Supplementary Appendix 2: Interview Methodology

This study uses interviews as one of several sources of evidence. As security forces rarely make public the means through which they identify victims during periods of mass violence, field research is an essential tool to improve our understanding of how this occurs. In the manuscript I rely on a combination of interviews, diplomatic cables, military publications, and secondary sources to illuminate my hypothesized causal process in the main case of Central Java, as well as the additional cases of West Java and East Java.

Interview Framing and Response Rate

In each case I sought to interview those with direct, first-hand knowledge of the mass-categorical violence. In most cases, this consisted of individuals whose knowledge was primarily about local processes in different locations. A limited number of national elites were also able to provide insights on broader processes through which the violence was carried out. Respondents can be categorized as belonging to a number of different groups: security forces, militia leaders, militia members, local elites, national elites, witnesses, and former prisoners. There is some categorical overlap. One security force member, for example, participated in the arrest process and served as a prison guard, before being arrested towards the end of anticommunist violence in his area. Individuals are categorized by the main role they played in the mass categorical violence, based on their interview responses. The identity of those respondents who consented for a formal interview are summarized in the table below:

Table 1: Respondent Information

Role	Security Forces	Militia Leaders	Militia members	Local Elites	National Elites	Witnesses	Prisoners
Number	4	2	2	3	2	11	26

I interviewed a total of 50 respondents, the vast majority of whom were interviewed between November 2015 and May 2016. Most people I approached consented for an interview. A notable exception to this was military officers who served at the time of the killings, especially from the elite paracommando regiment (RPKAD) that orchestrated the violence in Central Java and Yogyakarta. It is unlikely that additional time in the field would have changed this, as personal referrals from other contacts were rebuffed by these actors.

Sampling

Per the manuscript, I used snowball sampling to locate respondents (Tansey 2007). In general, I operated in two broad networks: former political prisoners and anti-communist activists. To identify initial respondents amongst former political prisoners, I approached local NGOs working on survivor advocacy. At times this initial contact was facilitated by other scholars working on the Indonesian Killings and related topics. After identifying and approaching one or more potential respondents on my behalf, further respondents were identified and approached through earlier respondents. I relied on a similar approach to gain access to respondents within a network of anti-communist activists. I conducted my research during the 50th anniversary of the

killings. At this time there was a limited space for critical engagements with this part of Indonesia's history, such as during public university seminars. Many of these events were disrupted or cancelled due to threats from individuals or groups with connections to this anti-communist network. I first approached current members of this network, who referred me to those with firsthand knowledge of, or who participated in, the mass categorical violence. Like the survivor community, initial respondents reached out to others in this network on my behalf to be interviewed.

Snowball sampling is especially advantageous for discussing politically sensitive topics, in which a referral from a trusted contact helps to alleviate potential issues of distrust (Cohen & Arieli 2011). Given the extent to which discussions of the past still face considerable obstacles in Indonesia, I had respondents reach out horizontally rather than have contact information passed to me to contact referred individuals directly. I did this to facilitate easier refusal of requests to be interviewed, as this horizontal contacting helped to alleviate perceived power discrepancies between respondents and myself. Snowball sampling is also appropriate for this question as the populations I sought were at least partially hidden (both survivors and collaborators), and I did not seek a statistically representative sample of respondents (Wood 2006). I also interviewed a number of respondents multiple times to establish trust, probe new lines of inquiry as more information came to light from other sources, and to better check consistency with both previous responses and information from other interviews (Fujii 2009; Wood 2009).

Interview Format

All interviews were semi-structured. This allowed me to probe similar questions across respondents, while also providing opportunities for respondents to expand topics, and for me to change lines of inquiry as new information came to light. First interviews included biographic information: name, political affiliation and occupation prior to the violence, and similar information regarding family members. This was followed by asking for descriptions of the political situation in their local area, when conflict began, who was involved in these processes, and how violence played out locally. When possible, I was especially interested in the interaction between military and civilian actors.

All interviews began with acquiring informed consent, including subsequent interviews with those who had already provided consent to earlier ones. Participants were told that they could decline to answer any question or end the interview at any time. If any respondents appeared emotionally distressed, I would gently remind them of this. No respondents opted to unilaterally end interviews. Participants were informed that there was no compensation for this project, although I at times provided snacks or refreshments depending on interview location. Many interviews were recorded, with the consent of respondents. In some cases, where either respondents seemed hesitant to be recorded, or when this was infeasible due to background noise, I relied on handwritten notes. Most interviews lasted approximately an hour, with some as long as three hours. Most interviews were conducted at the homes of respondents, or in the offices of a local NGO. Approximately two thirds of interviews were conducted with an assistant, and all were conducted in Bahasa-Indonesia. I provided anonymity to all respondents.

One, Ibu Sri Muhayati, whose story introduces the manuscript, insisted her name be used. As both a survivor and activist, she was well aware of the risks of doing so.

Research Ethics

Prior to field research, this project was approved by the University of Toronto's research ethics board in accordance with Canadian Tri-Council Policy on ethical research involving human subjects. The study of violence conflict is always sensitive, even decades after it has occurred. Not only can memories be traumatic, but both survivors and those who participated may still face repercussions. These concerns underscored my decision to have contacts reach out horizontally in their networks, giving potential respondents an easier means of refusal. I also reminded respondents they could withdraw consent at any time, including during interviews. Identifying information and recording were stored on separate encrypted drives while in the field and continue to be so.

Confidence in Interviews

There are two key concerns with this interview data. First, respondents might have interest in telling a specific story, promoting a particular narrative, or presenting themselves in a particular light. Second, the interviews were conducted 50 years after the fact, and not all respondents would be able to accurately recall details. In regard to the first issue, this was mitigated as much as possible by cross-checking interview responses and interviewing respondents multiple times. Helping this process is that I interviewed those in networks with very different vantage points, allowing me to better identify trends of violence. In regard to the second issue, I found most respondents had clear memories of the events. Given the extreme nature of this violence, the type of information I inquired about was always remembered. Finally, interviews were not the sole source of information for this project, and I also consulted diplomatic cables, military publications, and secondary sources.

References

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