

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

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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.

Economic Empowerment for Youth and Countering Violent Extremism in Indonesia

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Problem Statement

This policy brief examines the stories of former terrorists and combatants who have transformed themselves into community leaders and have encouraged hundreds of youths and former terrorists across Indonesia to leave their violent experiences behind. Now they are committed to building peaceful and productive communities. Supports from the Counter Terrorism National Agency (BNPT), the Ministry of Social Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, local governments and stakeholders both in district and provincial levels have instilled confidence in them. However, some local governments and communities tend to be apathetic by not engaging nor integrating them into their policies in constructing a peaceful, strong and productive young community. The prevention of security threats involving youth are also urgently required at the Southeast Asian level, especially along the border areas of Indonesia, Malaysia and Philippines.

Introduction

The nexus between economic development and countering violent extremism is widely agreed by analysts. The security-development relationship is “especially evident when looking beyond the traditional interpretation of national security to human security, which includes environmental, economic, health, and crime-related threats.”¹ This brief presents the lessons learned from youths on how economic empowerment has prevented them from becoming involved in religious violent extremism.

Ali Fauzi (born in Lamongan, November 15th, 1971), Arifudin Lako aka Brur (born in Poso, September 20th, 1978), and Khairul Ghazali (born in Medan, April 29th, 1965) are three former terrorists who have gone through

self-transformation in various ways around 2006 and 2010, and now actively involved in the economic empowerment programs for youth and children of former terrorists. In addition, Widodo (born in Semarang, July 10th, 1986), who is not a former terrorist detainee, now occupied as a manager of Dapoer Bistik Solo while also assisting and guiding young former terrorist detainees in entrepreneurship. Although they do not fulfil the criteria of youths by the United Nations (UN) and Indonesian Law No. 40/2009, they have been inspiring, encouraging, and transforming hundreds of youths to stay clear of terrorism and radicalism as well as building confidence in entrepreneurship.

John Horgan argues that terrorists can effectively transform in prison and after released.² A persuasive and dialogical approach has opened their hearts and minds to reintegration. This is a different experience from the teaching of “anti *thaghut* (un-Islamic) government”, which considers Indonesian government comprises infidels - a doctrine they had from terrorist groups. The transformation of former terrorists strengthened with additional supports and assistances from economic empowerment programs, life skill programs, and start-up business funds. Horgan argues that countering terrorism strategies demand comprehensive approaches to incorporating state and non-state actors. He states: “No country has ever succeeded in defeating terrorism, and that will not change. Terrorism remains a strategy, attractive to a variety of disenfranchised actors, groups, and movements who decide violence is the only appropriate response for exerting social and political control.”³ Perpetrators of terrorist attacks are varied and need different approaches. Horgan continues: “the composition of terrorist groups is remarkable for its diversity. Those involved

1 Eelco Kessels and Christina Nembr, “Countering Violent Extremism and Development Assistance: Identifying Synergies, Obstacles, and Opportunities,” Policy Brief, February 2016, Global Center on Cooperative Security. Accessed on January 04, 2018 from <http://www.globalcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/February-2016-CVE-and-Development-policy-brief.pdf>.

2 John Horgan, “Deradicalization or disengagement? A Process in Need of Clarity and a Counterterrorism Initiative in Need of Evaluation,” *International Journal of Social Psychology*, Vol. 24, Issue 2, 2009.

3 John Horgan, “Psychology of Terrorism: Introduction to the Special Issue,” *American Psychologist*, Vol. 72, No. 3, 2017, p. 203.

in terrorism can be men, women, and even children who engage in different ways, via multiple pathways, and whose subsequent encounters and experiences differ significantly from each other's."⁴

In line with Horgan's arguments on disengagement, Julie Chernov Hwang interviewed more than fifty former terrorist detainees and former combatants in Indonesia, including Fauzi and Brur. Hwang argues that the "psychological processes ... propel individual militants to turn away from violence."⁵ Hwang believes that Fauzi, Brur, and Ghazali have strong individual reasons through religion, family, and social interaction in prison, and after prison, to transform and committed to preserving peace, socio-economic work, and education. By quoting Horgan, Chernov Hwang, Panggabean and Fauzi argue that "an individual may disengage psychologically from violence due to feelings of disillusionment over tactics, strategy, or ideology; an inability to reconcile the disconnect between the fantasy and reality of being involved in a terrorist group; burnout; or changing priorities."⁶ This is how former terrorists and combatants find ways to change.

Fauzi, Lako, Ghazali and Widodo have strong leadership roles and influence in their communities. They have established social foundations to accommodate former terrorists, and their families nurture them with good lessons, teachings, economic skills training, and assistances in building more sustainable entrepreneurship. Besides their independent and creative initiatives in building strong community, they also gained wide supports from local communities and governments. Their critique of, and feedback on the prevention of terrorism are useful in

making a more comprehensive and effective policy by involving more stakeholders.

This policy brief is developed from stories in Lamongan, Poso and Medan, where hundreds of young, former terrorists are committed to leaving their violent jihadist circles. It analyses their views on strategic issues related to economic development for youth and how it is urgent to prevent and counter terrorism in Indonesia. It is argued that cooperation among the central and local governments, ministries, religious organizations and business people are significantly needed to ensure the effectiveness of countering terrorism and violent extremism.

Methodology

This brief is based on in-depth interviews with almost one hundred respondents in five provinces of Indonesia who are former terrorists, former terrorist detainees, former combatants, government officers, civil society leaders, college students, members of religious organizations, and business people. The study was conducted in Lamongan, East Java; Poso, Central Sulawesi; Medan, North Sumatra; Solo, Central Java, and Nunukan, North Kalimantan starting from August 15, 2017 to January 29, 2018.

Intolerance, Radicalism, and Terrorism

The UN limits the category of youth between 15 and 24 years old. This is different from Indonesian Law No. 40/2009, which states that a youth is an "Indonesian citizen aged between 16-30 years old" (BPS 2015). The number of Indonesian youths is approximately 65 million, or about 25% of the total population. The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) states that Asian-Pacific youth comprises about 750 million

⁴ Ibid., p. 200.

⁵ Julie Chernov Hwang, *Why Terrorists Quits: The Disengagement of Indonesian Jihadists*, Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2018; Julie Chernov Hwang, "The Disengagement of Indonesian Jihadists: Understanding the Pathways," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 29, Issue 2, 2017.

⁶ Julie Chernov Hwang, Rizal Panggabean, and Ihsan Ali Fauzi, "The Disengagement of Jihadis in Poso, Indonesia," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 53, 2013, p. 755.

people, or 60% of total global youth.⁷

Indonesian and Asian-Pacific youth greatly influence global youth. The radicalization and terrorism of youth in this region can affect the youth of Europe, Middle East or Africa. Indonesian youths' level of intolerance and radicalism, especially students at schools and universities, is alarming. The 2017 National Survey on Religiosity at Schools and Universities in Indonesia found that 23.35% students and college students said "terrorism acts such as suicide bombing is allowed in Islam," and 37.71% of them regarded "Jihad as an Islamic value targeted at non-Muslims."⁸ 43.46% respondents argued that the Indonesian economy was bad, and 52.29% said that the gap between the poor and rich is very bad. The intolerant and radical views of Indonesian youth, and their doubts about the Indonesian economy have become the potential targets of terrorist and radical groups.

The Global Youth Wellbeing Index 2017 concluded that Indonesian youth have limited economic opportunity – they are ranked in the bottom three in the Asia-Pacific. Indonesian youths are very strong in terms of "Citizen Participation" (ranked number 2), just below the youth of Australia (ranked number 1). Yet Indonesian youth also is apparently weak in gender equality and ICT. The socioeconomic and political participation of Indonesian youth provides hope and power to prevent and counter violent extremism. Fauzi, Brur, Ghazali and Widodo lead youth community movements in entrepreneurship and strengthen their economic skills. Brur even initiated an interfaith youth community to maintain permanent peace in Poso.

Economic Programs

The government and civil society provide economic programstoyouthacrossIndonesia.

⁷ "Youth in Asia Pacific," accessed on February 7th, 2018 from <http://www.unescap.org/resources/youth-asia-pacific>.

⁸ "Fire on Chaff: Study on Religiosity within Gen Z," National Survey on Religious Attitudes in High Schools and Universities in Indonesia in 2017 by PPIM UIN Jakarta

These include economic development opportunities for youth to counter violent extremism. The BNPT dominates the program, followed by the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Cooperatives and Small and Medium Enterprises, and other ministries and departments. A small number of local business people have joined to support former terrorist youth to reintegrate into the community by encouraging them to work at their companies or join their networks to build strong and independent young entrepreneurs.

BNPT has managed to economically many former terrorists. Ali Fauzi, a former instructor of the Mindanao Mujahidin camp, established the Institute of Peace Circle (YLP, Yayasan Lingkar Perdamaian) in August 2015, which has brought together more than fifty former terrorists and combatants. BNPT assisted Ali Fauzi by allocating some programs for small business start-ups, providing life skills training like breeding cows, cooking, agriculture and other skills to help them integrate into society. The Ministry of Social Affairs also provided a small fund to support former terrorists with their entrepreneurship activities. Some members of YLP confirmed that the support of the economic program from BNPT, the government and the business communities, fostered in increasing their confidence to continue their life, leaving their violent jihadism in the past. They also refused to rejoin terrorist group including ISIS, when other members of the group approached and persuaded them. Ali Fauzi realized that his effort is positive not only for the community of former terrorists in Lamongan, but also for other former terrorists across Indonesia. Many former combatants and terrorists personally contacted him to get advice on how to leave their violent activities behind.

In addition, Khairul Ghazali, a former terrorist involved in the CIMB Bank robbery in Medan, has also transformed himself and now educates many childrens of former terrorists. Ghazali attempted to halt the

development of a new terrorist generation by nurturing children in an inclusive curriculum at school. Ghazali established the Al Hidayah Boarding School, one of the few schools oriented to the rehabilitation of terrorists or students who vulnerable to terrorism. The Al Hidayah School initially received fundings from BNPT to begin teaching about twenty students. Most of them come from terrorist families. Ghazali said: “currently the school [has] run out of funds. The local government and civil society do not care about the school.”⁹ The local government even argues that they know nothing about the Al Hidayah School.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Arifudin Lako aka Brur, a former terrorist from Poso, Central Sulawesi stated that the BNPT’s programs have a minim impact on former combatants in Poso. This is due to the nature of their economic programs which usually short-term and mismanaged. Brur said: “BNPT rarely monitored or evaluated the programs they funded. So many grants conveyed to the wrong groups.”¹⁰

Hasanuddin, director of Amanah foundation of Poso also a former terrorist detainee, agreed to Brur. He said, “it is strategic to appoint former commander of terrorist detainee to lead monitoring and evaluation to BNPT program.”¹¹ Hasanuddin stated that Brur’s initiative at House of Katu community is very positive for former combatants and youth in Poso. Widodo, manager of Dapoer Bistik Solo (DBS) shared different experiences in economic empowerment and entrepreneurship to former terrorist detainees and youth in Solo. Widodo who initiated DBS in 2009 argued that “it is urgent for youth and former terrorist detainees to get a job to reduce negative stigma and to

give them a reintegration spirit to society.”¹² Widodo said Indonesian government have economic policy to CT and CVE less comprehensively and less sustainable.

BNPT, ministries, local governments and other institutions involved in economic programs for the young former terrorists and combatants have to plan, manage and implement the program with long-term sustainability in mind. BNPT has limited funding - it needs support from the local government to ensure the continuation of the program and a wider impact on the community.

A Multi-Stakeholder Approach

The work of Ali Fauzi, Brur and Ghazali needs total support from all stakeholders. BNPT’s effort to support the foundation of the Al Hidayah School in Medan should be followed by local government and civil society supports in North Sumatra as the school is strategic in preventing children and youth from becoming involved in violent extremism and terrorism. In addition, Ali Fauzi’s initiative to build a strong community of former terrorists needs a positive partnership with the local government and religious organizations in Lamongan, East Java. The involvement of all stakeholders will create an effective policy to prevent terrorism in youth. Kessl and Nemr stated: “an integrated approach has the potential to play a stronger role in strengthening community resilience against violent extremism and reducing many of its enabling factors, including relative deprivation and marginalization.”¹³ Integrated regional security partnership urgently needed as terrorism threats to youth in regional level developed.

¹² Widodo, paper presentation at Cisform-PSTPG-PPIM ION-Convey Indonesia Workshop in Yogyakarta, 29 January 2018.

¹³ Eelco Kessels and Christina Nemr, “Countering Violent Extremism and Development Assistance Identifying Synergies, Obstacles, and Opportunities,” Policy Brief, February 2016, Global Center on Cooperative Security. Accessed on January 04, 2018 from <http://www.global-center.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Feb-2016-CVE-and-Development-policy-brief.pdf>.

⁹ Khoirul Ghazali, personal interview in Medan, August 25, 2017.

¹⁰ Arifudin Lako, personal interview in Poso, September 2017.

¹¹ Hasanuddin, personal interview in Poso, 22 January 2018.

A multi-stakeholder approach also has a regional context where youth on the border of Nunukan, North Kalimantan are vulnerable to terrorism and criminal groups. About 70% of detainees in Nunukan were involved in drug-related crimes. Jema'ah Islamiah and the Islamic State also use the border to smuggle weapons from Mindanao to Sabah and Nunukan involving youth as local assistants. Indonesia, the Philippines and Malaysia have to cooperate to prevent weapons smuggling across the region. Interviews with the stakeholders in Nunukan found that Malaysia and Philippines have lost control of security at the border. They allow people to smuggle from and to Indonesia drugs and illegal commodities, including M-16s.

Conclusion and Recommendations

1 The transformation of, and leadership from, former terrorists such as Fauzi, Lako, and Ghazali are urgently needed to integrate the support of policy from the central, provincial and district governments, as well as civil societies and industries.

They have developed centers of education, engagement and creative works for former terrorists and combatants. They have attempted to assist them in transforming from their past violent experiences to peaceful and productive activities.

2 It is recommended, especially to BNPT, Special Detachment 88, Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Cooperatives and Small and Medium Enterprises, Coordinating Ministry for Political, Legal, and Security Affairs, Ministry of Youth and Sport, and Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, and local governments to develop partnerships to support youth and former terrorists and combatants in building economic empowerment programs.

3 In addition, at the ASEAN level, and especially along the border areas of Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines actions are needed to prevent human and weapon smuggling, and to integrate regional policy on youth economic programs to prevent violent extremism and security threats in the region.



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