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Mechanics of Mass Murder: A Case for Understanding the Indonesian Killings as Genocide

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ABSTRACT

This article presents an overview of new evidence recovered from the former Indonesian Intelligence Agency's archives in Banda Aceh that is able to prove, for the first time, military agency behind the 1965–66 killings in Indonesia. The military leadership, these documents show, initiated and implemented the killings as part of a coordinated national campaign. This campaign was described by the military leadership as an “annihilation operation” and was implemented with the stated intention to “annihilate to the roots” the military's major political rival, the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI). This new evidence fundamentally changes what it is now possible to know about the 1965–66 killings, specifically as regards the question of military intent. Likewise, the process by which the military's target group was identified and targeted for destruction can now be understood using the military's own accounts of how this process occurred. This article argues that this new evidence strengthens the argument, advanced by genocide scholars since the early 1980s, that the 1965–66 killings should be understood as a case of genocide.

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Introduction

Since the time of the 1965–66 killings, Indonesian and foreign commentators have debated the appropriate language with which to label them.¹ The scale of the killings—believed to have claimed up to a million lives—along with the killers' stated aim to “exterminate to the roots” (*menumpas sampai ke akar-akarnya*) an unarmed civilian group has led many to ask whether the 1965–66 killings constitute a case of genocide. Since the early 1980s, key genocide scholars have argued that the 1965–66 killings appear to meet the definition of genocide under the 1948 Genocide Convention. The biggest difficulty in substantiating this claim has been proving military intent behind the killings and corroborating the argument that the military's target group can be understood as a protected group under the Convention. This article provides an overview of new key evidence from Aceh province that is able to address this “evidence problem.” It will demonstrate, using the military's own records, how the killings were initiated and implemented as part of a deliberate campaign by the military. It will also show how the military explicitly identified its target group as extending beyond the confines of a “political group”—

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excluded from protection under the Convention—to identify this target group as belonging to an ideologically constituted national group (Indonesia’s “communist group”) and as members of a religious group (as “atheists”).² In doing so, it argues that the 1965–66 killings can indeed be understood as a case of genocide.

The story of how this new evidence came to light is one of good luck and fortunate circumstance. In 2010, I walked into the former Indonesian Intelligence Agency’s archives in Banda Aceh. I had been interviewing survivors and perpetrators of the killings in the province as part of research for my doctoral thesis. Unable to access the archive’s files directly, I requested to see its catalogues and placed an order for a number of files based on the dates they were produced. I could hardly believe it when I was subsequently presented with a box of 3,000 pages of classified military documents. These documents, combined with a report produced by the Aceh military command,³ are the first of their kind ever to be discovered throughout Indonesia. They have come to be known as the Indonesian genocide files.

The Evidence Problem

The greatest challenge faced by researchers of the 1965–66 killings has been the severe shortage of documentary evidence available with which to establish even a basic timeline of events, let alone a clear chain of command behind the violence. For the past half century, the Indonesian military has depicted the violence as the result of a “spontaneous” uprising by “the people,”⁴ and as an “explosion” of “communal clashes resulting in bloodbaths in certain areas of Indonesia.”⁵ Meanwhile, specific references to agency behind the killings are avoided. In its most recent official history of the province, the Aceh Military Command explained: “spontaneous people’s movements throughout Aceh simultaneously crushed the PKI [Partai Komunis Indonesia, Indonesian Communist Party] until the majority of PKI members were killed ...”⁶ The purpose of this official account is to deny that the killings were waged as a centralized, deliberate campaign by the military. As Vedi Hadiz has argued, support for the killings and the regime change they effected remains the “justification” for Indonesia’s current social order.⁷

This denial continues to this day. In April 2016, Indonesia’s coordinating minister for political, legal and security affairs, Luhut Pandjaitan, simultaneously denied that large-scale killings had occurred during the 1965–66 killings, while reiterating the government’s refusal to issue an apology to victims of the killings.⁸ The Indonesian state also continues to silence and intimidate those who wish to challenge official propaganda narratives of the violence.⁹ In September 2017, police in Jakarta shut down an academic discussion on the 1965–66 violence at the offices of one of the country’s oldest and most respected civil society organizations, Indonesia’s Legal Aid Foundation (LBH).¹⁰ In doing so, the police caved in to the demands of anti-communist protestors who, with the support of key sections of the military leadership, had mobbed LBH’s offices, trapping participants inside while incorrectly asserting that the group did not have “permission” to meet. Human rights activists have accused President Joko “Jokowi” Widodo of emboldening this anti-communist sentiment by announcing in June 2017 that he would “beat up” (*gebuk*) the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), banned in Indonesia since 1966, if it dared to “reappear.”¹¹

For almost fifty years, it was believed that so little documentary evidence existed from the time of the killings because no such records had ever been created. Since at least the

1970s, it has been argued that no written orders were issued by the military leadership to coordinate the killings.¹² In 2010, it was argued that there was “no evidence” of systematic records being kept of the killings,¹³ while in 2012, it was argued that the killings had taken place “without the aid of a sophisticated bureaucracy to process and punish declared enemies (which would have left written records).”¹⁴ That is, not only was it believed that formal written orders had not been produced, it was believed that the killings had been implemented without the assistance of state and civilian government structures.

Early accounts of the 1965–66 period written by Indonesia researchers focused on attempting to understand the actions and motives of the 30 September Movement—an abortive coup attempt during the morning of 1 October that was blamed on the PKI and used as the “pretext” for the military’s own coup and attack against the PKI—rather than on the killings themselves. Indeed, the question of whether the PKI had been responsible for the Movement would not be resolved until 2006, with the publication of John Roosa’s groundbreaking text, *Pretext for Mass Murder*.¹⁵ Meanwhile, the question of whether or not the military had implemented the killings as part of a deliberate military campaign remained an open debate until the discovery of the Indonesian genocide files.¹⁶

Despite this shortage of information, key genocide scholars have argued since the early 1980s that the 1965–66 killings appeared to be a case of genocide.¹⁷ In 1981, Leo Kuper included the 1965–66 killings in his seminal study, *Genocide: Its Political Use in the Twentieth Century*. Through this study, he dismissed official Indonesian accounts that the killings occurred as the result of spontaneous horizontal violence in response to the 30 September Movement.¹⁸ “On the contrary,” he argues, “the army engaged actively in the operation, participating directly in the massacres, and indirectly by organizing and arming civilian killers.” The killings, he suggests, should be understood as a potential case of genocide due to their large scale and their deliberate nature.

The major obstacle to understanding the 1965–66 killings as a case of genocide, he explains, is the exclusion of “political groups” from protection under the 1948 Genocide Convention¹⁹—the standard legal definition of genocide under international law. He proposes, however, that “in the slaughter of the Communists, the criterion of past affiliation had a finality and immutability quite comparable to massacre by virtue of race and it was based on a similar imposition of collective responsibility.”²⁰ The killings, moreover, he explains, transcended the boundaries of inter-group conflict, by additionally drawing upon “class” and “religious” differences between victims and perpetrators.²¹ Likewise, ethnicity was also a factor, as evidenced by the killing of “Chinese merchants and their families.”²² He thus suggests that the military’s target group was substantially broader than a political group and contained elements of deep inter-generational identity.

The 1965–66 killings were also included in Frank Chalk and Kurt Jonassohn’s classic 1990 study, *The History and Sociology of Genocide: Analyses and Case Studies*. Like Kuper, they describe the killings as a genocide and suggest that the military’s target group was broader than a political group. They explain: “While this genocide was directed at a political party,” and thus did not, at face value, conform to the legal definition of genocide, “it had curious overtones of an ethnic, religious and economic character.”²³ Meanwhile, they propose that the major hurdle to understanding the 1965–66 killings as a case of genocide was the “great deal of conflicting information available” at the time relating to how the killings were implemented.²⁴ Much of this “conflicting information” can now be resolved.

The following sections will provide an overview of the new evidence that is now available with which to prove military agency behind the killings, before returning to the question of how this new evidence is able to address the concerns raised by Kuper, Chalk and Jonassohn.

Military Preparations to Seize State Power in Sumatra Prior to 1 October 1965

From the early 1960s, the Indonesian military leadership began to make specific plans to “re-orient” the Indonesian state.²⁵ In 1964, to facilitate these plans, the military leadership was successful in lobbying Sukarno to issue a Presidential Decree to implement a raft of legislation known as the “Decision to Intensify the Implementation of Dwikora” (*Keputusan Peningkat Pelaksanaan Dwikora*). This new legislation, officially explained as a means of supporting Sukarno’s “Crush Malaysia” (*Ganyang Malaysia*) campaign, gave the military new sweeping powers that largely mirrored Indonesia’s martial law legislation, by providing it with the ability to mobilize both local military and paramilitary structures.²⁶ Most importantly, it provided the military with the ability to implement martial law internally, without first having to consult Sukarno.²⁷

From March 1965, the military began conducting military training exercises in Aceh and throughout Sumatra to test the preparedness of these new structures.²⁸ In August, the military inaugurated a new military command structure in the province, which it named the “Defence Region Command” (Kodahan: *Komando Daerah Pertahanan*). It then waited for an appropriate pretext to launch this seizure of state power.²⁹ The actions of the 30 September Movement during the early hours of 1 October 1965 would come to provide this pretext.

On 1 October, when the national military leadership was still ostensibly deciding how to react to the actions of the 30 September Movement, the military leadership in Aceh “activated” the Kodahan command, which it renamed the “Region Defence Command” (Kohanda: *Komando Pertahanan Daerah*).³⁰ It would subsequently launch its attack against the PKI and implement its seizure of state power in Aceh province through this command structure. As Aceh’s military commander explained:

Since the occurrence of the GESTOK affair [an alternative name for the 30 September Movement] on 1 October 1965, the entire strength of the Kohanda Aceh has been mobilized to launch an annihilation operation against GESTOK ... This operation has been a brilliant success.³¹

The genocide, this explanation confirms, was launched as state policy. While I do not believe that the military necessarily anticipated the scale of the eventual killings, it had both the intent and means to launch what it described as an “annihilation operation” from 1 October.

1 October: Early Military Orders

From the military documents now available, it is possible to see that military coordination on 1 October 1965 was much more intensive than previously known. Previously, the only known order sent from Suharto on 1 October was sent at 9 p.m., when he had declared: “now we are able to control the situation both in the centre and the regions.”³² It was not

known what Suharto meant by this statement. The Indonesian genocide files show that additional orders and directives were sent prior to this. It is now known, for example, that during the morning of 1 October, Suharto, acting as commander of the armed forces, sent a telegram to Aceh's military commander, General Ishak Djuarsa, a committed anti-communist,³³ stating that a "coup movement" had occurred in the capital.³⁴

This is the first known order to be found declaring that a coup had occurred, and preceded by several hours the 30 September Movement's declaration of a "Revolution Council," which did not occur until 2 p.m., usually seen as the earliest point at which the actions of the 30 September Movement could be classified as an attempted coup. This order is also evidence that Suharto and the national military leadership were in communication at this time. Here I am not suggesting that Suharto chose for some reason to contact Djuarsa first, rather that it can be assumed that this order was sent to all provincial military commanders at this time.³⁵

A second order was then received by Djuarsa, sent by Sumatra's inter-regional military commander, Lieutenant Colonel Ahmad Mokoginta. Mokoginta, a committed anti-communist, had played a key role in military preparations in Sumatra prior to 1 October 1965.³⁶ This order instructed Djuarsa to: "Await further orders/instructions from [Mokoginta]."³⁷ The direction promised in Mokoginta's order would be made clear at midnight that night, when Mokoginta delivered a speech in Medan through which he ordered that "all members of the armed forces must resolutely and completely annihilate this counter-revolution ... to the roots."³⁸ This is the first known order issued by the military to "annihilate" the 30 September Movement.

These orders are evidence that from the morning of 1 October, Suharto was in contact with and sent directives to inter-regional and provincial military commanders. They are also evidence that the military launched an offensive campaign that by midnight on 1 October was calling for the "complete annihilation" of the 30 September Movement. In addition, as has been outlined above, it can now be shown that the military activated a new command structure during the morning of 1 October to facilitate its attack against the PKI. It named this operation "Operation Berdikari." This name appears to have become the official codename the military used to describe the genocide in Aceh.³⁹

Initial Coordination

The military leadership in Aceh now proceeded to communicate these orders to Aceh's district and sub-district military and civilian leaderships. This consolidation began in Banda Aceh. It is recorded in the military documents that at 8 p.m. on 4 October, Aceh's Pantja Tunggal and representatives from the military leadership met in the governor's meeting hall in Banda Aceh.⁴⁰

The Pantja Tunggal, or "Five in One," was the top executive board at the provincial and district level. It combined military and civilian government representatives and was the key link between the military leadership and civilian government at the provincial and district level. This body counted as its members the provincial (or district) military commander, the governor (or district-level Bupati), chief prosecutor, police chief and a civilian political party representative from the Front Nasional. Ulf Sundhaussen has explained that the Pantja Tunggal was initially established as a means for "communists and leftists" to act as a "counterweight" in the provinces.⁴¹ However, once Dwikora was enacted, the Pantja Tunggal

acted to subsume the provincial or district government under military control, effectively implementing a form of de facto martial law.⁴²

The meeting then proceeded to produce a series of documents. The first was a “Declaration of the Pantja Tunggal for Aceh Special Region,” which was signed by members of the Aceh Pantja Tunggal. It declared its intention to “determinedly completely annihilate that which calls itself the 30 September Movement along with its lackeys.”⁴³ The military leadership’s annihilation campaign was thus adopted by Aceh’s Pantja Tunggal body, which now exercised control over Aceh’s civilian government, a development that extended the military’s as yet aspirational genocidal campaign into the arena of civilian politics.

A second document was then produced, also on 4 October. This document was entitled “Announcement: Special Announcement of the P.T.” and was designed to be read as a public announcement. This document, also signed by the Aceh Pantja Tunggal, declared: “It is mandatory for the people to assist in every attempt to completely annihilate the ... Thirtieth of September Movement along with its lackeys.”⁴⁴ This announcement thus goes even further than the first document to instruct, for the first time on record, that it was “mandatory” for civilians to participate in the military’s annihilation campaign. Within three short days, the Aceh Pantja Tunggal was issuing instructions for civilians to murder other civilians.

It is now, at least, no longer possible for the Indonesian state to claim that the military did not directly incite the population to engage in the killings that would shortly erupt. It is also clear that no matter how enthusiastic the support of some civilian participants may have been for this campaign, this relationship was ultimately coercive, as civilians had been ordered to participate.

Incitement and Mobilization: Djuarsa’s Coordination Tour

Following this meeting, Djuarsa embarked on a coordination tour of the province. During this tour, Djuarsa first met with local district military leaderships, before holding meetings with local district civilian government leaderships. He then held a series of public meetings at large sports fields, where he would issue an ultimatum to the local civilian population —“Kill the PKI or you will be targeted,” a perverse inversion of the popular propaganda account that civilians were allegedly made to believe that they must kill “or be killed” by the PKI. Dates shown in light grey in [Figure 1](#) are the dates of Djuarsa’s arrival in each district, or, in the case of South Aceh, which Djuarsa did not visit, the date of the local military leadership’s initial coordination meeting to discuss support for the military’s annihilation campaign in the district.

Djuarsa left Banda Aceh on 7 October to commence this coordination tour. He travelled first to North Aceh, where he met with Daud Buereueh, Aceh’s former military governor (1945–53) and former leader of the Darul Islam rebellion in the province, which had lasted from 1951 to 1962. At this meeting, Buereueh is said to have given his support to the military campaign and to have pledged: “I will order the people of Aceh to help you, General [Djuarsa].”⁴⁵ On the same day, pamphlets began to appear at the Lhokseumawe train station inciting violence.⁴⁶ These pamphlets called for “kidnappings to be responded to with kidnappings, cutting up [*pertjentjangan*] to be responded to with cutting up.”⁴⁷

Later the same day, Djuarsa travelled to Takengon, Central Aceh. There, as occurred in North Aceh, Djuarsa first met with Central Aceh’s military leadership before meeting with



Figure 1. Djuarsa's coordination tour. Source: Image reproduced with kind permission from © Robert Cribb.

the Central Aceh district government (DPRD II). Djuarsa then held a public meeting at the Alon Ishak sports field. Ibrahim Kadir, a school teacher in 1965 who attended this meeting, recalls Djuarsa announcing: "The PKI are *kafir* [non-believers], I [Djuarsa] will destroy them to their roots! If in the *kampung* you find members of the PKI, but do not kill them, it will be you who we punish!"⁴⁸

On 8 October, Djuarsa travelled to Meulaboh, West Aceh. There, Djuarsa also met with West Aceh's military leadership and the West Aceh DPRD II. T. M. Yatim, who in 1965 was assistant district chief in Johan Pahlawan, and who attended the meeting, recalls:

When the Panglima [Djuarsa] came here for the meeting it became even clearer what steps had been taken by the PKI . . . [It was said] let's go into the field, there's no longer a need for meetings, wo, wo, wo [the sound of being revved up].⁴⁹

A public meeting was then held at the Teuku Umar sports field by Djuarsa, where, Yatim recalls, Djuarsa announced: "If you don't kill [the PKI], they will be the ones doing the killing [*kalau tidak bunuh, mereka yang membunuh*]." ⁵⁰ Djuarsa's announcements, Yatim explains, were understood at the time as an "order ... to kill the PKI." ⁵¹

Djuarsa then proceeded to return to Banda Aceh. Consolidation, however, continued in West Aceh following Djuarsa's departure. Greater detail is known about this consolidation phase in West Aceh because, for reasons unknown, more documents have been recovered from this district than other districts.

From these documents it is known that three days later, on 11 October, a "Special Session of the West Aceh Provincial Government" was held. During this meeting, Djuarsa and Mokoginta's earlier orders were debated within the West Aceh DPRD II before a further series of documents was produced. One of these documents, produced on 11 October, was a declaration named "Declaration, No. 4" which announced: "[The West Aceh DPRD II] calls upon all layers of society to increase their awareness and ... vigilance while assisting ABRI [the armed forces] to annihilate and completely eliminate the 30 September Movement along with its affiliated organizations" ⁵²

As had occurred earlier in Banda Aceh, this declaration adopted the instruction that civilians must assist the military's annihilation campaign. The declaration was then sent to Djuarsa, the Aceh Pantja Tunggal, Aceh's governor, all Bupati, Walikota and regional heads in Aceh, all government bodies in West Aceh, Sukarno, various ministers in Jakarta and the Radio Republik Indonesia bureau in Banda Aceh. ⁵³ There was thus no level of government in Aceh or nationally that was not aware of what was occurring in West Aceh at this time. It appears that, as with other documents produced during this time, the broad circulation of the document may have served the dual purpose of indicating the issuing body's loyalty to Suharto and the military's annihilation campaign, while also inciting other government bodies to act in a similar manner.

Despite Djuarsa returning to Banda Aceh after his meeting in Meulaboh on 8 October, consolidation phases in East and South Aceh followed remarkably similar patterns to the rest of the province. Djuarsa was in Langsa, East Aceh during the morning of 1 October. ⁵⁴ By chance, on the morning of 1 October Djuarsa along with Aceh's entire military and civilian leadership had been in Langsa for a "mass meeting" to mark the arrival of Indonesia's deputy prime minister Soebandrio and national PKI Politbureau member Njoto, who had conducted a week-long "socialization" tour of Sumatra.

On the morning of 1 October, Soebandrio and Njoto had travelled up from Medan, North Sumatra, with Mokoginta, North Sumatra's military commander Darjatmo and North Sumatra's governor Sitepu, before meeting Djuarsa and members of the Aceh Pantja Tunggal at the provincial boundary at 1 p.m. and arriving together in Langsa at 2 p.m. ⁵⁵ The group had first heard news of the 30 September Movement over the radio between 6 and 8 a.m., before travelling on to Langsa, where the meeting had gone ahead as planned until Djuarsa interrupted it shortly after 2 p.m. to declare that a "coup" had occurred in the capital.

At this point, the meeting was called to a close and delegates were ordered by Djuarsa to return to their posts, with the reasoning: "If it [the 30 September Movement coup attempt] can happen in the centre, it could happen easily in the regions." ⁵⁶ This meant that East Aceh's military and civilian military leadership were aware of the military leadership's response to events in Jakarta from the morning of 1 October.

On 5 October, following patterns occurring elsewhere in the province, this consolidation was strengthened through a meeting of East Aceh's military and civilian leadership. The next day, representatives from six of East Aceh's political parties met with the East Aceh Pantja Tunggal. At this meeting, a "Joint Decision" was issued that called for "decisive and proportionate action" to be taken against "those who have clearly been involved in treachery towards the nation."⁵⁷ The more moderate tone of this declaration appears to be a reflection of the greater esteem with which the PKI was held in the district, which was home to Aceh's largest, unionized, plantation population. The similarities of the military's initiation phase in the district, meanwhile, point to the overarching coordination behind the military's response throughout the province.

Djuarsa also did not travel to South Aceh during the period following 1 October, which to this day remains an extremely isolated area. In 1965, there were only one or two radios in the district, which received signals through antennas that were hung from the tops of coconut trees.⁵⁸ "Hamzah," who in 1965 was a peasant farmer, recalled that there was initially some confusion in the district. Only one radio announcement was heard in the district on 1 October, which happened to be the original announcement of the 30 September Movement. This announcement was the Movement's 2 p.m. announcement that had declared the formation of a Revolution Council in the capital. Not hearing any further announcements, "Hamzah" has recalled that he, like others in the district, had "wanted to join" what they thought was a PKI rebellion.⁵⁹

Approximately "one week" after 1 October, apparently after receiving further instructions from the provincial military leadership, the South Aceh military leadership attempted to set the record straight. During this time, the district military leadership delivered a public explanation that supporting a failed PKI uprising was possibly not the best idea and that it was the "PKI who had carried out the coup."⁶⁰ Then, "Hamzah" explained, "we were taught how to 'crush the PKI'."⁶¹ Meanwhile, PKI members were asked to report themselves to the military.⁶²

From this time, it is possible to see the outbreak of violence in the districts. The military's annihilation campaign in the province shifted from its initiation phase to its phase of public violence.

Outbreak of Public Violence

The major patterns that can be seen in the spread of public violence throughout Aceh during this period are as follows. Following Djuarsa's coordination tour and the coordinating meetings in each district, demonstrations attended by civilians, including students, members of Aceh's non-communist political parties and military-sponsored death squads, were held under the watchful eye and with the encouragement and coordination of the military.⁶³ Posters and graffiti began to appear in the streets. Members of the local military and civilian leadership addressed the demonstrators, some said to number in the thousands and even tens of thousands. The demonstrators then marched on PKI offices and homes before these buildings were ransacked and destroyed. Individuals considered to be associated with the PKI along with their family members were subsequently "arrested"⁶⁴ and "surrendered" to the military.

At this time, people began to be disappeared. Some were killed at death houses or other unknown places before their bodies were dumped in the street. Other victims

were killed directly on the streets. Bodies were left on public display. These killings occurred within a context of a military direction to the population that it was “mandatory to assist the military to annihilate” members of this target group.

These killings were documented in great detail by the military. They were recorded in a Military Chronology and “Death Map,” with the victim’s name, age and organizational affiliation listed. No agency, however, is ever attributed to the victims’ killers in these records; the violence is rather portrayed as “spontaneous,” with records noting how “a corpse has been found” with the “killer unknown.”⁶⁵ Such claims of spontaneity and lack of information regarding perpetrator identity are clearly disingenuous.

In total, 1,941 public deaths are recorded as occurring during this period throughout Aceh by the military.⁶⁶ The purpose of this violence was to legitimate the use of extra-judicial violence against members of the PKI. It is clear that the military incited this violence, if not directly participated in its implementation. Indeed, it is possible to see a correlation between Djuarsa’s coordination meetings and the outbreak of this violence. As [Figure 2](#) shows, public killings did not start until after Djuarsa’s visit. Dates shown in dark grey are the dates listed in the Military Chronology recording the outbreak of public killings in each district. This violence received the direct support of the military leadership.

Escalation in the Violence

As a result of these actions and the arrest and surrender campaigns that accompanied them, a large prison population now existed throughout the province. The military leadership was faced with the question of what to do with this population. It chose to exterminate it. In doing so, the military’s order to “exterminate” the PKI and its affiliated organizations was taken to its logical conclusion. It appears that this decision was made both to terrorize the community, in order to facilitate its seizure of power, as well as to, quite literally, eliminate the military’s major political rival. It is this period of the military’s annihilation campaign that can be understood as the genocide proper.

In some areas, such as Central Aceh, this destruction was almost total. According to eye-witness accounts from this district, only one man survived the military’s arrest and kill campaign.⁶⁷ In Banda Aceh, meanwhile, it is believed that only one member of the Aceh PKI’s leadership structure survived.⁶⁸ In all districts in Aceh, it is extremely difficult to find survivors.

Following on from this crucial turning point in the military’s campaign, it is possible to see a sharp escalation in the violence, with the military now playing a direct and open role. This shift, which heralded the beginning of the third phase of the military’s annihilation campaign, was characterized by systematic mass killings. It would not have been possible without the earlier orders and initiation phase and demonstrations of violence.

Creation of the War Room

On 14 October, one week after the outbreak of public violence in Banda Aceh, Djuarsa issued an instruction “establishing the creation of a RUANG YUDHA [War Room] for [all] military units.”⁶⁹ This War Room, the report explains, “enabled KODAM I to carry out NON-CONVENTIONAL war in accordance with the Concept of Territorial Warfare [and



Figure 2. Outbreak of public violence. Source: Image reproduced with kind permission from © Robert Cribb.

enabled it to] succeed in annihilating them [‘GESTOK’] together with the people.”⁷⁰ The military leadership in Aceh would use this War Room to coordinate the systematic mass killings that erupted from this period and which would characterize the genocide nationally.

Systematic Mass Killings at Military-Controlled Killing Sites

Systematic mass killings at military-controlled killing sites would characterize the next phase of the military’s annihilation campaign. These killings occurred in each of Aceh’s districts and followed a remarkably similar pattern. The main elements of this pattern included the rounding up of targeted individuals not yet held in military-controlled jails or other places of detention; the holding of detainees in military-controlled jails and

other places of detention; the staged transportation of these detainees to military-controlled killing sites; and the subsequent systematic murder of these detainees.

The round-up campaign was coordinated from Banda Aceh by the military. It is known from the Military Chronology, for example, that on 20 October 1965, Djuarsa gave a "briefing" to representatives from all political parties and mass organizations, the Pantja Tunggal and heads of the civil service in Banda Aceh at the Governor's Audience Hall (*Pendopo*), where he provided an "explanation of the situation related to G-30-S."⁷¹ This explanation was based on a "Decision" signed by Djuarsa that same day.⁷² It forbade all individuals declared to be associated with the PKI from "leaving their places [of residence]" while declaring it "mandatory for all leaders of these Pol[itical] Part[ies]/Mass Org[anizations] to report themselves to the Peperlada/Military Police/Police in their area by no later than 25 October."⁷³

Targeted individuals who did not report themselves were picked up through sweeping arrest campaigns. These campaigns were conducted directly by the military,⁷⁴ with night patrols conducted by civilian paramilitary organizations⁷⁵ and by members of military-sponsored death squads.⁷⁶ In some cases, targeted individuals were forced to accompany military personnel on such arrest campaigns in order to facilitate the identification of other targeted individuals.⁷⁷ In some cases, membership lists and aid recipient lists seized by the military were used as checklists by the military.⁷⁸ In other cases, lists were produced as a result of interrogation.⁷⁹

Following their arrest, detainees were held in military-controlled jails and detention centres throughout Aceh. Examples of military-controlled detention sites that were used for this purpose in the province include the Military Police headquarters,⁸⁰ a military training site in Mata le,⁸¹ government offices⁸² in Banda Aceh, state-run jails and the district military headquarters in North Aceh,⁸³ a military jail and six detention centres that have been described as "concentration camps" (*camp untuk mengumpulkan*) in Central Aceh,⁸⁴ a state-run jail and government offices in West Aceh,⁸⁵ the district military headquarters in South Aceh⁸⁶ and the district military headquarters in East Aceh.⁸⁷

What follows is an overview of the locations and operation of military-controlled killing sites in Aceh. This is by no means an exhaustive list of such sites, but rather these are sites my interviewees either attended personally, as perpetrators, survivors or eyewitnesses during the time of the killings, or they are killing sites about which they had direct knowledge. In some cases, my interviewees heard about these sites when they were being held in detention or they are sites where their loved ones or neighbours were killed. I suspect these sites represent only a fraction of a much larger network of military-controlled killing sites that were in operation in the province at this time. As this small sample of examples shows, such killing sites can be found in every district of Aceh and they all display strikingly similar patterns of operation.

Locations of military-controlled killing sites in Banda Aceh include a killing site at Lhoknga beach, 15 km from the centre of Banda Aceh.⁸⁸ At this site, detainees, who were brought to the site on the back of trucks, were "killed, decapitated [*dipenggal*] one by one," or shot by members of the Military Police, before being buried in mass graves at the site.⁸⁹ At the military training site in Mata le, detainees were released at a pre-arranged time to waiting death squad members, who slaughtered them in the street.⁹⁰

In North Aceh, a military-controlled killing site was located at Meunasah Lhok, 30 km west along the coast from Lhokseumawe. Here detainees were brought at night to be

killed by civilian executioners selected from the community by the district military commander.⁹¹ Another site was located in Blang Padang, where members of the military-trained, village-level "Civilian Defence" (Hansip: *Pertahanan Sipil*) paramilitary organizations were ordered by the military to dig mass graves before killing the detainees by "hacking" them to death or cutting their throats.⁹² Detainees who survived this process were reportedly buried alive.⁹³ Meanwhile, another site was located at Cot Panglima, a steep cliff located along the mountain pass to Central Aceh, where detainees were brought directly from the jail in Bireuen before having their throats slit and their bodies thrown off the side of the cliff.⁹⁴

In Central Aceh, the military transported detainees on the back of trucks to multiple military-controlled killing sites along the mountain pass roads of Burlintang Mountain, where detainees, with hessian sacks over their heads and their hands tied together in front of them, were shot or decapitated, largely directly by the military.⁹⁵ The bodies were subsequently thrown off the side of the mountain, with the killing sites moved further along the mountain pass as particular sites began to smell "too rotten." Another site was located at Karang Debar, where villagers were forced to dig a large hole to be used as a mass grave, before the detainees had their throats slit and were thrown into the hole. Killings also occurred at Tritip Bridge, the final bridge into Takengon and only ten minutes from the centre of town. There, detainees were killed by the military with the assistance of villagers, before being buried in a mass grave close to the base of the bridge.

In West Aceh, detainees were transported on the back of trucks to military-controlled killing sites "near the sea" and "in the mountains."⁹⁶ These killing sites were established by the district military command, which gave orders to district government officials to help facilitate the transportation of detainees to these sites.⁹⁷ After disembarking from the trucks, detainees were forced to walk towards mass graves where they were shot as a group by firing squads.⁹⁸

In South Aceh, a military-controlled killing site was located at Ujung Batu, where detainees were transported on the back of trucks under the cover of darkness before being killed directly by the military and buried in mass graves.⁹⁹ Another site was located at Alu Bane, 76 km north-west along the west coast from Tapaktuan.¹⁰⁰ Members of the Front Nasional were pressured to "assist" the military in carrying out these killings.¹⁰¹

In East Aceh, meanwhile, a military-controlled killing site was located on "X Mountain" (the name and location of "X Mountain" has been withheld to protect the identities of interviewees).¹⁰² Detainees were taken to this site by members of the military, where they were killed and dumped in a mass grave.¹⁰³ Another site was located on Seunodok Mountain, which is now known locally as "PKI Mountain" and said to be haunted due to the large number of PKI graves there.¹⁰⁴ Detainees were also transported to local plantations, where many of the detainees had worked, to be killed.¹⁰⁵

The purpose of these military-controlled killing sites was to facilitate the systematic extermination of the detainee population. This intent is expressed in the organized way in which targeted individuals were grouped together in places of detention and subsequently transported in batches to specially established killing sites to be killed. Upon their arrest, targeted individuals became a quota that was to be disposed of as efficiently as possible. In the eyes of the military, these individuals, stripped of their identity, no longer had any other purpose than to be processed for death. In some areas, this destruction was almost total.¹⁰⁶

This intent was also expressed in government and military documents produced at the time. The purpose of the military's campaign, one document produced in North Aceh explains, was "the cleansing/extermination of the G30S."¹⁰⁷ "This annihilation," the document continues, "has been active and achieved in conjunction with the armed forces."¹⁰⁸ It is this phase of the military's annihilation campaign that can be understood as the genocide proper.

Why Genocide?

The above sections provide clear evidence that the military initiated and implemented the 1965–66 killings as a deliberate policy to annihilate its political opposition and bring the military to power. But can the killings be understood as a case of genocide? For scholars such as Kuper, Chalk and Jonassohn, who consider the 1965–66 killings to be a potential case of genocide as defined by the 1948 Genocide Convention, the major hurdle to confirming this finding has been the "great deal of conflicting information available" with which to assess whether the case is able to meet the stringent definitional requirements of the term.

Genocide, according to the 1948 Genocide Convention, is the act of attacking members of a particular target group with the intent to destroy this target group "as such."¹⁰⁹ Meanwhile, a target group of genocide must constitute a stable group that can be described as a "national, ethnic, racial or religious group." The members of a political group cannot, therefore, be the target of genocide, though political affiliation may well overlap with such a group. In the case of the 1965–66 killings, it has been unclear whether these two requirements could be established.

The 1948 Genocide Convention is, of course, not the only lens through which genocidal violence can be understood.¹¹⁰ Dirk Moses has observed that the Convention can play a role in "depoliticizing" how genocidal violence is spoken about and understood.¹¹¹ The central question for students of genocide must be to understand *why* such violence occurs. Genocides, Helen Fein argues, are implemented to achieve political aims,¹¹² while Martin Shaw proposes that genocide is best understood as a "form of war" implemented to destroy "the power of an enemy social group."¹¹³ Focusing purely on proving whether or not a particular case of genocidal violence meets the stringent definitional requirements of the Convention can limit this discussion to a narrow semantics-based debate.¹¹⁴

Nevertheless, the importance of the Convention as a key means through which access to the international legal system can be achieved cannot be underestimated. Furthermore, in the case of the 1965–66 killings, whether or not the case can be understood as a case of genocide under the Convention takes on additional significance, as it is through comparison with the Convention that the case has become stuck in its current evidentiary lacuna. Indonesia researchers have not been able to answer the questions of genocide scholars, leading to the perception that the 1965–66 killings are a borderline or problematic case of genocide.¹¹⁵

Intent to Destroy

In the case of the Indonesian killings, the military's intent to destroy its target group "in whole or in part" can now be proven. The Indonesian genocide files provide evidence

that, from at least midnight on 1 October 1965, in the words of Sumatra's inter-regional military commander, "all members of the armed forces" had been "ordered" to "completely annihilate" the "30 September Movement," described in this order as a counter-revolution, "to the roots."¹¹⁶ Meanwhile, it can also now be proven that the military leadership described this campaign as an "operation to annihilate GESTOK."¹¹⁷ This operation, Aceh's military commander explains, was launched on 1 October 1965 and was known internally within the military as "Operation Berdikari." The stated intent of this operation was to physically destroy the military's target group.

That the terms "exterminate" and "annihilate" were not meant metaphorically by the military leadership can be seen in its actions following 1 October. After ordering civilians on 4 October to "assist" the military "in every attempt to completely annihilate the counter-revolutionary Thirtieth of September Movement along with its lackeys,"¹¹⁸ Aceh's military commander embarked on a coordination tour of the province from 7 October. During this tour, he met with local military and government leaders and held public mass meetings where he explicitly ordered civilians to "kill" people considered to be associated with the PKI.¹¹⁹ Meanwhile, other documents discovered as part of the Indonesian genocide files show that the military mobilized and armed thousands of paramilitary members to participate in Operation Berdikari.¹²⁰

The military then oversaw a period of public killings in the province between 7 and 13 October. The military supported these killings and recorded their progression on flow charts and a "Death Map." In tandem with this public killing campaign, military-sponsored death squad members participated in an extra-judicial "arrest" campaign, during which time a large number of targeted individuals were abducted and subsequently "surrendered" to the military. These individuals were then held in military-controlled jails and "concentration camps," resulting in a large detainee population being created in the province.

From 14 October, the military began to implement a systematic killing campaign intended to destroy this detainee population. On this date, Aceh's military commander issued an "instruction" establishing the creation of a "War Room" intended to "enable" the military leadership to "carry out NON-CONVENTIONAL war" to "succeed in annihilating" its target group.¹²¹ From this time, the military began to play a direct role in the killings in Aceh. Targeted individuals, who had been hunted down and extra-judicially "arrested" and detained in military-controlled jails and "concentration camps" during the first two weeks of the military's operation, were now transported to a network of military-controlled killing sites. Each night, truckloads of detainees were sent to these sites, where they were killed, either directly by the military or by its paramilitary and civilian proxies. The purpose of this killing campaign was to systematically exterminate this detainee population.

The Military's Target Group

The question of whether or not victims of the 1965–66 killings constitute a protected group under the 1948 Genocide Convention is complicated by the multiple names given to this group. The Indonesian genocide files show that this group was initially identified on 1 October as "this counter-revolution,"¹²² before being identified, from 4 October,

as “that which calls itself the ‘30 September Movement.’” From 6 October, meanwhile, this group was named as “the PKI and the organizations under its banner.”¹²³

The official list of “affiliated” organizations, as formalized by Suharto on 31 May 1966, included organizations officially affiliated to the PKI, such as the PKI’s youth organization, People’s Youth (Pemuda Rakyat); the Indonesian Peasant’s Front (BTI, Barisan Tani Indonesia); the All-Indonesia Workers’ Union (SOBSI, Serikat Organisasi Buruh Seluruh Indonesia); and its cultural organization, the Institute of People’s Culture (LEKRA, Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat). It also included organizations that were not officially affiliated to the PKI, but which shared a similar political vision for Indonesia, including the Indonesian Women’s Organization (Gerwani: Gerakan Wanita Indonesia) and the Consultative Body for Indonesian Citizenship (Baperki: Badan Permusjawaratan Kewarganegaraan Indonesia), a mass organization for Chinese Indonesians who identified as pro-communist.

In this context, the label “PKI” was used to refer to PKI cadre and members of these “affiliated organizations” (see Figure 3). It was also used to refer to family members of PKI cadre and the families of members of these “affiliated organizations.” It was additionally used to refer to friends and associates of these individuals as well as to certain village populations and, at certain times and in certain places, to Indonesia’s ethnic Chinese community.¹²⁴ It is thus clear that the military’s target group was significantly broader than the organizational membership of the PKI.¹²⁵

This broad target group was also collectively identified as “communists” (*kaum komunis*, lit. “communist group”),¹²⁶ “counter-revolutionaries” (*konter revolusioner*)¹²⁷ “unbelievers” (*kafir, tidak beragama*) and “atheists” (*atheis, anti-tuhan*). These collective labels were intended to project the idea that this target group was internally cohesive and possessed a shared belief structure and self-identity. The actual connection of such targeted individuals to the actions of the 30 September Movement—the official justification for the military’s targeting of this group—was thus rendered secondary to the idea that such individuals should be targeted because of *who* they were alleged to be once the military’s attack against this group commenced. Meanwhile, such targeted individuals, commonly accused of being members of this target group through mere allegation or association, once identified as such, had no formal means of appealing this designation.

A number of scholars have argued that victims of the 1965–66 killings were targeted as a political group and that this group cannot, as such, be understood as a protected group



Figure 3. The military’s target group.

under the 1948 Genocide Convention.¹²⁸ The exclusion of political groups from protection under the Convention has attracted significant attention for being both morally unjustifiable¹²⁹ and based on the outdated notion that national, ethnic and racial identities (traditionally seen as stable and innate) are fundamentally different from political identity (traditionally seen as impermanent and socially created).¹³⁰ Scott Straus, meanwhile, has argued that it is the perpetrator group and not the victim group that ultimately determines the “essential properties” of a target group,¹³¹ rendering the current distinction between target group identities indefensible. Political groups, nonetheless, remain excluded from protection under the Convention.

Drawing upon the work of Barbara Harff, John Roosa has proposed that the 1965–66 killings should be understood as a case of “politicide”¹³²—a term designed to escape debate related to the exclusion of political groups under the Convention.¹³³ Andrei Gomez-Suarez, writing about anti-communist killings in Colombia, has, however, argued against adoption of the term, describing it as a “compromise” that reinforces the lack of consensus within genocide studies.¹³⁴ The genocidal destruction of communist groups in postcolonial states, in which communist groups have often played an integral part in the development of nationalist ideology, would appear to especially expose the false dichotomy between traditional ethnic-based national identities and modern ideologically based nationalist identities.¹³⁵

While it is true that victims of the 1965–66 killings were targeted in part due to their alleged affiliation with a political group (the PKI), it is my contention that victims of the 1965–66 killings were additionally targeted as part of a much broader group. The following sections provide an overview of why the military’s target group can be understood as a national and religious group.

An Ideologically Constituted National Group

Since 2001, Cribb has been the leading proponent of the argument that the 1965–66 killings can be understood as a case of genocide as defined by the 1948 Genocide Convention. The Indonesian case, he argues, is able to “shed light on the phenomenon of genocide,” by demonstrating the problematic nature of the artificial distinction made between concepts of race, ethnicity, national identity and political identity within mainstream interpretations of the Convention.¹³⁶ Traditional understandings of race, ethnic identity and national identity as “fixed” and “immutable,” he argues, are outdated and no longer supported by “constructionist” understandings of these identities.¹³⁷ This understanding, he proposes, is able to provide a “firm bridge between ‘classical’ ethnic genocide and political genocide,” by demonstrating the similarities between these two forms of identity.

In the case of Indonesia, Cribb argues that the category of “national groups,” as defined as a protected group under the Convention, can be expanded to include ideologically constructed national groups. This is because, he argues, “the nature of Indonesian national identity shows with unusual clarity how political cleansing can also be ethnic cleansing.” To support this argument, he provides a detailed overview of the development of Indonesian national identity as the embodiment of three distinct “nations of intent,” or “expressions” of this identity.¹³⁸ These three “expressions”—identified as “communist,” “Islamist” and “developmentalist”—were not just differentiated from each other by

cultural, social and ideological antagonisms but also overlaid with economic and class hostilities.¹³⁹ He thus proposes that Indonesia's "communist group" can be understood as a protected group under the Convention, while also providing a deep historical analysis of inter-group conflict within Indonesia.

This argument was taken a step further by the International Peoples Tribunal for 1965 (IPT-65), which led a non-legally binding investigation into the 1965–66 killings in The Hague in November 2015. Drawing upon Cribb's argument, the IPT-65 proposed that the "Indonesian national group" became the target of genocide because it had been wiped out "in part."¹⁴⁰ A similar approach has also been adopted by Daniel Feierstein in the case of Argentina to explain the repressive events that took place in that country between 1974 and 1983.¹⁴¹

This approach has been dismissed by legal scholars of genocide, however. International law expert William Schabas, for example, explains that "confusing mass killing of the members of the perpetrators' own group with genocide is inconsistent with the purpose of the Convention, which was to protect national minorities from crimes based on ethnic hatred."¹⁴² International law establishes that the Convention does not apply to members of a national group who are targeted by members of the same national or ethnic group—a phenomenon sometimes referred to as "auto-genocide."¹⁴³

This was not Cribb's position. Cribb's explanation suggests that it was Indonesia's "communist group," rather than the "Indonesian national group" as a whole that became the target of the military's annihilation campaign. This "communist group," he argues, constituted a quasi-ethnic group as its own ideologically constituted national group or subnational group. That the military explicitly identified Indonesia's communist group (*kaum komunis*) to be the target of its annihilation campaign is supported by evidence found within the Indonesian genocide files.¹⁴⁴

A Religious Group

Victims of the 1965–66 killings were also targeted for destruction based on their alleged identity as "atheists" (*atheis, anti-tuhan*) and "unbelievers" (*kafir, tidak beragama*). Indeed, as new data gathered during my research reveal,¹⁴⁵ this would be the major way in which the killings were justified at the time, both by the military in its public announcements and by civilian participants.

This aspect of the military's targeting of the "PKI" has, to date, remained largely unexplored. This has been, in large part, due to the perceived sensitivity of the topic. Atheism is not recognized by the Indonesian state.¹⁴⁶ Meanwhile, survivors are often anxious to distance themselves from the accusation that they are "atheist," both because of this legal requirement and because they consider themselves to be practising Muslims (or Hindus or Christians).¹⁴⁷

Jurisprudence exists to suggest that atheism can be accepted as a "religious group" under the Convention. The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), in the case of *Akayesu*, defined a religious group as "one whose members share the same religion, denomination or mode of worship."¹⁴⁸ This definition, legal scholars Matthew Lippman and David Nersessian argue, encompasses atheistic groups. Lippman, for example, argues: "Religious groups encompass both theistic, non-theistic, and atheistic communities which are united by a single spiritual ideal."¹⁴⁹ Meanwhile, David Nersessian

argues: "The concept of religious groups should be sufficiently flexible to include atheists and other non-theists targeted for genocide, based either on their internal 'beliefs' or their functional 'mode of worship' (not worshipping at all)."¹⁵⁰

The argument that the military's target group should be understood as a "religious group" is further strengthened by the understanding that this group considered itself to be a theistic group "united by a single spiritual ideal," as per Lippman's definition. Indonesia's communist movement emerged during the 1920s as an offshoot of the Dutch East Indies' pan-Islamic anti-colonial movement. From this time, the majority of PKI members and adherents of Indonesian communism identified both with Marxism and "Red Islam", a distinct stream of Islam articulated by the "Red Haji," Haji Mohammad Misbach, who preached that Islam and communism were compatible.¹⁵¹

It is thus possible to argue that victims of the 1965–66 killings were, in part, identified for destruction as a religious group, both because this is how the military identified this group (as "atheists") and because this is how this group self-identified (as adherents of "Red Islam"). Similarly, as per Cribb's argument, it is possible to argue that victims of the 1965–66 killings were targeted as members of an ideologically constituted national or sub-national group as part of Indonesia's "communist group." Meanwhile, in the case of ethnic Chinese victims of the 1965–66 mass killings, victims were also, in certain times and in certain places, additionally targeted as members of an ethnic or racial group.¹⁵² When presented in conjunction with the clear evidence that the military both possessed and acted upon an intent to destroy this group "as such," this new evidence strengthens the argument, advanced by genocide scholars since the early 1980s, that the 1965–66 killings can be understood as a case of genocide.

Conclusion

The discovery of the Indonesian genocide files has fundamentally changed what it is now possible to know about the 1965–66 killings, specifically as regards questions of military intent and accountability. Likewise, the process by which the military's target group was identified and targeted for destruction can now be understood using the military's own account of how this process occurred. A strong case for understanding the 1965–66 killings as a case of genocide can now be made. Genocide as a concept is not perfect. Even so, it remains an important tool to bring perpetrators of systematic state-sponsored mass murder to account.

The deliberate mistruth perpetuated by the Indonesian state and its allies in Washington, London and Canberra that the Indonesian genocide occurred as the result of spontaneous violence is harmful. In addition to allowing perpetrators of the genocide to enjoy complete impunity for their actions, it allows the military to continue to incite inter-group conflict in Indonesia while washing its hands of the consequences. It is time for the 1965–66 killings to be recognized for what they were: one of the most brutal state-sponsored genocides of the twentieth century.

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Notes on contributor

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Notes

1. A version of this article was presented at "'1965' Today: Living with the Indonesian Massacres," Amsterdam, 2 October 2015.
2. I argue elsewhere that ethnic Chinese victims of the 1965–66 killings were additionally targeted as members of an ethnic or racial group. (Jess Melvin, "Why Not Genocide? Anti-Chinese Violence in Aceh, 1965–66," *Journal of Southeast Asian Affairs (GIGA)* 32, no. 3 (2013): 63–91; also Jess Melvin, *The Army and the Indonesian Genocide: Mechanics of Mass Murder* (New York: Routledge, 2018)).
3. I am sincerely grateful to Douglas Kammen for sending me the "Complete Yearly Report," produced by the Aceh Military Command for the year 1965, which apparently mysteriously appeared at the Royal Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (KITLV) to be scanned as part of the Aceh Digital Library project.
4. *40 hari kegagalan 'G.30.S': 1 Oktober–10 November 1965*, 2nd ed. (Jakarta: Staf Pertahanan Keamanan Lembaga Sedjara, 1966; first published December 1965), 111.
5. Nugroho Notosusanto and Ismail Saleh, *The Coup Attempt of the 'September 30 Movement' in Indonesia* (Jakarta: n.p., 1967), 77.
6. Fairus, ed., *Kodam Iskandar Muda: sejarah dan pengabdian* (Banda Aceh: Dinas Penerangan Kodam Iskandar Muda, 2004), 92.
7. Vedi R. Hadiz, "The Left and Indonesia's 1960s: The Politics of Remembering and Forgetting," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 7, no. 4 (2006): 555.
8. "1965 Symposium: Indonesia's Way to Face Its Dark Past," *Jakarta Post*, April 19, 2016, <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2016/04/19/1965-symposium-indonesias-way-to-face-its-dark-past.html>.
9. "Indonesia: Stop Intimidating Participants in Events Concerning 1965 Human Rights Violations," Amnesty International, public statement, 9 August 2017.
10. The attack occurred on 16 September 2017. Nurkholis Hidayat, "Democratic Emergency? Hardliners, Communism and the Attack on LBH," *Indonesia at Melbourne*, September 18, 2017. <http://indonesiaatmelbourne.unimelb.edu.au/democratic-emergency-hard-liners-communism-and-the-attack-on-lbh/>
11. Dwi Andayani, "LBH kaitkan pengepungan dengan seruan Jokowi 'Gebuk PKI,'" *DetikNews*, September 18, 2017. Jokowi's comments were made on Facebook.
12. Harold Crouch, *The Army and Politics in Indonesia* (Jakarta: Equinox Publishing, 2007; first published 1978), 141–2.
13. Robert Cribb, "Political Genocides in Postcolonial Asia," in *The Oxford Handbook of Genocide Studies*, ed. Donald Bloxham and A. Dirk Moses (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 453.
14. Douglas Kammen and Katharine McGregor, "Introduction," in *The Contours of Mass Violence in Indonesia, 1965–68*, ed. Douglas Kammen and Katharine McGregor (Singapore: NUS Press, 2012), 8.
15. John Roosa explains how the 30 September Movement was used as a "pretext" by the military to launch its long-anticipated attack against the PKI. John Roosa, *Pretext for Mass Murder: The 30 September Movement and Suharto's Coup d'Etat in Indonesia* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006).
16. See Robert Cribb, "Unresolved Problems in the Indonesian Killings of 1965–1966," *Asian Survey* 42, no. 4 (2002): 551–2. For earlier examples, see Lucien Rey, "Dossier of the Indonesian Drama," *New*

Left Review no. 36 (1 April 1966): 35; and Benedict R. Anderson and Ruth T. McVey, *A preliminary analysis of the October 1, 1965, coup in Indonesia* (Ithaca, NY: Modern Indonesia Project, Cornell University, 1971). Rey, writing in 1966, proposed that the military had “encouraged” armed mobs “to take advantage of [the] anti-PKI climate” during the aftermath of 1 October 1965. “The technique,” he explains, “has been for the army to enter a village, force the headman to give the name of all PKI members and sympathizers, round them up and then let the extremist right-wing Muslim and Christian mobs know when they were to be released. As they came out of the jail they were chopped up with billhooks and machetes.” This technique was indeed used by the military, as outlined above. What this explanation does not explain, because it was not yet known, is that this was but the tip of military accountability for the killings. McVey and Anderson, meanwhile, writing in 1971, described the killings as “a systematic campaign to uproot the Communist Party.” “The Army,” they explain, “clearly intended to destroy the party roots and branch.” They refrain, however, from providing an analysis of how this campaign was implemented, beyond explaining that “the PKI was rapidly rounded up and destroyed” with the assistance of military-trained vigilante groups. How this campaign was led and by what method it was implemented is not explained, as such information was not yet known.

17. In Indonesia, the 1965–66 killings first began to be described as a case of genocide during the late 1990s. See, for example, Wimanjaya W. Liotohe, *Mengadili diktator Suharto in absentia: pengadilan rakyat semesta-pengranta* (Jakarta: n.p. [self-published], 1999).
18. Leo Kuper, *Genocide: Its Political Use in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981), 152–3.
19. *Ibid.*, 138.
20. *Ibid.*, 154.
21. *Ibid.*
22. *Ibid.*, 153.
23. Frank Chalk and Kurt Jonassohn, *The History and Sociology of Genocide: Analyses and Case Studies* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), 382.
24. *Ibid.*, 35.
25. Roosa, *Pretext for Mass Murder*, 189–91.
26. “Keputusan peningkat pelaksanaan Dwikora,” Keppres/Plm Tert. ABRI/KOTI/KOTOE No. 52/KOTI tahun 1964, mb 14 Sept. 1964, in *Ketetapan MPRS dan peraturan negara jang penting bagi anggauta Angkatan Bersendjata*, ed. Muhono, ‘Decision for the enforcement of the implementation of Dwikora’ in ‘Decisions of the Provisional People’s Consultative Council and government regulations relevant to members of the Armed Forces’ (Jakarta: Tentara Nasional Indonesia, 1966).
27. Sukarno’s apparent intention was to use the new Dwikora legislation to curtail the military’s powers by placing his own allies in control of this command and to provide a counterbalance to the military’s monopoly on arms by providing basic arms training to the campaign’s proposed 21 million volunteers. Ulf Sundhaussen, *The Road to Power: Indonesian Military Politics, 1945–1967* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1982), 186. I have argued that Sukarno’s support for this arms training was perceived by the military leadership as having crossed a “red line” that accelerated its plans to seize state power.
28. Crouch, *The Army and Politics in Indonesia*, 45–8.
29. For a full discussion of how the actions of the 30 September Movement were used as a pretext by the military leadership, see Roosa, *Pretext for Mass Murder*.
30. *Laporan tahunan lengkap Kodam-I/ Kohanda Atjeh tahun 1965* (Banda Aceh: Kodam-I, 1966), 17.
31. *Ibid.*
32. “Pidato radio Pimpinan Sementara Angkatan Darat Major Djendral Soeharto,” Pimpinan Sementara AD Republik Indonesia, Major Jendral Soeharto, 1 October 1965, in Alex Dinuth, *Dokumen terpilih sekitar G.30.S/PKI* (Jakarta: Penerbit Intermasa, 1997), 59–60.
33. Djuarsa received training at the US Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth in Kansas, United States. Bryan Evans III, “The Influence of the United States Army on the Development of the Indonesian Army (1954–1964),” *Indonesia* no. 47 (April 1989): 28.
34. “Chronologis kejadian2 jang berhubungan dengan Gerakan 30 September di daerah Kodam-I/Atjeh,” in *Laporan tahunan lengkap*, 92.

35. It is known, for example, that this order was also sent through the inter-regional military commander for Sumatra, Lieutenant General Ahmad Mokoginta. "Chronologis," 1.
36. Mokoginta had received training at the US Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, from which he would emerge as a distinguished figure in the national military leadership. He had also previously served as head of the military's Armed Forces Staff and Command School (SESKOAD). Evans III, "The Influence of the United States Army," 28.
37. "Tetap tenang dan penuh kewaspadaan terhadap setiap anasir jang merusak dan ingin menghanturkan Pantjasila-revolusi-negara dan bangsa kita, baik dari luar maupun dari dalam," in Letdjén A. J. Mokoginta, *Koleksi pidato2/kebidjaksanaan Panglima Daerah Sumatra* (Medan: Koanda Sumatera, 1966), 152.
38. *Ibid.*, 152.
39. Jess Melvin, *The Army and the Indonesian Genocide: Mechanics of Mass Murder* (New York: Routledge, 2018).
40. "Chronologis," 92.
41. Sundhaussen, *The Road to Power*, 185–6.
42. Melvin, *The Army and the Indonesian Genocide*, 45.
43. "Pernyataan Pantja Tunggal Daerah Istimewa Atjeh," Banda Aceh, 4 October 1965, 1; see also *Chain of Command documents file*, the Indonesian genocide files.
44. "Pengumuman: Peng. No. Istimewa P.T.," Banda Aceh, 4 October 1965; see also *Chain of Command documents file*, the Indonesian genocide files.
45. "Ishak Djuarsa: sejak 1967, Pak Harto sudah seperti imam yang batal wudu," *Tempo*, April 2, 2000, 39. This account has been independently corroborated by Dahlan Sulaiman, who claims to have travelled with Djuarsa to Pidie and then on to Lhokseumawe. Interview with Dahlan Sulaiman, Banda Aceh, 29 December 2011.
46. "Chronologis," 3.
47. *Ibid.*
48. Interview with Ibrahim Kadir, Takengon, Central Aceh, 7 February 2009.
49. Interview with T. M. Yatim, Meulaboh, West Aceh, 3 December 2011.
50. *Ibid.*
51. *Ibid.*
52. "Pernyataan, No: 4/Dprdgr/AB/1965," Meulaboh, West Aceh, 11 October 1965, 2; see also *Chain of Command documents file*, the Indonesian genocide files.
53. *Ibid.*, 3.
54. Melvin, *The Army and the Indonesian Genocide*, 78–87.
55. Following the conclusion of this meeting, which Djuarsa called to a close after instructing Aceh's military and government leadership to return to their respective districts to await further orders, Soebandrio and Njoto left for Medan on a speedboat. Upon arriving at the Belawan port, just outside of Medan, they were placed under the "protective custody" of Mokoginta and Darjatmo. Anderson G. Bartlett III et al., *Pertamina: Indonesian National Oil* (Singapore: Amerasian Ltd, 1972), 240.
56. Interview with Teuku Ali Basja, Simpang Surabaya, Banda Aceh, 28 December 2011.
57. "Peristiwa apa jang menamakan dirinja 'Gerakan 30 September'," Langsa, East Aceh, 5 October 1965; see also *Chain of Command documents file*, the Indonesian genocide files.
58. Interview with "Hamzah," Tapaktuan, South Aceh, 6 December 2011. (Names given in quotation marks are pseudonyms.)
59. *Ibid.*
60. *Ibid.*, 7.
61. *Ibid.*, 9.
62. *Ibid.*, 3.
63. For example, "Chronologis," 2–7.
64. These arrests were conducted extra-judicially.
65. For example, "Chronologis," 4, 5, 6, 8, 15 and 16. For discussion of this phenomenon, see Melvin, *The Army and the Indonesian Genocide*, 274.
66. *Laporan tahunan lengkap*, 6–7.

67. Interview with Ibrahim Kadir, Takengon, Central Aceh, 7 February 2009.
68. Interview with Asan, Hong Kong, 31 October 2011.
69. *Laporan tahunan lengkap*, 17.
70. *Ibid.*, 85 (emphasis in original).
71. "Chronologis," 9.
72. "Surat-Keputusan No: KEP/PEPELRADA 29/10/1965," Banda Aceh, 20 October 1965. See, 'Banda Aceh documents file', the Indonesian genocide files.
73. *Ibid.*
74. Interview with "Ramli," West Sumatra, 15 December 2011; also interview with "Tjoet," Kampung X, Bireuen, 11 February 2009.
75. Interview with "Hamid," Lhokseumawe, North Aceh, 19 December 2011.
76. Interview with T. M. Yatim, Meulaboh, West Aceh, 3 December 2011. Military-sponsored death squads were formed throughout the district during the month of October. Their membership consisted of anti-communist student organizations that had received paramilitary training from the military prior to 1 October.
77. Interview with "Karim" and "Aminah," Village 2, Tamiang, East Aceh, 12 December 2011.
78. Interview with "Jamil," Kampung X, Bireuen, 11 February 2009; also interview with "Abdullah," Takengon, Central Aceh, 9 February 2009.
79. Interview with "Jamil," Kampung X, Bireuen, 11 February 2009.
80. Interview with "Ramli," West Sumatra, 15 December 2011.
81. Interview with Dahlan Sulaiman, Banda Aceh, 29 December 2011.
82. Interview with Zainal Abidin, Banda Aceh, 14 February 2009; and interview with T. M. Yatim, Meulaboh, West Aceh, 3 December 2011.
83. Interview with "Tjoet," Kampung X, Bireuen, 11 February 2009.
84. Interview with Ibrahim Kadir, Takengon, Central Aceh, 7 February 2009; and interview with "Abdullah," Takengon, Central Aceh, 9 February 2009.
85. Interview with T. M. Yatim, Meulaboh, West Aceh, 3 December 2011.
86. "Chronologis," 19.
87. *Ibid.*, 8.
88. Interview with "Ramli," West Sumatra, 15 December 2011.
89. *Ibid.*
90. Interview with Dahlan Sulaiman, Banda Aceh, 29 December 2011.
91. Interview with "Hamid," Lhokseumawe, 19 December 2011.
92. Interview with "Sjam," Lhokseumawe, 19 December 2011; and interview with "Hamid," Lhokseumawe, 19 December 2011.
93. Interview with "Hamid," Lhokseumawe, 19 December 2011.
94. Interview with "Jamil," Kampung X, Bireuen, 11 February 2009.
95. Interview with Ibrahim Kadir, Takengon, Central Aceh, 8 February 2009.
96. Interview with T. M. Yatim, Meulaboh, West Aceh, 3 December 2011.
97. *Ibid.*
98. *Ibid.*
99. Interview with "Ali," Sama Dua, South Aceh, 6 December 2011.
100. Interview with "Ali".
101. "Chronologis," 11.
102. Interview with "Karim" and "Aminah," Village 2, Tamiang, East Aceh, 12 December 2011.
103. *Ibid.*
104. Interview with "Saifuddin," Idi, East Aceh, 18 December 2011.
105. *Ibid.*
106. It is extremely difficult to find survivors of the military's arrest and kill campaign in Aceh. In other provinces of Indonesia, a larger number of survivors can be found. In some areas, long-term detention camps were established. Prisoners at these facilities were eventually categorized. "Category A" prisoners were killed while "Category B" and "Category C" prisoners were released, often after years of abuse and torture. "Category A" prisoners constituted the military core target group and were

- killed as part of the genocide proper. Justus M. Van der Kroef, "Indonesia's Political Prisoners," *Pacific Affairs* 49, no. 4 (1976–77): 628; see also Melvin, *The Army and the Indonesian Genocide*.
107. "Pertahanan Sipil/Hanra", in *Laporan Bupati Kepala Daerah T. Ramli Angkasah dalam memimpin Pemerintahan Kapupaten Aceh Utara mulai April 1965 s/d Mei 1966 disampaikan dalam sidang paripurna ke 1/1966 DPRD-GR Kabupaten Aceh Utara di Lhokseumawe tanggal 15 Juni 1966*, 32. Similar formulations can be found in "Pernyataan," Djulok, East Aceh, 28 October 1965, 2; and "Pernyataan kebulatan tekad rakjat ketjamatan Idi Rajeuk, Kabupaten Atjeh Timur, tentang peristiwa apa jg menamakan dirinja 'Gerakan 30 September'," Idi, East Aceh, 30 October 1966. A report written by the Regent of North Aceh, signed 15 June 1965 [sic. 1966].
 108. "Pertahanan Sipil/Hanra," 32. A report written by the Regent of North Aceh, signed 15 June 1965 [sic. 1966].
 109. "Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide," adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 9 December 1948. The term "as such" conveys the special intent (*dolus specialis*) requirement of the crime.
 110. For an overview of competing definitions, see Chalk and Jonassohn, *The History and Sociology of Genocide*, 8–11.
 111. A. Dirk Moses, *The Problems of Genocide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).
 112. Helen Fein, "Revolutionary and Antirevolutionary Genocides: A Comparison of State Murders in Democratic Kampuchea, 1975 to 1979, and in Indonesia, 1965 to 1966," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 35, no. 4 (1993): 801.
 113. Martin Shaw, *War and Genocide: Organised Killing in Modern Society* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 44–5.
 114. I have argued elsewhere for applying a more inclusive understanding of genocide to the 1965–66 killings. Melvin, *The Army and the Indonesian Genocide*.
 115. See Israel W. Charny, ed., *Genocide: A Critical Bibliographic Review*, vol. 1 (New York: Facts on File, 1988), 55, 331; Helen Fein, ed., *Genocide Watch* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 18.
 116. "Tetap tenang dan penuh kewaspadaan," 152.
 117. *Laporan tahunan lengkap*, 16–17.
 118. "Pengumuman: Peng. No. Istimewa P.T.," Banda Aceh, 4 October 1965.
 119. Interview with Ibrahim Kadir, Takengon, Central Aceh, 7 February 2009; interview with "Latifah," Banda Aceh, 15 February 2009.
 120. "Daftar: Kekuatan ABRI HANSIP/HANRA/SUKWAN di Kohanda Atjeh," 2. A report written by the Regent of North Aceh, signed 15 June 1965 [sic. 1966].
 121. *Laporan tahunan lengkap*, 17.
 122. "Tetap tenang dan penuh kewaspadaan," 152.
 123. "Keputusan Bersama: No. Ist. II/Pol/Kpts/1965," Banda Aceh, 6 October 1965, 1; see also *Chain of Command documents file*, the Indonesian genocide files.
 124. Jess Melvin, "Why Not Genocide? Anti-Chinese Violence in Aceh, 1965–1966," *Journal of South-east Asian Affairs* (GIGA) 32, no. 3 (2013): 63–91; see also Melvin, *The Army and the Indonesian Genocide*.
 125. This evolution in the naming of the military's target group is consistent with the understanding that the military had planned to induce a showdown with the PKI, its major political rival, and that this attack was intended to appear as a defensive move in reaction to an appropriate pretext that could be blamed on the party.
 126. For example, "Panitia Aksi Gerakan Massa Ummat Bertuhan untuk Mempertahankan Pantjasila," Idi, East Aceh, 14 October 1965; see also *Death Squads file*, the Indonesian genocide files.
 127. For example, "Pernyataan No. 12/Pernj/Dprd/1965," Langsa, East Aceh, 28 October 1965; see also *Death Squads file*, the Indonesian genocide files.
 128. See Robert Cribb and Charles A. Coppel, "A Genocide That Never Was: Explaining the Myth of Anti-Chinese Massacres in Indonesia, 1965–66," *Journal of Genocide Research* 11, no. 4 (2009): 447–65; see also Ben Kiernan, "Twentieth-Century Genocides," in *The Specter of Genocide: Mass Murder in Historical Perspective*, ed. Robert Gellately and Ben Kiernan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 46.

129. Beth van Schaack, "The Crime of Political Genocide: Repairing the Genocide Convention's Blind Spot," *Yale Law Journal* 106, no. 7 (1996): 2259–91.
130. Cribb, "Political Genocides in Postcolonial Asia," 446.
131. Scott Straus, "Contested Meanings and Conflicting Imperatives: A Conceptual Analysis of Genocide," *Journal of Genocide Research* 3, no. 3 (2001): 366.
132. Roosa, *Pretext for Mass Murder*, 224.
133. Barbara Harff and Ted Gurr, *Ethnic Conflict in World Politics* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998), 224.
134. Andrei Gomez-Suarez, "Perpetrator Blocs, Genocidal Mentalities and Geographies: The Destruction of the Union Patriótica in Colombia and Its Lessons for Genocide Studies," *Journal of Genocide Research* 9, no. 4 (2007): 638. Gomez-Suarez, like Shaw, sees a connection between degenerate war and the development of a genocidal mentality, which is useful when examining the genocidal destruction of communist groups in Latin America.
135. The problematic nature of the exclusion of communist groups from traditional definitions of genocide in the case of postcolonial Asia has been raised by Cribb, "Political Genocides in Postcolonial Asia," 445–65; and in the case of postcolonial Latin America by Daniel Feierstein, "National Security Doctrine in Latin America: The Genocide Question," in Bloxham and Moses, *The Oxford Handbook of Genocide Studies*, 489–508. It could be argued that the "national security doctrine," used to justify the destruction of communist groups in Latin America, was first tested in Indonesia.
136. Robert Cribb, "Genocide in Indonesia, 1965–1966," *Journal of Genocide Research* 3, no. 2 (2001): 221.
137. *Ibid.*, 221–2.
138. *Ibid.*, 226.
139. *Ibid.*, 227.
140. "Final Report of the IPT 1965: Findings and Documents of the IPT 1965," 20 July 2016. <http://www.tribunal1965.org/en/final-report-of-the-ipt-1965/>
141. Daniel Feierstein, "Political Violence in Argentina and Its Genocidal Characteristics," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 2 (2006): 149–69.
142. William A. Schabas, *Genocide in International Law: The Crimes of Crimes*, 1st ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 119.
143. The 1975–79 killings in Cambodia are considered to be an example of auto-genocide.
144. See, for example, "Panitia Aksi Gerakan Massa Ummat Bertuhan untuk Mempertahankan Pantjasila," *Idi*, East Aceh, 14 October 1965.
145. See Melvin, *The Army and the Indonesian Genocide*.
146. While it is not illegal to hold atheist thoughts in Indonesia *per se*, it is illegal to express these thoughts publicly under religious blasphemy laws. The banning of atheistic expression is traced to the Indonesian constitution, which recognizes "belief in the Almighty God" as the basis of the Indonesian state. The condemnation of atheism became institutionalized under the New Order period and was linked to the 1966 banning of the PKI and "Marxism-Leninism." Ismail Hasani, "The Decreasing Space for Non-Religious Expression in Indonesia: The Case of Atheism," in *Religion, Law and Intolerance in Indonesia*, ed. Tim Lindsey and Helen Pausacker (London: Routledge, 2016), 197–210.
147. In 2010, 87.2 per cent of Indonesians identified as Muslim; 9.9 per cent as Christian; 1.7 per cent as Hindu; and –1 per cent (.9 percent Buddhist, .4 per cent unspecified). In Aceh, approximately ninety-eight per cent of the population identify as Muslim.
148. "The Prosecutor versus Jean-Paul Akayesu," International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, 2 September 1998, paragraph 515, 210.
149. Matthew Lippman, "The 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide: Forty-Five Years Later," *Temple International and Comparative Law Journal* 8, no. 1 (1994): 1.
150. David L. Nersessian, *Genocide and Political Groups* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).
151. Melvin, *The Army and the Indonesian Genocide*.
152. I have not included a discussion here of how members of Indonesia's ethnic Chinese community became a target of attack during the killings, as I have already done so elsewhere. See Melvin, "Why Not Genocide?"; Melvin, *The Army and the Indonesian Genocide*.