



# Martial Rule in Aceh Circa 2003: A Ceasefire Crumbles as Hostilities Resume

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*Jakarta has 'lost' East Timor not because, but in spite of its diplomacy. If any lesson should be learned, it is that abusive realities on the ground, not international forums abroad, might provoke the world to internationalize the conflicts.*

Aboeprijadi Santoso (Jakarta Post, 2003)

## Introduction

The manifold effects of the fall of the New Order in Indonesia continue to unravel. The twin forces of *demokrasi* and *reformasi* are still alive albeit muffled. Alongside, the centrifugal forces of separatism and communal conflicts loom large in the horizon. Suharto's successors have responded in many ways to the dangers of a polity that could implode. Ironically yet expectedly, the resolution of the "dirty little war" in East Timor has roused a resurgent militancy on the separatist *Gerakan Aceh Merdeka* (Free Aceh Movement or GAM) and magnified the Government of Indonesia's (GOI) concern at keeping intact all the remaining 26 provinces. Lest history repeat itself, the situation unraveling in Aceh engenders a strong sense of urgency and action.

With the collapse of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (COHA) and President Megawati's declaration of martial law in Aceh, there is need to review what has happened since December 2002, when the COHA was signed, and to examine the developments that have taken place since the introduction of the integrated operations of martial law government in the province.

Given the immediate post-COHA violence and the GOI's decision in November 2003 to extend the emergency rule in Aceh, an inquiry, particularly on the nature and status of the military-led integrated operations becomes imperative. The purpose is not just to treat the post-COHA emergency regime as fodder for academic exchange; more importantly, past mistakes may not be repeated and lessons learned will contribute, if not lead, to resolving the costly and protracted violence in Aceh.

### The *Wayang* in Aceh<sup>1</sup>

There is so much to look into in the Aceh situation as it resembles a screenplay that features a cross-weaving of ethnic-historical configuration, political marginalization, socio-economic deprivation, religio-cultural oversights, self-seeking rival groups, human rights violations, corrupt governance, and foreign interests - except that the Aceh situation is not theater. It is real.

The term "*Wayang* in Aceh" is intended to convey an irony on the following grounds: (1) the *wayang* being culturally of Javanese origin and that a reputedly common complaint among Acehnese, in particular, and the rest of Indonesia's non-Javanese population, in general, is the apparent Java-centric orientation or ethnocentrism of the central government; and, (2) the *wayang* performance, stage-wise entails the interplay of the shadow and the light, symbolic of the plot of Aceh's continuing plight. The author,

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1 *Wayang* is a Javanese word meaning "shadow" or "ghost" and is a theatrical performance of living actors (*wayang orang*), three dimensional puppets (*wayang golek*) or shadow images projected before a backlit screen (*wayang kulit*).

however, posits that while the *wayang* takes place in the shadow/darkness, the light is also part of it. While there is persistent darkness in Aceh, there is light as well amidst the shadows.

Up until the signing of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement between the warring Indonesian Armed Forces (*Tentara Nasional Indonesia*, TNI) and the GAM, there seemed not much hope for peace in the conflict-ridden Aceh province. In response to the revival of armed separatism in the second half of the 1980s, the Suharto government designated Aceh as a special *daerah operasi militer* (DOM, short for “military operations area”). For nine years, from 1989 onwards, troops were deployed in Aceh to eliminate GAM rebels.

Rather than working to redress Aceh’s grievances through dialogue, Jakarta’s armed deployment in the process enshrined state violence as the defining characteristic of the central government’s presence in the province. The TNI wreaked havoc not only on the insurgents but also upon innocent civilians who were killed, raped, tortured or left orphaned. The asymmetrical war has caused the death of some 12,600 people. For 2003 alone, it has displaced more than a hundred thousand civilians and is set to eclipse the record 140,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in 1999, when Aceh was experiencing what others referred to as “DOM II.”<sup>2</sup>

Despite decades of “unpeace,” hope remains. The end of Suharto’s New Order ushered in expectations of positive change. Even with the feeble substantiation of high profile commitments to redress past injustice in Aceh by Jakarta’s successor presidents (three leaders in four years’ time), peace efforts and pressures for the same persist. Concerned humanitarian and other civil society groups, in many ways and shades, spurred and continue to spur, the peace momentum. Following so many false starts and protracted negotiations facilitated by the Switzerland-based Henri Dunant Center (HDC), the COHA was sealed in 09 December of 2002.

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2 For more details see Karim D. Chow, “Aceh: The Special Territory in North Sumatra: A Self-Fulfilling Promise?” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 20. 1 (200\_): 94-95.

Finally, it seemed, the decades-old bloodshed would give the Acehese a respite. The succeeding two months ushered in a climate of peace which Aceh has not experienced in nearly a quarter of a century. Commenting on the initial period of the COHA implementation, Steve Daly of HDC was bullish as he asserted, “a lot of progress has been made in a very short time. The situation on the ground, and the statistics tell the story” (Aglionby 2003). Peace zones were created on schedule. The number of civilian deaths dropped, from 87 per month before the COHA signing, to 11 by end of January 2003. TNI casualties declined from 45 to two; GAM deaths, from 102 to five (Aglionby 2003). Under such favorable yet guarded conditions of optimism, GAM should have proceeded with its vow to disarm and the TNI with its commitment to “relocate” by February.

The momentum was not sustained as the TNI and the GAM ostensibly tried to outflank each other as they committed and traded accusations of ceasefire violations. The Joint Security Committee (JSC) which was mandated to monitor the COHA implementation started receiving threats from civilians, allegedly under military instigation. Subsequently, JSC offices in East Aceh and Central Aceh were burned by suspected militia members.<sup>3</sup> JSC monitors in Central Aceh were even beaten by people chanting anti-GAM slogans. GAM, for its part, was accused of holding pro-independence rallies and of publicizing its self-serving interpretation of the COHA, specifically, that the final result of the COHA implementation was independence for Aceh. GAM also reportedly intensified membership recruitment, continued smuggling weapons and sought to expand its underground government, abducted village heads and sustained extorting “*Nanggroe* tax” at a time when the COHA was being enforced (Sastrohandoyo 2003; Abdillah 2003).

The ink on the COHA document proved not strong enough to wipe away so many years of mistrust as both the TNI and GAM have breached

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3 Interview with the Jakarta-based David Gorman of the Henri Dunant Centre (HDC) on 27 October 2003. Gorman said that the incidents were referred to the Indonesian police for a very thorough investigation but they never got a report back from the police.

COHA terms, committing “serious” to “very serious” violations.<sup>4</sup> As the nature of the GOI and GAM complaints and accusations trading can no longer be settled at the JSC, calls were made to convene the Joint Council – the highest body, under COHA stipulations, which could decide on the issues.

Last-minute efforts to salvage the COHA, most prominently indicated by the international meeting in Tokyo in 17 May 2003, proved futile. The suspicious circumstances surrounding the arrests in Aceh of GAM negotiators, on the eve of the Tokyo talks, cast even more doubts as to Jakarta’s real intentions and/or its real capability to monitor and police its own ranks. The strange circumstances were brought to the author’s attention following information provided by a highly-placed official involved in the COHA who was present during the arrest of the negotiators on the eve of the crucial talks. Consider:

- One, the fact that the GAM negotiators who were Tokyo-bound were the same GAM negotiators for the COHA and were members also of the JSC. Per the COHA terms, “as long as they don’t do anything that violates the agreement then they should not be arrested.”<sup>5</sup>
- Two, the indecision of the apprehending authorities, as indicated by the number of times they apprehended the negotiators. The official disclosed, “Well, I was on my way with the GAM negotiators ... when the GAM negotiators were arrested.... We were coming from Aceh.... they [GAM negotiators] were arrested once, then released. Then arrested again, and released for a day for the [Tokyo] meeting. And they were picked up again, so three. Three. Three times.”<sup>6</sup>

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4 How to distinguish between the two was, according to HDC’s Gorman, done on a “case-to-case basis” by the Joint Security Committee.

5 Interview with highly-placed COHA official, 27 Oct. 2003, Jakarta.

6 Interview with COHA official.

And, as what turned into a *fait accompli*, on 18 May 2003, President Megawati Sukarnoputri issued Inpres (Presidential Instruction) 28/2003 declaring a military emergency situation in Aceh, effectively scrapping the COHA.

### Integrated Operations: A “Progress” Report

Government functionaries, especially from the defense and foreign ministries, maintain that the military campaign merely forms part of the larger “integrated operation.” “Integrated” is used to call attention to facets, other than the armed component, which include civilian, non-military elements.<sup>7</sup> Despite the hard sell, the armed aspect cannot be understated. Continuing operations point even more to the bias, if not overdependence, on the military facet. Some of the more pertinent relevant indicators, issues and undercurrents are posited in the following situationer and discussion.

### Portentous Deployment

The sheer number of soldiers now deployed for the operations, from 40 to 45 thousand, plus some 15 thousand police personnel, indicates the primacy of the armed component.<sup>8</sup> This number is at least six times more than the number of troops sent to Aceh in the mid-1990s when GAM’s separatist campaign shifted to high gear, and is reputedly Indonesia’s largest since independence 58 years ago (*Jakarta Post* 12 May 2003). The TNI force-mix in Aceh is ostensibly potent. Tasked to subdue the 5,000-plus GAM separatists the military has “spared nothing for the campaign ...” (*Jakarta Post* 7 Nov. 2003).

[t]he army is sending its Strategic Reserves Command (*Kostrad*) and the Special Forces (*Kopassus*); the Navy is deploying its Marines on

7 Government claims this includes the military operation, humanitarian operation, law enforcement, empowerment of the local administration, and, lately, economic recovery program. *Jakarta Post*, 8 Nov. 2003; interview with Indonesian Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Marty Natalegawa on 16 Oct. 2003 at his DEPLU office in Jakarta.

8 Estimates vary but hover in the vicinity of said figure. *Jakarta Post*, 7 Nov. 2003 and Schulze 2003, 1.

the ground as well as more than 10 of its warships to patrol the waters around Aceh; the Air Force is sending its crack Special Forces (*Paskhas*), and stationed a handful of its airworthy jet fighters in Medan in neighboring North Sumatra. The police are deploying its [sic] own elite forces, the Mobile Brigade (*Brimob*)” (*Jakarta Post* 12 May 2003).

Published reports in October 2003 reveal that the military has gained control of over 90 percent of GAM territory (*Jakarta Post* 21 Oct. 2003) and yet it has confiscated only some 380 weapons from the separatists (*Jakarta Post* 15 Oct. 2003).

### Worsening Toll

The body count and collateral damage still continue to increase, underscoring the damaging externalities of the war in the province. Government sources claim that no less than 2,600 GAM members have been killed, captured or injured since May 2003 while more than 1,800 others have surrendered or have been arrested. Aggregate data on TNI war casualties are not available and could not be ascertained due to tight media controls. Civilian casualties, thus far, are estimated to be no less than 304; add to this some 140 injured civilians (*Jakarta Post* 15 Oct. 2003) and many other cases of atrocities committed by both the TNI and GAM. These banner, more than anything else the bloodletting that hounds Aceh which Jakarta seeks to keep in its “unitary state” and which the separatists envision to convert into a sultanate ala Brunei.

Cumulatively, there has been at least 120,000 displaced persons, “although often temporarily, since the beginning of the offensive.”<sup>9</sup> There are still many others unaccounted for as they try to avoid official camps for fear of GAM retribution. It is not infrequent for members of dislocated communities to seek refuge in the forests, with relatives elsewhere or migrate to Malaysia. Samples of other incidents can be gleaned from the table below.

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9 “Over 600,000 IDPs Still Wait to Return, While Aceh Crisis Causes New Displacements,” [www.idpproject.org](http://www.idpproject.org).

Table 1. Illustrative Incidents by Type per Month,  
19 May to 18 September 2003

Type of Cases by Month	1st Month 19 May - 18 June	2nd Month 19 June - 18 July	3 <sup>rd</sup> Month 19 July - 18 August	4th Month 19 August - 18 September	Total
Murder/Death	263	62	93	52	470
Gunshot Wound	31	5	11	5	52
Illegal Arrest/ Detention	412	176	233	113	934
Torture/ Beatings	326	85	115	82	608
Sexual Harassment/ Rape	16	9	4	1	30
Property Looting	75	13	18	4	110
Illegal Search	84	54	85	33	256
Intimidation	42	29	9	4	84
Arson	68	10	18	5	101
Bombing	9	4	8	11	32
Total	1,326	447	594	310	2,677

Source of data: various sources culled by Sidney Jones of the International Crisis Group in Jakarta.

Over and beyond current figures and incidents, certain quarters have expressed concerns that internal and external pressures could drive military and police officials in Aceh to produce “results” which could have tremendous backlash, especially, on the civilians. This could translate into acts of desperation, as is revealed in the remarks made by police Brig. Gen. Guliansyah who was quoted as saying: “If necessary, shoot on the spot anyone who raises this GAM flag. Whoever raises the flag must be a GAM member” (*Kompas* 4 Dec. 2003).



### Aid & Monitoring Noose

The *de facto* prohibition on international humanitarian agencies and foreigners until the last week of December 2003, was based on the suspicion that such offices either provide cover to the separatists or abet the separatists' cause.<sup>10</sup> While such belief could have partial validity, it effectively precludes international agencies from extending humanitarian assistance.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, tough controls against foreigners, including journalists, raise more doubts and questions on the military emergency regime as the situation prevents independent observation (*Jakarta Post* 24 Dec. 2003).<sup>12</sup> Given the checkered past of the TNI particularly its involvement in human rights violations,<sup>13</sup> it would be foolhardy to take the military's word without reservations.

### A Strategy with "No End"

The situation is marked by an absence of a pre-determined "ending" strategy, i.e., there is no predetermined position as to the manner of concluding martial rule, which a former leading GOI

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10 It took Jakarta some seven months, and not without the intense lobbying of local and international actors, before the decision was made to allow select international organizations to resume their humanitarian activities in the war-ravaged province. These INGOs were the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Education, Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). *Jakarta Post*, 24 Dec. 2003.

11 For details as to the travails of international NGOs and media in securing government permission to travel to Aceh, see "Aceh under Marital Law: Unnecessary and Dangerous Restrictions on International Humanitarian Access." [www.hrw.org/backgrounder/asia/aceh0903-bck.htm](http://www.hrw.org/backgrounder/asia/aceh0903-bck.htm).

12 Moreover, the seeming paranoia against foreigners' presence in Aceh is made evident by several incidents. Jakarta's attitude has been unusually nervous and suspicious in its attempt to keep "external" elements out of Aceh. This has run through incidents from the shootings of German tourists; to the threatening and deporting of American, South Korean, Malaysian and Japanese journalist and activists, to effectively ban all foreign press and aid agencies and the hunting down of Acehnese outside of Aceh – all at the price of the greater suffering and isolation of local Acehnese. Even two Australian seafarers stranded in Aceh were suspected of "foreign conspiracy." See *Jakarta Post*, 10 Oct. 2003.

negotiator posits as different from an “exit” strategy. The same former negotiator clarifies, “I don’t say ‘exit’ because we’re not going to get out from Aceh. But only, you know, it has to be a political solution because there is no military solution.”<sup>14</sup> No less than the TNI chief, Gen. Endriartono Sutarto, affirms this as he admitted “with the extension of martial law in Aceh, we have yet to decide on the new method or strategy to hunt down the guerrillas” (*Jakarta Post* 14 Oct. 2003). Of late the forthcoming elections of April 2004 and the subsequent historic direct presidential elections in July are being cited as justifying the continuation of martial rule.

In the absence of any *a priori*, definitive termination condition, the central government and TNI officials can always cite either new or continuing justifications to retain or institutionalize martial law. As the “target” is so broad, it could also be elusive. Open-ended time-frames are subject to discretion, and discretion that is unfettered is susceptible to abuses. As it stands to date, Jakarta and the military regime in Aceh can always extend the emergency in pursuit of some big goal, and broadly this entails the total elimination of GAM.

In October 2003, asked regarding the possible extension of the military rule in Aceh, Coordinating Minister for Political and Security Affairs Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono responded by saying that the military would be given the authority to assess whether or not the emergency status should be extended. This is most telling. In what amounts as a re-contextualization of the emergency mission, the minister asserted that the final goal of the military offensive in Aceh is to restore security among the people, even as he stated that he doubted that the Acehnese would feel safe to go out to exercise their political rights if the security situation remained uncertain (*Jakarta Post* 15 Oct. 2003).

Later that same month, in a forum participated in by Aceh military operation commander Maj. Gen. Bambang Darmono, the commander

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13 As in East Timor, Papua New Guinea and the wave of violence in May 1998.

candidly acknowledged that many Acehnese still supported GAM and assisted rebel leaders. Darmono confessed:

I can't deny that we the military find difficulties in our search for GAM leaders because many civilians continue to support the movement and assist their leaders in hiding from government troops.

Bambang's comments belie, among others, TNI's repeated claims that more and more of the Acehnese are supporting the ongoing military operations (*Jakarta Post* 21 Oct. 2003).

While in the end whatever "ending" plan the government must have boils down to exercising a judgment call, it must be a judgment call that is plausible, consistent, reasonable and acceptable to the people. As things stand to date, credibility which is essential, even more so as one is waging war, is wanting. For the time-being, the livelihood and future of Aceh's 4.2 million people plus the others in the region affected by the operations and mass displacement will continue to suffer as government haunts down GAM members.

### Local Governance Snafus

Non-restoration of local administration and the continuing government corruption are inconsistent with Jakarta's pledge to foster autonomy and civilian rule. Empowerment of the local government has been invoked as part of the integrated operations. Jakarta, however, concedes that the local government is not strong or capable enough to take local administrative responsibilities. Jakarta also reasons that it could not deal directly with charges of corruption against the provincial government as this will infringe on local autonomy. This underscores an earlier assertion made by the former senior GOI negotiator, Pak Wiryono. Writing for the *Jakarta Post*, he reported that

A good number of observers have identified one extremely formidable obstacle to peace in Aceh, and that is a situation of

widespread corruption that gives everyone involved an economic motive for leaving the problem unsolved.

There is reportedly a great deal of smuggling of luxury goods going on in the free port of Sabang. Extortion and protection racketeering by both the military and the GAM guerillas have been observed to be endemic from one end of the province to the other. Weapons from foreign sources are regularly brought ashore by fishing boats in a thriving arms trade that keeps the GAM and other groups of a more criminal nature well armed. The national government can to a large extent curb the corruption by simply making provincial officials and other authority figures more accountable, but such a crackdown may have its own destabilizing effect (Sastrohandoyo 2003).

In what amounts to an implicit admission to allegations of corruption in Aceh and apparently as a measure to placate growing criticisms of seeming central government indifference, Coordinating Minister for Political and Security Affairs Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono announced in December 2003 plans to set up special teams to monitor the ongoing integrated operation in Aceh to ensure that it met its target, particularly on budget spending. "Many students and NGOs there have complained about misuse of government funds," he said, saying that teams would be posted in the central government and in the provincial government (*Jakarta Post* 24 Dec. 2003). The teams, to consist of government and independent persons, would have no authority but to advise either the government or the military administration on possible moves to tackle misuse of funds during the operations.

This situation is a repeat as well as a perpetuation of earlier claims of corrupt practices of the protagonists in the Aceh conflict. A report by the Economic Intelligence Unit (EIU) on Aceh conditions prior to the signing of the COHA proves very instructive and current to the discussion.

The entrenchment of the military and its associated vested financial interests in the province is believed to be one of the factors prolonging

and exacerbating the conflict. The military, GAM and civilian government officials are all believed to be earning money from the lawless situation that prevails in Aceh. Smuggling of luxury cars, post-regional autonomy oil and gas revenue, extortion rackets, kidnapping and illegal logging are just some of the business ventures which makes and end to the conflict undesirable for the armed factions and many others in positions of power an influence (EIU Country Report Sept. 2002).

In early October, for example, the Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam provincial administration disbursed the third batch of humanitarian aid totaling Rp25.7 billion (US\$3M) intended for those widowed or disabled during operations against GAM. This was done despite the fact that only two of the 14 regencies (Pidie and Bireuen) were able to comply with the required accountability reports. The provincial government, itself, has refused to release data on the fund disbursement, fanning even more suspicions of corruption (*Jakarta Post* 9 Oct. 2003).

No less than Martial Law Administrator Maj. Gen. Endang Suwarya has admitted that irregularities occurred in several Aceh districts regarding the humanitarian fund but declined to provide details as to who were responsible. SAMAK, an anti-corruption NGO, ranks Aceh as the most corrupt province in the country as it is documented to have more than 390 corruption cases awaiting government investigation since 2002 (*Jakarta Post* 3 Oct. 2003).<sup>15</sup>

### Glossing Over Survival Economics

The low prioritization of the economic component of the integrated operation is indicated by the much delayed approval in November 2003 of some Rp1.3 trillion (US\$153 million) for the economic improvement operation in Aceh, (*Jakarta Post* 7 Nov. 2003) at a time when the original term of martial law is about to end, and as compared to the outright

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14 Interview with one of the former leading RI negotiators on 23 Oct. 2003 in Jakarta.

appropriation of a total of Rp1.7 trillion (about US\$200 million) to finance the May to November 2003 military operation in the province (*Jakarta Post* 21 May 2003).

No doubt, the present martial law regime has compromised the life, limb and liberties of Acehnese, and even those of adjacent territories. In the economic sphere, the conflict has aggravated the living conditions of the very population which the central government hopes to secure. It has disrupted food supplies, transportation, access to information, basic services and utilities, education, and healthcare services. It has led to massive unemployment and ever worsening conditions of poverty.

Only five months into the emergency some 40 percent of the population was living below the poverty line.<sup>16</sup> Prices of commodities have skyrocketed and their availability has been constricted thus leading inevitably to rationing (*Agence France Presse* 2 Oct. 2003). As the armed operations by both GAM and the Indonesian troops continue, Acehnese non-combatants suffer the attendant physical hardships and indignities.

### **Alienation, Fast Backward**

The martial law measures being employed in Aceh's emergency rule are deemed to be offensive, ineffective and unjust. These consist of compulsory mass loyalty oaths; forced evacuations; hamletting; disappearances; beatings, illegal arrests and summary executions of suspected GAM members/sympathizers; "litsus"; mock court proceedings; uneven and unjust court sentences.<sup>17</sup> In trying to constrict GAM members, the martial rule administrators have resorted to actions which undermine the Jakarta government's own goal of winning the people's hearts and

15 SAMAK is the acronym for "Solidarity for Anti-Corruption Society."

16 See the report in [www.laksamana.net](http://www.laksamana.net), 29 Oct. 2003.

17 For more detailed accounts, see *Jakarta Post*, 17 July 2003; *Jakarta Post*, 22 July 2003; International Crisis Group, July 2003; *Jakarta Post*, 2 Oct. 2003; and <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2003/12/17/indone6692.txt.htm>

minds. These are not only reminiscent of DOM and past injustices which have stirred centrifugal tendencies and, as in East Timor, humiliated the central government and the TNI. They are a harsh replay of the mistakes the lessons of which are yet to be learned.

The military viewpoint is that they are simply keeping intact the state. From the vantage point of society, the military is not different from GAM, in fact they too are enemies. Continued military emergency only prolongs people's insecurity as there is no real security which a military solution offers. Worse, with the continued armed excursions from both sides, these polarize the people. A polarized situation is not desirable for the Indonesian government; it merely delineates even more clearly who is on whose side. And, this makes it dangerous as the people are compelled to decide which camp between the two armed groups it would side. It is not really choice. Moreover, it is coercion and self-destruction.

As it stands now, there is much that is errant in the Indonesian military's "integrated operations" in Aceh. The mission is to contain, if not subdue, the rebels. Aristotelian telos, however, would have us believe that there is something more essential, more paramount and more noble a "final cause" in all these campaigns. The Indonesian government would have its people believe that the preservation of the unitary state is most supreme. There is nothing that can be considered "ultimate" in this goal however. Why then is the unitariness of Indonesia important? Divested of all formalities and legalese, the government has yet to present a convincing argument that it is in unitariness where the interests of the Indonesian people would be best served.

### **Conclusions**

The preceding discussion noted and critiqued the many facets relating to the establishment and extension of martial law in Aceh. From the foregoing, we posited the flaws and effects of measures which mitigate against endearing the Indonesian government to the Acehnese, in particular, and to the Indonesians, in general. What price is the Jakarta government

willing to pay to crush the rebels? It seems at all costs, even to the point of antagonizing the very people it purports to protect.

It is obvious that the emergency rule is a primarily a military campaign and that it has and continues to overstretch its original shelf life. It is alienating concerned publics within and beyond Aceh, and beyond Indonesia. Rather than dousing the fire with water, the martial law regime is fanning the flames of greater enmity between the population and the state.

In the absence of a commitment to an overarching strategy that rather than contain even deepens people's resentment, the way the present emergency is being managed, or staged, is likely to send negative rippling effects on the rest of the country and backfire on the central government, the TNI and the provincial elites.

This is not to say that Jakarta's loss would be GAM's gain. The separatist movement is evidently responsible also for a number of Aceh's COHA and post-COHA suffering. The evidence on the ground show its own *mala fide* to the COHA terms. By its own posturings, it has failed to convince people to its side. Napoleon's dictum should have proven relevant for GAM: do not disturb your enemy when it is busy committing mistakes. However, like the Indonesian forces and government, GAM's worst enemy is itself when it afflicts the very constituency it hopes to govern in the future.

History, bad history is being repeated in Aceh — the bad history of Aceh's past DOMs, the bad history of the military onslaught in East Timor, the bad history of poor local governance, the bad history of Jakarta's maladministration, and the bad history of patronage and opportunism. Still, this situation of "compounded injustice" must be redressed.

The present data, the historic precedents and peculiar circumstances relating to the martial law regime in Aceh undoubtedly cannot be delinked from the bigger socio-economic, politico-historical, and religio-ethnic landscape of Indonesia. Many and often contradicting forces in the polity are at interplay. While institutions of good governance and civil society



groups seek to firm up their respective roles, forces likely to be disadvantaged by the *demokrasi* and *reformasi* movement would naturally tend to undermine the democratic and peace processes. Altogether, actors with self-serving agendas, unresolved past and present issues, and the continuing structural problem undermine the peace efforts.

Yet even with the perennial overcast skies, the situation should not be hopeless as peace does entail a high price, especially in terms of good will, determination, creativity and commitment to the right cause. Opportunities as to influencing, if not, transforming the actors, the issues and structures must be exhausted. Openings for dialogues and even honest admonition must be parlayed. Civilian participation and vigilance must be constantly nurtured.

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