2006), 'Aceh's Local Elections: The Role of the Free Aceh Movement (GAM)', Asia Briefing No. 57, Jakarta/Brussels.

### ***KIP and Panwas: Overly rushed, inadequately financed***

The most disturbing finding from the fieldwork conducted in most districts was the lack of adequate preparation and funding for the elections. Regional KIP and Panwas officials complained that these elections were being forced through to meet political deadlines with little regard for the quality of the process. In most cases, the delay in passing the Aceh Governance law, as well as the possibility of run-off elections, required revisions to local government budgets involving lengthy debates. As late as 24 November, KIP and/or Panwas in Aceh Utara, Aceh Tengah and Nagan Raya were still waiting for government budgets to be approved or disbursed, and were having to rely on “advances” from local government in order to cover their current expenses. According to KIP and Panwas officials in all districts visited, this has resulted in cutbacks or delays in training of election officials and appears to have negatively impacted the socialization of the elections. Even in Pidie where electoral institutional capacity has been strong, and coordination with local government generally good, Panwas officials went on strike from 1 December because government funds to cover operational costs and staff salaries for the last three months had not been disbursed.

In particular, the ability of Panwas to carry out its oversight role at each stage of the electoral process has been severely compromised as most district-level Panwas were only established after key stages of the electoral process, including voter registration and eligibility tests of candidates, had already taken place. This has exacerbated existing doubts about the validity of the voter lists in many districts. The selection of Panwas by district parliamentarians who have vested interests in the elections also throws the neutrality of Panwas into question. Furthermore, Panwas is under-resourced: with only five officials at the district level and three at the sub-district level, the ability of Panwas to investigate all reports of electoral violations and to patrol their areas regularly is limited. Whilst Panwas has realized that this is a significant problem and has contingency plans in place to train and pay for volunteers who would be stationed at each polling booth on polling day to assist Panwas, there is uncertainty over additional funds from local governments to pay for this.

Compared to the 2004 elections across Indonesia, the role of local NGOs in voter education has been limited. KIP has focused primarily on training local election officials and “socializing” village heads on the mechanics of voting. Local NGOs in Aceh Utara, Aceh Tengah and Bener Meriah believe that socialization efforts need to focus more on neighborhood heads and local community, youth and women leaders to be really effective. They also point out that most Acehnese have had prior experience in voting for village heads and in the 2004 elections, so they do not need more sessions on the mechanics of voting. Instead, most people need information to help them decide between candidates; debates between candidates is a good way of seeing candidates think on their feet, instead of just reciting their “*visi misi*” or campaign platforms.

### ***Police seem neutral and prepared***

As a centralized agency, district police in Aceh are following standardized schedules and policy guidelines set by Jakarta to secure the elections. In several districts visited, police operations were running well, including polling day simulations for election officials and trainings of *linmas*<sup>8</sup> at the district and sub-district levels who will be on duty at polling stations. As with the 2004 elections, the main conflict prevention tool employed by the police is the classification of villages/polling stations into three broad categories: sensitive (*rawan*), moderate risk (*sedang*) and normal (*biasa*)

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<sup>8</sup> *Linmas* or civilian defence consist of village volunteers who can be called upon to assist government agencies particularly during events like elections. In this instance, *Kesbanglinmas*, a unit within the Ministry of Home Affairs, provides the budget and the police conduct the training.

that will determine deployment of personnel.<sup>9</sup> The police are clear about their role in securing the elections in a way that does not interfere with the democratic process. Consequently, it is the role of *linmas* to maintain order within the polling stations, whilst police personnel are within reach but outside a 200 meter perimeter.

The main challenges facing the police include access to remote villages in difficult terrain and insufficient personnel. To compensate for this, the police have established informal posts at polling stations with local leaders at hand to diffuse tensions that may arise. Police do have the option of seeking assistance from the military who will be on stand-by but otherwise not directly involved in securing the elections. There are police representatives in Panwas at all levels in addition to intelligence officers at the *kecamatan* level to assist the district police chief in deployment decisions. Police also meet regularly with all campaign managers to ensure that they are notified of campaign activities and that authorisation has been obtained to stage events. On the whole, police are applying “objective intelligence” in their policing, i.e. identifying potential trouble-makers and deploying accordingly irrespective of ideological stripe. Higher-ranking police officers at the district level generally acknowledged that KPA/GAM leaders are committed to peaceful elections, although they still expect minor scuffles to occur between campaign teams which typically occurs during elections in Indonesia. Their main concerns included unregistered voters turning up to vote on polling day and campaign teams reacting negatively to disappointing results.

#### ***Campaigning: Covert, cash-based and relatively little conflict***

Across Aceh, campaigning was preceded by candidates pledging to ensure peaceful campaigns and elections. This generally took the form of district-level “public” ceremonies witnessed by the *muspida*<sup>10</sup>, local parliament and government officers, though the wider public was not always present. The content of the *MOU Pilkada Damai* across districts ranged from generic moral commitments to peace to more binding agreements where candidates agreed to be held responsible for the behavior of their campaign teams.<sup>11</sup> The timing of the elections in Aceh meant that most candidates used the fasting month and Ramadan to conduct covert campaigning or “meet the people sessions”. Many candidates who had taken leave of office in order to contest the elections made use of government facilities to hold *halal-bihalal* ceremonies inviting *camats* and village heads in an obvious bid to gain their support. Panwas’ inability to prevent or act on covert campaigning during this period dented their credibility. Another form of covert campaigning involved the role of candidates or running mates as respected religious leaders invited to lead Friday afternoon prayers or officiate at weddings and other events. Many local observers said that this was a very effective way of gaining support given the respect that Acehnese have for religious leaders. The importance of religion and the link being made between religious credentials and clean government also explains the popularity of religious leaders as candidates or running mates.

The current campaigns are a departure from previous years in that there have been fewer large-scale, open campaigns; smaller meetings or door-to-door campaigning have been more common, reducing the likelihood of confrontations between larger groups of supporters. Local observers attribute this to several reasons: candidates being unsure of the real level of support they enjoy and not wishing to “expose” it through low turn-outs; lack of funds preventing KPA/GAM-affiliated candidates in particular from organizing transport or food for large turn-outs; and candidates

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<sup>9</sup> See Patrick Barron, Melina Nathan and Bridget Welsh (2005), “Consolidating Indonesia’s Democracy: Conflict, Institutions and the “Local” in the 2004 Legislative Elections”, CPR Working Paper No 31, World Bank: Washington, D.C. (pp. 21-22).

<sup>10</sup> *Muspida* refers to a grouping of key agencies at the district level including the *bupati*, military commander, police chief, district judge, prosecutor, head of *syariah* court and head of religious leaders.

<sup>11</sup> *MOU Pilkada Damai*, or MOU for Peaceful Elections, linking the elections to the peace process.

guarding against the poaching of their supporters, which generally takes place during the lull just before polling day through *serangan fajar* which occurred in 2004.<sup>12</sup> The campaigning period has not seen major conflicts with incidents confined to minor scuffles between campaign workers fighting over turf for posting campaign materials. There have been no restrictions on supporters attending *kecamatan* campaigns but Panwas and the police have forbidden convoys with banners and loud-speakers from making the rounds.

Contrary to expectations, the mobilization of GAM and former anti-separatist networks leading to clashes has not occurred thus far in the hotspots of Bener Meriah, Aceh Tengah and Aceh Utara.<sup>13</sup> This is because the *Front Pembela Tanah Air* (PETA) has been riven by internal conflict and rivalries since its inception. At the height of the conflict between 1999- 2003, a common cause kept all constituent groups and leaders together. However, with no common enemy, internal divisions have come to the fore. Instead candidates have been relying on various networks including political parties, party-affiliated/national youth groups, backing from religious leaders or networks, family or clan networks, as well as “loyal” local government officials. This puts pressure on independent candidates who do not have access to these networks. Party-backed candidates have to pay small fortunes to use party resources and stand to lose their shirts if they do not win.

Money politics seems to be widespread and funnelled through *tim sukses* structures that extend down to the village level. These *tim sukses* are often promised rewards if they deliver votes leading some to act as brokers for more than one candidate. This explains the rise in intra-party incidents involving candidates and their *tim sukses* who are handsomely paid to deliver votes. It also explains why the front-runners in many district races are those backed political parties with deep pockets such as Golkar. It remains to be seen if money politics will influence voters or whether they will pocket the money and vote independently.

## II. DISTRICT CASE STUDIES

### *Aceh Barat: Institutional weaknesses cloud relatively stable electoral competition*

KIP and Panwas are fully formed and at least KIP is funded. Staff of both are seen as heavily partial; two staff members of KIP are close relatives of candidates, and civil society groups have protested the appointment of two Panwas members who were board members of political parties. There are suspicions that the voter list announced by KIP is larger than it should be, possibly assisted by the proliferation of fake KTPs for tsunami aid. This raises the possibility that these ‘phantom votes’ could be utilized improperly to support a particular candidate.

In Aceh Barat, inter-community tensions do not seem high and ethnic divisions seem neither deep nor tense, even though there is one candidate from the ethnic Javanese community. KPA/GAM has fielded one candidate, who supports Irwandi-Nazar at the provincial level. A former *bupati* is the Golkar candidate, and is reported to have the most funding. Two other candidates have substantial funds from private backers, which suggests that a victorious candidate would owe a return on this investment. There seem to be few organizations involved in campaign mobilization and anti-separatist groups are not meaningfully present. Mobilization seems to not be primarily through *ulama*, youth groups, *preman*, or ethnic structures; rather, *tim sukses* are reaching out to villages through kin connections or approaches to individual *geuchik* (village heads) and other village-level *tokoh masyarakat* (community leaders). *Tim sukses* are said to attempt to influence *geuchik* through

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<sup>12</sup> *Serangan fajar* or “dawn attacks” refers to attempts to influence villagers just before polling day with gifts of cash or in-kind. These were widespread in 2004 and many believe they will recur this year.

<sup>13</sup> In Bener Meriah and Aceh Tengah, former anti-separatist leaders and senior KPA/GAM members are in the *bupati* race. Aceh Utara is the base of the anti-separatist organisation, Berantas.

promises or donations, but *geuchik* seem wise to this and, as one stated, will “take their money and then vote for whoever we want.” There are some signs of *tim sukses* piggybacking on aid programs, but this seems incidental rather than systematic. Overall people seem traumatized by conflict and afraid to talk too much, and seem to care little who wins as long as there is peace. Apart from the KPA/GAM supporters, many people see the candidates as all the same.

***Aceh Jaya: Low mobilization, community interest and institutional capacity***

In contrast to other districts, electoral institutions in Aceh Jaya are less prepared. They are hampered by communication difficulties, funding delays and the lack of capacity. Panwas is the most severely affected and, at the time of fieldwork, barely functions. The election supervisory committee had yet to receive its budget just weeks away from the elections and had only received two loans from the local government, which has allowed them to hold two trainings. On 22 November they still had no office, had not yet been able to recruit village volunteers due to the lack of funds, and had resigned themselves to only responding to violations if they are reported by candidates and *tim sukses* rather than pro-actively monitoring the election process. One KIP official noted, “Panwas will only watch and take notes, if something actually happens it will be KIP and the police that will take the report and respond.” KIP and the police are less affected.

The level of mobilization and community interest is low in Aceh Jaya. It seems this is for two reasons. Communities are preoccupied with tsunami reconstruction and re-establishing their lives and livelihoods, and are therefore relatively uninterested in the elections. Another factor is that candidates have, to date, used rather benign methods of mobilization, relying on their sub-district party structures to arrange meetings with village leaders, rather than utilizing social organizations and mass campaigns. A group of fisherman in Calang even complained that, in contrast to the 2004 elections, there had been few campaign events, t-shirts and other campaign paraphernalia that had captured the community’s attention. Interestingly, the relatively slow pace of tsunami reconstruction in Aceh Jaya is not a campaign issue. Most villagers do not think that the local government has a role in the reconstruction process and that delays are the responsibility of the BRR (Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Agency) and international organizations. However, one candidate has reportedly presented BRR projects as his own and many villagers see the role candidates have played in post-tsunami emergency and reconstruction as an important indication of their commitment to Aceh Jaya.

***Pidie: High-levels of mobilization suggest incidents likely, but mitigated by strong institutions***

Relative to some other districts, the electoral institutions responsible for implementation of the elections in Pidie are well prepared. KIP was one of the first district offices to submit their tentative electoral rolls, Panwas is functioning and active, the police have held simulations of election day, conducted multiple trainings for *linmas*, and have opened communication channels with all candidates and *tim sukses* as well as KPA/GAM. All agencies hold regular although ad-hoc coordination meetings. In addition, many of those responsible for election implementation at the village-level have previous presidential and legislative election experience behind them and feel confident in their capacity to manage events on election day.

Being a crucial district population-wise, mobilization of the Pidie electorate is high. Of the seven *bupati* candidates, the two most active are the Yahya-Ishak and Mirza-Nazir candidatures. Yahya is the former *bupati* from the Golkar party. He is backed by a large coalition of nine parties and has, in addition, the support of numerous organizations, including Pemuda Pancasila (nationalist youth organization), Forkab (reportedly former anti-separatist front members) and Forkada (religious student organization). Mirza-Nazir is the KPA/GAM-affiliated ticket and, in an indication of the KPA/GAM’s capacity to mobilize the community, had over 20,000 attend the launch of their

candidature on the 4 November.<sup>14</sup> Given this high-level of mobilization and the likelihood of a “newcomer” versus “old guard” (i.e. Mirza-Nazir versus Yahya-Ishak) run-off, isolated tensions and violence and conflict both pre- and post-election seems likely. However, more widespread and serious conflict is likely to be mitigated by three factors. First, the Yahya coalition incorporates a wide range of identities and affiliations that will diffuse the “newcomer” versus “old guard” cleavage. Second, the candidates and *tim sukses* have made public declarations in support of peaceful elections and are likely to campaign on the inclusive, albeit generic, issues of poverty, governance and development. Third, the relative professionalism of the electoral institutions in Pidie, including the police, is likely to result in a legitimate and widely accepted result.

***Nagan Raya: Ethnicity, religious sects, and a KPA/GAM split divides voters***

In Nagan Raya KIP seems weak and Panwas, although having several reformist members, suffers from a lack of funding (none having been delivered by 23 November) and the fact that they were formed late. Specifically, there are complaints that although one candidate passed his Koran reading test, his skills are known to be lacking. The Koran reading test took place behind closed doors and before Panwas was formed; they are thus unable to deal with this problem, but it may come back to haunt the candidate if he wins.

Several election-related dynamics have some potential to lead to conflict in Nagan Raya. First, a split between two religious groupings divides voters. Three candidates ally with the Cik di Kila sect and two represent the Plekong sect. Both splits amongst followers of a particular sect (who support different candidates) and rivalries between the two sects could lead to conflict; on the other hand support may be so fragmented that nothing comes of it. Second, three of the candidates claim descent from past rulers of sub-regions within what is now Nagan Raya. To some degree people see this election as a contest between these different historical polities, and have intense loyalties to one or the other. Third, the KPA/GAM leadership split at the provincial level is replicated at the district level with two KPA/GAM candidates separately supporting H2O and the Irwandi-Nazar candidates.<sup>15</sup> This is causing tensions amongst GAM supporters who resent colleagues who support the opposing candidate. Finally, the population of the district is almost half ethnically Javanese; efforts to secure the Javanese votes thus have the potential to decide the election.

***Bener Meriah: Some inflammatory campaigning, but tempered by strong institutions***

In Bener Meriah, both electoral institutions demonstrate strong capacity with experienced staff who were also election officials in 2004. Coordination with local government has been good and government advances to cover operational costs and staff salaries have been sufficient. Relations between KIP and Panwas are good with regular meetings to discuss election-related issues. When Panwas faced difficulties in removing candidate socialization material after 6 November, KIP at the district level instructed all PPKs (*kecamatan* level election committee) and PPGs (village level election committee) to assist their Panwas colleagues.<sup>16</sup> In order to prevent election-related altercations during campaigning, Panwas Bener Meriah has placed restrictions on *kecamatan* level campaigning; only residents can participate in campaigns held in each *kecamatan*. Large groups of supporters from outside the *kecamatan* are turned away. The system seemed to work on the first day of campaigning when Panwas officials stationed at the Pintu Rime Gayo *kecamatan* border spotted cars ferrying in people that they did not recognize. Panwas reported this to the *kecamatan*

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<sup>14</sup> Other candidates are also mobilizing support. However, their respective capacities to do so are not on the same scale.

<sup>15</sup> This is made more complicated by the fact that Nagan Raya and Aceh Barat together form one *wilayah* under KPA/GAM’s structure. The leadership of this *wilayah* is said to support Irwandi-Nazar.

<sup>16</sup> PPK or *Panitia Pilkada Kecamatan* refers to KIP at the *kecamatan* level; PPG or *Panitia Pilkada Gampong* refers to KIP at the village level.

police on campaign duty who duly investigated and confirmed that the passengers were former IDPs (internally displaced persons) who had recently returned home.

The high levels of preparedness in Bener Meriah can be explained by the candidates contesting the *bupati* election which include two former leaders of the anti-separatist front, PETA, on different tickets (Misriady-Sutrisno and Tagore-Sirwandi); the former GAM regional commander (Fauzan Azima paired with Arhama, a SIRA<sup>17</sup> activist); and the former district secretary who is angling for the top job but could end up losing everything. Fears that Bener Meriah would be divided along pro-GAM and anti-separatist lines, reviving old tensions, have not been realized because Fauzan Azima is not perceived to be a serious contender in these elections. In addition, both former anti-separatist leaders have turned on one another splitting the PETA base. Compared to the other candidates who have focused their campaigns on economic development and improving the standards of religious education, Misriady, who is ethnic Gayo, is running an inflammatory campaign fuelled by appeals to *putra daerah* pride, solidarity with the Javanese (his running mate is Javanese and a local parliamentarian), and distrust of outsiders who are exploiting Bener Meriah, including 16 out of 25 parliamentarians and 75% of local government employees who work in Bener Meriah but live in neighboring Aceh Tengah district. This is an obvious reference to his main rival, Tagore, head of Bener Meriah parliament, who resides in Aceh Tengah. The other campaigns have been relatively low-key and Fauzan in particular has focused on small meetings and door-to-door campaigning by his *tim sukses* because he lacks funds for larger events. The Bener Meriah police who face an acute personnel shortage – 503 officers are needed to adequately cover this large district but current capacity stands at 217 – have performed professionally to date. They have to rely on accurate intelligence in order to accurately deploy scarce resources. Tellingly, on the first day of campaigning, it was Misriady's campaign that was assigned the largest police contingent because of potential trouble. By contrast, at other campaigns including Fauzan's, only a few policemen were present.

### ***Aceh Tengah: The dominance of local elites and money politics***

In Aceh Tengah, KIP performed well until a printing error affecting one of the candidate's name on the ballot paper required a second batch to be reprinted. This is already being seen as a corruption case in the making. Panwas is seen to have been “purely decorative”: one member's journalist credentials are dubious and another is the son-in-law of a local parliamentarian linked to a candidate. Adequate funds for Panwas has been a problem and money only became available last week to hire volunteers to assist with oversight at each polling booth. In addition, four newly-formed *kecamatan* have not been allocated staff and funding, further stretching already over-extended staff.

There are eight pairs of candidates contesting the *bupati* elections and money politics is the main issue in this contest, casting intra-party rivalries and competition for the anti-separatist front's resources into the shade. The former *bupati*, Nasaruddin, has been accused by all other candidates of stacking the local bureaucracy with his loyalists to secure his position in this election. At the *MOU Pilkada Damai* ceremony on 20 November, other candidates demanded that the current caretaker *bupati* remove all 14 *camats* who were accused of backing Nasaruddin. The Golkar candidate, Mahreje, has the extensive Golkar party network and national youth and party-affiliated organizations such as *Pemuda Pancasila* (*Pancasila* Youth) and AMPG supporting him.<sup>18</sup> He has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on his *tim sukses* to deliver votes and has warned that his supporters will “react strongly” if he loses. Mahreje may face competition for Golkar support from

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<sup>17</sup> SIRA or Centre for the Referendum on Aceh, a civilian-based organisation that drove the campaign for a referendum on independence for Aceh, is considered to have a considerable grassroots network.

<sup>18</sup> AMPG or *Angkatan Muda Partai Golkar*, Golkar's youth wing.

Syukur Kobath, the former head of parliament who lost out to Mahreje as the Golkar candidate, and subsequently crossed over to the Democrat party. He claims that many Golkar cadres and coordinators are still loyal to him. Both Kobath and Mahreje also claim to have the support of the anti-separatist front (PETA) in Aceh Tengah; Kobath was the official Aceh Tengah head but PETA also included many of the national youth or party-affiliated organizations that are said to support Mahreje. Intersecting support bases, a biased local bureaucracy and the role of money politics make this a tough election to call. A run-off election is almost certain and this may account for why there have not been serious clashes between the rival camps (apart from minor turf scuffles between *tim sukses*) – candidates are already preparing to forge new alliances in round two.

***Aceh Timur: Neutrality of election institutions in question, dominance of former bupati***

The dominance of the former *bupati*/Golkar candidate in this race has led to accusations that KIP Aceh Timur lacks neutrality, with complaints such as that a partisan *camat* interfered with KIP and Panwas activities in Sungei Raya *kecamatan*. KIP has tried to keep its distance from the Golkar ticket by not accepting Golkar invitations to activities such as the training of party witnesses, but suspicions remain, especially since two members of KPU Aceh Timur were caught manipulating data in the 2004 elections to secure victories for candidates.<sup>19</sup> KIP's main concerns were campaign sites in two *kecamatan* being closer than the required two kilometers' distance stipulated in the regulations, as well as needs for training its *kecamatan* officials to aggregate results from the ballot boxes correctly. Working relations between KIP and Panwas are strained, with Panwas claiming that KIP did not share information that it needed. Budget shortfalls and hard-to-access locations have prevented Panwas Aceh Timur from functioning effectively.

Front-runner Drs Azman Usman Nurddin has three main bases of support: loyal local bureaucrats from his stint as *bupati*; the Golkar party machinery; and local *ulama*. A VCD making the rounds shows a meeting of key *ulama* taking a common stand to support Azman and ensure his success. Azman's prospects have probably been boosted by the presence of two KPA/GAM-affiliated candidates, Sulaiman Ismail and Muslem Hasballah, potentially splitting the GAM vote, although Sulaiman claims to be independent of GAM/KPA. In addition, the GAM/KPA constituency may not be solidly behind its candidates; ex-combatants interviewed at the KPA office revealed that they would vote for the candidate who could best "help" them, not necessarily the GAM candidates. The Aceh Timur police chief also commented that the KPA/GAM rank and file in Aceh Timur are disillusioned with, and no longer defer to, their leaders because they have not received adequate reintegration assistance. Thus far there have been two incidents of KPA members being assaulted for supporting Azman rather than a GAM candidate.

***Aceh Utara: Preparations for elections rushed, tensions between KPA/GAM and police***

KIP and Panwas Aceh Utara were very critical of the way the elections were being rushed in order to take place before the end of the year; the head of KIP went so far as to say that these rushed elections were "crazy". He cited delays in funding as the main problem holding back the implementation time-table, specifically the establishment of PPKs and PPGs, and technical training for elections officials. The head of Panwas noted that the establishment of Panwas after key stages of the electoral process had already taken place threw into the question the validity of the elections. The "failure" of two independent candidates (including prominent KPA/GAM leader Teuku Amni) in the koran reading test raised questions because candidates were tested on their ability to *recite*

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<sup>19</sup> The elections in 2004 were legislative elections so the Indonesian name of the election committee was different, *Komisi Pemilu Umum* or KPU.

rather than read.<sup>20</sup> Panwas had not been established at the time the test was conducted but managed to convince KPA/GAM not to contest the result and to replace Amni with another candidate. The local KPA/GAM leadership proved their commitment to the peace process by rejecting the recommendation of hardliners to disrupt the elections in Aceh Utara.<sup>21</sup> Panwas officials were convinced that many KIP officials at the *kecamatan* level had been bought; Panwas officials had also received Ramadan gifts of money.

The Aceh Utara contest looks set to be a three-way race with two candidates from big parties (United Development Party and Golkar) and a very popular KPA/GAM candidate. All three candidates have formidable organizational resources behind them but Tarmizi, former *bupati*, backed by the United Development Party, is confident that Ilyas Pase (KPA/GAM) will not carry the urban vote. Tarmizi and Ghazali (from Golkar) are more equally matched and both are also supported by local *ulama*. Interviews conducted with village heads in Nisam *kecamatan*, deep in the GAM hinterland, reveal cases of attempted intimidation by Ilyas' *tim sukses*, but informants also revealed, "when they come, we keep quiet and nod, but on polling day, we know in our hearts who we will really choose and no one can force us." Panwas was most concerned about villagers in remote *kecamatan* like Nisam that were also high-impact conflict areas in the past. Recent clashes between GAM and the local police in Aceh Utara not only exacerbate these pre-existing tensions but could also spill over into the electoral process. In early November, several KPA members were present when local citizens conducted a "vice raid", catching a policeman with a young woman. Within hours, the local KPA office was raided, with members of the local police implicated in the raid. Several days later, GAM *tim sukses* members were harassed in Nisam by some members of the police, resulting in a scuffle and warning shots by the police that terrified villagers. Whilst such incidents are not common occurrences, they do point out the distance yet to be travelled by both sides for the elections and peace process to be mutually reinforcing.

### III. LOOKING AHEAD

With the elections only days away, it seems likely that they will not be marred by widespread or orchestrated violence, although we can expect incidents to occur and the process itself is less than perfect. Given the challenges faced, the conduct of the elections is another milestone in the peace process. However, over the next few months, it will be important to continue to monitor conflict dynamics as we move into different phases of the elections. The period immediately after polling day will have different dynamics in each region as candidates and their supporters assess their chances of winning; a well-designed and widely-accepted "quick count" could help prepare losing candidates and their supporters to accept the results, whereas poorly designed quick counts have the potential to inflame tensions.

Results of the gubernatorial race are expected to be announced on 2 January, while district results may be announced slightly before this. After the announcements, grievances about the process, questions about the legitimacy of winning candidates, and general disappointment of those supporting losing candidates are all likely to occur, and again will reflect local dynamics. Second round run-offs are mandatory where no candidate obtains 25% of the vote; due to the high numbers of candidates in most districts (and in the gubernatorial race), many run-offs are likely to be required. These are to take place within two months of the announced results. In the period leading up to the run-offs, new dynamics will emerge involving strategic alliances between the top two

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<sup>20</sup> Panwas was particularly concerned about the other failed candidate, who was the former head of a religious boarding school and could not recite loudly because he had suffered from a stroke, but was obviously qualified.

<sup>21</sup> Three options were discussed by KPA/GAM: 1) disrupt the election; 2) join forces with a national party; or 3) find a replacement for Amni from KPA/GAM.

candidates and influential losing candidates. In a two-way race where resources and networks can be consolidated and focused unlike the current round of elections, the potential for conflict will increase significantly.