**Indonesian Buddhist woman imprisoned for complaining mosque too loud**

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An Indonesian court sentenced a Buddhist woman to 18 months in prison for blasphemy on Tuesday, after she was accused of insulting Islam for complaining that neighborhood mosque was too loud.

Meiliana, a 44-year old ethnic Chinese Buddhist had complained the Muslim call to prayer, repeated five times a day, was being played too loudly at the mosque near her house in North Sumatra.

Indonesia has the world’s largest population of Muslims and sizable Buddhist, Christian and other religious minorities. Recent years have seen a rise in conservative and hardline interpretations of Islam, prompting fears that the secular nation’s long-standing reputation for tolerance and diversity was being eroded.

“She had said something that insulted religion, in this case Islam,” said Jamaluddin, spokesman of the Medan district court, adding the defendant had “showed remorse and apologized”.

Political activists have said the country’s stringent blasphemy laws are being used to bully minorities and violate religious freedoms.

Last year, the former ethnic Chinese governor of Jakarta was tried and jailed for blasphemy after several Muslim groups accused him of insulting Islam when he said his political rivals were using the Koran to deceive voters.

The ruling was widely condemned and believed to be politically motivated. Basuki Tjahaja Purnama also lost his re-election bid because of the accusations.

There are hundreds of thousands of mosques across the vast archipelago and most use loudspeakers to play the ‘azan’ or call to prayer, which lasts a few minutes. But many also play lengthy versions of prayers or sermons lasting over 30 minutes, which has been deemed unnecessary by the Indonesian Mosque Council.

Vice President Jusuf Kalla, who is also a member of the Council, formed a team in 2015 to review mosques’ use of loudspeakers and regulate their use and volume. He has previously called on mosques to use their public address systems “wisely”.

Kalla’s spokesman did not respond to requests for comment on Meiliana’s conviction.

Meiliana’s lawyer, Ranto Sibarani, said they would appeal the verdict, according to The Jakarta Post.