

KEY FINDINGS

In 2025, Indonesia’s freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) conditions remained poor despite some government initiatives to improve them. The government continued to apply multiple legal instruments—including a presidential decree, the Criminal Code, and the Information and Electronic Transactions (ITE) Law—to regulate religious expression, criminalize blasphemy, and impose broad restrictions on FoRB. The government also struggled to curb FoRB violations by nonstate actors as intolerance in society persisted.

The government, as well as several religiously intolerant groups, leveraged the *Izin Mendirikan Bangunan* (IMB)—the permit required for constructing religious buildings—and the 2006 Joint Decree on Houses of Worship to obstruct minority religious communities from establishing their own places of worship. Throughout 2025, Christian churches across the country struggled to obtain IMB or gather peacefully, as intolerant individuals pressured authorities to stop their activities. Oftentimes, authorities failed to prevent recurring offenses and prosecute assailants. In January, Muslim residents in Bandung, West Java, stated they would sue leaders of Sang Hyang Hurip St. Anthony Catholic Church to prevent its building construction despite the church having received the necessary IMB. In March, the St. Odilia Catholic Church in Bandung faced protests from local Muslim residents while holding Lenten Mass. The demonstrators opposed the church’s use of a multi-purpose building for religious services, arguing that the activity required IMB. In June, a mob of approximately 200 people in Sukabumi, Surabaya, stormed a private residence used for a Christian youth retreat, accusing the attendees of gathering at an unlicensed prayer hall. The group vandalized the premises before forcing 36 children in attendance to flee. Police arrested only seven of the 200 perpetrators. Similarly, in July, a group of intolerant residents disrupted worship and religious education activities at a Christian

prayer house in Padang, West Sumatra, damaging the facilities and injuring two children. In August, authorities in East Java halted the construction of a church in Kediri City, citing the lack of IMB. In West Java, authorities in Purbayani Village shut down a prayer house before evicting its evangelist.

Ahmadiyya Muslims also continued to endure discrimination and experience difficulties conducting religious activities. In June, authorities in Banjar City prevented Ahmadiyya Muslims from carrying out worship activities in buildings that authorities had previously sealed. Also in June, the Manado State Islamic Institute canceled an Ahmadiyya book event after the Indonesian Ulema Council lodged complaints citing its 2005 fatwa against Ahmadiyya Muslims. Other religious minorities such as Jehovah’s Witnesses, Baha’is, Buddhists, and Hindus reported similar experiences, with over 400 local laws and regulations discriminating against them across the country.

Other incidents of religious intolerance included job discrimination and state favoritism for Islamic institutions. In October, the government announced its plan to finance the rebuilding of a collapsed Muslim boarding school despite its lack of IMB. In North Kalimantan, a local religious affairs office issued job postings for custodial and office security positions, requiring the applicants to be Muslim and able to recite the Qur’an. Only following public outcry, the local agency removed the religious qualification requirement.

The government’s notable efforts to improve FoRB in 2025 included the Ministry of Religious Affairs’ (MoRA) new program, “Curriculum of Love,” for religion teachers in schools to promote tolerance and respect for different religions. In March, Minister of Human Rights Natalius Pigai proposed drafting a religious freedom bill to end discrimination against minority groups. In December, MoRA hosted its first Christmas celebration within the ministry to enhance religious inclusivity.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE U.S. GOVERNMENT

- Include Indonesia on the Special Watch List for engaging in or tolerating severe violations of religious freedom pursuant to the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA);
 - Work with the Indonesian government through the U.S. Department of State to repeal or amend existing laws—including Chapter VII of the Criminal Code, blasphemy laws, and the ITE law—to comply with international human rights standards specific to FoRB, such as eliminating the 2006 Joint Decree on Houses of Worship requirement that religious groups obtain approval from other religious communities to construct worship facilities; and
 - Encourage the Indonesian government to allow citizens to select either nonbelief or religions beyond the six currently recognized in the religion column of the national identification card.
- The U.S. Congress should:
- Raise Indonesia’s religious freedom conditions and advocate for the release of FoRB prisoners through delegation visits, meetings, and hearings, including through the Congressional Friends of Indonesia Caucus.

KEY USCIRF RESOURCES & ACTIVITIES

- **Factsheet:** [The Responsibility of Host Countries to Protect Refugees Fleeing Religious Persecution — Examples from South and Southeast Asia](#)
- **Country Update:** [Indonesia](#)
- **Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief [Victims List](#) and [Appendix 2](#)**

Background

Indonesia is the world's most populous Muslim-majority country. With a population of over 280 million, the Southeast Asian country has approximately 87 percent of the population identifying as Muslim, with the vast majority adhering to Sunni Islam. Other minority Muslim communities include Shi'a and Ahmadiyya. Protestant Christians account for 7.5 percent of the population, while Roman Catholics make up 3.1 percent. Hindus represent 1.7 percent. The remaining 0.8 percent includes followers of Buddhism, Confucianism, and other traditional beliefs.

Pancasila, a philosophical theory that undergirds Indonesia's governance and identity, is deeply embedded in Indonesia's constitution and guides the country's political, social, and cultural spheres. While the Indonesian government promotes interreligious harmony and tolerance based on *Pancasila*, the ideology's monotheistic interpretation of religion excludes minority groups like Ahmadiyya and Shi'a Muslims as well as Baha'is, atheists, and nontheists.

Although the government added a seventh category—*keperayaan* (belief)—as a recognized religion on national identification cards in 2024, allowing followers of indigenous beliefs who do not adhere to the six recognized religions (Islam, Buddhism, Catholicism, Confucianism, Hinduism, and Protestantism) to note their affiliation, the Constitutional Court denied nonbelievers the right to leave the religion field blank on official documents in a 2025 ruling. Additionally, Indonesia does not legally recognize interfaith marriage, resulting in couples' inability to register their union or requiring one party to convert to the religion of their spouse; if one spouse is Muslim, it is often the non-Muslim spouse that is legally required to convert to Islam for the marriage to be recognized.

New Criminal Code and Accompanying Procedure

Indonesia's new Criminal Code (RUU KUHP), scheduled to take effect in 2026, will replace the colonial-era Dutch Penal Code. The RUU KUHP broadens the existing blasphemy provisions by introducing penalties for "hostility based on religion" in addition to the current prohibitions against "insulting" or "defaming" religion. Other concerning additions include articles outlawing leaving a religion or belief as "apostasy," enforcing Islamic morality interpretations on individuals regardless of their religion or belief, and permitting blasphemy allegations stemming from a person's social media and online presence.

In November, the Indonesian Parliament unanimously passed the revision of the Criminal Procedure Code (KUHAP) into law to align with RUU KUHP. Critics argued that the passage signifies a regression in the country's commitment to human rights, as it would expand police authority, legitimize arbitrary detention, and provide unchecked investigative powers.

Blasphemy and Hate Speech

The government and members of Indonesian society continued to wield existing blasphemy laws to target those accused of insulting others' religion. In January, a Catholic youth forum in East Nusa Tenggara Province accused a Catholic beautician of blasphemy after she criticized a

diocese for evicting indigenous people from their land, although police later dropped the charge after the two parties reconciled. In March, the district court in Medan found Ratu Thalisa, a Muslim influencer who had commented on Jesus's hair in a video, guilty of spreading hate speech against Christianity and sentenced her to two years and 10 months and a 100,000,000 rupiah (\$6,200) fine.

A positive development took place in November, when MoRA officials acknowledged the widespread influence of religious hate speech on social media, saying it reflects the intolerance of those who adopt a rigid interpretation of religious texts and exclude others in society. Accordingly, they called for the government, media, and the public to place tolerance as the foundation of the nation.

Key U.S. Policy

The United States and Indonesia continued to guide their relations through both the [U.S.-Indonesia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership](#) and the U.S.-Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, which support a shared vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific region. In 2025, the two countries collaborated across a wide range of issues, such as trade, maritime security, military exchange, and counterterrorism efforts.

In January, Indonesia's MoRA [signed](#) a memorandum of understanding with the U.S. Embassy in Indonesia to promote educational exchange between the two countries through the Fulbright scholarship program. In April, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio [met](#) with Indonesian Foreign Minister Sugiono to discuss defense and security cooperation and trade. In September, the State Department's East Asian and Pacific Affairs Senior Bureau Official Kevin Kim [visited](#) Indonesia to advance U.S.-Indonesia and regional cooperation on "trade, business, energy, and emerging technology."

The Donald J. Trump administration [paused](#) or [eliminated](#) critical preventative programs that were intended to strengthen Indonesia's capacity to combat terrorism and extremism. Additionally, other U.S. initiatives uplifting Indonesia, such as its Strategic Religious Engagement policy, were no longer supported. Furthermore, support for hundreds of Rohingya refugees in Indonesia was scaled back due to reduced U.S. funding.

In April, bipartisan co-chairs of the House Abraham Accords Caucus introduced [H.Res.320](#) to encourage the State Department and civil society to further the Abraham Accords by encouraging peace and tolerance in education, citing potential progress "in particular to Saudi Arabia and Indonesia." In July, Representative Riley Moore (R-WV) and Senator Josh Hawley (R-MO) introduced [H.Res.594](#) and [S.Res.327](#), respectively, to condemn the persecution of Christians in Muslim-majority countries such as Indonesia; Representative Mario Diaz-Balart (R-FL) and Senator Ted Cruz (R-TX) also introduced [H.R.4397](#) and [S.2293](#), respectively, to require President Trump to designate the Muslim Brotherhood—a transnational organization with notable influence in Indonesia—as a Foreign Terrorist Organization, to which President Trump [granted](#) and designated certain chapters of the organization as a Foreign Terrorist Organization in a November executive order. In September, Representative French Hill (R-AR) introduced [H.Res.738](#) to express concerns regarding severe restrictions on religious freedom abroad, including in Indonesia.