

Aceh: Women activists declare new political party

Wednesday 30 May 2007, by [BALOWSKI James](#) (Date first published: 25 May 2007).

Jakarta,

On May 20, a group of women activists in Indonesia's northern-most province of Aceh declared the formation of a new local political party — the Acehese People's Alliance Party for Women's Concern (PARAPP).

This is the third local political party that has been declared since the ratification of a law on local parties in Aceh that is part of the peace deal between the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and the Indonesian government in Helsinki in August 2005.

In other parts of Indonesia, political parties can only participate in elections after fulfilling strict requirements on the number of chapters established at the provincial, regency and sub-district levels.

PARAPP chairperson Zulhafah Lutfi said that the party would focus on programs to struggle for women's rights in Aceh and to empower women by increasing their involvement in politics. "This is not a women's party. But whoever is in the party is obliged to struggle for and give more attention to women's problems", she told Acehkita.com following the declaration.

Women's and human rights activists in Aceh have long expressed concern that women are being left out of the reconstruction and rehabilitation process following the 2004 tsunami and that local Islamic-based sharia laws discriminate against women and the poor.

Aside from PARAPP, two other local parties have also been formed in Aceh — the leftist Acehese People's Party (PRA) and the Gabthat Party (which means brave, strong or bold in Acehese). The Gabthat Party was established by Islamic scholars and former GAM members in the Greater Aceh regency. Although GAM has said that it plans to form a political party, this appears to have been delayed due to internal divisions within the organisation.

P.S.

From: International News, Green Left Weekly issue #711 30 May 2007.