

# 16 Indonesians die after drinking bootleg alcohol

January 6 2014

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Sixteen Indonesians have died and nine are fighting for their lives after drinking bootleg alcohol to celebrate New Year's Eve on the main island of Java, police said Monday.

Police have arrested a couple who are suspected of producing and distributing the [alcohol](#) to roadside stalls in the town of Mojokerto in eastern Java, where the victims bought it.

It is thought the locally produced alcohol, believed to be made from palm tree sap or rice, contained poisonous methanol, Awi Setiyono, police spokesman for East Java province, told AFP.

Those that drank the alcohol to celebrate New Year began falling ill in the following days and the first death was recorded on Friday, said Setiyono.

A total of 16 people have now died—including two on Monday—and nine people are in [critical condition](#) in local hospitals, he said.

"We suspect that the drink contains methanol but we can only confirm that after we have the results of laboratory tests," he said.

The couple that were arrested are in [police](#) custody, he added.

There have been many previous cases where alcohol containing methanol—which is sometimes added to drinks to make them

stronger—has proved fatal in Indonesia.

In 2009, 25 people including four foreigners died after drinking methanol-laced palm wine on the resort island of Bali.

The small proportion of those who consume alcohol in Muslim-majority Indonesia sometimes opt for homemade drinks, because legally produced alcohol is relatively expensive as it is heavily taxed and much is imported.

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