

## Analysis of Church Suffering in Society of Indonesia

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Herman Eha, as the servant of God, who experienced persecution at GKT Bandar Jaya, said, “the throwing incident of the church building that we used for worship in June 1998 (Singh, 2011), which resulted in broken glass windows, and heard the screams of the rioters to crush and kill the Chinese people, has resulted in some of our congregations who suffered from retreating from participating in these activities worship and church formation (Singh, 2011). They become afraid, preferring to stay silent at home rather than participating in worship and formation activities inside the church and outside the church. There are even congregations who do not dare to make their house a place for fellowship activities anymore, because this activity is carried out in the houses of the congregation”. In line with that, Sugi Hasan (Yu Yu), a former head of the GKT Metro youth commission for the 1998-1999 period, said that as a direct result of the rioting, part of the youth and youth development program had stopped, for example, a retreat. This program is always not approved by the assemblies due to the security situation and conditions. In addition, some parents of members of the association do not allow their children to participate in these activities. Majelis Lim Bun Sui, a member of the congregation council, said that currently it is quite difficult to invite new people, especially Chinese Hoa, to come to church. This is due to two reasons, first the enthusiasm of some congregation members has begun to slack off to evangelize and invite their friends to come to church, secondly the current situation and conditions are very frightening for new souls, especially Chinese Hoa people to come to church, because the church is often terrorized by certain groups to destroy and destroy. Brother Aan, a Sunday school teacher at GKT Metro, said since 1997 until now, after the riots and destruction of church buildings that were rife in the country had a negative impact on Sunday school children at GKT Metro, the attendance of Sunday school children in the church had decreased. Some children are afraid to come to church, besides that there are parents of Sunday school children who do not want to take their children to church. Based on the results of the interview above, the writer concludes that after the riots, there were several members of the Metro Trinity Christian Church whose majority members were Chinese Hoa people who felt anxious about presenting themselves as Christians, this kind of phenomenon is very sad and heartbreaking, and will have a more impact far if this situation is allowed to continue.

*Keyword:* analysis, suffering, church, Indonesia

## Introduction

The rise of acts of terrorism with many bombings has brought into question Christian life. The actual explosion occurred in various churches in Indonesia. In the homeland, the church has never stopped in the face of problems and severe persecution. Technically, persecution means a systematic attempt to suppress or eradicate Christianity by social pressure by using violence (Sidjabat, 2001). If this is related to the context in Indonesia, efforts to systematically obstruct and oppress the church have occurred. For example, it is difficult for a church to obtain a permit to build a building; it is prohibited for Christians to hold worship in homes for various reasons. In connection with the above, Dr. Sidjabat (2001), in his paper entitled “The Urgency of Christian Education in Improving the Quality of the Spirituality of the Congregation”, said:

The challenges that have become increasingly difficult to confront the church have become more pronounced in the last five years as evidenced by the mushrooming of burning church buildings accompanied by persecution in various places. In particular we have seen this in the prolonged and recent events in Maluku and Ambon and in Mataram and elsewhere. It is still fresh in our memories of the events in Situbondo and Tasikmalaya, as well as the bombing of churches in several places in Indonesia in December 2000. People have various reasons for the occurrence of the event including political, social and cultural reasons. Whatever the obvious reasons, such incidents are certainly very surprising and often make church members shrink, scared, afraid. Of course some others are getting more enthusiastic. (p. 2)

Since the first seven centuries AD, the Archipelago has occupied a prominent place in Asian trade traffic. Foreign merchants came to Indonesia to trade, but they also brought along their respective religions, for example: Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam.

The existence of God's church in Indonesia cannot be separated from the involvement of Western powers, particularly the Portuguese and the Dutch, who came to Indonesia, for various reasons including: economic reasons, political reasons, and also religious reasons. As written by Th. Van den End, that in the 16th to 18th centuries, Western people tried to build churches in Indonesia in the context of building a trade empire. Those who entered first were Roman Catholics by the Portuguese, then came the Dutch who brought the Protestant religion (Van den End, 1985).

The relationship between the presence of Christianity and colonialism at that time greatly influenced the attitudes and views of the Indonesian people towards Christianity to this day. This was because at that time there was special treatment for Christians, where all facilities were given to the church, while a number of non-Christians at that time were often treated unfairly by the Portuguese and the Dutch so that they experienced suffering and persecution. This view/attitude continues to persist, even in the struggle for the independence of the Indonesian nation, Christians who are also involved in the struggle and also experience various sufferings and persecutions.

## Research Methods

This article was written referring to the results of research using the literature study method. The author digs up various information about radicalism and terrorism from historical books.

## Result Finding and Discussion

### Legal Guarantee

The existence of God's church in Indonesia is legally valid, because it is guaranteed by the laws in force in

this country. In the 1945 Constitution, Chapter XI “Religion”, Article 29, Paragraph 2, it is stated that: The State guarantees the freedom of every citizen to embrace his or her own religion and to worship according to his religion and belief.

In the *Guidelines for the Living and Practicing of Pancasila*, regarding the first precepts, it is emphasized that Indonesian people believe in and devote to God Almighty in accordance with their respective religions and beliefs according to the basis of fair and civilized humanity (Sek Neg RI, tt: 7, 30-31).

The existence of Christians on earth in Indonesia is not second-class boarding residents, but their existence is legal, has the same rights and obligations as all other Indonesian citizens. Petrus Octavianus (2002), in his paper entitled “National and State Life Guarantee” in terms of theological perspectives and its relevance for Indonesia’s future, said:

Christians as an integral part of this nation need to realize that they also have the right to life, religious rights, political rights, economic rights, national and state rights equal to other citizens. This social awareness also needs to be strengthened by theological awareness about the role of the church. (p. 2)

### **Problem Faced**

Even though the existence of Christians in Indonesia is constitutionally guaranteed by the 1945 Constitution and Pancasila as the basis of national and state life, it cannot be denied that in everyday life they are always faced with various kinds of challenges and obstacles, either secretly or openly.

An example of a tacit challenge is the meeting of the Indonesian Islamic Youth Association (PPII) which was held in Jombang on the 14th to 15th of February 1994, attended by representatives of Muslim youth throughout Indonesia, taking decisions that were mutually agreed upon, contained in a circular letter dated 5 February 1994 which reads (Surat edaran dari pimpinan pemuda Islam Indonesia [PPII] untuk jumlah umat mayoritas, Jombang, 5 Pebruari 1994):

1. It is obligatory for Muslims as the majority to stem the development of Christians in Indonesia.
2. How to stem not through arguments of faith, because the Quran teaches about the prophet Isa As, while in the Bible there is no teaching about Muhammad SAW.
3. The only way to stem it is through “LOVE” because it is considered the most successful in reducing the development of Christians in Indonesia.
4. Muslim youths are obliged to date Christian girls. Show a sympathetic attitude so that Christian girls are fascinated and their love is genuine.
5. If you are a boyfriend, you can do anything with them. If pregnant force her to convert and marry Islam in the Office of Religious Affairs, if she refuses to convert to Islam just leave.
6. Maybe it is not your ideal girl to be a wife? There is no need to be afraid and sorry because our religious teachings justify more than one wife.

Then, symbolic violence continues to be experienced by churches in Indonesia. Symbolic violence is a subtle and invisible form of violence that hides behind the imposition of domination. Sidjabat (2001) said:

The presence and participation of Christians in the life of the state, nation and society face obstacles, both small and large. Not a few Christians have difficulty earning a living and getting better positions and jobs because of their belief in Jesus Christ. As a result, changing beliefs is often an option, as is common in North Sumatra. Today, we realize that the religious awakening of the people who feel that they are the majority, has pushed many churches into economic, cultural, political, legal and educational life. (p. 2)

Another form of violence against the church is, the emergence of a Decision Letter with the Minister of Religion and the Minister of Home Affairs No. 1 of 1969—which is clearly contrary to Pancasila, UUD 19945 (Paragraph 1 and Article 29), TAP MPRS No. XX/MPRS/66, as well as the human right to worship—has shackled and denied the freedom of worship of Christians in Indonesia. Thomas Santosa (2000), in an article on FKKI, said:

SKB No. 1 of 1969 has become a “snowball”, by which the agencies under it have made provisions that are more shackling and refer to symbolic violence. Among others, the Decree of the Minister of Religion (Number 70 of 1978 and Number 77 of 1978), Circular of the Director General of Protestant Christian Community Guidance (Number E/200/1011/75), Circular of the Director General of Islamic Community Guidance and Haj Affairs (Number 07/EDR/79), Governor’s Instruction (Number 28 of 1990), letters from the Regional Office of the Ministry of Religion, letters from the Mayor/Regent, letters from the District Head and other agencies under them. (p. 16)

Meanwhile, the open challenge faced by believers is that since 1997, statistically, there has been an increase in the destruction or burning of church buildings, all of which have resulted in casualties, property, and damage to the peace of life of the community that grows and is nurtured naturally among fellow citizens (across SARA in Indonesia).

Dr. med Paul Tahalele, chairman of the FKKI, predicts that in 2004 the destruction, closure and burning of church buildings is estimated to reach 1,000. The prediction is of course based on previous data, which graphically tends to increase (Tahalele, 2000).

In a paper entitled “The Servant of God Struggles in the Middle of Current Indonesian Politics”, Dr. Purnawan Tenibemas (2001) said

Indeed, to this day the government has not succeeded in stabilizing the country and bringing peace to its citizens. Burnings, vandalism and church closings are still ongoing. In fact, according to data from FKKI until June 2001 alone, during President Wahid's administration since October 20, 1999, 211 churches were burned, damaged or closed or 14.07 churches/month. This figure exceeds the previous period. If President Wahid steps down, will his successor or the government formed later be better? Will the fate of Christians be better? there is no guarantee for this. (p. 3)

Since 1996, the incidents of church vandalism have been quite clearly documented, for example, the time and place of the incident, the chronology of the incident, the victim’s data, and most of them were recorded properly through photos and videos. From the period 1996 to the end of April 2000, it was recorded that 473 churches were damaged, burned, closed or revolutionized (FKKI, 2000, p. 17). There are also data that the authors can compile based on FKKI sources which can be seen in the table below.

Table 1

*The details of the destruction of the church building based on the number from 1996 to the end of April 2000*

No.	Year	N	%
1.	1996	71	15.01
2.	1997	92	19.45
3.	1998	134	28.33
4.	1999	123	26
5.	2000	53	11.2
Total		473	100

Meanwhile, the destruction of churches in Indonesia is based on denomination from 1996 to the end of April 2000 are as follows:

Table 2

*The destruction of churches in Indonesia is based on denomination from 1996 to the end of April 2000*

No.	Denomination	N	%
1.	Protestant Christianity	240	30.74
2.	Catholic Christianity	54	11.42
3.	Pentacostal	179	37.84
4.	Salvation Army	10	20.00
Total		483	100

If it is portrayed in a broader spectrum of events and in a longer time continuum since the government of President Soekarno (August 17 1945). Abdurrahman Wahit, 29 November 2000, the number of church buildings that were damaged, destroyed, and burned can be seen in Table 3

Table 3

*The church building was destroyed, and burned during the time President Soekarno's government*

No.	Period	Government	N	Approximately/Monthly
1.	1945-1967	Soekarno	2	0.008 couples
2.	1967-1998	Soeharta	456	1.19 couples
3.	1998-1999	Habibie	153	9.6 couples
4.	199-2000	Gus Dur	165	12.7 couples
Total			776	

### **The Result of the Difficult Situation Today Against the GKT Metro Congregation**

In order to understand what the consequences of the difficult situation faced and experienced by the Church on members of the Metro Trinity Christian Church, we will briefly describe the historical background of the Metro Trinity Christian Church and the development of its ministry.

#### **Background**

Gereja Kristen Tabernakel Metro began to form as a POS PI GKT Teluk Betung. The initial service began on December 21, 1975 by borrowing a place at the Metro Indonesia Christian Church, every week at 16:00 Waktu Indonesia Barat (WIB) with an average attendance of 10 to 15 people. At that time, the public worship service was coordinated by Pdt. Tan Cu Tek and Ev. Andrew Zabdi while the Sunday school service by Bp. Kurniawan and Bp. Lo Yau Tung (Bp. Ujang) from GKT Teluk Betung. Not long after, the service moved to the Sumur Bandung location (the current location of Bank Danamon), then in 1979, it moved again to a garage owned by the congregation behind the current Chandra supermarket Metro building.

Finally, with God's help, sometime in 1980 or 1981 GKT Metro had its own place of worship on Jl. Maulana number 8 (current place), since then the GKT metro is served on a full-time basis by Pdt. Paulus Max served until 1985. Seeing the development of the congregation and the need for a permanent church building, the servants of God and the administrators and congregations of GKT Metro took care of permits for the construction of a church building. With God's help and support from the donors, on May 1, 1996, the house which was used as a place of worship was demolished and then a permanent church building was built, which was inaugurated on June 25, 1997.

As for the servants of God who have served at GKT metro since the start until now, they are Mr. Pdt. Tan Cu Tek, Ev. Andrew Zabdi, Pdt. Alan Setiawan (1975 s/d 1980), Pdt. Paulus Max (1980-June 1985), Ev. Philipus Sarwon Juni (1985-April 1988), Ev. Lim Wie Ing (August 1988-August 1993), Ev. Badrin Susanto

Saap & Ev. Meilia (August 1993-February 1999), Ev. Putut Riyadi Siswantoro & Ev. Linda (March 1999-present) (GKT history celebrating on 25 years Juli, 26 2001).

### **Vision and Mission of Gereja Kristen Tabernakel**

The meaning of mission is that every Christian needs to reach others in order to know Jesus Christ and live according to his will that means there is movement bringing them to Jesus, receiving salvation and growing in Christ. True evangelism is preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, so that they will believe and have a desire to worship God and experience continuous renewal in Christ.

The Trinity Christian Church as a whole is domiciled in Lampung Province, Southern Sumatra region, including the municipalities of Bandarlampung, Central Lampung, South Lampung, and Tanggamus Regencies with a total membership of +1,500. To do this great job, the GKT has optimized the evangelism movement with the aim of reaching out to the people especially the Tiong Hoa tribe who live in Lampung Province.

Referring to the interview that was conducted, Mr. Lo Yau Tung, one of the pioneers of GKT Metro, said that the Trinity Christian Church was originally present in Lampung Province as a tribal church, namely, the Tiong Hoa tribe and until now among the people of Lampung, the Trinity Christian Church as a whole is known as a Tiong Hoa church, because the initial vision and mission was to evangelize and win the Tiong Hoa people living in Lampung Province who worked as traders and businessmen, although in subsequent developments the GKT had also reached out to other tribes in Lampung Province.

The church government system is Presbyterian, where the highest decision-making rests with the assembly. Pastors and servants of God who serve the same position as the council are specialized in the field of evangelism and spiritual formation of the people. Meanwhile, in certain matters, they are not involved in making decisions, especially in the management and use of church finances (for example determining the living allowance of God's servants).

After all, the recent vandalism, resolution and burning of church buildings in the country have had its own impact, both positive and negative. In this section, the author will explain the impact of today's difficult situation on the congregation, which will describe first the positive impacts, the second negative impacts.

## **Conclusion**

### **The Positive Impact**

It cannot be denied that the aftermath of the persecution of God's church in the country has had a positive impact, both in the spiritual aspects of Christians and aspects of social relations with non-Christian communities. The positive impact is indicated by:

First, the faith of the congregation is getting refined. Behind all the persecution against the church arises a realization that there is a beautiful plan from God. The GKT Metro congregation is made aware to continue to seek God, because God's presence and strength are absolutely needed when facing various kinds of persecution. Congregations are made aware that persecution is an opportunity to strengthen fellowship with God.

As told by Mrs. Bing Hua, a member of the GKT Metro congregation whose house is adjacent to the church building. The question that the author asks is: What would you do when you see a church or a Christian always facing threats in the form of destruction of church buildings and threats of bombs? This mother said that she and her husband along with the children could only pray every 19:00 at night with her husband and all the children took time to pray for God's strength so that her faith would not back down.

In line with that, Mr. Tan Ke Co, one of the founding figures of the GKT Metro congregation (church elders) said that since the events of the vandalism, bombing of churches, the number of people participating in morning prayers together at the church has increased. The persecution experienced by the church today has awakened the faith of Christians from their beds. Many Christians do not know why he is alive and what he is living for, Christians actually live because of God's grace and to glorify God (Stephen Tong, 1999).

Second, Christian love for enemies is put into practice. The GKT Metro congregation is not only taught to know that the Word of God requires believers to love enemies, but loving enemies is something that must be practiced. In an interview with Lo Jau Tung, the author asked the question: What are you going to do to those who are involved in destroying, burning, and destroying the church building? The answer that the author gets is: First, he still gives thanks to God because God always nourishes and gives strength. Second, even though the church had been harmed materially, he personally said that he was not grudging, not hostile and never thought or even wanted to avenge their crimes. Third, let the prevailing laws in Indonesia prosecute those involved in destroying church buildings.

Third, there are opportunities to testify. The persecution of the church leaves many people living in fear and in need of help. Mr. Lo Jau Tung said that this was a golden opportunity to share the Gospel, by giving forgiveness to those who are guilty and giving help and strength to those in need.

### Recommendation

After we pay attention to the description of the history describes above, the author recommends that this thought is expected to inspire churches or other Christian communities to respond to the rise of terrorism in Indonesia. Everything was done not for the purpose of violence, but to develop a culture of peace.

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