

# PERSPECTIVE

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## **Islamism and the New Anti-Terrorism Law in Indonesia**

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### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- The Surabaya bombings that took place on May 13, 2018 signaled a change in the nature of terrorist attacks in Indonesia. For the first time, the perpetrators were a whole family including children.
- These bombings hastened Parliament's approval on amendments to the anti-terrorism bill.
- The new anti-terrorism law broadens the definition of terrorism and grants the police more preemptive arrest powers. Nevertheless, many sources of terrorism are still present and have not been addressed.
- The new anti-terrorism law, however, is a significant step in Indonesia's attempts to tackle terrorism.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

In the early morning of 13 May 2018, three churches in Surabaya, the stronghold of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), were bombed. A bombing in Sidoardjo, a small town nearby, soon followed. These terrorist attacks, which resulted in 14 casualties and 40 injuries, differed from those in the past in two ways—the terrorists all belonged to one whole family, involving the wife and the children; and they had a middle class background.

Six members of a Javanese family carried out the Surabaya bombing—the father Dita Oeprijanto (48 years), the mother Puji Kuswati, their two teenage sons (18 and 16 years old) and their two daughters (12 and 9 years old).<sup>1</sup>

There were conflicting reports on Dita. It had been reported in the social media that the family had visited Syria and that they did not socialize with neighbours. This was soon contradicted, and it was revealed that the family was quite sociable and had never visited Syria.<sup>2</sup> In any case, the police report confirmed that Dita was associated with the Jemaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD), a terrorist organization led by Aman Abdurrahman. JAD is linked to Islamic State of Syria and Iraq (ISIS), and Dita was the head of its East Java branch.<sup>3</sup>

On the morning of 13 May, Dita divided his family into three groups: Dita acted alone, his two sons formed a group while his wife with two daughters constituted the third group. They then moved to churches located on three different streets and blew themselves up. These bombings shocked the country since attacks involving woman and very young girls are rare in Indonesian history.

That night, there was another bombing, this time in a housing complex in the neighboring town of Sidoardjo. The perpetrators were also members of one single family. It also had six members—the father Anton Ferdiantoro (47 years), his wife and their four children. The youngest was only 10 years old.<sup>4</sup> What actually happened is still unclear. It was reported that Anton had intended to blow up a certain target but the bomb detonated when he was confronted by the police in the housing complex. The bomb killed his wife and one of his sons. He himself was still alive and intended to detonate another bomb but was killed by the police.<sup>5</sup> The three other sons survived. The police reported that the bombs were similar to those used in the JAD attacks. Anton was also known to be a close friend of Dita Oeprijanto.<sup>6</sup>

Soon after the Surabaya attacks, Radio Republik Indonesia (RRI) interviewed the Communication Head of the Indonesian State intelligence Body (BIN) Wawan Purwanto.<sup>7</sup> Wawan noted that the authorities had known that there would be terrorist attacks on 12 May in West Java. Under existing anti-terrorism laws, the authorities were however unable to make pre-emptive arrests without sufficient evidence.<sup>8</sup> The fact that the police were able to identify the background of the terrorists so soon after the bombings suggests that they had knowledge about the terrorists involved.

Individuals and religious organizations immediately condemned the terrorist attacks in Surabaya.<sup>9</sup> Joko “Jokowi” Widodo immediately condemned this “barbaric act”, and stated firmly that he would pursue the matter to its roots and eliminate the terrorists. He even noted that he would issue a Presidential Decree (Perppu) if the parliament did not amend the existing anti-terrorist law soon.<sup>10</sup>

Prabowo Subianto, the Chairman of Gerindra, the largest opposition party, also expressed sympathy with the victims and condemned “any form of terrorism”<sup>11</sup>. His deputy cum deputy Speaker of the House, Fadli Zon, deplored the “barbaric and cowardly act” in his twitter, but at the same time wrote critically of the government: “Generally terrorist attacks take place in a country where the government is weak, its leaders easily swayed, a lot of poor people and the [income] gap and injustice are apparent.”<sup>12</sup>

On 16 May 2018, a few days after the Surabaya bombings, five terrorists attacked the police station in Pekanbaru in the Riau province. One killed a policeman with his car, while four attacked policemen on duty with *parangs*. All were eventually killed by the police.<sup>13</sup> It is believed that those attackers were also members of JAD.<sup>14</sup>

In fact, on 9 May prior to these terrorist attacks, a riot occurred in the detention camp in Depok, near Jakarta, which resulted in the death of five policemen and one detainee. The camp was where all Islamic radicals who had been found guilty were detained.<sup>15</sup>

## **A NEW LAW IS PASSED**

As early as February 2016, the Jokowi administration had submitted an anti-terrorist draft law to Parliament (DPR) which had shown itself reluctant to pass the bill despite various terrorist attacks occurring in the country. The legislators had been concerned about the implications of the proposed law on basic human rights. Only after the Surabaya bombings did Parliament hasten deliberations and eventually passed it into law on 25 May 2018.

Under this new law, any behavior that threatens security is considered terrorism.<sup>16</sup> The Indonesian authorities now have the right to detain any person suspected of planning an attack for 21 days without charge, up from seven days previously. Once more definitive evidence is collected; detention is extended to between 180 days and 290 days for the police to prepare the court case. The new law also states that any person who is a member of a group that has been declared by a court to be a terrorist organization may face a jail term of two to seven years.<sup>17</sup>

The new law also considers the military part of the country’s anti-terrorism force, but it is allowed to participate in anti-terrorist activities only when requested to do so by the police force and with the approval of the President. At the same time, the police force has immediately established its own anti-terrorist action group.

The new law gives much greater power to the police, and many are afraid that this power may be abused. Others fear a return of the military to power. The government noted that the power of the police and the military was still quite limited and that the aim still to fight terrorism.<sup>18</sup>

On June 2, soon after the passing of the new law, the police discovered bombs and instruments for making bombs on the campus of the University of Riau and arrested three students.<sup>19</sup> Apparently, the students were planning to bomb the regional parliamentary building. The police also discovered that one of the students, ZamZam, is a member of JAD.<sup>20</sup> The bombs seized were identical to those used in the Surabaya attacks.

## **ISLAMIC IDEOLOGY**

Terrorism in Indonesia is a complex issue rooted in the evolution of domestic Islam and in the elite politics of the country.

Islamism<sup>21</sup> established itself in Indonesia after the fall of Suharto. The Islamist organizations included Majelis Mujahiddin Indonesia (MMI), Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI), Front Pembela Islam (FPI), Laskar Jihad, Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) and Forum Umat Islam (FUI). Although not all radical, they have these things in common: they are anti-Democracy, anti-Pancasila and desire to replace Pancasila with “Islam-based rule of Law”.<sup>22</sup>

Some have shown links to international Jihadists involved in terrorist activities since the Bali bombing in 2002. In recent years, they have also been linked to ISIS. Their most “well known” leaders are Abu Bakar Bashir (MMI and JI) and Aman Abdurrahman (JAD). In the past these radical Islamic organizations could freely propagate their version of Islam. Indeed, before December last year, the HTI had been free to spread their conservative/puritan Islamic ideology in secondary schools and universities and had recruited significant numbers of members that way. It claimed having one hundred million members when it was banned.<sup>23</sup>

In his keynote speech given at the conference on “the Religious Authority of the Indonesian Islam”, Professor Amin Abdullah divided Indonesian Islamic organizations into Official Islam and Oppositional Islam.<sup>24</sup> Major Islamic organizations (such as NU and Muhamaddiyah) belong under Official Islam, while the Islamist Islamic organizations mentioned above are classified under Oppositional Islam. The former tends to be “elitist”. The latter is populist and has grassroots support and often control mosques and spread puritan and often radical Islamic doctrine, threatening the mainstream Islam represented by Official Islam.<sup>25</sup>

## **THE RISE OF RADICAL ISLAM**

According to the report made by the Indonesian Intelligent Body (BIN), 39 percent of university students have been exposed to radical Islamic ideology, and some might have been influenced by it.<sup>26</sup> Many young Muslims have in fact been converted to Islamic radicalism. Some even went to Syria to join ISIS.<sup>27</sup>

According to the police report, many Indonesian Muslims who joined ISIS died in the battlefields; some have since joined the Marawi Battle in the Philippines, and a few hundred have returned to Indonesia. Many of these returnees continue to carry out terrorist activities in Indonesia. Some have been arrested and imprisoned, but many are still at large. Before the passing of the new anti-terrorism law, detention beyond seven days without sufficient evidence was not possible.

However, radicals in prison tend also to radicalize other prisoners, and even prison guards. They are apparently even able to keep contact with the outside world, and direct activities from prison.<sup>28</sup> Should this be true, there is a dire need for an overhaul of the prison system.

Anti-government forces have also been cooperating with radical Islamic groups to attack their political rivals in order to gain power eventually.<sup>29</sup> The 2 December 2016 demonstration (the so-called Aksi 212) was a case in point in which the opposition parties worked closely with radical Islam in defeating Basuki Tjahaja Purnama's (Ahok) attempt to retain his governorship. They succeeded.<sup>30</sup> Another example was the meeting between Prabowo/Amien Rais and the fugitive FPI leader Habib Rezieg in Saudi Arabia for the purpose of gathering support for next year's presidential election.<sup>31</sup> This kind of cooperation makes Islamic radicalism acceptable to the general public and hence creates conditions for the development of Islamic radicalism in Indonesia. Moreover, the original source of radicalism and terrorism lies overseas, and is beyond Indonesia's control. ISIS has been considerably weakened in the Middle East and has started to move into Southeast Asia. This poses a significant challenge to the Indonesian government.

In recent years, those involved in terrorist attacks in Indonesia have been members of JAD and they have shown great resourcefulness; they have used cars and motorcycles to carry out their attacks. More worrying, whole families have been recruited into the terrorist network. It also appears that recent terrorist leaders come from the well-educated middle-income group, while their followers are often from the urban masses who are "indigenous" Indonesians and poor. Indonesia after the fall of Suharto has not been able to solve the widening income gap. The poor have become the easy target for recruitment, and the promise of Islamism to resolve problems may have an ideological appeal to them as well.

## **CONCLUSION**

After the Surabaya bombing, particularly after the passing of the new anti-terrorism law, a series of events have shown that the government now has more muscle to deal with terrorist activities. Tito Karnavian, the Indonesian police chief, was reported to have said that since the Surabaya attacks, more than 120 terrorist suspects have been detained, and 17 have been killed. However, one key suspect, Kholid Abu Bakar, is still at large.<sup>32</sup>

Moreover, surveillance teams have now doubled in number and the police at the provincial level have set up joint teams with the military, intelligence and para-military police. It was also reported that on 22 June, the head of JAD, Aman Abdurrahman, who had been detained since 2009, had been given the death sentence. The police were also on alert to deal with possible acts of revenge by his followers.

Be that as it may, Islamists are still growing in number. Some may join the terrorists or become their sympathizers. Islamism appears to have become an attractive ideology for many young Indonesians.<sup>33</sup> The gap between the haves and the have-nots has provided fertile ground for Islamists to recruit members from. Islamism is not necessarily violent, but many radical groupings have derived from it. Professor Amin Abdullah noted that Official Islam should provide effective leaders at the grassroots in order to counter Oppositional Islam. NU and Muhammadiyah, however, remain dominant in Indonesian society even if their following has been somewhat eroded by Islamism.

The Indonesian government needs to collaborate with moderate Muslim organizations to stop the spread of Islamism, reform the prison system, and co-operate with foreign governments in their anti-terrorist efforts.

The new anti-terrorism law is an important step taken to deal with terrorists in Indonesia. Without it, terrorism is bound to make further inroads.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ri9\\_WfkYu1Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ri9_WfkYu1Y) (Accessed 5/7/2018).

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.abc.net.au/indonesian/2018-05-15/keluarga-pembom-bunuh-diri-di-surabaya-adalah-warga-biasa/9762180> (Accessed 6/7/2018).

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/indonesia/live/indonesia-44098112> (Accessed 6/7/2018).

<sup>4</sup> <https://news.detik.com/berita/4018937/ini-identitas-5-anggota-keluarga-anton-teroris-rusun-sidoarjo> (Accessed 6/7/2018).

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.tribunnews.com/nasional/2018/05/14/berniat-serang-sejumlah-tempat-polisi-tangkap-7-terduga-teroris-di-sidoarjo-dan-surabaya> (Accessed 9/7/2018).

<sup>6</sup> <http://jatim.tribunnews.com/2018/05/14/terungkap-bom-yang-diledakkan-di-surabaya-dan-sidoarjo-ternyata-sama-dan-andalan-teroris-isis>; <http://www.bbc.com/indonesia/live/indonesia-44098112> (Accessed 6/7/2018)

<sup>7</sup> Radio Republik Indonesia (RRI), 13 May 2018.

<sup>8</sup> <https://kumparan.com/@kumparannews/bin-mengaku-sulit-cegah-aksi-teroris-dengan-aturan-saat-ini> (Accessed 8/7/2018).

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/indonesia/indonesia-44108670> (Accessed 5/7/2018);

<http://www.bbc.com/indonesia/indonesia-44098394> (Accessed 5/7/2018).

<sup>10</sup> <https://news.detik.com/berita/d-4021036/jokowi-akan-keluarkan-perppu-teroris-hnw-jangan-mengancam> (Accessed 6/7/2018).

<sup>11</sup> <https://news.detik.com/berita/d-4018428/prabowo-kutuk-keras-teror-bom-gereja-di-surabaya-2022100024.1411143038> (Accessed 5/7/2018).

<sup>12</sup> The twitter was in Indonesian. The translation is mine. See <http://www.tribunnews.com/nasional/2018/05/13/ledakan-bom-di-surabaya-fadli-zon-sebut-teroris-berkembang-di-negara-yang-lemah-pemimpinnya> (Accessed 5/7/2018)

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.pikiran-rakyat.com/nasional/2018/05/16/kronologi-polisi-tembak-mati-4-teroris-di-mapolda-riau-424461> (Accessed 6/7/2018).

<sup>14</sup> <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2018/05/16/15044791/polri-cek-keterkaitan-penyerang-mapolda-riau-dengan-jad> (Accessed 6/7/2018).

<sup>15</sup> <https://nusantaranews.co/markas-pasukan-elit-kepolisian-kebobolan-jadi-tamparan-keras-buat-brimob-densus-88-dan-polri/>; <https://en.tempo.co/read/news/2018/05/15/314918466/Bitter-Lesson-from-Kelapa-Dua> (Accessed 6/7/2018).

<sup>16</sup> For the full text of the new anti-terrorism law, see <https://kumparan.com/@kumparannews/isi-lengkap-uu-antiterorisme> (Accessed 8/7/2018); for some of the important points, see <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2018/05/26/10190871/pasal-pasal-penting-yang-perlu-anda-tahu-dalam-uu-antiterorisme?page=all> (Accessed 8/7/2018); for a summary in English, see Wahyudi Soeriaadmadja, "Jakarta gives Police more power against terror suspect", *Straits Times*, 26 May 2018.

<sup>17</sup> Wahyudi, *ibid*.

<sup>18</sup> <https://nasional.tempo.co/read/879115/pemerintah-menjamin-revisi-uu-anti-teroris-tak-langgar-ham> (Accessed 8/7/2018).

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.antaranews.com/berita/715689/tersangka-teroris-zamzam-kenal-penyerang-polda-riau> (Accessed 8/7/2018).

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.beritasatu.com/nasional/495359-terduga-teroris-di-kampus-universitas-riau-kelompok-jad.html> (Accessed 8/7/2018).

<sup>21</sup> Islamism refers to “those movement that have a conception of Islam as a political system and strive to establish a Islamic state.” See Martin van Bruinessen, eds. *Contemporary Development in Indonesian Islam: Explaining the “Conservative Turn”*, Singapore: ISEAS, 2013, p.17.

<sup>22</sup> For a good review of the radical Islamic movement in Indonesia, see Bruinessen, eds. *Contemporary Development in Indonesian Islam*, especially chapters 1 and 2.

<sup>23</sup> On the HTI, see “Bubar sebelum Makar”, *Tempo*, 21 May 2017, pp.30-40.

<sup>24</sup> M. Amin Abdullah, “Religious Authority in Indonesian Islam: Main Stream Organizations under Threats?” Keynote speech at the Conference on “Religious Authority in Indonesian Islam: Contestation, Pluralization and New Actions,” held on 3-4 July 2018, ISEAS Yusof Ishak Institute.

<sup>25</sup> Amin Abdullah, *ibid.* “Elitist” may not be a proper term as NU and Mommadiyah are mass organizations, and their pesantrens are also for the masses.

<sup>26</sup> <https://nasional.sindonews.com/read/1301619/14/bin-39-persen-mahasiswa-terpengaruh-paham-radikal-1524924594> (Accessed 8/7/2018).

<sup>27</sup> <http://aceh.tribunnews.com/2017/09/19/ini-jumlah-warga-indonesia-yang-bergabung-dengan-isis> (Accessed 9/7/2018).

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.matamatapolitik.com/atur-serangan-jakarta-dari-penjara-aman-abdurrahman-dihukum-mati/> (Accessed 9/7/2018).

<sup>29</sup> Leo Suryadinata, “Indonesian Ideological War”, *Straits Times*, 2 December 2017.

<sup>30</sup> <http://indonesiaatmelbourne.unimelb.edu.au/bukan-sekedar-ahok-menjelaskan-aksi-massa-pada-2-desember/> (Accessed 11/7/2018).

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.viva.co.id/berita/nasional/1042230-pa-212-ungkap-isi-pertemuan-amien-prabowo-dan-habib-rizieq> (Accessed 10/7/2018).

<sup>32</sup> <https://af.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idAFKBN1JO1RN> (Accessed 6/7/2018)

<sup>33</sup> Leo Suryadinata, “Pancasila and the Challenge of Political Islam: Past and Present”, *Trends in Southeast Asia*, no.14 (2018).

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