On Solving an Armed Conflict through a Peace Dialogue
The story of Aceh

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The most recent instability and armed conflict tormented Aceh, a province of Indonesia, for almost 30 years. The armed struggle affected, and even killed, many civilians who were not part of the insurgency, destroyed social structures, education prospects, employment opportunities and much more. The impact of years of armed violence resulted in a lost generation in Aceh.

Efforts by civil society – locally, nationally and internationally – to end the armed conflict started at the height of the conflict, known as the Daerah Operasi Militer (DOM or Military Operation Area) era and continued under the post-Suharto regimes.

The peace agreement of August 2005, known as the Helsinki Memorandum of Understanding, paved the way for the more than five million people living in the province to acquire prosperity and justice. Yet, a decade later much remains to be done to truly assure lasting peace for the people of Aceh.

The armed conflict

Aceh has a long history of resistance, dating back to their fight against the Portuguese (1500-1614), the wars against the Dutch and the Japanese (1872-1903, 1903-1942 and 1942-1944), and the struggle of Darul Islam (1953-1963). In 1976, Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (GAM or the Free Aceh Movement) took up its arms against the authoritarian leader in Jakarta, Suharto. GAM originally demanded independence from Indonesia. The resulting armed conflict would last till 2005, and end with greater autonomy for Aceh, while still under Indonesian rule.

The declaration of Aceh as a Military Operation Area (Daerah Operasi Militer, DOM) in 1990 showcased the dominance of the Military in policy and decision making during the Suharto regime. This was not only happening in Aceh, but also in Timor-Leste, West Papua and other places in the country. However, the situation in Aceh was particularly bad. Amnesty International estimates that in the period of 1989-1998 at least 12,000 people were killed in Aceh as a result of DOM. Many victims were civilians who suffered serious human rights abuses, such as summary executions, torture, extra-judicial killings, rape, and much more.

The human rights abuses became public knowledge after several reports were published, based on investigations undertaken by national and international human rights organisations, such as Human Rights Watch (HRW), Amnesty International, FORUM-ASIA, Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation (YLBHI), the
Indonesian Institute for Research and Community Advocacy (ELSAM), the Commission for the Disappeared and Victims of Violence (KontraS) and Indonesian Legal Aid and Human Rights Association (PBHI). These, and other groups, like Initiatives for International Dialogue (IID), Tapol, International Forum for Aceh (IFA) and Support Committee for Human Rights in Aceh (SCHRA), played a crucial role by supporting national and international advocacy on the human rights violations in Aceh.

For example, groups in Aceh would undertake efforts to monitor the situation and collect data and information. However, soon it became apparent that the local groups needed further investigative skills, which is why in 1998, KontraS Jakarta facilitated a training in investigation skills in Aceh. Afterward, the data and information would be distributed to national, regional and international partners to be delivered to Governments, Parliaments, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and many other institutions. Civil society organisations (CSOs), like FORUM-ASIA, played an important role in raising public awareness and international lobbying.

The path towards peace talks

In 1998 Suharto was forced to step down. Habibie, his Vice President, took over the Presidency. The new national leadership’s number one priority was regaining political stability. President Habibie committed to democratising Indonesia and encouraging both good governance and decentralisation. As part of this process, Habibie revoked the DOM status of Aceh in the beginning of August 1998. Habibie fundamentally changed the way Jakarta dealt with the insurgency, including acknowledging the existence of GAM. Part of this was a nine priorities proposal, which emphasised a dialogue approach.\(^{81}\)

After DOM was revoked and the demobilisation of the Indonesia’s Army Special Forces (Kopassus) started, victims of the period began to demand accountability from the Government and that human rights abuses be investigated. The people stood up to the Government and called for the release of all political prisoners.


\(^{81}\) Habibie’s nine points of policy to solve the conflict in Aceh: (1) to continue the program on those political prisoners that were involved in political activities in 1989-1998; (2) to ask the local Government to unearth the mass cemetery of victims in DOM and grant them burials according to Islamic rules at the expense of the Government; (3) to give aid in the form of scholarships to orphans, to give business credit, capital or other forms of aid to widows, victims of rape, the disabled and others in need of social rehabilitation; (4) to rehabilitate and reconstruct community buildings used by the Military during DOM, including compensation for the mental and spiritual impact; (5) to improve the quality of education in Aceh, including changing the status of the 85 madrasah from private to government management, to provide sufficient facilities, especially to Madrasah Aliyah, to provide the land for the practicing of skills to Unsyiah, IAIN and boarding schools; (6) to re-construct the train line in Aceh; (7) to develop the integrated economic development areas of Sabang; (8) to extend the run-way of Iskandar Muda airport; and (9) to recruit 2,188 children of victims of DOM as officers without any testing.
The student movement that proposed a non-violent approach was particularly crucial in this period. Some of the groups involved were the Student Solidarity for People (SMUR), the Aceh Student Front for Reform (FARMIDIA), and Aceh Student Action for Reform (KARMA). Aware of the opportunity presented by the collapse of the Suharto regime, they demanded change. They did so through mass demonstrations and mobilisation, hunger strikes, seminars and conferences, press statements, and much more. The student movement demanded three things: 1) to end the status of DOM; 2) the release of political prisoners; and 3) an investigation into human rights abuses committed during the DOM period. Part of the success of the movement stemmed from the support it gained from other groups, including academics.

The DOM resulted in severe human rights abuses in Aceh. The National Commission on Human Rights of Indonesia (Komnas HAM), the Indonesian House of Representatives, and several non-governmental organisations (NGOs) established an independent investigation team. Their primary focus was to do an in-depth investigation into the serious cases of human rights abuses during the DOM period. NGOs in Aceh, in the meantime, established Forum Peduli Hak Azasi Manusia Aceh (FP-HAM). In fact, many groups conducted investigations to get data and information on the human rights abuses. It contributed to a change in public opinion, determination to gain justice for victims, and the realisation of the importance of preventing violence.

Jafar Sidiq, an Acehnese human rights defender (HRD) spoke at the United Nations (UN) in New York on Human Rights Day, 10 December 1998. The speech became a symbol for the movement for the promotion of human rights in Aceh. On 12 December 1998, it was followed by the first international conference on Aceh, organised by the Aceh Forum of New York (AFNY) in collaboration with a Burmese CSO, the Years of Living Dangerously: The Struggle for Justice in Indonesia. One of the outcomes of the conference was the establishment of the International Forum for Aceh (IFA).

To support the initiative at an international level, Acehnese human rights groups, like LBH Banda Aceh, KontraS Aceh, Koalisi NGO HAM, Flower and the student groups mobilised demonstrations to stop the violence. Student posts were established in several places to provide information, collect data, and undertake public awareness activities on human rights. Of course, the role of national and international organisation, such as YLBHI, HRW, FORUM-ASIA and Amnesty International, was very important in the investigation of the human rights violations. Some of them already became involved in 1990.

In July 1999 the IFA, supported by FORUM-ASIA, organised another meeting, this time in Bangkok. The meeting recommended the establishment of an international solidarity network for Aceh. FORUM-ASIA took on the role of assuring the establishment of the Support Committee Human Rights
for Aceh (SCHRA). Its members were NINDJA in Japan, FORUM-ASIA and IID for Southeast Asia, Tapol for Europe and HRW for the United States of America (USA). On 15-16 January 2000 a SCHRA conference was held at the Universitas Syiah Kuala (Unsyiah). The conference discussed the situation in Aceh in a comprehensive way and how to relate to the international level.\(^85\)

The meeting in Bangkok, in July 1999, provided an early opportunity to give input to negotiations between GAM and the Government of Indonesia, who were represented at the meeting by five Acehnese from the Desk Aceh. Although the representative from GAM could not attend in the end, the recommendations from the meeting were particularly important to push for and influence conflict resolution in Aceh through negotiation and peace dialogue. The Bangkok meeting really contributed to develop the peace road map for Aceh, it was a strategic initiative of IFA and FORUM-ASIA to support peace in Aceh, instigated by people like Chalida Tajaroensuk.

The establishment of IFA and SCHRA supported the advocacy on human rights abuses in Aceh at the international level. Some of the organisations on the inside, like People Crisis Centre (PCC), Jaringan Pemantau HAM (Legal aid foundation Banda Aceh) and KontraS Aceh, were taking up strategic roles to provide data and information for these international campaigns. Meanwhile, on a national level, groups like KontraS, YLBHI, ELSAM, Kalyanamitra and other organisations did very important work by lobbying and organising meetings, seminars, conferences and even helping Acehnese activists to enhance their capacities.

**From Habibie to Gus Dur**

In October 1999 President Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) became the first elected President after the Suharto period. Gus Dur continued Habibie’s radical policy related to Aceh. He allowed for international involvement in the facilitation of the peace negotiations between GAM and the Government of Indonesia. Gus Dur agreed to appoint the Henry Dunant Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HDC), a Geneva based organisation, as facilitator.\(^86\) The HDC played a crucial role in convincing the GAM leaders to accept the proposal

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\(^82\) The student movement to demand three issues led by SMUR on hunger strikes in Syiah Kuala University, on 8-22 June 1998.

\(^83\) The three mandates of IFA, were 1) to accumulate and mobilise global solidarity in order to support and respect human rights, in particular in Aceh, 2) to initiate various efforts towards the recovery of those affected by human rights abuses in Aceh, as well as, 3) to seek the empowerment and improvement of the quality of life of the widows and orphans of victims during the DOM period.

\(^84\) Human Rights Watch, director of Asia division led by Sidney Jones did an investigation on human rights abuses in 1990 with Hendardi from YLBHI, source of information from Koalisi NGO HAM.

\(^85\) Invitation letter prepared by Farmidia, Nomor.

\(^86\) Henry Dunant Centre started to communicate with the Government of Indonesia after they did an in-depth assessment of the chances of a dialogue between the Government of Indonesia and GAM.
of a dialogue approach to solve the conflict in Aceh.

In spite of the high pressure, the HDC succeeded in convincing both parties to sign a first agreement, the Humanitarian Pause. It reflected the view of both parties that humanitarian emergency response was urgent, particularly for the victims of the conflict and internally displaced persons in Aceh, which was a group of about 250,000 at the time.87

The dialogue process continued in the form of Peace through Dialogue, in which both parties agreed to a cessation of hostilities. The interest of both parties was very strong, even though the political changes at the national level did impact the peace dialogue.88 Finally, on 9 December 2002 both parties agreed to sign the agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Aceh (COHA), which focused on efforts to create peace zones, a ceasefire and a further process to solve the conflict. Both parties agreed to prioritise the involvement of civilians.

For the implementation of the COHA, Acehnese CSOs organised themselves through the Acehnese Civil Society Task Force (ACSTF) to facilitate meetings to attempt to understand and criticise the COHA. HDC facilitated the civil society leaders to be involved in formulating the All Inclusive Dialogue mechanism. To support the implementation of COHA, FORUM-ASIA, ACSTF, KontraS, and LBH Banda Aceh agreed to establish the Civilian Peace Monitoring Team in Aceh (CPMTA).89

Return to martial law

After the Suharto regime collapsed in 1998, the political situation in Indonesia initially got a lot worst and became very unstable. Both President Habibie and President Gus Dur played important roles to strengthen the democratic foundations of the country. Both contributed to the eventual solution of the armed conflict in Aceh.

When Megawati Sukarnoputri became President in 2001 though, she took a very conservative approach to the peace process. She did not manage to sustain the talks, in part because she was strongly influenced by the Military and ultra-nationalist groups. The situation escalated in Central Aceh90, which was the reason for a meeting in Japan. But the meeting failed. So on 19 May 2003 President Megawati decided to return to a military power approach and to impose martial law.91 All negotiators representing GAM were detained, and the Military took control of the area once more.

The peace agreement

The earthquake and tsunami on 24 December 2004 created a new opportunity to continue the peace dialogue between the Government and GAM. The same year President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) and Vice President Jusuf Kalla took office. SBY and Kalla realised that the international community demanded security to be guaranteed for the distribution of humanitarian aid.92

The Crisis Management Initiative, a
non-profit organisation, led by former President Marti Ahtisari of Finland, was invited to facilitate a new round of talks right after Aceh was hit by the tsunami. After five rounds of negotiations, the Helsinki Peace Agreement was signed on 15 August 2005. It was a political consensus between the Government of Indonesia and GAM, dealing among other things with the development Aceh post-war.\(^{93}\) The adopted agreement included substantial content on the law that would need to be drafted on the Governance of Aceh. The draft was approved by the Indonesian Parliament and signed by the President on 1 August 2006.

**Role of external partners**

The role of the international community, including the European Union (EU), the USA, Japan, and the countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), but also of CSOs was of tremendous importance to the peace process. It marked a new chapter in the history of local and international efforts for peacebuilding.

Most interventions during military rule were aimed at mobilising global solidarity, to monitor and advocate about the human rights abuses. Organisations such as Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and FORUM-ASIA were very important to pressure the international community on the reality of the military rule.

Of course, building solidarity from outside was not easy. It needed to be initiated from inside. The main lead in developing the advocacy agenda needs to come from the affected people themselves. They need to set and develop the agenda for change, decide on the strategies, targets, vision and long-term plan. Particularly when it comes to monitoring the situation, investigating violations and abuses, and campaigning, solidarity and support from outside can be used strategically. International solidarity networks can lobby and pressure the decision makers in their own countries and regions to respond to humanitarian tragedy and human rights violations, as happened in Aceh. These kind of activities became particularly important when the power of the Military created great pressure on HRDs.

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\(^{87}\) According to a report submitted by the People Crisis Centre (PCC) in 2000.

\(^{88}\) The impeachment of Gus Dur in 2001 negatively impacted the peace dialogue process in Aceh.

\(^{89}\) FORUM-ASIA and CPMTA were actively involved in monitoring and investigating human right violations during the implementation of COHA.

\(^{90}\) Militia groups burnt the joint Security Council and HDC office in Aceh Tengah, it was a spoiler to provoke the situation and resulted in a deadlock during the peace dialogue in Japan.

\(^{91}\) Most of the victims were civilians. KontraS reported about 2,000 civilians killed under martial law.

\(^{92}\) SBY and Jusuf Kalla, President and Vice President, had both already been involved in solving the conflict in Aceh during the Gus Dur era. SBY was responsible for managing the Desk Aceh related to security, while Jusuf Kalla handled social prosperity for the Aceh Desk.

\(^{93}\) The Helsinki peace agreement dealt with six important issues, including the Governing of Aceh, human rights, and amnesty.
The role of FORUM-ASIA

FORUM-ASIA was one of the CSOs actively involved. During martial law, FORUM-ASIA facilitated several capacity building trainings, among others on human rights monitoring for youth, who had to replace experienced activists that had to go into exile. This effort was combined with assistance to those activists that needed to be evacuated. FORUM-ASIA received regular updates on the victims of human rights violations. Five of them were protected and accompanied by FORUM-ASIA until they were officially recognised by UNHCR and received asylum in other countries.

Chalida Tajaroensuk, staff member of FORUM-ASIA at the time, used her own experiences with advocating on human rights abuses to support CSOs in Aceh. All data and information that was received from partners in Aceh and Indonesia was used to develop advocacy materials to influence public opinion in the ASEAN region and beyond.

Other activities included improving the understanding of Acehnese HRDs of international human rights instruments through a short course at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok. It helped the Acehnese in developing their strategies towards UN Special Rapporteurs and other relevant UN institutions.

The Acehnese CSO, Organisasi Masyarakat Sipil, cooperated with FORUM-ASIA to initiate a civil society monitoring team. It was called the Civilian Peace Monitoring Team in Aceh (CPMTA). The coordinator of CPMTA, Arief Rusli, was FORUM-ASIA staff. The secretariat was based in Aceh itself, hosted by the Acehnese Civil Society Task Force (ACSTF).

After the earthquake and tsunami, FORUM-ASIA was involved in monitoring the rehabilitation and reconstruction process. It tried to make sure that the humanitarian aid from the international community was going to the survivors of the tsunami.

Lessons learnt

There are several lessons learnt, based on the experience of Aceh, that could be valuable for other places that face armed conflict, peace dialogue processes and post-conflict situations.

- The important role of civil society

In Aceh the vibrant civil society groups that advocated for conflict transforming through concrete action, were the drivers behind the changes in policy of the Government. The Acehnese civil society became the main actor to build peace. It was the people who lobbied both parties to stop the military approach and violence.94 They could do so because they were supported by CSOs on the national, regional and international level, through capacity building and advocacy support.

If the main actor in changing a conflict situation is civil society, the need for CSOs to be strong, knowledgeable and creative becomes obvious. If civil society is weak, little will change. Civil society needs to be empowered, strengthened
and consolidated. Their social capital needs to be resourced to become a power for change.

The experience of consolidating of the Acehnese CSOs was a great learning process, not just for Aceh but for regional and international groups as well. The process went through different stages. The initial facilitation to develop strategies and activity plans. The cultivation of awareness among student groups, NGOs, peoples and community organisations, and many more. But also the consolidation of the different views on the referendum movement, some pro-independence and some pro-autonomy, which needed to be mediated to understand each other without hostilities.

In particular, the human rights organisations in Aceh were crucial. They monitored, investigated, campaigned, and accompanied the victims of human rights violations, both during and after the DOM period. The accompanying of victims was very important, because most of them were severely traumatised, particularly those that were raped.95

However, civil society had its weaknesses too. It had difficulties in ensuring national stability when advocating for the continuation of communication between the central Government and that of Aceh. Also, it had limited resources to monitor the Military and the police during the post-conflict period. It made it clear, once again, that support between Acehnese and national CSOs remains crucial to ensure national political stability in the future.

• Importance of communication

One of the biggest challenges, when advocating for conflict resolution as a means to solve situations like in Aceh, is establishing communication among the stakeholders. Aceh was almost completely isolated from foreigners and mass media. This was a direct result of military rule, both during the DOM times in 1987-1998 and under martial law in 2003-2004. Resolving this was crucial for the peace process.

• Recognise and respect the different stages of the peace process

The cessation of hostilities is a stage of the peace negotiations that turned out to be incredibly volatile, particularly after the signing of the Humanitarian Pause and the Peace through Dialogue. Understanding the challenges of the different stages, also those that follow after the cessation of hostilities, and respecting what needs to happen to build the fundaments for eventual peace, requires time and effort.

• Influence of the broader political context

Dialogue was a key word in mobilising the conflict resolution process in Aceh.

94 On July 27, 1998, the Solidarity with Victims of State Violence (SKKN) met with the ABRI-Fraction to demand them to push the TNI commander to make an effort to solve the conflict in Aceh through negotiations, because the violent military operations were resulting in greater support for GAM.

95 The fact-finding team on human rights violations in Aceh uncovered 6 cases of rape in Samalangan District, the victims were Kartini, Syam.
However, it depended heavily on the national political situation. When Indonesia became more democratic, the national policy towards Aceh improved too, but when the Military regained more influence, the situation in Aceh worsened.

• The importance of advocacy on human rights abuses

The hard work of HRDs in monitoring, collecting data and investigating cases of human rights violations became very important when pressuring the Government. Particularly to gain the political will of the Indonesia Government to solve the armed conflict in Aceh through the peace dialogue.

The effort to investigate the human rights abuses was done by local, national and international groups. Actually, the available data was not only sufficient in term of advocacy, currently Komnas HAM is building cases of five serious human rights abuses committed during a military operation, as explained by Otto Syamsuddin Ishak.96

The other agenda priority of local groups was the set-up of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Although it has not been implemented yet, the political decision to do so has been taken.

• A dialogue is not a linear process

The process that is described above illustrates the different stages that the dialogue process needed to go through to find a solution. Trust building and developing political will are key components to such a process. The dialogue and negotiation process was happening both in a top-down and bottom-up manner to make sure all stakeholders were heard.

The role of the mediator is extremely significant. The mediator needs to know when to push or when to step back. To facilitate, mediate and bridge the interests of both sides.

Still, in spite of significant efforts from many parties, the talks failed and the peace process collapsed before an eventual agreement was signed. Unfortunately that is almost inevitable. Dialogue processes are neither straightforward nor linear. They go through ups and downs, steps forward and steps back. But in the end it is all worth it.

• Unexpected allies

Acehnese civil society activists became involved with the Reformasi Movement on the national level through influencing the national political agenda, building networks and even formulating a common national plan on democratisation, law enforcement, human rights, justice and

96 Including torture that occurred between 1997 and 1998 at Rumoh Geudong, a tactical post of Indonesia’s Army Special Forces (Kopassus) in Pidie district; the Simpang KKA incident in May 1999 when the military opened fire on hundreds of protesters in North Aceh district; the 2001 Bumi Flora massacre in Eastern Aceh, which left at least 31 dead; a mass grave which was found in Bener Meriah district in 2002; and the 2003 Jamboe Keupok killings in South Aceh district.
development. So, when the Acehnese activists enhanced their advocacy on the problems in Aceh, Jakarta based networks, colleagues and partners were ready to support. The role of national networks was important to maintain political stability, regulation and pro-society policies, and even to influence the national leadership.

- **Work on all levels, national, regional and international.**

The involvement of supporters on the national, regional and international level was crucial overall, but particularly when it came to advocacy on humanitarian emergency responses, human rights abuses, and conflict resolution through peace dialogue.

The solidarity network was a source of power to push both parties to negotiate. It was also a source of support for Acehnese HRDs, for inspiration, learning, emergency assistance and much more. Building, strengthening and working through such a network is one of the main positive lessons learnt from the Aceh process.

- **The difficult part starts after the signing of a peace agreement**

While finally reaching the peace agreement was undoubtedly a long and hard process, that was the result of many sacrifices, hard work and incredible dedication by many, to some extend the difficult part of peacebuilding started after the signatures were dry.

Ten years of peace, and the post-conflict development programmes have, to some extent, still not managed to truly improve the economic growth, democracy, good governances, and other development needs. Challenges related to transitional justice and sustainable positive peace remain.

The data and documentation related to the process, including photos, videos, and important papers, are scattered among different stakeholders. The effort to bring it all together, for example in a museum or archive, has not been made. Both the Acehnese people themselves, and those that are still suffering from armed conflict in other areas of the world, would like to learn from what happened, but the Government of Aceh has not been able to provide for that. To gather the lessons learnt, for example through a Conflict and Peace Knowledge Centre (CPKC), is very important, in particular managing the data and information from the DOM period, the conflict transformation phase, the dialogue and negotiation process, and the post-conflict situation.

**After the agreement**

Ten years after the signing of the peace agreement, there are many achievements that can be seen, related to: socio-economic development; democracy; civil society; law enforcement; human rights and security; and good governance in managing resources and delivering public services. These improvements have been crucial for the social well-being in Aceh.

But there have been challenges too.
The implementation of Law number 11/2006 on the Governance of Aceh (LOGA), a continuation of the political agreement focussed on the recovery and reconstruction of Aceh, has been difficult. Some of the outstanding issues are as follows:

- The leadership of the Government has no budget policy on targets, the control system for the implementation of the programme was not as planned, and there has been little creativity on how to increase income. The availability of budget has been not able to accelerate economic growth, and funnelling of funding seems to be a problem.

- The performance of the Provincial and District Parliaments is still weak in developing regulations that will benefit society. Budget allocations have not been pro-society. The monitoring of the execution of projects has been little, so the quality of development is low.

- Natural resource exploitation has been the focus of the Government to increase income. The resulting increase in income from that sector has not been significant, while it has been devastating for the environment and productive land, as well as being a source of conflict in society.

- The social phenomenon of crime is emerging, among others, in relation to the implementation of development projects, in particularly the process of bidding for projects and the selection by the Government.

- The problems described have been added to those that emerged already during the armed conflict, many of which were never solved. This has led to an accumulation of problems. The failure to establish a Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Human Rights Court seems to be caused by a lack of commitment to support sustainable peace by Members of Parliament. The process to realise transitional justice is still not clear, this is caused by the lack of a road map of the Government on peacebuilding, which would include justice for victims.

In terms of sustaining peace, the Government must take concrete steps to prevent the relapse of the conflict. In the face of violence, there are main impulses. The first is an immediate one, to stop it. The second is a medium term one, to deal with the wounds resulting from it. The third, and final, is a long term one, to change the underlying conditions that led, and may lead again, to violence.

The coordinator of KontraS Aceh, Destika Gilang Lestari, said that after seven years of implementation, the transitional justice agenda of the Helsinki Agreement, which mainly focussed on victims, had not been realised yet. The Government should take its responsibility to investigate the truth of the human rights violations during the armed conflict in Aceh, as well as during the post-conflict period.
The proposal for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission was already approved by the Parliament of Aceh in 2014 through Undang-Undang No.11/2006 article 229, which requested the Government to establish the commission. But the Acehnese have not seen any real efforts yet to make this happen. Justice for victims should be the main priority to sustain peace, so all groups, including the Government, and the people can move forward.

During the conflict and conflict resolution process, the Acehnese gained a lot of experiences in internal consolidation, building awareness, formulating common agendas and undertaking activities together. The Acehnese civil society was conscious that the power to change the situation must come from inside.

Similarly, during the post-conflict situation, the Acehnese civil society took the initiative to consolidate groups and individuals to support and sustain positive peace as Aceh Peace Insider Peace-builders.99

The Government of Aceh and its civil society continue to work on peacebuilding ten years after the Helsinki Peace Agreement was signed, an achievement that needs to be appreciated by all of parties. It deserved to be celebrated, which was done through the Aceh Peace Forum, a series of activities related to reflections and developing an agenda on how to move forward.

Conclusion

After ten years the peace agreement has been implemented in the province. However, the challenges to keep the peace still remain, particularly to realise positive peace that enables a prosperous and just society.

In spite of the remaining challenges, the Aceh peace agreement has provided not only a milestone for peace in Indonesia and Southeast Asia as a whole, but also a sea of knowledge and experience that many parties that are facing difficulties in promoting peace could learn from. Aceh has undergone an intricate process of negotiations with the Government of Indonesia, before a peace agreement was reached, which included challenges of ending mutual resentment and addressing the misery that most of Acehnese people lived in.

Whilst Aceh is now enjoying a fruitful recovery after the conflict and disaster, some regions in Southeast Asia are still struggling to bring their internal conflict to an end. The Mindanao conflict in the Philippines and the Southern Thailand conflict are in need of support from outside the countries, and the Aceh peace process is an experience to be utilised.

97 Paper Concept released by ACSTF on 5th Years of Peace in Aceh.

98 Berghof Glossary on Conflict Transformation, pages 22.

99 On 12-14 April, 2015, The Acehnese Civil Society Task Force in cooperation with the Peace Unit University Sains Malaysia organised a multi-stakeholder forum to facilitate the Acehnese as insider peace-builders.
Looking to Aceh itself, peace is not only the absence of war. Expectations go further than that, including an essence of positive peace that still needs to be achieved. Sustainable peace must be marked by key players, mainly insider peace-builders and other supporting groups at the national and international level. The ten year anniversary of the peace agreement should be used as a moment for reflection, to recognise and better understand the weaknesses, challenges, and spoilers for sustaining peace, as well as ways forward.

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When the armed conflict in Aceh escalated in the late 1990s and early 2000s, Juanda offered humanitarian support to around 25,000 people in different location as the Coordinator of the Peoples Crisis Centre.

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