

**DIN MINIMI:  
THE STRANGE STORY OF AN ARMED  
GROUP IN ACEH, INDONESIA**

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## I. INTRODUCTION

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Ten years after a much-lauded peace agreement ended a 30-year insurgency in Aceh, a peculiar armed group has emerged there with ties to former rebels, petty criminals and violent extremists as well as to intelligence and security forces. Indonesia has a history of such groups appearing in conflict areas, and it is often difficult to figure out who is using whom for what ends. Even by Indonesian standards, however, the story of Din Minimi is convoluted. It serves as an illustration of many problems in Indonesia today, including hostility and competing agendas among security forces, as well as lax control over high-risk offenders in prison. It also shows the potential for more serious violence in Aceh.

Din Minimi, Aceh's supposedly most wanted outlaw, first came to media attention in 2014 after he had been involved in a number of robberies and extortion attempts. Two journalists were invited to his "camp" in North Aceh, facilitated by a civil society activist. Din Minimi gave them a long interview, based on talking points prepared by the activist: how the current Aceh government had not fulfilled the provisions of the 2005 Helsinki peace agreement and how it was failing to bring prosperity to the people of Aceh. It had failed to meet its promises of free homes and land for former combatants. The target of criticism was clearly Partai Aceh, the party formed by the former rebels of the Free Aceh Movement (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka, GAM) whose senior members include the governor of Aceh, Zaini Abdullah, and his deputy, Muzakir Manaf, former GAM military commander and Partai Aceh head.

It seemed as though Din Minimi was one of innumerable disgruntled former combatants who had turned to crime and just happened to have the good fortune to run into people with an interest in boosting his exploits. As media attention grew, so did groups with an interest in using him, either to weaken the Partai Aceh government, raise the spectre of renewed conflict or build an armed force to wage jihad. (The last, it should be noted, has never been Din Minimi's own objective.)

In late 2014, two groups linked to each other by little more than a telephone connection reached out to Din Minimi. One consisted of an Acehnese living in Norway who belonged to a GAM splinter called MP-GAM. The other was a group of Acehnese extremists who had been involved in an effort to set up a terrorist training camp in Aceh in 2010. Together they helped strengthen his little band of armed men, with the Norway resident providing funding and the would-be terrorists—two of whom were operating from their cell in Banda Aceh prison—arranging for the purchase and delivery to Din Minimi.

For all his bombast against the Partai Aceh government, Din Minimi's targets for extortion seemed to be drug dealers and corruptors, a few with political links and others with none. Until March 2015, he seemed to be more a criminal nuisance than a serious security threat. In March, however, he and his men executed two military (Tentara Nasional Indonesia, TNI) intelligence agents. The police stepped up efforts to hunt down Din Minimi followers and killed at least two by shooting them at close range under disputed circumstances in July and August 2015. More than 20 alleged followers were in prison as of September, and police said there were about the same number on the wanted list.

The TNI, which lost two men, left the hard tactics to the police and tried persuasion instead, with the regional commander (Danrem) himself visiting Din Minimi's family during Ramadan, bearing gifts, to urge that he surrender. The commander also sent an envoy to him directly with an offer of money if he turned himself in. The provincial commander—and virtually every other senior security official—has also been in direct telephone contact with Din Minimi.

The role of the state intelligence agency, BIN, is even murkier. In 2008-2009, a senior BIN official had been involved in an effort to identify the whereabouts of the many guns retained by GAM members after the peace agreement. In the process, he worked with an ex-combatant from

Bireuen named Abu Razak. Abu Razak joined Din Minimi in 2015 and was in touch with both MP-GAM and the would-be terrorists; he was also present at the execution of the TNI men. It does not necessarily mean that BIN is directly involved with Din Minimi or the image-boosting campaign around him, but any sustained assault on the credibility of Partai Aceh as a ruling party would probably be of interest to the agency.

As of late September 2015, circumstances seem to have turned Din Minimi into what he was not at the outset: leader of a well-armed group with a grudge against the state. The police and military were competing to see who would get him first, and whether hardline or persuasive tactics respectively would prevail—a competition that mirrored the efforts to get the country’s other leading fugitive, the elusive extremist leader Santoso, in Poso, Central Sulawesi.

Even on the run with his many of his men locked up or dead, Din Minimi was attracting the interest of thugs, pro-ISIS extremists and GAM dissidents, including MP-GAM members beyond the small group in Norway. If nothing else, the story of his rise and likely fall show how much violence lurks beneath the surface in Aceh, ready to be stirred up by a welter of different interests.

## II. DIN MINIMI: BACKGROUND

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At first glance, Din Minimi’s story echoes that of many other minor figures in independence struggle whose life was disrupted by the war and who had a hard time making ends meet after the peace. When he first returned to crime, no one took him very seriously. It was a familiar story for many combatants, who found that post-conflict Aceh had little use for their skills and that in some cases it was easier to get money through extortion and robbery than through salaried employment. Din Minimi’s evolution into a legendary outlaw was the result of many interests besides his own.

### A. *The Beginning*

Nurdin bin Ismail Amat alias Din Minimi, about 37 in 2015, was born in Keude Buloh village in Julok, East Aceh, the first of four brothers. His father, known as Abu Minimi after the machine gun (mini-mitrailleuse) he carried in the conflict, was a locally prominent GAM fighter who was killed sometime before Soeharto fell in 1998. All of the sons joined the struggle as soon as they were able.<sup>1</sup> Din Minimi himself left elementary school after Grade 3 and joined GAM in 1997, though he never held a command position.<sup>2</sup>

In 2003, he was arrested by the TNI and served about a year in prison in Langsa, Aceh. Sometime after the 2005 peace agreement, he went to work as a forklift operator for a sawmill in East Aceh owned by a former GAM fighter, Anwar alias Teungku (Tgk.) Rabo. He had not been employed very long before the company folded, and he subsequently seems to have picked up work where he could get it. Around 2010 he was employed as a heavy equipment operator at a company called PT Setia Agung.<sup>3</sup> Then for a year, 2011 to 2012, he operated a bulldozer for the construction of a drainage project near his home in Julok.<sup>4</sup> The contractor was PT Alfaris

1 One brother, Hamdani alias Sitong, was killed in a clash with the TNI in 2004. Another, Mak Isa alias Bukrak, disappeared during the conflict and was never found. The youngest brother, Bahar alias Azhar, is still at large; he was the executioner of the two TNI men in March.

2 “Sosok Din Minimi, Mantan GAM yang Masih Angkat Senjata,” *viva.co.id*, 18 April 2015.

3 This was the company targeted by a hit squad loyal to Partai Aceh in December 2011. They shot eight workers, killing three, on 5 December 2011 in what proved to be a successful effort to delay Aceh’s gubernatorial election on security grounds. Din Minimi had no known connection to the killings or to the group that carried it out, under the command of a man known as Ayah Banta.

4 “Din Minimi, Sosok Pekerja yang Ulet,” *Serambi*, 4 June 2015.

Jaya, a company run by another former combatant from East Aceh named Abdul Hadi, better known as Adi Maros, who had left GAM before the peace agreement and soon developed close relations with both BIN and the military. Since late 2014, Adi Maros has become the TNI's main envoy to Din Minimi.

Din Minimi reportedly was actively involved in the 2012 campaign for governor, initially supporting Partai Aceh; indeed one source said he was involved in the local campaign team for Zaini Abdullah and Muzakir Manaf. Nothing in his background suggested that he would either turn against them or suddenly become a de facto spokesman for neglected combatants.

### *B. The Crimes Attributed to Din Minimi*

Most of the crimes attributed to Din Minimi have been abductions for ransom, in a way that has enabled his supporters to claim that he is merely using the money to help the poor, although it is clear from the testimony of those arrested that the money gets divided among the perpetrators to use as they see fit. One man used his share to purchase a new cell phone, for example.

The crimes include the following:<sup>5</sup>

- 16 July 2013, Julok, East Aceh: kidnapping and extortion of Razali Yakob, a businessman, in Baktiya, North Aceh.
- 8 July 2014, Julok, East Aceh: destruction of ballot boxes by Yusmaidi alias Lem Pue'b, a Din Minimi follower.
- 11 July 2014, Bandar Baru, Kec. Indra Makmur, East Aceh: shooting of a truck carrying palm oil fruit owned by businessman Naswar Muhammad alias Yan Peneng.
- 18 August 2014, Blang Seunong, Pante Bidari, East Aceh: armed robbery of seven employees of PT CPM, a company laying a gas pipe from Lhokseumawe to Belawan. They took all cell phones, Rp.4.8 million in cash and a small truck.
- 7 September 2014, Idi Rayeuk, East Aceh: abduction and extortion of Ridwan alias Nawan bin Usman.
- 20 January 2015 Alue Lhok, Paya Bakong: Abduction of Muhammad Yani, 32, an employee of the Partai Aceh-linked contracting company PT Salina Bersama that was building an irrigation project on the site. Ransom of Rp.60 million paid.
- 12 February 2015, Geulumpang Sulu Barat, Dewantara, North Aceh: abduction of a businessman, Maulidin alias Mak Woe (sometimes seen as Mak Wok). Family paid Rp.50 million ransom. Media reports portrayed him as a suspected drug dealer, adding to the misleading impression that Din Minimi only went after "bad" people.
- 22 March 2015, Paya Terbang, Samudera, North Aceh: abduction of Mahmudsyah alias Ayah Mud, 38, an ex-GAM commander, now KPA leader.
- 23 March 2015, Nisam Antara, North Aceh: abduction and killing of two TNI intelligence officers from Kodim North Aceh, First Sgt Hendrianto and Serda Indra Irawan.

<sup>5</sup> All the crimes noted here except for the ballot box destruction appear on a list prepared by the provincial police in Aceh entitled "Tindak Pidana/Kejahatan Yang Dilakukan Oleh Kelompok Kriminal Bersenjata Api," undated but given to IPAC on 5 October 2015, with additional details from media reports.

- 26 July 2015, Simpang Keuramat, North Aceh: shooting around noon of truck carrying palm oil fruit near the government plantation SPIV (no casualties).
- 5 August 2015, Simpang Keuramat, North Aceh: kidnapping and extortion, no further details available.

### C. *The TNI Killings*

The killings of the two TNI men were an aberration in a list of crimes that up until then had involved many threats but little actual violence. At first Din Minimi denied any responsibility through Safaruddin, his lawyer.<sup>6</sup> Safaruddin, founder of the NGO called Advocacy for the People of Aceh (Yayasan Advokasi Rakyat Aceh, YARA), was the same activist who brought Din Minimi to media attention in 2014. Despite the denials, it quickly became clear that Din and his men were indeed involved, although it seems to have been an unplanned reaction to the sudden appearance of the soldiers in their midst.

On 23 March, the sergeants, both assigned to the intelligence unit of District Military Command (KODIM) 0103, North Aceh, had been returning from a visit to the village head of Alue Mbang in Nisam Antara, North Aceh, ostensibly to track down the whereabouts of Din Minimi. Din and his men, some 20 strong, were in the area with a hostage, Ayah Mud, the KPA commander whom they had abducted the day before and for whom they were now demanding a Rp.200 million ransom. Din had ordered his men to move the hostage from the camp to a nearby palm oil plantation. As they were walking along a dirt road, most of them armed, they passed the village head's house, with the soldiers' car parked outside. As they continued walking, they heard the car approaching. Two of Din's men stopped it while his brother Bahar ordered the men out at gunpoint. The two soldiers were told to lie down while they were searched and bound and an FN pistol removed from one of them. The car was left by the roadside, and all three hostages were then taken into the palm oil plantation where the two soldiers were beaten up, then executed around 6 p.m. The gunmen were Bahar and a man named Komeng, but Din Minimi was in charge, according to the testimony of Abu Razak, who was at the site. Abu Razak says he urged Din, Bahar and Komeng to let the men go, but they were adamant that they were not going to let any TNI members get away.<sup>7</sup>

The executions seem to have been a spontaneous response to an unforeseen incident, but the beatings that preceded them and the apparent element of vengeance involved do not fit the image of a benign but poverty-stricken combatant itself, after an initial outburst of anger, forced by penury into a life of crime. What was surprising was the extent to which the TNI itself continued to foster this image.

### D. *The Police and Military on Different Paths*

Since the killing of the two TNI members, the approaches of the police and military have sharply diverged, although they carried out several joint operations to track down the alleged killers,

<sup>6</sup> "Din Minimi Membantah Anggotanya Terlibat Pembunuhan Anggota TNI", *benarnews.org*, 16 April 2015.

<sup>7</sup> Testimony of Tun Sri Muhammad Azrul Mukminin al-Kahar alias Abu Razak, 10 April 2015; and "Abu Razak Pemasok Senjata Untuk Kelompok Din Minimi," *Waspada*, 3 September 2015. This Abu Razak is the same as the man arrested in Aceh on 6 March 2009, then known in the media as Abdul Razak bin Muthalib, for a series of crimes against Partai Aceh members in Bireuen and a few high-profile abductions. He was flown to Jakarta for investigation. After his arrest, his wife contacted a human rights organisation for legal help, and the lawyers there said that while they were accompanying the wife to Jakarta, she acknowledged that her husband frequently worked with BIN. Abu Razak was eventually sentenced to a year and six months.

including in Pidie in May 2015 that resulted in exchanges of fire with the fugitives.<sup>8</sup>

But they had different aims with respect to Din Minimi himself. The police see Din Minimi as an armed criminal who has repeatedly broken the law and therefore should be arrested and prosecuted. After the TNI killings, they stepped up operations to hunt down group members, shooting to kill in several cases where eyewitnesses say the targets were unarmed and the use of lethal force was unnecessary.<sup>9</sup> Many Acehnese do not see the police as politically neutral, because Aceh's autonomy provisions give the governor effective veto power over the choice of police chief.

Initially the TNI was understandably furious and its spokesperson in Jakarta announced that they would spare no effort to track down the perpetrators. The regional commander stressed that the TNI would respect the law and turn over the case to the police to follow through on. But as weeks went by, the TNI's tone softened.

After the Pidie clashes in May, Din Minimi returned to his home, believing that he would be safe because the provincial military commander, in a phone conversation, promised him that he would be. He arrived home at 5 a.m. An hour later, the district police chief showed up with an armed team. Din Minimi just managed to escape, but the police searched the house and found an M-16. They also reportedly found sacks of newly minted Pindad bullets. Din Minimi called the man who served as go-between with the TNI for help, who in turn called the district police chief to find out what was going on. The chief said his boss had authorised the operations, but it was clearly without any coordination with the TNI.

The approach of the military became more about showing the TNI to be the kind friend of the people who understood their suffering, in sharp contrast to the provincial government. After several conversations with Din Minimi arranged through Adi Maros, the military commander of the Lilawangsa Military Resort in Lhokseumawe, Col. Daniel Chardin, made a highly publicised visit to Din Minimi's house on 1 June 2015, meeting with his mother, wife and children and bringing five sacks of rice and various other goods to the house. He called Din Minimi as journalists watched, urging him to surrender so that he could come home to be with his children during the fasting month, saying that he, the provincial military commander and the provincial police chief would all guarantee his security.<sup>10</sup> Later, the provincial military commander relayed the same message in a direct conversation to Din Minimi, documented in pictures and videos taken by Adi Maros on his handphoned and shown to IPAC. Col. Daniel returned to Din Minimi's village after Ramadan, again with the media in tow, bringing assistance to build two homes for the families of the men killed in clashes with security forces. He said at the time that the military was planning to rehabilitate 100 houses but the funding had not yet come through, so they could only build two.<sup>11</sup>

A month after the aid delivery, Col. Daniel was promoted to brigadier general and has become deputy commander of the Infantry Weapons Center of TNI's training academy in Bandung.<sup>12</sup> The police, one former GAM member says, are also determined to use the Din Minimi case to get promotions, but the way up the career ladder for the police is through arrests—particularly of high-profile figures.

8 On 24 May 2015 in Blang Malu, Kec. Mutiara, Pidie, a clash between a joint police-army team and members of the Din Minimi group resulted in one of the latter killed and two arrested (Nasir Khadafi and M Masir alias Puthet). Two days later, another armed clash took place in Tangse, Pidie.

9 These cases include the 20 August 2015 death of Ridwan in Pulo Meuria, Kec. Gueredong Pase, North Aceh and the 27 August shooting in Muara Satu, Lohkseumawe of Junaidi alias Beruijeuek.

10 "Kunjungi Keluarga Din Minimi, Danrem Lilawangsa Terinspirasi Anaknya", *LintasAtjeh.com*, 1 June 2015.

11 "Danrem 011 Lilawangsa Bantu Rumah Dhuafa", *Medanbisnis.com*, 22 July 2015.

12 "17 Pati TNI dapat anugerah kenaikan pangkat", *lensaindonesia.com*, 31 August 2015.

### III. DIN MINIMI'S DEMANDS

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Din Minimi has no shortage of supporters willing to give him talking points and articulate his demands better than he can, but he has also given his own share of interviews.

Safaruddin, the YARA founder, claims to be the person who gave Nurdin Ismail the name “Din Minimi” and first brought him a national television audience when he arranged for Metro TV and Serambi, Aceh’s main daily newspaper, to interview him in October 2014. By this time Din Minimi was already on the police wanted list. Safaruddin himself was highly critical of Zaini and Muzakir for not doing more to press for full implementation of the MOU, particularly its economic provisions. Among other things, in 2013 he filed a class action suit against Martti Ahtisaari, the Indonesian president, the governor of Aceh and Malik Mahmud, the Wali Nanggroe of Aceh, for failing to establish the Joint Claims Settlement Commission provided for in the Helsinki agreement.<sup>13</sup>

According to Safaruddin, it was Din Minimi who reached out to him by phone and asked for help in ensuring that his aspirations reached a wider audience.<sup>14</sup> Safaruddin thus arranged for reporters from Metro TV and Serambi to meet him somewhere in East Aceh and gave him talking points, including on the need for better implementation of the MOU.

Over time, the points became almost rote:

- He was not fighting the police or military, he was not rebelling against the state, he only wanted to demand the rights of former combatants and children orphaned by the conflict.
- The government of Aceh had failed to deliver prosperity or justice.
- It has not given the homes, palm oil land or free trips to Mecca that it promised former combatants.
- He will turn himself in when the government fulfills half of the promises made by Zaini and Muzakir during their campaign.
- He only kidnapped people who were hurting others, like drug dealers.
- He is disappointed by the failure of the government to live up to its commitments.

Din Minimi elaborates on some of these points in innumerable interviews on video and in print, but Safaruddin and Adi Maros, who has arranged conversations between Din Minimi and senior officials in the Aceh government including the governor’s brother, Hasbi Abdullah, and various military commanders and who says he talks to Din Minimi every day, can recite the script even more smoothly. They say Din Minimi is a good man, only wants a better life for his people.

Safaruddin will do anything to prod the Aceh government into action on the economic front. He cheerfully acknowledges that it was he who in July 2015 put some disaffected GAM members up to saying they would join ISIS if they did not get more assistance from the government. Safaruddin said the government had stopped listening to them, but “mention ISIS and everyone sits up.”<sup>15</sup> The spokesman for the GAM members at the time was Fakhruddin Kasem alias Din Robot, a friend and associate of Din Minimi’s.

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13 “Martti Ahtisaari dan President RI digugat Class Action di Aceh”, sayangi.com, 2 October 2013.

14 Interview, Safaruddin, Jakarta, 16 September 2015. He said the same to the media. See “Safaruddin YARA: Awalnya Din Minimi Telepon Saya Minta Jumpa”, *Serambi*, 5 September 2015.

15 IPAC interview, Safaruddin, Jakarta, 16 September 2015.

The Robin Hood image is thus the result of careful cultivation by individuals and agencies who have an interest in showing Din Minimi to be a victim of injustice, fighting on the side of the good and the pure against the corrupt Partai Aceh government. In fact, he is anything but pure.

#### IV. THE CONNECTION TO TEUNGKU MUKHTAR AND THE NORWAY GROUP

One of Din Minimi's staunchest allies joined him while in Banda Aceh's main prison. Tgk. Mukhtar bin Ibrahim Ahmad alias Tgk. Tar was serving the fourth year of a twelve-year terrorism sentence when he first made contact with Din. Mukhtar was one of several Acehnese who had joined a terrorist training camp in Aceh, made notorious by the involvement of such well-known figures as Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, Bali bomber Dulmatin and ideologue Aman Abdurrahman. Through him, a member of a GAM splinter group that used to be known as MP-GAM and that since the 2005 peace agreement has adopted the old GAM name of Aceh Sumatra National Liberation Front (ASNLF), came into the picture.

##### A. *Mukhtar and the Extremists*

In 2008, Mukhtar had been head of security for a radical pesantren in Lhokseumawe, North Aceh called Darul Mujahidin. Long before the idea was captured by Dulmatin and his friends, a colleague of Mukhtar's at Darul Mujahidin together with a Darul Islam member from West Java who is now with ISIS in Syria, Jamil Abdullah, had a plan to set up a camp at the pesantren that would become the spearhead of an effort to establish an Islamic state. Both were followers of Aman Abdurrahman; they had met at a religious study group in Jakarta.

The men at Darul Mujahidin decided they needed to purchase more land if the pesantren was going to host serious training. Mukhtar had a potential donor in mind, a man living in Norway named Abdul Rauf, better known as Apa Oh or Ayah Oh. Mukhtar at the time had never met him, but he knew another member of the MP-GAM contingent in Aceh named Abu Rayeuk, famous in Aceh for an incident in which he drove a truck full of refugees onto the grounds of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) office in Kuala Lumpur in 1998.

Abu Rayeuk introduced Mukhtar to Apa Oh by phone, and Apa Oh agreed to help find funds for the land. It is unclear from documents available whether any funds were actually transferred, but Mukhtar and Apa Oh were in telephone communication periodically from late 2008 until sometime after March 2009, when leadership of the proposed camp was ceded to Dulmatin. A different site was eventually selected for the camp near Jantho, Aceh Besar, but it was broken up by police in February 2010, shortly after it had started operations. Mukhtar was among the first arrested, and by his own account, he had no further communication until 2012, when Apa Oh rang him in prison—he was in Tanjung Gusta prison in Medan at the time. It is not clear what prompted Apa Oh to get back in touch but the election for governor of Aceh, which pitted Partai Aceh members Zaini and Muzakir against incumbent Irwandi Yusuf, could have been a factor.

Mukhtar was moved to Banda Aceh prison in May 2013, where after a year or so, he became friends with a narcotics offender known as Si Yek or Bayeh—a friend and follower of Din Minimi. Bayeh was in regular contact with his boss, and on one occasion handed the phone to Mukhtar so he could talk to Din Minimi directly. Din gave his usual spiel about how GAM had been given a bad deal, and how the provincial government was not fulfilling the terms of the MOU and was not delivering prosperity to the Acehnese people. Mukhtar was apparently impressed and called Apa Oh sometime in December 2014 to tell him about the conversation. Apa Oh asked for Din Minimi's mobile number, and the link was made.

Shortly afterwards, Apa Oh called Mukhtar and reported that he was sending four of his men to help Din Minimi move from East Aceh, where he was reportedly trapped, to North Aceh. (It is not clear how many men Apa Oh commands or how he does it from Norway, but he has reportedly returned to Aceh on several occasions and maintains a house there.) The four men between them had two rifles and a pistol and successfully carried out their task of getting Din Minimi safely to North Aceh.

In early January, Apa Oh called again and said that Din Minimi needed arms. He would supply the funding, but Mukhtar had to arrange the purchase. Mukhtar turned to an old friend from GAM days, Muhammad Abidin alias Tgk. Agam. While Apa Oh arranged with Din Minimi to transfer Rp. 30 million (about \$2,400), Mukhtar arranged with Agam to find the guns. A Din Minimi follower delivered the money to Agam, Agam purchased an M-16 and a folding AK rifle for Rp.15 million (about \$1,200) each—from none other than Abu Razak, the man who had been used by BIN in 2008 to find GAM's leftover arms. The arms were used in the abduction of Mohamed Yani, the irrigation project worker.<sup>16</sup>

One danger of Mukhtar's involvement is that he has a proven capacity to recruit, and both he and Bayeh are both strong supporters of ISIS, according to a fellow inmate. Their interest is less ideological—they disapprove of branding fellow Muslims as apostates or infidels—and more because they regard ISIS fighters as heroic and want to be like them. Hasbuddin, one of the other prisoners arrested for involvement in the Aceh camp and detained in Banda Aceh until his release in mid-2015, is said to be much more committed ideologically to ISIS and there are concerns that he will look for a way either to get to Syria or to join forces with pro-ISIS networks on Java.

Din Minimi seems to have appeared on the scene just as these inmates and former inmates were looking for someone who could open a new front in Aceh for Indonesia's rather pathetic jihad. One group whose members visit Mukhtar regularly in prison, for example, is a local faction of Darul Islam whose religious discussion groups in Jakarta and Aceh helped radicalise Pepi Fernando, the 2011 book bomber. Two senior figures of Darul Islam-Aceh were particularly frequent visitors, Tgk. Zul and Tgk. Fadli. Both were also pro-ISIS.

There is no indication that Din Minimi has any interest at all in jihad, Syria or an Islamic state, but he is interested in acquiring more weapons and fighters and has not shown much discrimination about where they come from. The question is whether some of those recruited by Mukhtar in Tanjung Gusta and Banda Aceh prisons, together with some of the other participants in the doomed Aceh camp, could form the basis of a new network, with or without Din Minimi. It was reportedly the existence of Din Minimi's little band, however, that gave them the idea for trying to build a new front.

### *B. Involvement of a GAM Splinter Group?*

Some well-placed Acehnese believe that Din Minimi represents the efforts of the Indonesian government and MP-GAM to make a tactical alliance to weaken Partai Aceh. Senior MP-GAM officials emphatically deny any such cooperation but also express sympathy for Din Minimi as a representative of the ex-combatants neglected by Zaini and Muzakir.

MP-GAM, short for Majelis Pemerintahan (Governing Council)-GAM, is a group led by Dr Husaini Hasan that split with GAM founder Hasan di Tiro in 1998. Its membership has always been small, consisting of a few dozen exiles in Scandinavia and several hundred among the

<sup>16</sup> As their interrogation depositions indicate, the eight men arrested in connection with that case were initially going to be charged with terrorism, but when they were formally indicted, it was on charges of abduction and illegal possession of weapons.

estimated 5,000 Acehnese in Malaysia. In Aceh, its support has always been miniscule, but as dissatisfaction has grown with Partai Aceh, MP-GAM has seen an opportunity to try and tap into the discontent.

MP-GAM was virulently opposed to the 2005 peace agreement and made clear that it saw the GAM negotiating team as having sold out by accepting autonomy instead of continuing to fight for independence. After criticising GAM at every opportunity, however, Husaini Hasan, who now lives in Australia, returned to Indonesia for a visit in 2013 with the full support of the Yudhoyono government. MP-GAM itself has since split, with a wing now calling itself the Aceh-Sumatra National Liberation Front (ASNLF, the original name of GAM) continuing to reject the Helsinki agreement and Dr Husaini and others deciding that it is time to move forward.<sup>17</sup>

Apa Oh in Norway was a member of MP-GAM but in his contacts with Tgk. Mukhtar, he appears to have been acting on his own.

## V. CONCLUSION

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The story of Din Minimi could be a script for a movie, but it illustrates one very important point: there is still a high potential for violence in Aceh, and to support any armed group there is to play with fire.

The 2005 Helsinki agreement ended the war between the Indonesian government and GAM, but it did not end political violence. Every election has seen an uptick in violence, most seriously before the 2012 race for governor. Partai Aceh was the main culprit then, but there were also a few cases in which its members were targeted. The existence of an armed group like Din Minimi's, with an avowed anti-Partai Aceh stance, could provide a rationale for more violence in the lead-up to the district elections scheduled for February 2016, which will take place in all but three of Aceh's 23 districts.

Islamist extremist violence has also periodically erupted in Aceh, most notably with the efforts to build the terrorist training camp in 2010. Most of those arrested in connection with the camp are now being released after completing their sentences, and a few, as noted, want to create a new pro-ISIS front in Aceh, despite the near total lack of support in the broader Acehnese community. Din Minimi himself has no known interest in such an organisation, but he has inadvertently inspired the revival of a prison-based network that has access to arms, men and money.

Police-military hostility in the past has led the two agencies to support opposite sides in local campaigns; it has also led to leakages of arms and ammunition to favoured groups. At the very least, the Din Minimi case shows how the two are working at cross purposes.

Whatever the Indonesian government thinks about Partai Aceh, the last thing any of its agencies should be doing is giving support or encouragement to outlaws—especially those with guns.

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<sup>17</sup> IPAC interview, Husaini Hasan, Jakarta, 20 September 2015.

## INSTITUTE FOR POLICY ANALYSIS OF CONFLICT (IPAC)

The Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict (IPAC) was founded in 2013 on the principle that accurate analysis is a critical first step toward preventing violent conflict. Our mission is to explain the dynamics of conflict—why it started, how it changed, what drives it, who benefits—and get that information quickly to people who can use it to bring about positive change.

In areas wracked by violence, accurate analysis of conflict is essential not only to peaceful settlement but also to formulating effective policies on everything from good governance to poverty alleviation. We look at six kinds of conflict: communal, land and resource, electoral, vigilante, extremist and insurgent, understanding that one dispute can take several forms or progress from one form to another. We send experienced analysts with long-established contacts in the area to the site to meet with all parties, review primary written documentation where available, check secondary sources and produce in-depth reports, with policy recommendations or examples of best practices where appropriate.

We are registered with the Ministry of Social Affairs in Jakarta as the Foundation for Preventing International Crises (Yayasan Penanggulangan Krisis Internasional); our website is [www.understandingconflict.org](http://www.understandingconflict.org). This report was funded in part by a grant from the Foundation to Promote Open Society; the views expressed here do not necessarily represent the organisation.