

Aceh, Indonesia

The December 2004 tsunami offered an unexpected political opportunity for peacemaking in the Indonesian province of Aceh, site of a long-running insurgency. The need to cooperate on a large-scale humanitarian operation brought about tentative reconciliation between the government of Indonesia and the separatist Free Aceh Movement (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka [GAM]). A memorandum of understanding signed on 15 August 2005 outlined steps in that direction, including demilitarization and Indonesian troop withdrawal. The European Union and five members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) deployed the 250-strong Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM) to observe its implementation, which became operational on 15 September 2005. While the AMM's mandate is limited, it is the EU's first in Asia and the first such collaboration between the EU and ASEAN countries.

Aceh has been a center of resistance to the Indonesian government since the country gained independence from the Netherlands in

1945. Formed in 1976, the GAM, developed into a de facto government of the province with its own tax system and armed forces. But from 1990 to 1998 the Indonesian army and paramilitary forces mounted counterinsurgency operations, reportedly claiming one thousand lives. The 1998 fall of President Haji Mohamed Suharto offered an opportunity for peace—in 2001 Megawati Sukarnoputri gained the presidency on a platform that included peace in Aceh.

In December 2002, Indonesia and GAM signed a framework agreement on the cessation of hostilities, which included provisions for third-party monitoring. After prolonged negotiations failed to achieve progress on Aceh's political status, President Megawati authorized new military operations against the GAM in May 2003. But violence never returned to pre-2002 levels and even before the tsunami there was a new impetus for peace. The International Crisis Group (ICG) has claimed that in October 2004 the new Indonesian government of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono reached a secret agreement with exiled GAM leaders on the cessation of hostilities.

The tsunami provided both sides with the opportunity to make difficult public political choices. Immediately following the tragedy, GAM declared a unilateral cease-fire so as to allow humanitarian aid to be delivered. It also sent representatives to talks in Helsinki, moderated by an independent nongovernmental organization, the Crisis Management Initiative (CMI), founded by former Finnish president Martti Ahtisaari. Five rounds of talks produced the August Memorandum, which formally

EU Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM)

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| • Authorization date | 9 September 2005 (Joint Council Action 2005/643/CFSP) |
| • Start date | September 2005 |
| • Head of mission | Pieter Feith (Netherlands) |
| • Budget as of 30 September 2005 | \$18.1 million (2005) |
| • Strength as of 30 September 2005 | Military observers: 216 |

ended the violence, offered an amnesty to imprisoned GAM members, and prompted the deployment of the AMM.

The AMM's main purpose is to observe implementation of the August Memorandum. Formally, it has acted on the invitation of the Indonesian government and with the full support of the GAM. Its tasks include monitoring demobilization of the GAM, assisting in the decommissioning of its arms, as well as the withdrawal of Indonesian forces, the maintenance of human rights, and the development of new legislation affecting the province. While it has the right to rule on disputed amnesty cases, the AMM is not empowered to take on the role of facilitator or negotiator, which remain the prerogative of the CMI.

The European Union's Political and Security Committee (PSC) is responsible for the AMM's political control and strategic guidance, under overall authority of the Council of the EU. The head of the mission is a senior Council official, Pieter Feith, supported by a principal deputy from Thailand, Lieutenant General Nipat Thonglek, and two EU deputies. The initial mandate was six months. Disarmament and troop withdrawals in Aceh were scheduled to be completed by 31 December, with the mission scheduled to end on 15 March 2006.

The AMM is a fully integrated operation under EU leadership, with 130 personnel from the EU, plus Norway and Switzerland. Another ninety-six staff are supplied by five "ASEAN contributing countries"—Brunei, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand—which are involved in the mission in their own right rather than representing ASEAN. The mission headquarters are in the regional capital of Banda Aceh, with monitoring cells located in ten district offices across the province. These

are complemented by mobile decommissioning teams. While the mission includes a number of former military personnel, it is an unarmed civilian force—the Indonesian government bears responsibility for its security.

By the end of September 2005 the AMM had overseen the first stage of withdrawal of Indonesian troops and the destruction of the first batch of weapons surrendered by the GAM. In this period, 6,671 Indonesian military and around 1,300 police moved out of Aceh, and a total of 243 arms were handed over by the GAM. The next phase was launched the day before its 15 October deadline and concluded in ten days. With all parties apparently keen to keep up this pace, military and police withdrawals concluded on 29 December and 5 January, respectively. The only Indonesian Security personnel left in the province were native to it.

Nonetheless, some difficulties arose in the amnesty process. By early October 2005, the GAM was concerned that around a hundred of its members had not yet been released by the Indonesian government. Ambassador Feith declared his determination to pursue this issue, and was optimistic that a solution would be found by the mission's conclusion. The delivery of assistance to former GAM members, organized by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and monitored by the AMM, also encountered difficulties, as the GAM refused to reveal their names for security reasons.

As the demobilization process continued, the focus of the AMM began to shift toward monitoring human rights. Human right experts were scheduled to gradually replace arms specialists within the mission. A decision on extending the AMM beyond its six-month mandate was scheduled to be made by January 2006.