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The mark left by Wednesday's bomb in Yogyakarta

Thousands of Muslims have taken to the streets of two cities on the Indonesian island of Java to protest against violence against Muslims on the Moluccan Islands.

The rally came as the Indonesian army again denied it was planning a coup to restore order to the troubled archipelago.

Some of the marchers called for 'Jihad', or holy war, according to reports from Yogyakarta - Indonesia's royal city.

It was also reported that a convent was pelted with stones, and some of its furniture looted.

A spokesman for police in Yogyakarta said: "Mass prayers took place, with around 5,000 people at the Kridosono Stadium, but there was no incident of violence."

“ I guarantee, there will be no coup. If there's a coup, I will relinquish my post

Chief of Staff General Tyasno Sudarto

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A similar rally was held at Solo, 60km to the north of Yogyakarta, by 3,000 Muslims.



Police said they had been well prepared in Yogyakarta, where there had been widespread fears of sectarian violence.

A home-made bomb exploded on Wednesday night inside the town's main mosque. The blast caused a small fire, but no injuries.

Violence fears

Two weeks ago, a Muslim rally in Mataram, the main city on the resort island of Lombok, burst into violence after participants went on the rampage.

The violence lasted three days and left five dead. Many churches, and homes and businesses owned by non-Muslims, were burnt to the ground, and thousands fled the island.

Fighting fuelled by religious and ethnic tensions broke out a year ago between Christians and Muslims in Ambon and quickly spread to other islands in the Moluccas or Spice Islands.



Ambon: Focus of sectarian violence

The Indonesian Government says that 1,600 people have been killed in the violence. Human rights groups put the death toll far higher.

No plans for a coup

President Abdurrahman Wahid, who is currently out of the country on a 17-day overseas tour, has been criticised for his inability to stem the violence.

The state news agency Antara on Sunday reported that the Indonesian army's chief of staff had dismissed fears of a military coup.

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"I guarantee, there will be no coup. If there's a coup, I will relinquish my post," army chief of staff General Tyasno Sudarto was quoted as saying.

The denial - a repetition of earlier military statements - follows warnings from the United States against any moves by the Indonesian army against President Wahid's government.

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