

Dates: 17 – 19 October 2017

Country: Indonesia, Jakarta



Accurate reporting on minority religions is sorely lacking, said journalists participating in the [International Association of Religion Journalists](#) (IARJ) conference in Jakarta. This international gathering of religion journalists was held on 17 – 19 October in a country with the world's largest Muslim population - Indonesia. There are more than 200 million Muslims living in Indonesia, but there are also many other faith groups.

Speaking at the IARJ event, the editor in chief of [KBR68H radio news agency](#) , Citra Dyah Prastuti explained how the Indonesian media failed to report accurately [on the elections for the mayor of Jakarta in 2017](#).

Ahok, who is credited by his supporters with cracking down on corruption, streamlining bureaucracy and tackling infrastructure woes, was polling well until [he was accused of insulting Islam](#) on the campaign trail in September when he cited a verse from the Qur'an, Al Maidah 51. An ongoing [blasphemy trial](#) ensued, which has significantly dented his popularity.



“An effort to promote harmony within Indonesia’s diverse communities is essential to the nation’s future. “Harmony is a must; otherwise, Indonesia cannot survive,” said the Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi who spoke at the IARJ conference. She emphasised the importance of interfaith dialogue and the crucial role of the media in unbiased and accurate coverage of religion issues.

In other examples, Isabel Templo, a freelance journalist from Philippines, raised her concerns about the language used in the media coverage of the [conflict in Marawi](#) which is the only Muslim-majority part of the otherwise largely Catholic Philippines. “Most of the media would rather use expressions such as ‘Islamic’ (religion) and ‘Maranao’ (ethnicity) than ‘militants’ or ‘extremists’,” said Templo for the The Jakarta Post press.

[Representing the Media Diversity Institute](#) (MDI) at the IARJ conference in 2014, Edmundo Bracho, a visiting lecturer at Westminster University, said that “journalists need to develop the ability to both empathise and become knowledgeable about the subject matter, about the individuals they are portraying and giving a voice to,” said Bracho.

The conference in Jakarta was jointly organized by [IARJ](#), the Union of Journalists for Diversity ([SEJUK](#)) and the Nusantara Multimedia University ([UMN](#)).