

Enhancing the Role of Religious Education in Countering Violent Extremism in Indonesia – **CONVEY Indonesia**

# Policy Brief Series

Issue 3 | Vol. 1 | 2018

This Policy Brief series is published as part of CONVEY Indonesia project organized by PPIM UIN Jakarta.

CONVEY Indonesia aims to build peace in Indonesia and to prevent violent extremism and radicalism through a series of research-survey, policy advocacy, and public interaction based on the potential of religious education. CONVEY Indonesia project covers on the issues of tolerance, diversity, and non-violence among youth.

## Taking a Closer Look at The Development of *Salafi* Group's Education

## Key Findings

1. The majority of educational institutions developed by Salafi movement in Indonesia are in the form of *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school).
2. Some Salafi *pesantren* put more emphasis on the teaching of *Salafi* methodology by teaching the books written by Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab.
3. Some of the Salafi *pesantren* studied have adopted the national curriculum, while the rest applies only *pesantren* curriculum:
  - Adopting the national curriculum is one way to make the *pesantren* accepted by the surrounding community.
  - Some *pesantren* that only adopt local curriculum have the tendency of withdrawing themselves from the community.

## Background

Salafi teaching started to be widely known and spread in Indonesia since 1980s. The teaching was spread through proselytization activities by the *ustadz* (religious teachers/ leaders) who studied in Salafi-oriented Islamic universities, such as LIPIA/*Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Islam dan Arab* (Islamic and Arabic College of Indonesia), Jami'ah Imam ibn Su'ud (Saudi Arabia), and Darul Hadith Dammaj (Yaman) (ICG, 2004).

The Salafi *ustadz* spread the teaching through *pesantren*, *madrasah* (Islamic schools), radio, and published books. Some Salafi *pesantren* provides scholarships as well as educational means and facilities that are sufficiently good. Further, Salafi *pesantren* facilitate their alumni

who wish to continue their education overseas, particularly to Saudi Arabia and Yaman.

Some Salafi group tends to be exclusive, limiting themselves from socializing with other Muslims from different groups. As a result, negative prejudice against this group starts to grow. In addition, the Salafi group tends to reject different opinions in religious matters, and this creates frictions with other groups of Muslims.

Nevertheless, in particular spectrum, there are opportunities for collaboration where Salafi groups can contribute to the development of the country and the community. There is a tendency that the bigger a Salafi group, the more open and moderate they are. Some Salafi *pesantren* are proven to have adopted national curriculum so that their graduates can continue to conventional universities.

# How is Salafism spread throughout Indonesia?

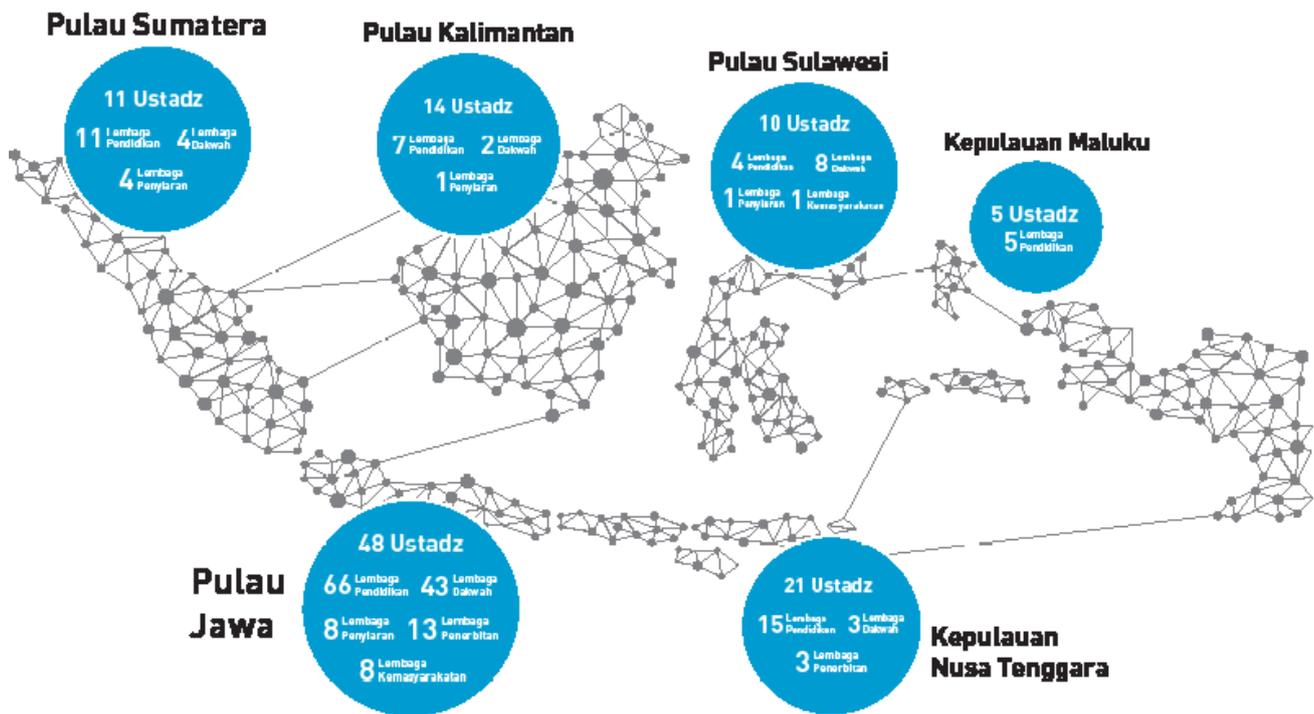
The spread of Salafi ideas in Indonesia happens by at least two ways:

## Through Salafi Ustadz/Ulama (religious teachers/leaders)

According to a study by PPIM (2017) in 25 cities in 13 provinces in Indonesia, there are at least 112 Salafi ustadz who play important role in spreading Salafi teaching in Indonesia. They have their network at both the local and national level. This shows that their preaching was positively accepted.

## Through Organizations

Salafism is also spread through educational institutions (schools, madrasah, and pesantren), proselytization organizations (religious gatherings i.e. majelis ta'lim and halaqah), publishing and broadcasting companies (of books, magazines, tabloid, radio, and TV), and community organizations (hospitals/clinics and orphanages and fund distribution agencies). The Salafi group funds their activities independently. Nonetheless, they are also raising funds from overseas, especially from Saudi Arabia. This is what makes the Salafi organization able to survive until this day.



1 There is a tendency that the bigger a Salafi group is, the more open or moderate they become. Some of the larger Salafi pesantren are known to adopt national curriculum so that their graduates can continue to conventional universities (PPIM UIN, 2017).

## Salafi Educational Institutions: Inclusive or Exclusive?

Of all the 13 provinces studied, there are 111 Salafi educational institutions, consisting of: 95 *pesantren*, 11 schools, 3 universities, and 2 private tutorial course agencies.

Similar to other *pesantren* in Indonesia, Salafi *pesantren* place emphasis on lessons about Islam such as *akidah* (Islamic creed), interpretation of the holy Quran, *hadits* (prophetic sayings and traditions), and *fikih* (Islamic jurisprudence). The difference is that the Salafi *pesantren* teach the prominent work of Salafi such as *al-ʿAqidah al-Wasithiyah* by Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 1328) and *Kitab at-Tawhid* and *al-Ushul al-Tsalatsah* by Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab (d. 1792).

As many as 56 Salafi *pesantren* (59% of 95 *pesantren*) in 13 provinces in Indonesia aim to make their institution to have better acceptance in the community. One way to do that is by adopting the national curriculum (Ministry of Religious Affairs or Ministry of Education and Culture) and apply formal education structure similar to SD/MI (primary education), SMP/MTs (junior secondary), or SMA/MA (senior secondary) in their *pesantren*.

The followings are example of two profiles of Salafi educational institutions that are open to the public:

SD Islam Abu Bakar (an Islamic primary school) located in Tangerang Selatan and an important institution to spread the teachings of Salafi in the area. The school was founded in 2011 with the mission to administer education based on Al-Quran and As-Sunnah. The curriculum used in the school is almost similar with the curriculum used in conventional school, but with some additions in special curriculum. The additions include, among others, lessons in *aqidah akhlaq* (Islamic creed and morality), *kitabah*, memorization of *hadist*, *tajweed*, Arabic language and *sirah* (historical biographies) that refer to translated books from Saudi Arabia.

In applying the Salafi methodology (*manhaj Salaf*), this school does not close itself from the community. This is part of their strategy so that the community can accept the Salaf group. Together with the students, the school is actively involved in activities in the neighborhood, such as community clean-up activities.

*Pesantren* Ibn Taimiyah in Bogor is also very open to their surrounding community. During the fasting month of Ramadhan, the *pesantren* often organizes *ifthar* (the breaking of the fasting) together with the community, the village officials, the sub-district officials, and chief of local police. Founded in 1992, the *pesantren* also employs local people as cooks and laundry workers in the *pesantren*. The *pesantren* declares that they are not affiliated with any political parties or activities.

Nevertheless, there are reasons for people to consider that Salafi educational institutions tend to be exclusive. A survey by PPIM (2017) showed that 41% of Salafi educational institution do not adopt national curriculum. The consequence is that the students could not attend national examination. This shows that there is some resistance to government policies in education. If a *santri* (*pesantren* student) wants to obtain formal education, the *santri* must get their education from outside the *pesantren*.

One example is Ma'had Bina Madani in Bogor that gives emphasis on memorization of all 30 chapters of the holy Qur'an for junior secondary school students and a good command of Salafi books for senior secondary school students. Ma'had Bina Madani does not adopt national curriculum so that their teaching and learning activities follow the local curriculum of the *pesantren*.

Further, of the 39 *pesantren*, there is one *pesantren* that tend to be exclusive, i.e. *Pesantren* Ibnu Mas'ud in Bogor. This *pesantren* is now shut down by the local government of Bogor based on community demand. On 17 August 2017, news broke that *Pesantren* Ibnu Mas'ud burned down some red-and-white decorative banners. According to the local community, the *pesantren* has caused apprehension among the community because it is very private and closed itself from the surroundings.

Because of their very closed and private nature, the *pesantren* Ibnu Mas'ud was associated with terrorist network. One of the founders of the *pesantren*, Ibnu Sulaiman, is now serving time in Correctional Facility of Nusa Kambangan because he was implicated in Cimanggis Bombing. Furthermore, some of the *santri* in the *pesantren* are children of terrorist prisoners. The *pesantren* uses the curriculum from neither Ministry of Education and Culture nor Ministry of Religious Affairs, despite the fact that they still teach general lessons such as math and physics.

<sup>2</sup> The Salafi lifestyle prioritizes modesty and distances oneself from worldly pursuits. This is based on the idea of Salaf which means purification of the teachings of the Prophet/Rasulullah. In dressing, for example, the Salaf women wear face veil while the men wear robes to the length just above their ankles.

## Recommendations

### Ministry of Religious Affairs

- To take follow up actions on the database of Salafism by updating the data, particularly about educational institutions, for institutions that follow and do not follow the national curriculum.
- Together with Ministry of Education and Culture to have periodical dialogue with Salafi educational institutions that withdraw from the community in order to provide the required support to those institutions.
- Together with Ministry of Education and Culture to develop and incorporate topics on nationalism that can be put into practice (and structured) into the curriculum used by the *pesantren*.

### Ministry of Education and Culture

- The ministry to actively organize equalization programs of package A, B, and C for Salafi educational institutions that do not adopt national curriculum.
- Together with Ministry of Religious Affairs to have periodical dialogue with Salafi educational institutions that withdraw from the community in order to provide the required support to those institutions.
- Together with Ministry of Religious Affairs to develop and incorporate topics on nationalism that can be put into practice (and structured) into the curriculum used by *pesantren*.

## About PPIM UIN

Centre for Islamic and Community Studies (PPIM/*Pusat Pengkajian Islam dan Masyarakat*) is an autonomous research institution in UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta. Today PPIM is a strategic, university-based study centre in Indonesia that has experience in religious and social studies with extensive publication and network, domestically and internationally.

## About the Research on 'Database of Salafism in Indonesia'

PPIM UIN Jakarta conducted a study on "Database of Salafism in Indonesia: Actors, Institutions, and Networks" that investigates the actors, the *pesantren* and other institutions adhering to the Salafi school of thought in 13 provinces in Indonesia i.e. : Jakarta, Banten (Tangerang and Pandeglang), West Java (Bekasi, Bogor, Bandung, Tasikmalaya, Cirebon, and Indramayu), Central Java (Temanggung and Surakarta), Yogyakarta, East Java (Surabaya and Lamongan), NTB (Mataram, Lombok Barat, Lombok Timur, and Bima), South Sulawesi (Makassar), Riau (Pekanbaru), Riau Islands (Batam), Kalimantan (Banjarmasin and Martapura), Maluku (Ambon), and Aceh (Banda Aceh).

The areas were selected based on findings from previous research which indicated that the growth of Salafi movement in those provinces was quite significant compared to other regions. Data collection was carried out for 2 months (15 August to 15 October 2017) by involving 15 researchers and 25 assistant researchers.



**Enhancing the Role of Religious Education in  
Countering Violent Extremism in Indonesia**

Gedung PPIM UIN Jakarta,  
Jalan Kertamukti No. 5, Ciputat Timur, Tangerang Selatan, Banten 15419 Indonesia  
Tel: +62 21 7499272 | Fax: +62 21 7408633 | E-mail: [pmu.convey@gmail.com](mailto:pmu.convey@gmail.com) | Website: <https://conveyindonesia.com>

