

3 Enforcing Religious Freedom in Indonesia

Muslim Elites and the Ahmadiyah Controversy after the 2011 Cikeusik Clash

Bastiaan Scherpen

1 Introduction

The Ahmadiyah controversy in Indonesia took a deadly turn for the worse in February 2011 when an angry mob clashed with followers of the sect in a remote village in Banten province, brutally killing three men in the process. As graphic footage of the Cikeusik mob attack circulated on YouTube, Islam-based organisations and parties were forced to take a stand. In this chapter, the aftermath of this attack will be used as a case study to examine the attitudes and behaviour of mainstream Islamic organisations and Islam-based political parties. Based largely on personal interviews and an examination of statements in various media and in the House of People's Representatives (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat/DPR), this contribution shows that there is considerable divergence between proposals by politicians and those by civil society groups associated with their parties about how to deal with a sect almost unanimously seen as deviant in Indonesia. It is shown that while major civil society groups like Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah seem to advocate pragmatic solutions, Islamic idealism often prevails in the political arena.

2 Muslims, Minorities and Democracy¹

While the sprawling Indonesian archipelago is often said to be a vanguard of 'pluralist' or 'moderate' Islam – as opposed to more 'radical' Islamic ideas and practices said to be prevailing in Middle Eastern countries –

1 Besides the people who kindly freed up some of their valuable time for an interview with me (and who are mentioned throughout this paper), I would like to thank the following people for their feedback, advice and help in contacting sources: Martin van Bruinessen, Kees van Dijk, Ridho al-Hamdi, Ahmad-Norma Permata, Nico J.G. Kaptein, Anita Rachman and Moch Nur Ichwan.

a number of developments in recent years have led people to start questioning the idea of Indonesia as a representative of 'Islam with a smiling face'.² But of all the focal points in the ongoing discussion of where Indonesia is headed in terms of democratisation, controversies surrounding the freedom of worship have probably generated the most attention, internationally as well as domestically. The presence of the minority Muslim³ sect, Ahmadiyah, is one of those controversies. The most important theological point of contention in the ongoing Ahmadiyah debate is the status of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835–1908), and there is a long history in terms of highly complex claims and counter-claims with regard to the nature of Ghulam Ahmad's religious leadership.⁴

Indonesia's government has experienced considerable difficulties in coming to terms with the presence of the sect – an issue that was not really an issue until a powerful lobby group decided to take it up a decade ago.⁵ The issue has proven to be particularly divisive and has led to heated debates across Islam-based organisations in recent years. The Indonesian Ulama Council (Majelis Ulama Indonesia, MUI) declared Ahmadiyah a deviant sect in several fatwas, most recently in 2005, and hardline groups have even threatened to topple the government if it fails to issue an outright ban on the sect. While Ahmadiyah communities

- 2 Martin van Bruinessen, 'What happened to the smiling face of Indonesian Islam? Muslim intellectualism and the conservative turn in post-Suharto Indonesia', *RSIS Working Paper* No. 222, 6 January 2011, www.rsis.edu.sg/publications/workingpapers/wp222.pdf.
- 3 Whether or not Ahmadis are actually Muslims is at the core of the controversy. I choose to refrain from taking sides in this highly complex debate and call Ahmadiyah a Muslim sect because Ahmadis identify themselves as Muslims.
- 4 A detailed examination of the debate on Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's status is beyond the scope of this chapter. Herman L. Beck presents Ghulam Ahmad's ideas and doctrinal differences between Ahmadiyah and mainstream Sunni Islam in 'The rupture between the Muhammadiyah and the Ahmadiyya', in *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 161–162 (2005): 210–246, 215–219. Erni Budiwanti's account: *Pluralism collapses: A study of the Jama'ah Ahmadiyah Indonesia and its persecution*, Asia Research Institute Working Paper Series No. 117, National University of Singapore, 2009, is more comprehensive. For a detailed refutation of many accusations commonly levelled at Ahmadis see M.A. Suryawan, *Bukan sekedar hitam putih. Kontroversi pemahaman Ahmadiyah* (Tangerang: Azzahra Publishing, 2005).
- 5 International Crisis Group, *Indonesia: Implications of the Ahmadiyah decree*. Asia Briefing No. 78. Jakarta/Brussels, 7 July 2008: 2–3, 14–15.

throughout the country suffered intimidation and physical violence, the government issued a Joint Ministerial Decree (*Surat Keputusan Bersama/SKB*) of the Minister of Religious Affairs, the Attorney General and the Minister of the Interior on 8 June 2008. This SKB outlawed any form of Ahmadiyah proselytisation but did not ban the organisation itself. Human rights groups lamented what they saw as a restriction on the freedom of worship while hardline groups slammed what they considered to be a half-hearted move taken under foreign pressure. It was against this background that on 6 February 2011, three Ahmadi were brutally slain in the village of Umbulan, in the Cikeusik sub-district of Pandeglang in Banten province.

With the Ahmadiyah controversy taking a deadly turn for the worse and graphic footage of the Cikeusik mob attack circulating on YouTube, Islam-based organisations and parties were forced to take a stand. It is this topic that I will use here as a case study to examine the attitudes and behaviour of mainstream Islamic organisations like Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah and Islam-based political parties⁶ in Indonesia's House of People's Representatives. This chapter will show that there is considerable divergence between politicians and the civil society groups associated with their parties with regard to proposals on how to handle the Ahmadiyah issue. Islamic idealism prevails among politicians while civil society groups generally seem to be more pragmatic in handling the issue. This divergence is much less visible when making a comparison along the lines of traditionalists, modernists and tarbiyah activists – the various groups traditionally seen as broadly making up the landscape of Indonesian Islam – and which – as Syaifudin Zuhri shows in his contribution to this book – are involved in a struggle for various social spaces in the religious domain, like mosques.

6 The Prosperous Justice Party (*Partai Keadilan Sejahtera/PKS*), National Mandate Party (*Partai Amanat Nasional/PAN*), United Development Party (*Partai Persatuan Pembangunan/PPP*) and National Awakening Party (*Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa/PKB*) are (more or less) Islam-based, but are relatively small parties. The Democratic Party (*Partai Demokrat/PD*), the Golkar Party (*Partai Golongan Karya/Golkar*) and the Indonesian Democratic Party – Struggle (*Partai Demokrasi Indonesia – Perjuangan/PDI-P*) are the largest parties but – although far from 'secular' – do not stake a claim to Islam. Of all the parties mentioned here, only the PDI-P is not represented in President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's Second Indonesia United Cabinet.

3 The State

Noted lawyer Adnan Buyung Nasution, who served as President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's top legal adviser (2007–2009), says that he strongly argued against disbanding Ahmadiyah but that the SKB was still issued as a compromise due to pressure from hardliners.⁷ This seems to be confirmed in a confidential diplomatic cable of 11 June 2008 in which the US Embassy in Jakarta reported to Washington on the SKB's coming into force. The cable states that embassy officials had raised US concerns about the decree with one of Yudhoyono's foreign affairs advisers, who allegedly told the Americans that the decree's ambiguous wording was 'a delicate balance' and that 'we have to be a little tricky' in devising a compromise.⁸

In terms of both domestic laws and international covenants and declarations, however, there is no lack of willingness on the part of the Indonesian government to show its dedication to the freedom of religion. To name a few examples, in 2005 Indonesia ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), while 60 years earlier the fledgling republic had already mentioned in its constitution that '[t]he state will guarantee the freedom to every resident to adhere to their respective religion and to perform their religious duties in accordance with their religion and that faith'.⁹

3.1 EXECUTIVE BRANCH: DIALOGUE THAT REMAINED A MONOLOGUE

In the immediate aftermath of the deadly Cikeusik incident, President Yudhoyono surprised observers with a statement that many considered rather mild. He said he 'regretted' the fact that people had died. He did order a thorough investigation and said that police apparently had failed to offer protection.¹⁰ Djoko Suyanto, the coordinating minister for Political, Legal and Security Affairs, added that the government 'condemns whoever is behind violence against any Indonesian citizen'.

7 Adnan Buyung Nasution, *Nasihat untuk SBY* (Jakarta: Kompas Media Nusantara, 2012): 88–107.

8 [US] Embassy Jakarta, Cable No. 08JAKARTA1143, 'Sect members allowed to worship despite edict'. Created 11 June 2008, released by WikiLeaks on 30 August 2011, <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2008/06/08JAKARTA1143.html> (accessed 10 September 2011).

9 Muhammad As'ad, 'Ahmadiyah and the freedom of religion in Indonesia', *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 3–2 (December 2009): 390–413, 392–393.

10 'Police negligent in Ahmadiyah attack: Yudhoyono', *Tempo*, 8 February 2011, www.tempo.co.id/hg/nasional/2011/02/08/brk,20110208-312084,uk.html (accessed 5 October 2011).

However, he also called on the Ahmadiyah community to 'respect the joint [ministerial] agreement signed in 2008'.¹¹

Suryadharma Ali, a graduate of IAIN Syarif Hidayatullah (1984) and a former Indonesian Islamic Student Movement (Pergerakan Mahasiswa Islam Indonesia/PMII) activist who has been the chairman of the PPP since 2007, is an important player in the Ahmadiyah controversy, not only because he is the religious affairs minister, but also because he has said that Ahmadiyah should be disbanded, in a more or less personal note.¹² Officially, however, the Minister so far has maintained his support for the SKB while, as he said, the government is working on a more permanent solution. Representatives of the main Ahmadiyah organisation in Indonesia, the Indonesian Ahmadiyah Community (Jemaat Ahmadiyah Indonesia/JAI), nevertheless refused to attend a meeting with Suryadharma Ali at the Religious Affairs Ministry, planned for 22 March 2011, saying the Minister could not be expected to be a fair facilitator for dialogue. 'From the start he has been intent on disbanding Ahmadiyah', JAI spokesman Zafrullah Ahmad Pontoh said.¹³ The smaller Indonesian Ahmadiyah Movement (Gerakan Ahmadiyah Indonesia/GAI),¹⁴ however, did join the meeting.

3.2 LEGISLATIVE BRANCH: THE SEARCH FOR A SOLUTION

On 9 February 2011, three days after the Cikeusik incident and a religion-inspired riot in Temanggung,¹⁵ Central Java, the DPR's Commission VIII

11 'sby orders investigation into fatal attack on Ahmadiyah', *Jakarta Globe*, 7 February 2011, www.thejakartaglobe.com/home/sby-orders-investigation-into-fatal-attack-on-ahmadiyah/421163 (accessed 18 March 2012).

12 'Ahmadiyah: Daripada dibiarkan, lebih baik dibubarkan', *PolitikIndonesia*, 28 February 2011, <http://politikindonesia.com/index.php?k=politisiana&i=19223> (accessed 8 October 2011). It is also worth noting that the minister supported 'dialogue' as a way of bringing groups seen as deviant back to mainstream Islam: see 'Shia Conversion Is Solution: Minister', *The Jakarta Post*, 6 September 2012, www.thejakartapost.com/news/2012/09/06/shia-conversion-solution-minister.html (accessed 7 January 2013).

13 'Menag tidak fair, alasan Ahmadiyah absen dialog', *PolitikIndonesia*, 23 March 2011, <http://politikindonesia.com/index.php?k=politik&i=20144> (accessed 8 October 2011).

14 Worldwide, there are two main groups of Ahmadis, the Qadian community and the Lahore community. They view Mirza Ghulam Ahmad in a slightly different light, with the Lahore Ahmadis saying he was a reformer (*mujaddid*) of the faith, and not the Messiah. In Indonesia, the GAI represents the latter group.

15 On 8 February 2011, a Muslim crowd went on the rampage in the Central Java

for Religion, Social Affairs and Women's Empowerment (chaired by PKB politician Abdul Kadir Karding until he was replaced in February 2012) met with the Minister of Religious Affairs and National Chief of Police General Timur Pradopo to discuss the government's role in protecting interreligious freedom and harmony and how to prevent violence. The Minister said that the 1945 Constitution guarantees each citizen freedom of religion and belief as well as freedom of worship, but he added that 'in exercising these freedoms every person is subject to restrictions specified in the laws'. Suryadharma Ali also said that Ahmadiyah had been causing trouble from the start.¹⁶

3.2.1 *Traditionalist Parties: PKB and PPP*

The leader of the PKB faction in the DPR and a chairman of the party's Central Leadership Board (DPP), Marwan Ja'far, said immediately after the Cikeusik incident that '[t]he attack on Ahmadiyah members is highly immoral, in violation of human rights and denies the principles of Islam's peaceful teachings'. He called the attack 'a setback for religious life in Indonesia' and said people should not take it upon themselves to decide who is an infidel and who is not.¹⁷

During meetings of the DPR's Commission VIII, Ali Maschan Moesa did most of the speaking for the PKB. On 9 February, during the meeting with the religious affairs minister and the chief of national police, Moesa suggested a re-evaluation of current policies, to see whether they were wise in the context of interreligious dialogue. He also argued for a re-formulation of the SKB, saying that apparently it did not solve any problems. Just calling somebody an infidel (*kafir*) is easy, he said, and is the sign of a very shallow understanding of Islam. He stressed the need for dialogue, as even when people agree that others are wrong, there should be talk, not violence. 'We cannot just say: leave Islam, while people actually want to be Muslims', Moesa said.¹⁸

town of Temanggung, after a Christian man was sentenced to five years in prison for blaspheming Islam – which the crowd deemed insufficient. Several churches and government buildings were subsequently vandalised.

¹⁶ DPR-RI, *Risalah rapat* [Minutes of a meeting of Commission VIII with the minister of Religious Affairs and the national police chief], 9 February 2011, www.dpr.go.id/id/komisi/komisi8/risalah/1708/Raker-dengan-Menteri-Agama-dan-Polri (accessed 18 March 2012).

¹⁷ 'Sejumlah partai Islam kutuk tragedi Cikeusik', *PolitikIndonesia*, 7 February 2011, <http://politikindonesia.com/index.php?k=politik&i=18162> (accessed 8 October 2011).

¹⁸ DPR-RI, *Risalah Rapat* 9 February 2011.

For the PKB, the Ahmadiyah issue also seems to have been used as an opportunity to showcase its ties to the NU, of which it claims to be the sole legitimate political representative. According to then Commission VIII Chairman Karding,¹⁹ the PKB follows the decisions of the NU's Central Leadership Board (PBNU). Asked what he thought about the position of one of the most liberal *kyais*, or religious leaders, at the top of the NU, Masdar Farid Mas'udi (whose views will be discussed in greater detail below), Karding said he agreed that only God is able to decide whether someone's beliefs are deviant or not. At the same time, the young PKB politician said the Ahmadiyah presence posed a very complex political challenge, mainly from the legal point of view. 'Ahmadiyah has to be regulated, but the SKB has no [legal] power', he said, adding that it would be difficult to decide whether Ahmadiyah could legally be seen as a religion in itself (*agama*) or as a stream (*aliran*) within Islam. Karding concluded that the best solution was to come up with an umbrella law that would also deal with Ahmadiyah and that would, once and for all, guarantee religious harmony in Indonesia.

On the more conservative side of Muslim politics, the PPP is a staunch supporter of an outright ban on Ahmadiyah. PPP politicians themselves describe the party as the only true representative of pluralist Indonesian Islam, and people from most mainstream Islamic organisations indeed are active in the party. Unlike the PKB, which is based on Pancasila, the PPP is based on Islam, because it wants to stress that it believes only Islam is the true *rahmatan lil alamin* (blessing for all creation).

Suryadharma Ali is the general chairman of the PPP, but, as mentioned, because he is also the Minister of Religious Affairs, he was obviously expected not to stray too far from the official government line in the Ahmadiyah controversy. PPP lawmakers do not face such restrictions and, after Cikeusik, seem to have been trying to make up for this limitation faced by their political leader.

On 9 February, Commission VIII member Hasrul Azwar made the case for disbanding the sect by explaining that ever since Ahmadiyah had arrived in Indonesia in the 1920s, there had been trouble. He even had a bad experience himself: when once in Medan, North Sumatra, he performed *salat*, the obligatory prayer, at an Ahmadiyah mosque. After he was done and the space he had occupied was cleaned with water, he said, '[b]ut who is the infidel: me or the Ahmadiyah?'.²⁰

According to Hasrul Azwar, all the government had to do was act decisively and disband Ahmadiyah. The lawmaker also said that the

19 Interview with Abdul Kadir Karding, Jakarta, 13 October 2011.

20 DPR-RI, *Risalah Rapat*, 9 February 2011.

Ahmadiyah issue should not be classified as a human rights issue. 'It's sacrilege, desecration of the religion I profess,' he said, adding that people should not hide behind human rights to insult religion. A week later, also at the DPR and facing JAI leader (*amir*) Abdul Basit, Hasrul Azwar made sure there would be no misunderstanding about his position. Ahmadiyah beliefs were substantially different from true Islam, he stressed, and there was only one solution: 'Disband Ahmadiyah!'.²¹

However, outside the DPR, at least one senior PPP politician held a less combative position right after the Cikeusik clash. Lukman Hakim Saifudin, the deputy head of the People's Consultative Assembly (Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat/MPR), a chairman of the PPP's central leadership board and a former NU activist, said the violent acts could not be justified, but he also stressed that all parties involved should respect the SKB.²² That sentiment was shared by M. Arwani Thomafi, another PPP chairman and also a member of Commission VIII at the time of the Cikeusik incident. Arwani said he believed that with the SKB there were sufficient legal grounds to ban Ahmadiyah, but that the Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono government apparently did not want to 'follow through on what has already been decided at the level of the Religious Affairs minister' based on 'its [the government's] own political considerations'.²³

Regarding the Ahmadiyah issue, Arwani stressed there had been no reconsideration of the party line after Cikeusik. The PPP had made up its mind and it was up to the president to act, he explained. The reasoning behind this stance is that the PPP sees Indonesian society, or at least its constituents, as people for whom religion plays a very important role. This does not mean, however, that those people are fundamentalists or opponents of pluralism, Arwani pointed out. 'Indeed it has been proven that Indonesian society is a society that can be united by Pancasila,' he said. But when it came to religious beliefs, he said, that was something deeply rooted in people's hearts, 'which should be seen as a fundamental issue'. He added that for Christians or Hindus it would also be unacceptable if something that was considered holy were to be mocked or even abused. 'Muhammad in Islam is considered very noble, and very sacred, protected from sinful acts. If this concept is being violated, what happens is that the people get really angry'.

21 Statements from this 16 February 2011 meeting between representatives of the JAI and members of the DPR's Commission VIII are taken from a recording by TV *Parlemen*.

22 'Sejumlah partai Islam kutuk tragedi Cikeusik', *PolitikIndonesia*, 7 February 2011.

23 Interview with M. Arwani Thomafi, Jakarta, 25 July 2011.

For Arwani, the Ahmadiyah issue was not a problem of pluralism, but an internal problem of Islam. 'It has no relation at all to pluralism, and nor is it in any way tied to the freedom of religion,' he said. When it comes to human rights, Arwani stressed that these are limited by other people's human rights, which, however, do indeed include the freedom to adhere to any religion of one's choice. 'But don't follow a religion that destroys other religions,' he said. 'Christians believe that God is Jesus. What if all of a sudden a person appears who claims to be a Christian, but his God isn't Jesus? His God is Goliath, for example, or Pharaoh ...? Christians would get angry, right?'

3.2.2 *The Initiative Lies with Ahmadiyah: PAN*

The National Mandate Party (PAN) was founded in 1998 by a group of reform-minded people that included the Muhammadiyah general chairman of the time, Amien Rais. It is therefore often seen as a Muhammadiyah-linked party, but in fact there are no structural links between the two organisations, and the PAN is not based on Islam. It does however see religion as the 'moral and ethical foundation of nation and state'.²⁴

During the 9 February hearing of Commission VIII, Amran and Dewi Coryati spoke on behalf of the PAN. Amran argued that the SKB really needed to be made better-known at the grassroots level of society, as he had contacted some leaders in his constituency who only after the Cikeusik incident had heard – on television – about the very existence of the SKB. Amran, from South Sulawesi, later explained²⁵ that his party does defend freedom of religion, but in the sense of 'enjoying religion in line with its teachings'. Christians, for example, are free to worship based on the Bible. But in the case of Ahmadiyah, it is clear that the sect is deviant because Islamic leaders – and even the Qur'an – have made it very clear that Muhammad is the final prophet. 'Ahmadiyah says there is another one after the last one. That deviates from the Islamic Shariah,' he said. 'Therefore there are two alternatives: if Ahmadiis want to identify themselves as Muslims, they have to return to Islam's teachings. And if they do not want to return to Islam's teachings, they should leave Islam.' But the lawmaker also stressed that Ahmadiis have the right to live in Indonesia as citizens of the Republic and that dialogue was the only solution.

During the 16 February meeting with the JAI leader, most of the speaking for the PAN was being done not by Amran, but by Ahmad

24 'Platform Partai Amanat Nasional', *Partai Amanat Nasional*, www.pan.or.id/index.php?comp=home.detail.99 (accessed 12 November 2011).

25 Interview with Amran, Jakarta, 1 August 2011.

Rubaie, the faction's deputy chairman at the DPR. He said that blood should not have flowed, calling the Cikeusik incident a violation of human rights. But he explained that every religion has its leaders and that for Indonesian Muslims the guide should be the MUI, which 'cannot enforce beliefs but it does have the authority to explain, socialize and teach'. And as the MUI issued a fatwa in 2005 declaring Ahmadiyah deviant, the best solution would be that Ahmadis return to Islam, to 'maintain the purity of the Islamic ummah'. Differences of interpretation should then be left to the MUI. 'If they do not want to join Islam', the PAN politician said, 'they have to declare a new religion'. The initiative lies with Ahmadiyah.

3.2.3 *Real-world Implications: The PKS*

The PKS in recent years has received more attention from scholars and media than all the other more or less Islam-based parties combined, probably because of widespread fears – in Indonesia and abroad – of its Islamist agenda. It is a well-organised party that takes Islamic issues very seriously, but it seems to be particularly concerned with morality issues like the anti-pornography legislation that was passed in 2008.²⁶ With regard to the Ahmadiyah controversy, the PKS's Central Shariah Board (Dewan Syariah Pusat/DSP) had, as early as in May 2008, made its position abundantly clear in a detailed *bayan* (explanation taking the shape of a fatwa).²⁷ What is most interesting about this *bayan* is that it explicitly refers to the practical implications of Ahmadiyah's deviance for Muslims – something that other political parties and also civil society groups seem less concerned about.

According to the DSP, led by KH. Surahman Hidayat (who in October 2011 briefly became deputy chairman of Commission VIII), 'Ahmadiyah has desecrated the holiness of Islam, desecrated the holiness of the Qur'an and desecrated the Prophet Muhammad SAW as the final prophet and messenger'. Ahmadis who have already been told about their deviance and who refuse to repent have to be considered *murtad* (apostates) and *musyrikin* (idolaters), not as *ahlul kitab* (People of the Book, like Christians). Furthermore, as a legal consequence of the Ahmadiyah followers' apostasy, '[i]t is not halal to marry an Ahmadiyah woman, to let a Muslim woman marry an Ahmadiyah man or to eat the meat of animals slaughtered by an Ahmadi'. Also, someone who dies as a follower

²⁶ PKS observer Ahmad-Norma Permata pointed this out to me.

²⁷ 'Bayan DSP PKS Nomor: 17/B/K/DSP-PKS/1429 Tentang Ahmadiyah', 9 May 2008, <http://harakatuna.wordpress.com/2011/02/10/bayan-dsp-pks-tentang-ahmadiyah-1429-2008/> (accessed 18 December 2011).

of Ahmadiyah cannot be given Muslim funerary rites or prayers and is not allowed to be buried in a Muslim cemetery.²⁸

The bayan of the DPS is the most detailed exposé of the practical consequences of the perceived deviance of Ahmadis and shows a preoccupation of the more religion-minded elements within the PKS with practical Islam. But on the political level, PKS lawmakers have also been calling upon the government to act firmly against Ahmadiyah, primarily to prevent conflict within society.²⁹ Former KAMMI³⁰ activist and now senior PKS parliamentarian Mahfudz Siddiq said in 2010 that it was time for the government to act.³¹ He said that if the government had a reason to disband Ahmadiyah, it had better go ahead. 'There already is the MUI fatwa, so the government already has clarity about Ahmadiyah's status, but so far this hasn't been executed'. Mahfudz said he feared that if the government continued to drag its feet on the issue, it would amount to 'inviting a dangerous situation'.

After Cikeusik, then-PKS secretary general Anis Matta³² asked the police to act decisively against those responsible for the violence: '[a]lthough the background is religious, this is a criminal act'. Matta, who was also the deputy chairman of the DPR, added that the problems related to Ahmadiyah's status could be debated later, but that the legal issue of people being murdered should be the priority.³³ In an interview on the same day that Matta spoke, PKS lawmaker and member of Commission VIII Herlini Amran said two things should happen: the government should stand firm on the issue and Ahmadiyah should stop

28 In March 2011, in West Java's West Bandung district, residents of Cililin removed the (already-buried) body of an Ahmadi from an Islamic burial ground. See 'Makam pengikut Ahmadiyah dibongkar warga, jenazah diletakkan di tanah kosong', *Pos Kota*, 3 March 2011, www.poskota.co.id/berita-terkini/2011/03/03/makam-pengikut-ahmadiyah-dibongkar-warga-jenazah-diletakkan-di-tanah-kosong (accessed 18 December 2011).

29 For a detailed examination of the various camps within the PKS and their goals and strategies see Ahmad-Norma Permata's contribution to this book.

30 KAMMI, or Kesatuan Aksi Mahasiswa Muslim Indonesia (Action Unit of Indonesian Muslim Students), is not officially tied to the PKS, but shares its ideological outlook. Its positioning will be discussed in section 4 of this chapter.

31 'PKS: Penyelesaian Ahmadiyah Jangan Berlarut-Larut', Mahfudz Siddik's blog, 3 September 2010, <http://mahfudzsiddik.blogspot.com/2010/09/pks-penyelesaian-ahmadiyah-jangan.html> (accessed 21 September 2011).

32 Anis Matta replaced Luthfi Hasan Ishaq as president of the PKS on 1 February 2013, after the latter resigned amid suspicions of his involvement in a major graft case.

33 'Sejumlah partai Islam kutuk tragedi Cikeusik', *PolitikIndonesia*, 7 February 2011.

claiming to be part of Islam. The root of the problem is one of faith, she said, adding that Ahmadis would have a pleasant life, side by side with people of other denominations, including Islam, if only they would let go of their claim to be part of Islam. From the government, Herlini was expecting clarity: '[t]he government, especially the Prosecutor's Office, really needs to take a firm stand against Ahmadiyah. You want to disband it or not? ... Don't let it be undecided, like now. Like this, the Ahmadis themselves are put in danger.'³⁴

Asked if she felt that Ahmadis' human rights were being violated by telling them to leave Islam, she said that 'not everything should be connected with human rights issues, especially issues related to belief and faith'. Discussing the 2005 MUI fatwa that some activists and Ahmadis themselves have blamed for the violence against the sect, Herlini said, 'the MUI has been carrying out its tasks properly and in accordance with prevailing legislation. In line with its task to protect Islam, the MUI has conducted an in-depth assessment of Ahmadiyah's presence. ... Ahmadiyah's *aqidah* [creed] is distorted, so it should be declared heretical'. And therefore, Herlini said, 'the decree against Ahmadiyah cannot legitimately be seen as one of the triggers of the deadly violence in Cikeusik'. Herlini also said the government should listen to the Islamic ummah – the majority in Indonesia.³⁵

In the meeting between lawmakers and senior government officials on 9 February 2011 lawmaker Jazuli Juwaini – from Banten – did most of the speaking for the PKs. He started by saying that he 'deplored' the fact that 'people were massacred in the name of religion'. 'All Indonesian citizens should be protected, whatever their beliefs, faith or religion', he said, criticising the chief of police by asking him how it was possible that mass violence such as that in Cikeusik could happen. He also wanted to know whether the attack was masterminded by someone and how it was possible that all of a sudden such a large crowd should show up in this relatively remote area. Addressing the Minister of Religious Affairs, Jazuli said that Ahmadiyah's controversial status should be clear by now, and that '[w]e have to differentiate between giving people freedom of religion and the desecration of religion'. And he added, 'religious freedom does not mean desecrating a religion that already exists'. He also said it was a good thing the minister invited Ahmadiyah to a dialogue, to tell them that if they want to use the name Islam, they should return to

34 'Herlini Amran: Sebaiknya Ahmadiyah buat agama baru saja', *PolitikIndonesia*, 7 February 2011, <http://politikindonesia.com/index.php?k=wawancara&i=18180> (accessed 18 December 2011).

35 Ibid.

the true teachings of Islam, and if they do not want that, they should start their own religion – without using the name Islam. However, he stressed that ‘no matter how much someone had deviated from Islam, nobody should be allowed to take the law into their own hands, killing people with impunity, destroying property – this can never be justified’.

4 Voices of Islam in Civil Society

Indonesia’s mainstream, Islam-based political parties to some extent all fall back on social groups. The most important of these are the traditionalist socio-religious organisation Nahdlatul Ulama (the NU, founded in 1926) and the modernist Muhammadiyah (founded in 1912). It is difficult to give exact figures on the number of people affiliated to these organisations but totals run in the tens of millions for both, with the NU being the bigger of the two. Although there is no formal link, Muhammadiyah is often seen as tied to the PAN, as this party was founded in 1998 by the Muhammadiyah chairman at that time, Amien Rais. In a similar way, the PKB (founded in 1999) is tied to the NU. However, the PPP (founded in 1973 through a merger of four Islamic parties, including the NU) also targets the NU voter base. The PKS draws from the tarbiyah movement, has been particularly successful among urban voters, and is informally tied to the active and well-organised student group KAMMI.

The MUI, the organisation that has outlawed Ahmadiyah on religious grounds in no fewer than three fatwas since 1980, is of course another important player in Indonesian Islamic civil society, but its positioning does not fall within the scope of this contribution. Suffice it here to say that after the Cikeusik attack, it was quick to explain that violence against Ahmadis should not be tolerated. Slamet Effendy Yusuf, the head of the council’s religious harmony division – and also one of the chairmen of the PBNU’s Tanfidziyah, or executive council – advocated zero tolerance with regard to ‘activities that lead to death’.³⁶ Theoretically, the MUI represents the broad spectrum of Indonesian Muslims, through the leaders of the many Islamic organisations in the country. It is a government-funded, but relatively independent organisation that aims to advise both the government and the ummah

36 ‘Zero tolerance buat kekerasan atas Ahmadiyah’, *PolitikIndonesia*, 7 February 2011, <http://politikindonesia.com/index.php?k=pendapat&i=18179> (accessed 16 March 2012).

with its fatwas. However, largely due to the one-organisation-one-vote system,³⁷ hardline groups have come to dominate the MUI.

In the next three sections, I will discuss the various positions on the Ahmadiyah issue taken up by key figures in Islamic civil society, starting with the NU.

4.1 TRADITIONALISTS: DAKWAH WITH NO TIME LIMIT

Nahdlatul Ulama presents itself as the moderate voice of pluralist inclusivism and a run-of-the-mill socio-religious organisation facilitating democracy through its insistence on dialogue. The *nahdliyin* (NU followers), the argument goes, understand that the Qur'an does not condone violence against minorities and therefore are rarely involved in violence. In this sense, the NU masses are contrasted with the hardliners involved in the Cikeusik attack and those in Temanggung soon after, who 'use sticks rather than logic'.³⁸

It is interesting to note that many prominent players in the Ahmadiyah controversy have roots in NU circles. This of course does not mean that the NU as an organisation bears any kind of responsibility for steps taken by such functionaries as part of their non-NU positions, but it does show that the NU is far from monolithic and that the traditionalist Islamic beliefs found at all levels of this socio-religious organisation can give rise to a wide array of perspectives, particularly in a politically delicate debate. One key player, for instance, is KH. Ma'ruf Amin. He is one of the chairmen of MUI's executive board and a member of President Yudhoyono's advisory council (Dewan Pertimbangan Presiden, Wantimpres), where he deals with religious affairs. As a former chairman of the Dewan Syuriah

37 Many, relatively small (compared with the NU and Muhammadiyah) groups like Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia and the Islamic Defenders' Front (*Front Pembela Islam*, FPI) have the same power as massive movements like the NU and Muhammadiyah, Ahmad Suaedy explains. See his 'Religious freedom and violence in Indonesia', in Ota Atsushi, Okamoto Masaaki and Ahmad Suaedy (eds.), *Islam in contention: Rethinking Islam and state in Indonesia* (Jakarta, Kyoto and Taipei: WI, CSEAS and CAPAS, 2010), 139–169. The late former Indonesian President and eminence grise of the NU, Abdurrahman Wahid, has called the MUI a 'bunker of radical Islam'. See Abdurrahman Wahid, 'Musuh dalam selimut', in Abdurrahman Wahid (ed.), *Ilusi Negara Islam. Ekspansi gerakan Islam transnasional di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Gerakan Bhinneka Tunggal Ika, Wahid Institute, Maarif Institute, 2010), 11–41, 39.

38 Zainal Abidin Nawawi, 'NU dan revitalisasi pluralisme agama', NU website, 28 February 2011, http://nu.or.id/page/id/dinamic_detil/4/27067/Kolom/NU_dan_Revitalisasi_Pluralisme_Agama.html (accessed 3 October 2011).



The head office of the Nahdlatul Ulama in Jakarta

(Advisory Council) and current member of the Dewan Mustasyar (Supreme (Advisory) Council), he also has serious NU credentials.

After the NU's leadership congress in 2010, Martin van Bruinessen, a longtime observer of the organisation, wrote:

[w]ith this new board, NU is poised to seek a new balance between the conservatism and politicisation of the past period and the search for a new religious discourse of the 1990s. ... The slide towards fundamentalist and anti-liberal religious views is unlikely to continue under the new board and it may even be reversed.³⁹

In this light, it is a case in point that the NU sent KH. Masdar Farid Mas'udi as its representative to a meeting with Commission VIII on 17 February 2011. Masdar is one of the most liberal thinkers at the top of the NU. He is considered one of the seniors of liberal Islam in Indonesia⁴⁰ and is currently chairman (*rais*) of the Dewan Syuriah.

39 Martin van Bruinessen, 'New leadership, new policies?', *Inside Indonesia* 100 (April–June 2009), www.insideindonesia.org/weekly-articles-100-apr-june-2010/new-leadership-new-policies-16061866 (accessed 16 March 2012).

40 Budi Handrianto, *50 tokoh Islam Liberal Indonesia. Pengusung ide sekularisme, pluralisme, dan liberalisme agama* (Jakarta: Hujjah Press, 2007), 145–146.

At the DPR, Masdar said the main way to get followers of the JAI back into the fold of mainstream Islam is to open up a peaceful dialogue and refrain from forcing conventional beliefs upon them. 'Gently straighten them out. As is mentioned in the Qur'an, invite those whose understanding differs from ours, with dakwah, with good advice. If that doesn't work, argue with them politely. If you hit a wall, then so be it – leave it to Allah', Masdar told the lawmakers.⁴¹ In the hearing, Masdar was reluctant to label Ahmadiyah a deviant sect. 'Humans do not have the right to determine whether a person's beliefs are heretical or not', he said. 'When it comes to religion, there is indeed such a thing as deviance. But if [this concept] is being used as a social norm, this will destroy our social life.'⁴²

Years earlier, in a reaction to the 2005 MUI fatwa labelling Ahmadiyah deviant, Masdar had already raised his objections to the confrontational approach, predicting that it would only lead to more violence.⁴³ He believes that radical beliefs imported from the Middle East are to blame for the Ahmadiyah-related trouble in recent years.⁴⁴ According to Masdar, the reason why the NU never officially labelled Ahmadiyah deviant but merely 'different' is that such a label could be used as a licence to kill, or at least provoke violence. On a more personal level, he said it would be arrogant to make a decision on a matter that is only God's to decide. Although Masdar himself does not agree with Ahmadiyah beliefs about prophethood, he said the debate about religious interpretation should be open. In fact, crucial to his position is the belief that Muhammad was indeed the final prophet: '[t]he doctrine about the finality of prophethood', he said, 'basically leads to the doctrine of freedom of thought.'⁴⁵ Key to Masdar's argument is that because it is clear that there will not be any other prophets, it is up to the ummah to decide how to fulfill religious requirements: '[w]e no longer have to be afraid that [our interpretation

41 'Luruskan Ahmadiyah dengan kelembutan', *Kompas*, 17 February 2011, <http://nasional.kompas.com/read/2011/02/17/22493848/NU.Luruskan.Ahmadiyah.dengan.Kelembutan>, (accessed 16 March 2012).

42 Ibid.

43 Ahmad Subakir, Ilham Mashuri and M. Asror Yusuf, 'Respon tokoh Islam atas fatwa MUI tentang Gerakan Ahmadiyah Indonesia', <http://ern.pendis.kemenag.go.id/DokPdf/ern-III-06.pdf> (accessed 21 September 2011).

44 Interview with KH. Masdar Farid Mas'udi, Jakarta, 6 October 2011.

45 This is a position derived from the works of Muhammad Iqbal (1877–1938), particularly the concept of 'inductive intellect': see Iqbal, 'The spirit of Muslim culture', the fifth in his compilation of lectures entitled *The reconstruction of religious thought in Islam* (1930).

of Islam] will be blocked by someone with absolute authority [i.e., a prophet].’ The only absolute truth that is left, is the Qur’an, he added.

The way out of the Ahmadiyah controversy, according to Masdar, would require two separate developments: the state should protect the basic rights of all citizens and mainstream Muslims should become more mature, with the faithful realising that it is not their responsibility to homogenise society. The two steps should remain separated, Masdar said, as ‘[t]he state does not have the right to judge whether beliefs are right or wrong’.

The general chairman of the NU, Said Aqil Siradj, although quick to denounce the Cikeusik violence and to call for harsh measures against the perpetrators, in his public statements stressed that Ahmadiyah teachings are not in line with those of the NU. However, he has been careful not to use the word ‘deviant’. ‘The Ahmadiyah teachings are rejected by all of Islam, that is true. But we cannot abuse them [Ahmadis],’ he explained. He also said violence would only increase the distance between Ahmadis and mainstream Muslims, so the only solution to the problem would be a civilised dialogue to bring Ahmadis back on the right track: ‘I, from NU, am ready for a discussion, a dialogue with Ahmadiyah. An objective discussion, not one to berate or harrass.’ With talks, Said Aqil said, Ahmadis could accept the offer to return to the true teachings. ‘Insyah Allah, if the result is that a part of the Ahmadiyah community returns to Sunni Islam, alhamdulillah. I am not aiming for all of them to return to Sunni Islam.’⁴⁶ When asked about the possibility of disbanding Ahmadiyah, Said Aqil said such a step fell within the domain of the state, and therefore was beyond the NU’s reach.⁴⁷ He also called acts like those in Cikeusik ‘signs of a society that is uncultured and unethical.’⁴⁸

The NU’s Dewan Syuriah in an official explanation of its stance on the issue (*taushiyah*) said in relation to the Cikeusik incident that ‘the teachings about Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s prophethood that are followed by Ahmadiyah are not in line with the creed of *ahlu-sunnah wal-jama’ah* [mainstream traditionalist (non-modernist) Sunni Islam]’. It also said

46 Imam Maruf, ‘PBNU: Penyerangan Ahmadiyah adalah tindakan biadab’, *Kabar Haji*, 7 February 2011, <http://kabarhaji.com/kabar/1716/pbnu-penyerangan-ahmadiyah-adalah-tindakan-biadab> (accessed 3 October 2011).

47 Edy M. Ya’kub, ‘NU, Ahmadiyah, dan FPI’, *Antara*, 5 March 2011, www.antaranews.com/berita/248702/nu-ahmadiyah-dan-fpi (accessed 3 October 2011).

48 ‘Penyerangan terhadap Ahmadiyah: Membenturkan Umat Islam kepada Negara’, *Al Kisah Magazine*, 16 February 2011, <http://majalah-alkisah.com/index.php/component/content/article/799-penyerangan-terhadap-ahmadiyah-membenturkan-umat-islam-kepada-negara> (accessed 23 November 2011).

that differences in religious understanding can never be used to justify violence, and that the government is constitutionally responsible for legal enforcement and the protection of 'all citizens regardless of their religion or beliefs.'⁴⁹ However, a colleague of Masdar at the Dewan Syuriah, KH. Hasyim Muzadi, one of the more purist and political-minded people at the top of the NU, was quoted as saying in March 2011 that Ahmadiyah activity and proselytisation should be outlawed, as was stipulated in the SKB. Hasyim Muzadi believes the issue should not be framed in terms of freedom of religion: 'Ahmadiyah teachings really have to be brought to a halt, because they make the Islamic ummah vulnerable, except when Ahmadiyah becomes a religion of its own and not [claims to be part of] Islam. This has no relation to the freedom of religion, but only with desecration of religion', said the former PBNU general chairman (2000–2005 and 2005–2010).⁵⁰

The current position of the NU, under the general leadership of Said Aqil, is thus more accommodating toward Ahmadiyah than the organisation's stance under the lengthy leadership of Hasyim Muzadi. During those eventful years, the Ahmadiyah issue was portrayed as a problem of desecration of religion rather than freedom of religion. 'Pancasila provides freedom of religion and belief to every citizen. But that does in no way mean it provides freedom to tarnish a religion that is considered legitimate in Indonesia', Hasyim Muzadi said after the issue of the SKB in June 2008.⁵¹ The PBNU leader at the time also called the SKB an appropriate step to prevent Ahmadiis from spreading their beliefs.⁵² More interesting, however, is that there was a meeting of NU leaders in Bogor in September 2005, presided over by Ma'ruf Amin, Said Aqil Siradj, Masdar F. Mas'udi and Rozy Munir, to discuss the NU's formal stance in the Ahmadiyah debate. The results of the meeting – calling Ahmadiyah 'deviant and outside Islam [*sesat dan keluar dari Islam*]' – were placed on the official NU website in May

49 'Seruan anti kekerasan Syuriah PBNU', 16 February 2011, www.nu.or.id/a,public-m,dinamic-s,detail-ids,6-id,26888-lang,id-c,taushiyah-t,Seruan+Anti+Kekerasan+Syuriah+PBNU-.phpx (accessed 19 May 2012).

50 Edy M. Ya'kub, 'NU, Ahmadiyah, dan FPI'.

51 'PBNU: Pancasila jamin kebebasan beragama, tidak kebebasan menodai agama', NU website, 12 June 2008, http://nu.or.id/page/id/dinamic_detil/1/12741/Warta/PBNU_Pancasila_Jamin_Kebebasan_Beragama_Tidak_Kebebasan_Menodai_Agama.html (accessed 20 November 2011).

52 'PBNU minta Ahmadiyah tak lagi kembangkan ajarannya', NU website, 11 June 2008, http://nu.or.id/page/id/dinamic_detil/1/12736/Warta/PBNU_Minta_Ahmadiyah_Tak_Lagi_Kembangkan_Ajarannya.html (accessed 20 November 2011).

2008, right when pressure on the government to do something about Ahmadiyah was mounting. In the statement, the government was asked to 'take a firm and consistent stand in dealing with Ahmadiyah in Indonesia [*memiliki sikap yang tegas dan konsisten dalam menyikapi keberadaan aliran Ahmadiyah di Indonesia*]'.⁵³ However, according to Masdar this statement was in fact a draft version that was never accepted by a majority of the ulama attending the meeting.⁵⁴ His position was confirmed by one of the chairmen of the NU's executive board, Imam Aziz, who stressed that the NU has never officially labelled Ahmadiyah a deviant sect. 'NU would never call another group deviant [*sesat*], infidel [*kafir*] or heretic [*bid'a*]. That's an official decision. NU's basic attitude is like that', Imam said, adding that Ahmadis have a constitutional right to worship, and that nobody can take that away.⁵⁵ KH. Malik Madani, secretary general of the Dewan Syuriah, after the Cikeusik incident also made clear that for the NU the disbandment of Ahmadiyah was not an option.⁵⁶

According to Imam Aziz, one of the founders of the Yogyakarta-based NGO LKiS, which is aimed at promoting inclusivist and tolerant understandings of Islam, the main problem in Indonesia is a lack of understanding – among the general population but also at government level – of the issue of minority rights. People have to stay within certain cultural or religious boundaries, Imam Aziz explained, and if they step outside those boundaries they are seen as deviant. 'And that is a problem, an ontological problem', he said. 'Ahmadiyah is seen as an aberration, and to cure it, they should come back to the mainstream.' For these reasons, Imam Aziz said the use of a human rights discourse – as opposed to dealing with the issue from a religious perspective – would be very useful. 'No matter how different they are from us, they still have rights.'

The NU's vantage point in the Ahmadiyah controversy has been the prevention of violence, Imam explained. He too said that he does not agree with the Ahmadis' ideas about prophethood, but added that violent

53 'Taushiyah: Sikap PBNU tentang Ahmadiyah', NU website, 9 May 2008, www.nu.or.id/page/id/dinamic_detil/6/12315/Taushiyah/Sikap_PBNU_tentang_Ahmadiyah.html (accessed 20 November 2011).

54 Masdar explained this in the 6 October 2011, interview in Jakarta. The question remains how the 2005 Bogor statement – including the crucial word 'deviant' – ended up on the NU's website in 2008, at such a politically expedient moment.

55 Interview with Imam Aziz, Jakarta, 15 November 2011.

56 'PBNU Tolak Pembubaran Ahmadiyah', KBR68H, 4 March 2011, www.kbr68h.com/berita/nasional/3169-pbnu-tolak-pembubaran-ahmadiyah (accessed 23 November 2011).

confrontation should be avoided at all costs. Instead, dakwah is the highest duty, he said, without a time limit. 'It is possible that other people are flawed, but the flaws have to be overcome gradually and by way of persuasion. If we beleaguer them, the distance will only increase.' 'All that the nahdliyin – the followers of the NU – can do is put across their message, and it is up to others to decide what they want to do with that message. And when people do have recourse to violence, then the state should get involved, for it is the task of the state to protect people's civil rights (but not to interfere in matters of faith).' In this sense, Imam said, actions by the NU's youth movement Gerakan Pemuda Ansor to promote religious tolerance should be seen as merely symbolic.

In mid-July 2011, the website of GP Ansor⁵⁷ featured a photograph of members of its paramilitary subdivision called Banser GP Ansor clearing the streets of Temanggung of rubble after the riot there. The organisation, at least under its current leader, Nusron Wahid, has been very outspoken on several issues pertaining to religious pluralism. On 8 February 2011, for instance, right after Cikeusik and Temanggung, Nusron said that places of worship are holy and need to be protected from disturbances from anyone, anywhere.⁵⁸ He said the destruction of churches in Temanggung could lead to national disintegration and called the incident 'barbaric' and 'legally and morally unacceptable in Indonesia'. For that reason, in relation to the Cikeusik incident, Nusron said the central leadership of Ansor had instructed its Banten branches to send out Banser units to protect Ahmadiis there.⁵⁹

4.2 MODERNISTS: SEPARATING SOCIETY AND STATE

The 45th *muktamar* (leadership congress) of Muhammadiyah in 2005 marked the end of Ahmad Syafi'i Ma'arif's leadership and the beginning of a turn to conservatism within what is probably the biggest modernist Muslim organisation in the world. Ma'arif was replaced by Sirajuddin 'Din' Syamsuddin and, with the latter at the helm, many progressive – mostly young – Muhammadiyah intellectuals felt marginalised from

⁵⁷ <http://gp-ansor.org/>.

⁵⁸ 'Rusuh Temanggung: Ansor bantu renovasi gereja', *PolitikIndonesia*, <http://politikindonesia.com/index.php?k=politik&i=18238> (accessed 9 December 2011).

⁵⁹ 'Penyerangan terhadap Ahmadiyah: Membenturkan Umat Islam kepada Negara', *Al Kisah Magazine*, 16 February 2011, <http://majalah-alkisah.com/index.php/component/content/article/799-penyerangan-terhadap-ahmadiyah-membenturkan-umat-islam-kepada-negara> (accessed 22 November 2011).

the start.⁶⁰ The emergence of the informal Jaringan Intelktual Muda Muhammadiyah (Network of Young Muhammadiyah Intellectuals, JIMM) under the mentorship of the late Moeslim Abdurrahman and the founding of the Maarif Institute should be seen as the progressive intellectuals' answer to the rise of conservative functionaries. However, as Pradana Boy ZTF argues, Muhammadiyah's 'left wing' starting to organise itself led to even stronger resistance from the right and mutual entrenchment, instead of the hoped for accommodation of liberal thought and a move back to the middle.⁶¹

As Herman L. Beck shows,⁶² the history of Ahmadiyah–Muhammadiyah relations is an interesting one. In the early years of Ahmadiyah missionary activity in the Dutch-controlled Java of the 1920s, namely, the organisation's Lahore branch developed cordial relations with representatives of the Indonesian modernists. This was able to happen because the organisations shared a modernist outlook, stressing Islam's compatibility with modernity, rationality and science. However, Muhammadiyah decidedly broke with the Ahmadiyah at its 18th congress, held in Solo in 1929.

At Muhammadiyah's 2010 muktamar, Din Syamsuddin was re-elected, but self-professed anti-liberals such as Adian Husaini⁶³ did not return to the organisation's Central Leadership Board (PP Muhammadiyah). Din seems to have a well-developed sense of political reality: in a period characterised by emboldened hardline religious activism in wider society, it might not have been a bad idea to coopt, in a way, some of the figures who shared such a train of thought. With regard to Ahmadiyah, Din Syamsuddin also seems to have been choosing his words carefully. Interestingly, Din Syamsuddin had been one of the people to sign the 2005 fatwa placing the sect outside Islam, as he was then the secretary general of the MUI. After the SKB was issued in 2008, Din Syamsuddin said the government had acted because Ahmadiyah had strayed from mainstream Islam and that the next step should be 'efforts to persuade

60 Pradana Boy ZTF, *Para pembela Islam. Pertarungan konservatif dan progresif di tubuh Muhammadiyah* (Depok: Gramata Publishing, 2009), 1.

61 Ibid., 185.

62 Herman L. Beck, 'The rupture between the Muhammadiyah and the Ahmadiyya', in *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 161–162 (2005), 210–246.

63 Adian Husaini, who has been active in organisations like KISDI and DDII, was a member of Muhammadiyah's Majelis Tabligh in 2005–2010. He is best known for his column 'Catatan Akhir Pekan' (Weekend Notes) in the magazine *Suara Hidayatullah*, in which he promotes what Pradana calls an 'ultra-conservative explanation of Islam': see Pradana, *Para pembela Islam*, 10.

Ahmadiyah followers to return to mainstream Islamic teachings.’⁶⁴ After the Cikeusik incident he urged the central government to be firm on Ahmadiyah, saying its hesitant stance ‘could lead to unrest and could open up opportunities for a group of people to take matters into their hands in dealing with this issue’. He also said, ‘the state has the power to disband Ahmadiyah or to give it a choice to form a new religion outside Islam’, but urged Ahmadis to embrace the teachings of mainstream Islam. Din Syamsuddin also stressed that violence was not the right way to bring Ahmadis back into the fold, but that there should be dialogue and dakwah.⁶⁵

Another senior Muhammadiyah leader, Syamsul Anwar – the chairman of the Tarjih and Tajdid Council, tasked with ruling on legal matters in the religious domain – explained that there should be a distinction between the religious side of the Ahmadiyah controversy and its social dimensions.⁶⁶ ‘There is no statement [within Muhammadiyah] about whether or not it is necessary to ban [Ahmadiyah]. There just isn’t, he said. ‘The teachings [of Ahmadiyah] are unacceptable. That is clear. And we reject the spreading of those teachings. But we also reject violence against Ahmadiyah.’ Syamsul Anwar used the analogy of a house in describing mainstream Muslims’ problem with Ahmadiyah. ‘For us it’s like an attack on our teachings. Our teachings are being distorted. We live in a house, then someone comes in and starts making changes to our house. That’s how we feel – because they say they are part of Islam, and share our faith. So that means we share the same house. They live in the same house, but they start making changes without permission.’

When asked about possible solutions, Syamsul Anwar said it was important to keep the dialogue going, as it was preferable that people keep living in the same metaphorical house. And with dialogue, the Ahmadis might be persuaded to return. A human rights discourse can be useful, but only when dealing with violence and destruction, not in relation to matters of faith. ‘Human rights are good, but they don’t always solve the problem’, Syamsul said, adding that the Ahmadiyah controversy had already become a political problem, thus was in need of a political solution.

One of the representatives of the young, progressive wing of Muhammadiyah is Fajar Riza Ul Haq, the executive director of the Maarif

64 Budiwanti, *Pluralism collapses*, 16.

65 ‘Din Syamsuddin: Kafir meyakini ada nabi baru’, Hidayatullah.com, 18 February 2011, www.hidayatullah.com/read/15420/18/02/2011/din-syamsuddin%3A-kafir-meyakini-ada-nabi-baru.html (accessed 18 March 2012).

66 Interview with Syamsul Anwar, Yogyakarta, 9 November 2011.

Institute, which has no formal ties to the organisation. He urged people after the Cikeusik incident not to be provoked into taking violent action over religious affairs, because in doing so they would only serve political interests.⁶⁷ For Fajar, the way out of the Ahmadiyah controversy is for the government to take a firm stand against vigilante groups to prevent further violence.⁶⁸ 'The government must rule the public domain, because that's the state's authority. When civil society actors come to the public sphere they should obey the law ... And the government at the same time should respect the rights of civil society – at the private level. ... If the NU and Muhammadiyah decide that Ahmadiyah is not Islamic, for example, the government should respect that. But [in the public sphere] both Muslim organisations should respect the government's rule.'

However, it is important to note that not all aspects of Fajar's vision are shared by Muhammadiyah's old guard, and the views of Agus Sukaca offer some interesting contrast. This general chairman of Muhammadiyah's Tabligh Council is in charge of matters pertaining to the implementation and socialisation of decisions taken by the previously mentioned Tarjih and Tajdid Council which has long been led by Syamsul Anwar. According to Agus Sukaca, 'It is clear that Ahmadiyah is deviant: Muhammadiyah said so decades ago and in recent years MUI has confirmed it.'⁶⁹ For Agus Sukaca the problem would be solved if Ahmadiis declared a new religion. But, ideally, Ahmadiyah would return to the straight path of Islam. 'If they come back that would be the best solution. If they don't want that, they have to create their own religion. And if they don't want that, the government has to disband them,' Agus Sukaca said when asked whether he thought the SKB was an appropriate measure. 'Actually it is not enough. Unless a statement were added that this group is outside Islam,' he added. According to Muhammadiyah's top *tabligh* (outreach) official, the Ahmadiyah issue is not a matter of a violation of human rights. 'As long as they claim to be part of Islam, I am of the opinion that the Islamic ummah has the right to have an opinion, or to take steps, to prevent the deviance from being spread. I think this is part of the Islamic effort to keep the faith pure. Because of that, this is not a human rights issue. It is a problem of truth,' he said, stressing however that violence was not the solution for this type of problem. In fact, if only the government would act decisively, further clashes would be prevented, he argued.

67 'Maarif Institute: Masyarakat jangan terprovokasi,' *PolitikIndonesia*, 17 February 2011, <http://politikindonesia.com/index.php?k=politik&i=18654> (accessed 9 December 2011).

68 Interview with Fajar Riza Ul Haq, Jakarta, 23 August 2011.

69 Interview with Agus Sukaca, Yogyakarta, 7 November 2011.

4.3 TARBIYAH ACTIVISTS

Although the student movement KAMMI shares the goals and strategies of the PKS – leadership based on Islamic values through elaborate Islam-based education of cadres – the two are not formally tied. The movement that claims to have 15,000 members at over 300 campuses from Sabang to Merauke is thus not the PKS's official student organisation. It is however a representative of the unofficial tarbiyah movement that also spawned the PKS. Because of that, it should come as no surprise that Fahri Hamzah, a founder of KAMMI, is now a senior PKS lawmaker. Mahfudz Siddiq, chairman of Commission I at the DPR on behalf of the PKS, also has a KAMMI background.

A month after the Cikeusik incident, the then-chairman of KAMMI told media that the Ahmadiyah issue was clear. 'We want the government to take firm action,' said Rijalul Imam, adding that the government should act as the leader of the ummah and that further clashes should be prevented.⁷⁰ For KAMMI, Rijalul Imam continued, there were three options: (1) Ahmadiyah declared itself to be a new religion ('the best solution'); (2) the Ahmadiyah organisation was outlawed; and (3) Ahmadis returned to the true teachings of Islam.

In March 2011, KAMMI elected a new general chairman, Muhammad Ilyas, a LIPIA⁷¹-educated 30-year-old from an NU family in Sidoarjo, East Java. According to Ilyas, it is important to take into account the first principle of the state ideology of Pancasila to find a solution for the Ahmadiyah controversy: belief in the one and only God.⁷² For Ilyas, this means that there is only limited room for deviance. In the case of Islam, he said, it is clear that Muhammad is the final Prophet: '[w]hen there is someone who says that there is another prophet after Muhammad, that means that person is not a Muslim. And Ahmadiyah has to be found in that area. They have their own prophet, their own book; Ahmadiyah cannot claim to be part of Islam.' For this reason, Ilyas said he supported the MUI fatwa declaring Ahmadis to be outside Islam. The solution

70 'KAMMI: Persoalan Ahmadiyah sudah jelas', *Republika Online*, 13 March 2011, <http://www.republika.co.id/berita/breaking-news/nasional/11/03/13/169036-kammi-persoalan-ahmadiyah-sudah-jelas> (accessed 11 October 2011).

71 The *Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Islam dan Arab*, or LIPIA, is a Saudi-affiliated institute of higher education focusing on the Arabic language and Islam, based in South Jakarta. It is generally seen as promoting conservative values, but also counts progressive activists like Ulil Abshar Abdalla, a founder of the (Liberal Islam Network), among its alumni.

72 Interview with Muhammad Ilyas, Jakarta, 25 November 2011.

Ilyas preferred was that Ahmadis returned to the true faith. He stressed however that violence was never an option. But if Ahmadis refused to repent, they would have to declare a new religion. 'But I am an optimist,' Ilyas said. 'Rapprochement would be better. The solution is dakwah.'

Asked whether disbandment of the organisation would be of any help, the KAMMI chairman said he did not think that would solve anything. The SKB in itself also was not enough, as there always needed to be dialogue: '[t]here have to be laws, but the rapprochement has to be facilitated through dialogue. Don't keep repeating the same history, until we end up with violence.'

With regard to human rights discourses in the ongoing controversy, Ilyas said it was difficult to draw the line, as mainstream Muslims also had rights. 'People can choose whatever religion they want to follow, that is their right. We cannot force them. But we have to teach people our understanding. If they want to accept it, that's great. If not, go ahead. But then they cannot lay a claim to Islam, because there are rules.'

5 Conclusion

The Ahmadiyah controversy over the past few years has given rise to an interesting interplay between ideological considerations and political pragmatism. This can be seen from the variety of arguments used, solutions proposed and references made to such notions as the rule of law, human rights, religious pluralism and social stability. The framing of rights discourses is a crucial element in this ongoing debate, particularly the relation between various conceptualisations of the rights of believers, the rights of citizens and the rights of human beings. Such rights are seen by some as one and the same, by others as complementary to each other and yet other people consider them to be in outright contradiction.

There is an overwhelming rejection of Ahmadiyah teachings within mainstream Indonesian Islam, among both politicians and civil society activists. Practically nobody agrees with Ahmadis' religious beliefs, and only a very few people hesitate to call them deviant. For the majority it is clear: Ahmadis are not proper Muslims and they should either repent or stop claiming to be part of Islam. However, the almost universal rejection of Ahmadiyah teachings on the level of religious understanding does not mean that most people (or even many people) think that violent confrontation is an option for solving the problem. In fact, most mainstream Muslim civil society leaders and politicians from Islam-based parties do consider Ahmadiyah deviant in terms of religious understandings but still propose a civilised solution in which Ahmadis'

rights as citizens and human beings are respected in the context of the Indonesian nation-state. Of course there are also organisations on the scene that are very outspoken in their rejection of Ahmadiyah and that – unlike the mainstream organisations – do not shy away from (threatening with) violence. These are fringe groups, but they have nevertheless been able to attract a lot of media attention and have proven their capability to escalate tensions up to the level of bloodshed.

The attack in Cikeusik in February 2011, probably in large part due to the graphic footage circulating on the Internet since its immediate aftermath, led to a surge of international criticism and expressions of concern over the protection of religious minorities in Indonesia. European governments⁷³ and the European Parliament,⁷⁴ but also the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and others, called for a thorough investigation. But even though Indonesia's National Commission on Human Rights (KOMNAS HAM) said in a preliminary report that the Cikeusik violence was planned and organised,⁷⁵ and there was video evidence that three people had been beaten to death, in the end nobody was charged with murder. After a high-security trial at the State Court in Serang, 12 defendants ultimately were found guilty of violating articles of the Criminal Code on violence (160), incitement (170), molestation (351) and willful participation in an assault resulting in serious injuries or death (358). They were sentenced to jail terms of three to six months.⁷⁶

The main issue discussed in this chapter is how people define the limits of the freedom of religion and the role of the state therein. In that

73 EU Delegation to Brunei Darussalam and Indonesia, *EU Statement on the recent attack and killings of Ahmadi in Banten*, 8 February 2011, http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/indonesia/documents/press_corner/20110208_en.pdf (accessed 15 March 2012).

74 *European Parliament resolution of 7 July 2011 on Indonesia, including attacks on minorities*, www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P7-TA-2011-0341+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN (accessed 13 August 2011).

75 'Komnas HAM: Rusuh Cikeusik Terencana-Terorganisir', *PolitikIndonesia*, 23 February 2011, <http://politikindonesia.com/index.php?k=hukum&i=19013> (accessed 15 March 2012).

76 '12 terdakwa Cikeusik divonis 3–6 bulan', *Kompas* 29 July 2011, 5. Later, on 15 August 2011, Deden Sujana, the Ahmadi's head of security who was said to have had travelled to Umbulan to help protect Ahmadiyah interests there, was sentenced to six months in jail for obstruction of justice (as he had ignored a police order to leave the premises ahead of the attack) and violent assault (because he had punched one of the men who were later convicted over the incident).

sense, the Ahmadiyah controversy in Indonesia is part of a wider debate on secularism and the state – normal in any democracy – and should not merely be seen in terms of ‘religious radicals’ targeting minority groups. Sadly, however, the Ahmadiyah controversy in Indonesia is also an excellent example of how democratisation can become a victim of its own success. This is the case for more than one reason. Without access to a wide range of print and online publications susceptible to their ideas, religious hardliners would never have been able to set the terms of the debate on Ahmadiyah to the extent they have done since at least the 2005 MUI fatwa on the matter. The objections against Ahmadiyah beliefs that are mentioned in the MUI fatwas are used time and again by most people who have publicly aired their views on the matter: Ahmadiyah claims that its founder Mirza Ghulam Ahmad is a prophet, so the sect is deviant because there is no prophet after Muhammad. Standing up for a group like Ahmadiyah, which even mainstream Muslim organisations and political parties at the national level see as clearly having crossed the line, is politically not very attractive.

Thus, there is a large degree of consensus on who is to blame in the Ahmadiyah controversy, but when talking about solutions the issue becomes a lot more complicated. Some say Ahmadis are the problem and thus hold the key to the solution. Others argue that the state should interfere – with some saying it should do so for religious reasons and others highlighting civil rights. The form of proposed state intervention varies, too. There are those who maintain that the state should outlaw Ahmadiyah and there are those who instead want the government apparatus to protect all citizens, including Ahmadis. Whereas civil society activists – from the traditionalist, modernist and tarbiyah camps – all stressed the need for continued dialogue, lawmakers – not entirely unexpectedly – advocated a legal solution. Representatives from the liberal and the conservative camps within traditionalist Muslim politics, former Commission VIII chairman Abdul Kadir Karding (PKB) and Religious Affairs Minister Suryadharma Ali (PPP) respectively, have both stated their support for a legal solution to settle the Ahmadiyah dispute once and for all.

For organisations like the NU and Muhammadiyah, it is important to note that although they are not officially political in outlook, their decisions – or lack thereof – do have a political impact.

When we look at Muslim leaders’ reactions to the Cikeusik incident, any assumed schism between Indonesia’s modernists and traditionalists is not that clear. In fact, the major line of division when we look at the variety of approaches to the Ahmadiyah controversy is not between modernists and traditionalists, but between civil society groups and politicians.

Lawmakers adopted a far more idealistic stance on the issue than civil society leaders. The politicians seemed to be a lot more concerned about perceived threats to the 'purity of Islam' than the functionaries of organisations like the NU and Muhammadiyah, who overall proved to be pragmatic in their approach.

One crucial aspect of Indonesian society to keep in mind when looking at such cases as Cikeusik is that – borrowing a view on corruption put forward by Edward Aspinall and Gerry van Klinken⁷⁷ – freedom of religion in Indonesia should be seen as a political process instead of an abstract concept devoid of political causes and implications. This view should be combined with a realistic understanding of the role of the law in Indonesian society, as presented by Robert Cribb in the same edited volume: '[a]ll this illegal activity leads some observers into the impression that law matters little in Indonesia. This is a mistaken impression. The central characteristic of the Indonesian system is that law matters, but only to some people and only in some circumstances. Indonesia is not a lawless society, but rather one in which law is unevenly implemented.'⁷⁸

In this context it is worth noting that throughout the Ahmadiyah controversy in 2011, PKS lawmakers more than other parliamentarians of Islam-based parties tried to push the issue into the judicial sphere by stressing the law enforcement implications of Cikeusik and downplaying its religious dimensions.⁷⁹ The latter part of the story was sufficiently covered by the PPP, and it seems that the PKS – despite its fundamental objections to Ahmadiyah beliefs on religious grounds – used the controversy to boost its credentials as a mature, law-abiding party for all citizens. In doing so, it took up a position quite in line with that of the NU and Muhammadiyah, as these socio-religious organisations also stressed the need for the state to focus on law enforcement and not religious matters. The PPP at the DPR called for an outright ban on Ahmadiyah, while from within the PKB there was both a denunciation of the Cikeusik violence in terms similar to those in which the NU condemned the killings and a push for a legal solution. PAN lawmakers stressed that Ahmadi-

77 Edward Aspinall and Gerry van Klinken, 'The state and illegality in Indonesia,' introduction to Edward Aspinall and Gerry van Klinken (eds.), *The state and illegality in Indonesia*. Verhandelingen van het Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde No. 269 (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2011), 28.

78 Robert Cribb, 'A system of exemptions. Historicizing state illegality in Indonesia,' in Aspinall and Van Klinken (eds.), *The state and illegality in Indonesia*, 33.

79 At the same time though, the PKS, through its 2008 bayan on Ahmadiyah, had warned its followers in great detail about the practical implications of Ahmadiyah's perceived deviance.

have the right to live in Indonesia as citizens but also saw a need for dialogue to bring Ahmadis back to the straight path.

Even though there are plenty of laws that could have been invoked to offer Ahmadis protection from persecution (the 1945 Constitution, to name but one example), there was only very little to be gained politically from taking their side in a dispute that has successfully been cast in a religious light by hardline activists. For many, the responsibility for the conflict and violence lies squarely with the Ahmadiyah. As a result, the law did not matter so much – either on that fateful day in early February 2011 or later in court.

