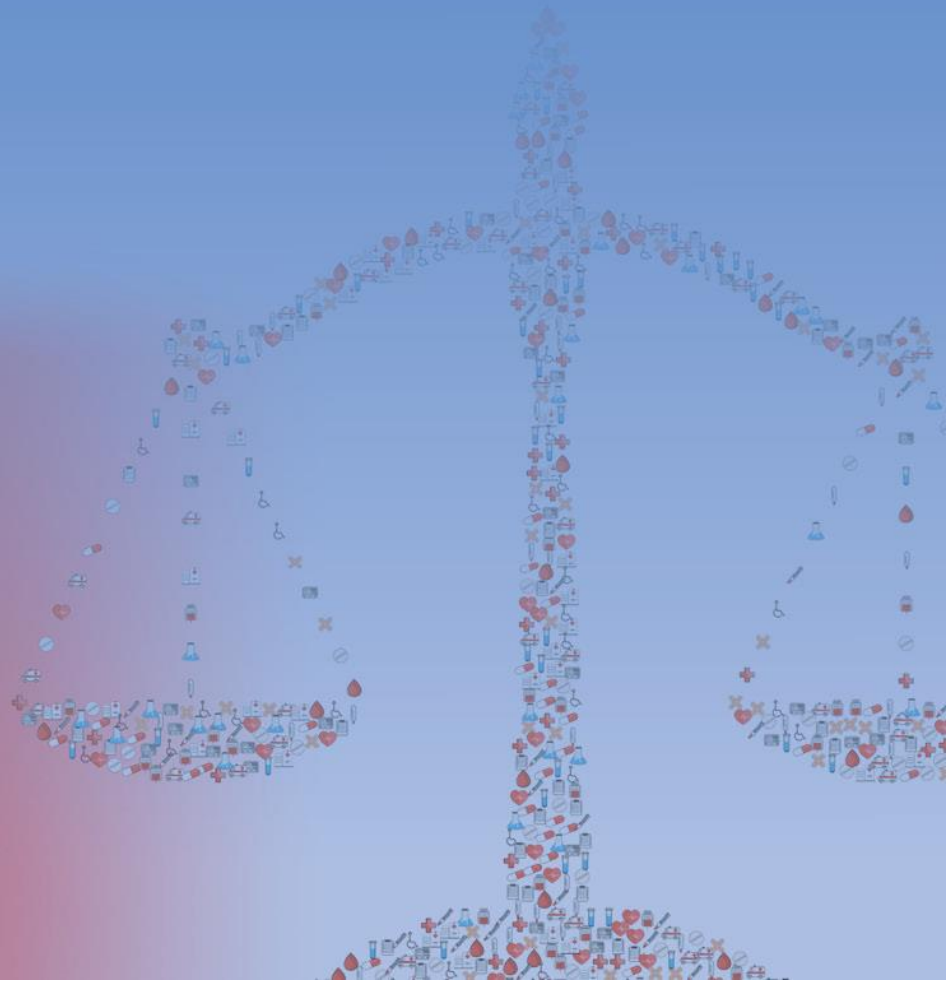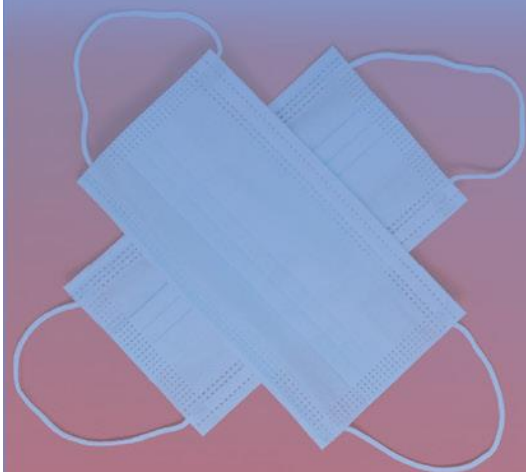# UNODC
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

Adjustment and Resilience

Preventing Violent Extremism in Indonesia during COVID-19 and beyond

February 2021

![GUYUB PROJECT logo]

Summary

The global pandemic has disrupted virtually every aspect of life, and the parallel social and economic adversities have brought favourable conditions for dangerously divisive narratives to prosper. While violent extremists in Indonesia have attempted to capitalise on the upheaval, government security agencies adapted to the short-term obstacles quite effectively. Civil society organisations (CSOs) and grassroots associations engaged with initiatives to prevent/counter violent extremism (P/CVE) have also adjusted activities by distributing humanitarian aid and attempting to move programmes online, some of which may be carried forward to future endeavours.

But maintaining enthusiasm and engagement through videoconferencing is not easy, and the suspension of face-to-face meetings will have eroded initiatives aimed at building trust, which has become fragile during the COVID-19 response. One pertinent lesson from the pandemic is the importance of proactive and inclusive local leadership, which also applies to P/CVE policy and practice. Recent developments suggest a renewed enthusiasm from the Indonesian government to collaborate with civil society on prevention efforts. Moving forward, an effective emphasis would be rebuilding trust through locally led initiatives, which ideally identify context specific drivers of violent extremism, embrace gender perspectives, and work towards sustainably long-term prevention processes.

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Introduction

COVID-19 crept into news-headline prominence slowly at the outset of 2020. By mid-March, the World Health Organisation had declared a global pandemic, nations throughout the world were closing their borders, and life for many was suddenly unrecognisable.

Amid universal uncertainty and crippling pressure on government decision-making, ideological agitators began exploiting fresh opportunities to undermine trust in government authorities. Some sought to cleave social fault lines, while the more extreme threatened to renew terrorist violence. Addressing these developments in extremist activity and preparing for an altered future have not been easy for governments stretched by the demands of the pandemic. Civil society stakeholders have also struggled, with their endeavours hindered or halted by social distancing restrictions.

This report looks at the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on counterterrorism and preventing/countering violent extremism (P/CVE) in Indonesia. It finds that Indonesian security agencies have adapted their operations well despite the trying circumstances. Regarding prevention efforts, crucial personal and community engagement programmes have been put on hold, though many activities have found at least limited success through the normalisation of videoconferencing applications, which may represent a silver lining moving forward. Civil society organisations (CSOs) involved in P/CVE have also been actively organising humanitarian aid to assist the people and communities they engage. This has allowed them to maintain contact and build good will.

The pandemic has demonstrated the difficulty of centrally managing a critical issue across a sprawling archipelago of 34 semi-autonomous provincial administrations, and the levels of government beneath. As with specific responses to regional or even neighbourhood COVID-19 outbreaks, initiatives to prevent violent extremism ideally require locally relevant design and committed community input. State P/CVE strategies have primarily been formulated in Jakarta over the past ten years. However, recent developments suggest greater involvement from regional authorities. Responses to the current pandemic may further highlight the utility of proactive local leadership when faced with pernicious threats.

Women have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The majority of frontline and community health workers are women; while at home, unpaid care, home-schooled children and the burden of sick and/or elderly family members have brought uneven vulnerabilities and hardship, compounded further by surging rates of domestic

violence. Given that increased numbers of women in Indonesia have become actively involved in jihadi militancy over the past five years, gender perspectives must now be a core feature of P/CVE programming, particularly through the pandemic recovery period.

The report begins by taking stock of the ways in which terrorist organisations and extremists in different parts of the world have sought to advance their goals during the pandemic. It then considers the broad impact of the COVID-19 crisis on counterterrorism and prevention programming, before narrowing focus to look at the activities of violent extremists in Indonesia during this period. The next section examines the adjustments made by Indonesia's counterterrorism and P/CVE stakeholders throughout the pandemic's disruptions and associated restrictions. This includes developments in law enforcement, the criminal justice and prison systems, recent and ongoing policy development, and community engagement endeavour. Concluding discussion highlights the utility of localising approaches to prevention, and offers constructive lessons from this challenging period.

Methodology

The research for this report is based on detailed consultative meetings with 25-30 stakeholders (men and women in roughly equal measure). These include civil society practitioners from ten organisations involved in P/CVE projects, as well as Indonesian government officials from the National Police, Directorate General of Corrections, Ministry of Religious Affairs, and the Witness and Victim Protection Agency.

Consultative discussions were also held with relevant national and international experts, including representatives of international organisations, including the World Health Organisation, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the International Committee for the Red Cross. Discussions were conducted using phone and video call platforms between July and December 2020. The report also draws upon secondary sources, including media reports, policy papers, journal articles, websites and publicly available documents outlining legislation and regulation passed by the Indonesian government.

Analysis was informed by a human security approach, as noted in General Assembly resolution 66/290, which calls for people-centred responses to cross-cutting challenges.[1] Recognising that problems are context specific, human security involves the development of interconnected networks of diverse stakeholders, from expertise across the United Nations to the comparative advantages and pertinent knowledge of community organisations. Prevention-oriented actions are participatory processes which support local ownership in defining the issues and implementing suitably sustainable solutions.

Human security acknowledges that root causes vary considerably and remain grounded in local realities, which is distinctly relevant to the prevention of violent extremism and terrorism. Risk factors for involvement in terrorism are uncertain and complex, involving varied combinations of personal, relational, ideological and structural conditions. The best way for prevention programming to target environmental drivers without slipping into generality is to be as geographically specific as possible, especially in a nation the size of Indonesia. Effective initiatives should be community built, with top-down assurance and bottom-up management.

This report is grounded within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Agenda 2030, with particular reference to SDG 5: Gender Equality; SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions and SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals. The report is also oriented by the UN Global Counter Terrorism Strategy and the United Nations Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism.

[1] United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, 'Human Security Handbook: An integrated approach for the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals and the priority areas of the international community and the United Nations system', *UN Human Security Unit* (January 2016)

Exploiting Uncertainty

The pandemic has presented both opportunities and obstacles for terrorist organisations and their supporters. Several attacks have been staged, but the primary strategic development has been the emergence of fresh narratives for recruitment propaganda and societal division.

Extremists from a range of ideological positions exploited COVID-19 speculation during the first several weeks of the global pandemic. The Islamic State in Iraq and Levant (ISIL) focused early attention on China, claiming the outbreak was punishment for the government's treatment of the Uighur population. Narratives then shifted with the pandemic, as ISIL asserted the virus was a manifestation of God's "painful torment" with allegedly idolatrous nations being a primary target.[2]

Meanwhile, the increasingly complex international spectrum of white supremacists and far-right extremists injected misinformation and conspiracy theories into public debate. This included blaming a range of factors for the pandemic, from globalisation to religious groups – and even emerging technology infrastructure.[3] Various organisations and individuals apparently sensed an opportunity to conduct attacks, either because security services may have been distracted, or the particular harm an operation would inflict during such a delicate period. In the United States, law enforcement agencies became concerned that Neo-Nazis planned to intentionally spread the virus through bodily fluids.[4] One far-right extremist was shot dead while allegedly planning to bomb a hospital in the US state of Missouri.[5]

Police in Germany and Spain arrested suspected ISIL operatives before they could act, while lone-actor knife and vehicle assaults in the UK and France were also linked to ISIL-

[2] Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi, 'Islamic State Editorial on the Coronavirus Pandemic' (19/3/20). Available at http://www.aymennjawad.org/2020/03/islamic-state-editorial-on-the-coronavirus (accessed 6-7-20)

[3] Anti-Defamation League, 'White Supremacists Respond to Coronavirus With Violent Plots and Online Hate', (26/3/20). Available at https://www.adl.org/blog/white-supremacists-respond-to-coronavirus-with-violent-plots-and-online-hate (accessed 6-7-20)

[4] Josh Margolin, 'White supremacists encouraging their members to spread coronavirus to cops, Jews, FBI says', *ABC News* (24/3/20). Available at https://abcnews.go.com/US/white-supremacists-encouraging-members-spread-coronavirus-cops-jews/story?id=69737522 (accessed 6/7/20)

[5] Adam Goldman, 'Man Suspected of Planning Attack on Missouri Hospital Is Killed, Officials Say', *New York Times* (25/3/20). Available at https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/25/us/politics/coronavirus-fbi-shooting.html (accessed 6-7-20)

inspired terrorists.[6] ISIL militants looked to ramp up violence in Iraq; and in Sub-Saharan Africa, different armed jihadi groups killed dozens of soldiers and civilians in Mali, Mozambique, and the Lake Chad border region.[7] However, the extent to which each plan, development, or operation was directly motivated or facilitated by the pandemic remains largely unclear.[8]

Greater clarity surrounds the intent to incite division through online rhetoric and COVID-19 commentary. Extremist provocateurs and recruiters have sought to exploit the uncertainty surrounding the pandemic, while likely benefitting from captive online audiences as people were confined to their homes.[9] Analysts highlighted the particular dangers of 'grey-area material', which may not appear sufficiently dangerous to censor on its own but still manages to plant seeds of doubt, or cryptically promotes more overt extremist narratives.[10]

Other terrorist organisations preferred a direct approach. In a six-page posting on COVID-19, al-Qaeda invited "people of the Western World" to reflect on the "vulnerability of your material strength", while asserting their governments had "spread wars, destruction, and famines … stolen the resources and wealth of poor nations and … propped up despotic rulers all over Muslim lands".[11]

Some terrorist organisations aimed to exploit economic hardship associated with the pandemic in order to undermine trust in national governments, many of whom are struggling to cope with the demands of the response. When state institutions fall short of providing adequate social services, this provides a vacuum for non-state actors to fill,

[6] Robin Simcox, 'Terrorism After the Pandemic', *Foreign Policy* (2/7/20). Available at https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/07/02/terrorism-after-the-pandemic/ (accessed 6-7-20)

[7] Michael Knights, 'How the Islamic State Feeds on Coronavirus', *Politico* (8/4/20). Available at https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2020/04/08/how-the-islamic-state-feeds-on-coronavirus-175192 (accessed 6/7/20); Emilia Columbo & Marielle Harris, 'Extremist Groups Stepping up Operations during the Covid-19 Outbreak in Sub-Saharan Africa', *CSIS Commentary* (1/5/20). Available at https://www.csis.org/analysis/extremist-groups-stepping-operations-during-covid-19-outbreak-sub-saharan-africa (accessed 6/7/20); BBC News, 'Mozambique: Is Cabo Delgado the latest Islamic State outpost?' (5/5/20). Available at https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-52532741 (accessed 6/7/20)

[8] UNCTED, 'The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on terrorism, counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism' (June 2020) p 3

[9] Gordon Corera, 'Coronavirus: Police warn of lockdown radicalisation threat', *BBC News* (10/6/20). Available at https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-52997441 (accessed 6/7/20)

[10] Nikita Malik, Self-isolation Might Stop Coronavirus, but It Will Speed the Spread of Extremism', *Foreign Policy* (26/3/20). Available at https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/03/26/self-isolation-might-stop-coronavirus-but-spread-extremism/ (accessed 6/7/20)

[11] See: https://twitter.com/Dr_E_Kendall/status/1245091128833183745 (accessed 6-7-20)

either through outright mobilisation of assistance, or the collection and strategic distribution of charitable donations.[12] Indeed, ideological militants operating in under-governed pockets of the Sahel are also thought to be exploiting opportunities to win hearts and minds.[13]

However, observers have also been sceptical of claims made by certain organisations regarding their capacity to deliver humanitarian or healthcare assistance during the pandemic, or indeed their competency for governance more generally. Images and video of militant groups distributing masks and hand sanitizer generated attention, but such incidents may be largely limited to opportunities for propaganda content creation.[14] To be sure, terrorist organisations themselves have not been spared the disruption and health risks posed by COVID-19, and many will have faced significant obstacles to their intended offline activities in the short-term.[15]

Looking ahead to the mid- to long-term is more concerning. The Soufan Group (an authoritative global security consultancy) has warned that the pandemic will produce a "litany of new grievances", while deepening pre-existing divisions, political polarisation and xenophobia.[16] Structural and economic inequalities are both exacerbating the impact of the virus among the less fortunate, and set to worsen in the pandemic's wake.[17] Factors that make one vulnerable for recruitment efforts are many, varied and complex; but it does appear the coming years will provide hospitable environments for the proliferation and adoption of extremist ideologies, particularly where trust in political leaders and governance has eroded.

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[12] William Avis, 'The COVID-19 pandemic and response on violent extremist recruitment and radicalisation', *K4D Helpdesk Report* (4/5/20) p 3

[13] Julie Coleman, 'The Impact of Coronavirus on Terrorism in the Sahel', *ICCT* (16/4/20). Available at https://icct.nl/publication/the-impact-of-coronavirus-on-terrorism-in-the-sahel/ (accessed 7/7/20)

[14] Kabir Taneja & Raffaello Pantucci, 'Beware of terrorists offering COVID19 aid', *Observer Research Foundation* (17/4/20). Available at https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/beware-of-terrorists-offering-covid19-aid-64731/ (accessed 6/7/20)

[15] Jessica Davis, 'Terrorism During a Pandemic: Assessing the Threat and Balancing the Hype', Just Security (28/4/20). Available at https://www.justsecurity.org/69895/terrorism-during-a-pandemic-assessing-the-threat-and-balancing-the-hype/ (accessed 6/7/20)

[16] The Soufan Center, 'Intelbrief: The Coronavirus Will Increase Extremism Across the Ideological Spectrum' (18/4/20). Available at https://thesoufancenter.org/intelbrief-the-coronavirus-will-increase-extremism-across-the-ideological-spectrum/ (accessed 7/7/20)

[17] Max Fisher & Emma Bubola, 'As Coronavirus Deepens Inequality, Inequality Worsens Its Spread', *New York Times* (15/3/20). Available at https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/15/world/europe/coronavirus-inequality.html (accessed 7/7/20)

Militants and violent extremists have genuinely sought to exploit the upheavals of 2020, but there is little convincing evidence they have found operational success beyond campaigns of propaganda and disinformation. Moving forward, the significant economic and social challenges facing governments will continue to present circumstances favourable to recruitment, the promotion of disinformation and division. The next section will consider the pandemic's impact on counterterrorism processes, and the prevention programming required to meet these challenges.

Counterterrorism, P/CVE and COVID-19

Movement restrictions have facilitated terrorist control measures, but they run the risk of stoking grievances, while crucial engagement work has been postponed or attempted online. Programming disruptions highlight the importance of empowering local solutions.

With state resources stretched and diverted to the pandemic response in countries throughout the world, observers broached concern that national security safeguards such as counterterrorism activities would be diminished, paving the way for extremists to take advantage.[18] Militaries and security agencies in several nations were tasked with ensuring people observed public health requirements and maintained social distance, which also prompted questions over evolving civil-military relations in some nations.[19]

From an operational counterterrorism perspective, COVID-19 quarantine measures and public check points may have provided unique opportunities in certain contexts for security agencies to monitor and question people, potentially thwarting plots in the short term.[20] The pandemic's travel restrictions and generally increased surveillance have also made life more difficult for would-be terrorists, complicating, postponing or otherwise hindering their plans.[21] At the same time, however, some worry that overly coercive methods may have induced human rights abuses in some situations, potentially

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[18] John Campbell, 'How Jihadi Groups in Africa Will Exploit COVID-19', *Council of Foreign Relations* (3/4/20). Available at https://www.cfr.org/blog/how-jihadi-groups-africa-will-exploit-covid-19 (accessed 8/7/20)

[19] Euan Graham, 'The armed forces and COVID-19', IISS (8/4/20). Available at https://www.iiss.org/blogs/analysis/2020/04/easia-armed-forces-and-covid-19 (accessed 8/7/20)

[20] Raffaello Pantucci, 'Key Questions for Counter-Terrorism Post-COVID-19', *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 12:3 (April 2020) p 4

[21] Sam Mullins, 'Terrorism and COVID-19: Are We Over-Estimating the Threat? Small Wars Journal (26/6/20). Available at https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/terrorism-and-covid-19-are-we-over-estimating-threat (accessed 30/10/20)

exacerbating grievances associated as root causes or triggers of terrorism.[22] Short-term security advantages may have quite different longer-term consequences.

The public health measures that precluded regular face-to-face interactions throughout the world in 2020 have interrupted the progress of more holistic prevention initiatives. Community policing efforts have either been put on hold where mingling in neighbourhoods is not permitted, or the same police resources have been repurposed to manage social distancing measures.[23] Some observers suggest the additional challenges faced by police departments in different nations during the pandemic may have compelled heavy-handed tactics, which could "sour relations" between police and the public, thereby diminishing crucial relationships of trust and channels for information sharing.[24]

As prisons adopted emergency control measures to protect against infection or address outbreaks among inmates, rehabilitation programmes have mostly been suspended.[25] Other P/CVE interventions, such as mentoring and post-prison reintegration engagements, rely on persistent personal contact. Much of this work will have moved online, as practitioners strive to keep in touch regularly with their clients via phone calls and chat apps. Combinations of labour market uncertainty, lockdown anxieties and stalled support services may have forced many initiatives back to where they started.

As online radicalisation has become a distinct focus for concern during the pandemic, agencies and organisations may decide to ramp up so-called 'counter-messaging' campaigns – particularly as they are more conducive to work-from-home scenarios. These initiatives are popular due to their relative ease, although scholars have noted that their impact remains largely unproven.[26] Finding constructive ways of appealing to the

[22] See for example: UNDP, 'Journeys to Extremism in Africa: Drivers, Incentives and the Tipping Point for Recruitment' UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa (2017)

[23] Eric Rosand, Khaild Koser & Lilla Schumicky-Logan, 'Preventing violent extremism during and after the COVID-19 pandemic', *Brookings* (28/4/20). Available at https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2020/04/28/preventing-violent-extremism-during-and-after-the-covid-19-pandemic/ (accessed 8/7/20)

[24] James K. Wither, The COVID19 Pandemic: A Preliminary Assessment of the Impact on Terrorism in Western States', George Marshall European Center for Security Studies Occasional Paper No. 033 (April 2020). Available at https://www.marshallcenter.org/en/publications/occasional-papers/covid-19-pandemic-preliminary-assessment-impact-terrorism-western-states (accessed 8/9/20)

[25] David Helps, 'Covid-19 outbreaks at jails and prisons should make us rethink incarceration', *The Washington Post* (25/6/20). Available at https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2020/06/25/covid-19-outbreaks-jails-prisons-should-make-us-rethink-incarceration/ (accessed 8/7/20)

[26] Eric Rosand & Emily Winterbotham, 'Do counter-narratives actually reduce violent extremism?', *Brookings* (20/3/19). Available at https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2019/03/20/do-counter-narratives-actually-reduce-violent-extremism/ (accessed 8/7/20)

same types of emotions that extremists prey upon through their propaganda is not straightforward.[27] Ideally, online engagements would be combined with offline activities, but this is also easier said than done, especially in the prevailing environment.[28]

Given the uncertainty and anxieties surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, a valuable 'counter-narrative' is simply clear, consistent public communications regarding the virus and government responses. While this has been provided in many jurisdictions, it has not been universal.

Beyond the interim difficulties of lockdowns and physical distancing, P/CVE programming in various nations face the threat of budget cuts, as resources are shifted to areas such as public health.[29] While international donor funding for terrorism prevention programming has been increasing over the past several years, projects often have short timeframes which creates continuity issues, impedes requisite longer term evaluations, and potentially erodes faith in the commitment.[30] COVID-19 is unlikely to disrupt this trend.

Following a survey on the pandemic among 50 NGOs engaged with P/CVE in eight developing countries worldwide, the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF) suggested that donor organisations maintain community engagement through COVID-19 assistance, such as the provision of protective equipment and raising awareness of public health best practices.[31] The authors also recommended that donors begin to focus more on the long-term, by building capacity among local actors to operate independently and sustainably, rather than simply conducting programmes conceptualised elsewhere.[32]

Many of these issues observed at a global level ring true when considering the situation in Indonesia. But before delving into the impact, specific challenges and potential

[27] Christina Nemr, 'Strategies to Counter Terrorist Narratives Are More Confused Than Ever', War on the Rocks (15/3/16), Available at https://warontherocks.com/2016/03/strategies-to-counter-terrorist-narratives-are-more-confused-than-ever/ (accessed 8/7/20)

[28] Nafees Hamid, 'Don't Just Counter-Message; Counter-Engage', *ICCT* (28/11/18). Available at https://icct.nl/publication/dont-just-counter-message-counter-engage/ (accessed 8/7/20)

[29] Andrew Silke, 'COVID-19 and terrorism: assessing the short-and long-term impacts', *Pool Re Solutions* (5/5/20) p 8

[30] Radicalisation Awareness Network, 'Preventing Radicalisation to Terrorism and Violent Extremism: Approaches and Practices', *RAN Collection* (2017) p 149

[31] Eric Rosand, Khakid Koser and Lilla Schumicky-Logan, 'Preventing violent extremism during and after the COVID-19 pandemic', *Brookings* (28/4/20). Available at https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2020/04/28/preventing-violent-extremism-during-and-after-the-covid-19-pandemic/ (accessed 8/7/20)

[32] Ibid.

opportunities for counterterrorism and prevention initiatives in Indonesia, it will be important to look at the activities of violent extremists and their affiliates during the pandemic in Indonesia.

While the nation did not witness a surge in terrorist endeavour, some militants did seek to exploit the situation, while agitators stirred division online. Ongoing disruptions and uncertainty through the recovery stages may prolong the threat.

Ideological Agitators and Violent Extremism conducive to Terrorism in Indonesia during COVID-19

Online activity spiked among affiliates of terrorist organisations in Indonesia, while a stubborn insurgency sparked to life in Central Sulawesi, and crude yet deadly attacks continued targeting law enforcement.

Indonesia has seen waves of terrorist activity since the nation's struggle for independence in the 1940s. The latest iteration is largely associated with the 2010s rise of ISIL, which both injected enthusiasm into a disjointed movement and brought an even more exclusivist brand of violent extremism.

One curious detail of this revitalisation was the attraction of an eschatological or 'end-times' theory, which was a prominent aspect of the Islamic State's narrative in Syria, where believers thought an epic final battle would herald the apocalypse.[33] When the COVID-19 outbreak became a full-blown pandemic, many subscribers to this theory apparently decided that the end had finally begun and chose to stay at home expectantly.[34] This meant that COVID-19 had a dampening effect on terrorist activity among some sections of the pro-ISIL networks.

But while in-person engagement may have subsided, online activity escalated sharply, and a notable feature during the early days of the pandemic was the prevalence of accusation towards China and Chinese people, which ostensibly created rare agreement between pro-ISIL extremists and certain hard-line politico-religious organisations.[35]

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[33] Greg Fealy, 'Apocalyptic Thought, Conspiracism and Jihad in Indonesia', *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 41:1 (2019) pp. 63-85; William McCants, 'How ISIS Got Its Flag', *The Atlantic* (22/9/15). Available at https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/09/isis-flag-apocalypse/406498/ (accessed 7/7/20)

[34] Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict, 'COVID-19 and ISIS in Indonesia', *IPAC Short Briefing No.1* (2/4/20)

[35] The Stabilization Network, 'Indonesia Spot Report: Online Jihadism and COVID-19' (April 2020) p 3

Some of this referenced the Uighur population in China. Other posts focused on the Jokowi government's perceived accommodation of Chinese business interests in Indonesia, particular in the mining sector.[36] Conspiracy theories proliferated through social media with claims of a secretive Chinese infiltration of Indonesia, and Chinese 'spies' set on destabilising the nation, among others.[37]

During Ramadan, Indonesian social media analysts noticed a prominent spike in the frequency of use of the word 'Khilafa' (Caliphate) on mainstream platforms such as Twitter and Instagram. However, there was no evidence this spike was driven by terrorist individuals or networks.[38] Associated rhetoric accused the Indonesian government of mishandling its response to the pandemic and claimed that a caliphate system would provide better healthcare, education and public information. Similar to far-right extremists in other parts of the world, some argued (without supporting evidence) that authoritarian governments were dealing with the COVID-19 outbreak more effectively than democratically elected administrations.

The Indonesian National Police arrested a number of people for spreading falsehoods, though reports suggest that civil society organisations played a significant and systematically important role in unveiling hoaxes as they emerged.[39] One example was a video purporting to show a Chinese man sneaking into the country through an airport in East Java. Fact checkers later found that it was actually a guest worker protesting in fear of repatriation to China after his contract in Indonesia had expired.[40]

Another prominent post from a Facebook group alleged that 19 Indonesian airports had been designated as secret entry points for Chinese immigrants since 2014.[41] A widely shared video from West Sumatra also claimed that local residents had set fire to Chinese mining assets following an official reception for Chinese tourists during Wuhan's COVID-

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[36] IPAC (2/4/20) p 3

[37] Aribowo Sasmito, '[Salah] "Mereka Sudah Mempersiapkan Senjata Tuk Memnatai Pribumi"', *Forum Anti Fitnah Hasut dan Hoax* (9/6/20). Available at https://turnbackhoax.id/2020/06/09/salah-mereka-sudah-mempersiapkan-senjata-tuk-membantai-pribumi/ (accessed 7/7/20)

[38] Phone Interview with Diastika Rahwidiati, Senior Strategic Communications Advisor, Love Franke (July 2020)

[39] See: Masyarakat Anti-Fitnah Indonesia (Mafindo), https://www.facebook.com/groups/fafhh/

[40] Wanda Indana, '[Cek Fakta] Video TKA Tiongkok Tertangkap Masuk Bandara Banyuwangi? Ini Faktanya', medicom.id (28/5/20). Available at https://www.medcom.id/telusur/cek-fakta/aNra1D6K-cek-fakta-video-tka-tiongkok-tertangkap-masuk-bandara-banyuwangi-ini-fak (Accessed 8/7/20)

[41] Aribowo Sasmito, '[Salah] "Terbongkar 19 Bandara Di Indonesia Sebagai Jalan Masuk Emigran China"', *Forum Anti Fitnah Hasut dan Hoax* (10/2/20). Available at https://turnbackhoax.id/2020/02/10/salah-terbongkar-19-bandara-di-indonesia-sebagai-jalan-masuk-emigran-china/?fbclid=IwAR3BWHxoPB5pIFOZ4lE6lIPzRZbYAP6oh9D9Vzgcvi41Agm2b3-OZrOV9Zg (Accessed 8/7/20)

19 outbreak. Footage was in fact spliced together from different, unrelated pre-COVID incidents.[42]

Militancy and Terrorism during the Pandemic

The early and broad fixation of violent extremist groups on China did not translate into physical violence. In August 2020, Indonesian police arrested 17 suspected members of Jemaah Islamiyah, who were accused of plotting to attack Chinese shop owners in West Java.[43] However, the COVID-19 outbreak did catalyse renewed vigour in the tiny insurgency of Mujahidin Indonesia Timor (MIT), which continues to evade capture in the hills of Central Sulawesi.[44] This concerning uptick highlights the group's stubborn resilience following major setbacks in 2016, when a joint police-military operation involving 2,000+ personnel tracked down the group's founding leader.[45]

In April 2020, the armed group waged a mini spree of violence that saw a police officer shot, two local farmers killed (one of whom was decapitated) and two militants shot dead by police.[46] Expert observers believe this increase in activity was a direct result of COVID-19, which MIT considered "an ally in the war against Islam's enemies", as the disease was killing 'non-believers' and weakening the economies of ISIL's adversaries.[47]

While this emboldened enterprise may not have grabbed international headlines, it appeared to provide a boost to Indonesia's extremists. Having experienced communal conflict in the past that attracted ideological militants from across the nation, the small city of Poso has been described as "the symbolic heart of ISIL support in Indonesia" by

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[42] '[Fakta atau Hoaks] Benarkah Ini Video Warga Sumbur yang Usir Turis Cina dan Bakar Perusahaannya Saat Pandemi Covid-19?' Tempo.co (18/5/20). Available at https://cekfakta.tempo.co/fakta/787/fakta-atau-hoaks-benarkah-ini-video-warga-sumbar-yang-usir-turis-cina-dan-bakar-perusahaannya-saat-pandemi-covid-19 (Accessed 8/7/20)

[43] Amy Chew, 'Indonesian terrorists planned to attack shop owners in areas with Chinese communities', *South China Morning Post* (27/8/20). Available at https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3099151/indonesian-terrorists-planned-attack-shop-owners-areas-chinese (Accessed 27/8/20)

[44] Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict, 'COVID-19 and The Mujahidin of Eastern Indonesia (MIT)', *IPAC Short Briefing No.3* (28/4/20)

[45] Zachary Abuza & Alif Satria, 'How Are Indonesia's Terrorist Groups Weathering the Pandemic?', *The Diplomat* (23/6/20). Available at https://thediplomat.com/2020/06/how-are-indonesias-terrorist-groups-weathering-the-pandemic/ (accessed 8/7/20)

[46] Cameron Sumpter & Jordan Newton, 'Flurry of Violence in Poso shows resilient militancy and community support', *Indonesia at Melbourne* (1/5/20). Available at https://indonesiaatmelbourne.unimelb.edu.au/flurry-of-violence-in-poso-shows-resilient-militancy-and-community-support/ (accessed 8/7/20)

[47] IPAC (28/4/20) p 1

the Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict.[48] April's events in and nearby Poso attracted significant attention online.

Pro-ISIL chat groups shared a *nasyid*-accompanied memorial video to one of the diseased MIT members, praising the apparent community support at the funerals for MIT members.[49] Circulating mobile phone footage showed dozens of people lining the streets as the coffins drove to the burial site; some holding ISIL flags, and others raising an index finger in solidarity.[50] Supporters also shared a graphic video allegedly showing the execution of a local farmer who MIT accused of informing law enforcement about their activities.

Terrorist activity in Indonesia since the outbreak of COVID has not been confined to Poso. In June 2020, suspected ISIL supporters conducted two separate attacks on police officers in Kalimantan and Central Java respectively. The first occurred in the very early hours of June 1, when a man allegedly carrying an ISIL flag and a sword entered a police station in a river-bank town of South Kalimantan. The assailant killed one officer and seriously injured another before he was fatally shot near the scene.[51] Three weeks later, the deputy chief of police in Karanganyar regency and his driver were attacked by a man wielding sharp weapons. The pair suffered injuries but survived, while police shot and killed the perpetrator, who was later identified as a former prisoner convicted of terrorism offences.[52]

These incidents may or may not have been facilitated or encouraged by pandemic-related conditions. Nonetheless they certainly represent a continuance of familiar assaults over the past several years. Tactics have generally targeted police in rudimentary but sometimes deadly operations, usually conducted by individuals or small cells who have pledged their support to ISIL.

[48] Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict, 'Indonesia's Lamongan Network: How East Java, Poso and Syria are Linked', *IPAC Report No.18* (15/4/15) p 15

[49] A nasyid (or nasheed) is a piece of a cappella vocal music, popular throughout the Islamic world, but also commonly used to accompany video sequences in ISIL propaganda

[50] The index finder has symbolic meaning to ISIL supporters. See for example: Michael Zelinsky, 'ISIS Sends a Message', Foreign Affairs (3/9/14). Available at https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2014-09-03/isis-sends-message (accessed 9/7/20)

[51] Farouk Arnaz, 'Suspected IS Militants Attack Police Post, Kill Officer in South Kalimantan', *The Jakarta Globe* (2/6/20). Available at https://jakartaglobe.id/news/suspected-is-militants-attack-police-post-kill-officer-in-south-kalimantan (accessed 9/7/20)

[52] Kompas, 'Penyerang Wakapolres Karanganyar Pernah Dipenjara karean Kasus Terorisme', (22/6/20). Available at https://regional.kompas.com/read/2020/06/22/19471061/penyerang-wakapolres-karanganyar-pernah-dipenjara-karena-kasus-terorisme?page=all (accessed 9/7/20)

More broadly, consultations with security officials revealed ongoing concern that ISIL-linked terrorist actors in Indonesia have indeed viewed the pandemic as an opportunity to conduct attacks, on the basis that they perceive their enemies to have been weakened. Some actors have allegedly discussed the potential to weaponise the virus somehow – possibly through infected children.[53] Such threats are likely to be unrealistic and impractical, although at the very least, they reflect a desire to exploit the unique circumstances of the pandemic to pursue terrorist objectives. Any increased enthusiasm for violence among some Indonesian ISIL supporters who manage to avoid arrest presents a serious ongoing concern.[54]

Charity and Exclusive Solidarity

The COVID-19 pandemic may have presented financing opportunities for terrorist organisations in Indonesia, at least in attempts to galvanize their support. Analysts have reported on organisations with charitable status who work to undermine deradicalization and reintegration initiatives for convicted terrorists, for example.[55] A slew of small organisations have emerged in recent years looking to conduct similar work – some with alleged links to al-Qaeda; others to ISIL.[56] In 2020, certain organisations appear to have adjusted their activities to support certain families and boarding schools impacted by the pandemic. While such charitable endeavour may genuinely help people in need, they operate with opposing goals from (and in competition with) state and CSO efforts to prevent extremism through community engagement.[57]

Yet the involvement of charitable organisations also highlights the fact that economic hardship associated with the pandemic has also presented challenges for terrorist networks in Indonesia. Combined with public health requirements, financial pressures have reportedly diminished activities such as travel and the organisation of meetings and religious study sessions, which are both an important source of recruitment and a means

[53] Zoom Interview with Densus 88 Officers (July 2020)

[54] See: Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict, 'The Ongoing Problem of Pro-ISIS Cells in Indonesia', *IPAC Report No.56* (29/4/2019)

[55] V. Arianti & Muh Taufiqurrohman, 'Extremist charities spread in Indonesia', *East Asia Forum* (17/3/20). Available at https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2020/03/17/extremist-charities-spread-in-indonesia/ (accessed 8/7/20)

[56] Nodirbek Soliev, 'Charity for "Jihad" in Syria: The Indonesian-Uyghur Connection', *RSIS Commentary* (12/3/20). Available at https://www.rsis.edu.sg/rsis-publication/icpvtr/charity-for-jihad-in-syria-the-indonesian-uyghur-connection/#.XwVFHCgzaHs (accessed 8/7/20)

[57] Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict, 'Terrorism, Recidivism and Planned Releases in Indonesia', *IPAC Report No.66* (4/9/20) pp.10-11

to maintain organisational cohesion.[58] While economic shortfalls for terrorist activity might be a positive development in the short-term, it could also raise risks in the long-term. Indeed, prolonged economic hardship may fuel desperation and grievance during the recovery that would ultimately support terrorist objectives.

Perhaps the most effective way of addressing the issue of pro-ISIL charities is by strengthening channels of constructive assistance. Indeed, one of the most durable and effective responses to pandemic-related terrorist activity will be further investment in community-based, locally informed initiatives that address the underlying contextual drivers of violent extremism.

Vaccinations, distribution and potential disruption

While some terrorist networks have viewed the social restrictions and diversion of resources during 2020 as a potential strategic opportunity, the unprecedented vaccination drive of 2021 may be seen as a more tangible period for disruption. In early September, President Jokowi announced that a domestically developed candidate known as *Merah Putih* (Red White – the national colours) may be available for production from mid-2021.[59] Following negotiations with China and the United Arab Emirates, the government has also secured tens of millions of potential doses from abroad. One prominent collaboration between the Indonesian state-owned enterprise Bio Farma and Chinese company Sinovac Biotech started clinical trials in Indonesia in 2020.[60]

The government's plan to combine local efforts and overseas partnerships to produce enough doses for its 270 million citizens, will require overcoming a number of obstacles. Among the most significant will be distribution: Indonesia has around 6,000 inhabited islands and effectively dispersing sensitive vaccines with low temperature requirements would appear to be a major challenge. Another issue is 'vaccine hesitancy', or a possible reluctance to participate in inoculation due to safety concerns surrounding the

[58] V. Arianti & Muh Taufiqurrohman, 'The impact of COVID-19 on Terrorist Financing in Indonesia', The Diplomat (11/11/20). Available at https://thediplomat.com/2020/11/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-terrorist-financing-in-indonesia/ (Accessed 14/11/20)
[59] Ivany Atina Arbi, 'Indoensia's 'Merah Putih' vaccine candidate to be ready for production mid 2021: Jokowi', *The Jakarta Post* (1/9/20). Available at https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2020/09/01/indonesias-merah-putih-vaccine-candidate-to-be-ready-for-production-mid-2021-jokowi.html (accessed 21/9/20)
[60] Stanley Widianto & Roxanne Liu, 'Sinovac launches Phase 3 trial for COVID-19 vaccine in Indonesia, reports Phase 2 details', *Reuters* (11/8/20). Available at https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-indonesia-vaccine-idUSKCN2570E9 (accessed 21/9/20)

accelerated development, which will be exacerbated by online misinformation and rumour.[61]

Vaccines and violent extremism also share a troubled history. Following the 2011 operation in which Osama bin Laden was killed in Pakistan, claims emerged that a fabricated vaccination programme was involved in the operation to confirm bin Laden's location.[62] This gave rise to public suspicion that hindered the polio vaccine programmes in the region and provoked violence.[63] From late 2012, militants in Pakistan began targeting anti-polio volunteers (many of whom were local women) and bombing or burning down clinics.[64] A spokesperson from Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which claimed responsibility for many of the incidents, said they would stop if the authorities "can convince us that these polio drops are Islamic and the spy agencies are not using it to kill our fighters".[65]

Although ISIL has targeted civilian hospitals, doctors and nurses, the organisation surprised many in 2014 by granting polio vaccinators access to its territory in Syria, when almost all other humanitarian actors were denied entry.[66] In recent years, development and health care workers have quietly engaged the leadership of armed groups, such as the Taliban and Boko Haram, to promote vaccination benefits in the areas they control.[67] Efforts involve developing trust and appealing to self-interest, but among more diffuse networks of violent extremists operating underground, a COVID-19 vaccination drive may be seen as an opportunity to provoke disruption and discord.

A cynical attack on a vaccination team in Indonesia is not beyond the realm of possibility, but ISIL supporters will more likely seek to exploit anti-vaccine narratives through both

[61] See: Katherine E. Bliss & J. Stephen Morrison, 'The Risks of Misinformation and Vaccine Hesitancy within the Covid-19 Crisis', *CSIS* (4/9/20). Available at https://www.csis.org/analysis/risks-misinformation-and-vaccine-hesitancy-within-covid-19-crisis (accessed 21/9/20)
[62] Saeed Shah, 'CIA organised fake vaccination drive to get Osama bin Laden's family DNA', The Guardian (11/7/11). Available at https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/jul/11/cia-fake-vaccinations-osama-bin-ladens-dna (accessed 21/9/20)
[63] Scientific American, 'How the CIA's Fake Vaccination Campaign Endangers Us All', (1/5/13). Available at https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-cia-fake-vaccination-campaign-endangers-us-all/ (accessed 21/9/20)
[64] Tim McGirk, 'How the bin laden Raid Put Vaccinators Under the Gun in Pakistan', National Geographic (25/2/15). Available at https://www.nationalgeographic.com/news/2015/02/150225-polio-pakistan-vaccination-virus-health/ (accessed 22/9/20)
[65] Aminesh Roul, 'The Pakistani Taliban's Campaign Against Polio Vaccination', *CTC Sentinel* (August 2014). Available at https://ctc.usma.edu/the-pakistani-talibans-campaign-against-polio-vaccination/ (accessed 23/9/20)
[66] Danya Chudacoff & Louise Redvers, 'Has Syria really beaten polio?' *The New Humanitarian* (5/2/15). Available at https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2015/02/02/has-syria-really-beaten-polio (accessed 23/9/20)
[67] William Worley, 'Why nonstate armed groups allow access for health workers', *Devex* (15/9/20). Available at https://www.devex.com/news/why-nonstate-armed-groups-allow-access-for-health-workers-97992 (accessed 21/9/20)

online and offline networks. Recent sentiment suggests that sowing seeds of doubt will not be difficult, as rumours of infrared thermometer guns causing brain damage have already spread widely on social media.[68] Contact tracing teams have also struggled with mistrust, encountering people who think swab tests are dangerous, or that volunteers are being paid commission for finding positive cases.[69] Violent extremist groups might also partner with established organisations who have anti-vaccination agendas.

The vaccine roll out campaign will need clear information delivered by credible envoys who carry weight among particular demographics and target communities. In 2018, the Afghan government asked Islamic scholars to convince Taliban and ISIL militants to allow polio vaccine units to operate freely.[70] Local religious leaders in Indonesia can play an important role in allaying fears and persuading people of the eventual vaccine's importance.

Similar to situations throughout the world, the Indonesian government is under considerable pressure as it battles through the response. Quick fixes are not available. As the crisis prolongs, violent extremists and other subversive actors will strive to find new ways of undermining faith in the authorities. As the next section highlights, initiatives to prevent violent extremism have been impeded or adapted during the pandemic. Moving forward, efforts must focus on building trust with target communities, and thereby fusing P/CVE programming into the COVID-19 recovery.

[68] Richard C. Paddock, 'In Indonesia, Fake Virus Cures Pushed by Those Who Should Know Better', *NY Times* (31/7/20). Available at https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/31/world/asia/indonesia-coronavirus.html (accessed 21/9/20)
[69] Nivell Rayda, 'Contact tracers in Indonesia face threats, assaults in fight against COVID-19', *Channel News Asia* (5/9/20). Available at https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asia/indonesia-covid-19-contact-tracing-threats-assaults-13078460 (accessed 21/9/20)
[70] Haroon Janjua, 'Afghan clerics in talks with Isis to break polio vaccine myths', *The Guardian* (27/3/18). Available at https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2018/mar/27/afghan-clerics-in-talks-with-isis-to-break-polio-myths (accessed 23/9/20)

Counterterrorism and P/CVE amid COVID-19 in Indonesia

Security agencies and prisons have generally adapted well. Many civil society organisations have been frustrated yet discovered promising opportunities through online communication apps. The national counterterrorism agency is making additional, valuable investments in coordinating diverse stakeholder efforts. As Indonesia eventually enters the recovery stage, a human security approach to P/CVE which emphasises contextualised responses and the comparative advantage of local ownership would create more relevant and sustainable prevention initiatives.

Public health imperatives and associated, broader challenges of mitigating the impact of the virus remain critical at the time of writing. Nonetheless, the pandemic has not prevented the Indonesian police from investigating and detaining suspected violent extremists.

The counterterrorism unit, Special Detachment 88 (Densus 88), announced in July that roughly 100 suspects had been arrested in the first six months of 2020, compared to a little under 300 during all twelve months of 2019.[71] A subsequent announcement stated that at least 70 terror suspects had been apprehended between June 1 and August 12, while regular operations have yielded further arrests through the final third of 2020.[72] It's unclear whether the slight decline in numbers from 2019 is connected to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, it does represent a smaller one-year reduction than that from 2018, when incidents such as the family suicide attacks in Surabaya and the riot in a police detention facility near Jakarta were followed by updated anti-terrorism legislation and a surge in associated arrests.[73]

Reports suggested that more restrictive lockdown measures in other nations may have provided police in those jurisdictions with more space to operate, and reasonable excuses to disrupt activities and make inquiries than in Indonesia.[74] Densus 88 officers reported

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[71] Farouk Arnaz, 'Hingga Pertengahan Tahun, 11 Pelaku Teror Dibekuk', *Berita Satu* (12/7/20). Available at https://www.beritasatu.com/nasional/654753/hingga-pertengahan-tahun-100-pelaku-teror-dibekuk (accessed 22/7/20)

[72] Budi Sutrisno & Fadli, 'Suspected terrorists nabbed amid pandemic', The Jakarta Post (11/11/2020). Available at https://www.thejakartapost.com/paper/2020/11/10/suspected-terrorists-nabbed-amid-pandemic.html (accessed 11/11/20)

[73] Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict, 'COVID-19 and ISIS in Indonesia', *IPAC Short Briefing No.1* (2/4/20)

[74] Pantucci (April 2020) p 4

that they have travelled across the country while taking precautionary, public health measures, such as rapid swab tests when entering new regions.

As a promising practice in Southeast Asia, the counterterrorism unit soon developed its own standard operating procedures (SOP) for safe practice in the COVID-19 environment. This included measures to ensure that officers protected themselves from the suspects they arrested, as well as other practices to mitigate risk that their operations might facilitate transmission of the disease. The COVID-19 environment has presented challenges for conducting surveillance. With the significant increase in the use of face masks in public places, Densus 88 have reported that it is more difficult to follow individuals, particularly new targets, whose movements and gestures may be less familiar to those monitoring.[75]

Prosecutors in Indonesia have also been forced to adapt. One week before the government introduced the PSBB regulation on social restrictions in late March, the Indonesian Supreme Court issued a circular letter to lower courts urging them to introduce physical distancing measures where needed, including work-from-home arrangements.[76] The Ministry of Law and Human Rights, Attorney General's Office, and Supreme Court subsequently introduced an MoU on 13 April 2020, addressing the implementation of criminal trials through teleconferencing.[77] The most high-profile terrorism case during this period was that of two Jemaah Islamiyah leaders, who were sentenced by videoconference on July 20 for facilitating the travel of Indonesian citizens to Syria, where they had trained or fought with al-Qaeda-linked militia.[78] .

Prisons, Management and Rehabilitation

Acknowledging that Indonesia's prison system was already brimming at over double capacity, the Ministry of Law and Human Rights suspended all inmate admissions and prison visits were suspended on March 18.[79] Suspects on remand have reportedly been

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[75] Zoom interview with Densus officers (July 2020)

[76] See: https://www.mahkamahagung.go.id/id/pengumuman/4065/surat-edaran-mahkamah-agung-ri-nomor-1-tahun-2020-tentang-pedoman-pelaksanaan-tugas-selama-masa-pencegahan-penyebaran-corona-virus-disease-2019-covid-19-di-lingkungan-mahkamah-agung-ri-dan-badan-peradilan-yang-berada-di-bawahnya (accessed 22/7/20)

[77] Dimas Indartono, 'Indonesia introduces Criminal Court Trials by Teleconference in Response to COVID-19', *SSEK Legal Consultants* (27/4/20). Available at https://www.ssek.com/blog/indonesia-introduces-criminal-court-trials-by-teleconference-in-response-to-covid-19 (accessed 22/7/20)

[78] See: https://putusan3.mahkamahagung.go.id/direktori/putusan/2a1154a0543fe0241bc09c1c7e16e65c.html (accessed 11/8/20),

[79] For current numbers see: http://smslap.ditjenpas.go.id/public/bps/status/monthly; Announcements were made in: Kementerian Hukum dan Hak Asasi Manusia Republik Indonesia, *Penundaan Sementara Pengiriman Tahanan ke*

scattered throughout a number of police stations and provincial prosecutor detainment facilities. By the end of March, a decision was taken to further ensure space by allowing prisoners who will have completed at least two-thirds of their sentence by December 2020 to serve the next 'assimilation' stage of their sentence at home.[80] Roughly 50,000 inmates were eligible under the early probation scheme, which did not include violent extremist offenders.[81]

In order to address the public health needs of those who remained in their cells, as well as for the guarding officers, the Directorate General of Corrections issued information and guidelines on mitigation, including sterilization processes, and even encouraged the planting of crops on prison grounds to bolster food security.[82] Prison staff have also distributed vitamins and attempted to maintain healthy diets.[83]

Within the first six months of the pandemic, there were reportedly around 200 positive COVID-19 cases in the prison system, mostly in South Sulawesi and Java.[84] A number of prison officers and staff have also contracted the virus, and corrections officials remain highly cautious of opening the system up to new arrivals and visitors.[85] Many of the early COVID tests were conducted using rapid response kits, whose accuracy is inferior to polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests.

When the prison system's restriction measures were announced around the end of March, there were 524 inmates convicted of terrorism offences spread out among dozens of facilities across Indonesia.[86] The largest concentrations of prisoners convicted of terrorism offences were in two maximum security prisons on Nusakambangan Island: Pasir Putih and a new compound called Karang Anyar, which was opened in August

Rutan/Lapas di Lingkungan Kementerian Hukum dan Hak Asasi Manusia sebagai Upaya Pencegahan Penyebaran COVID-19, M.HH.PK.01.01.01-04 (24/3/20)

[80] Keputusan Menteri Hukum dan Hak Asasi Manusia Republik Indonesia Nomor M.HH-19.PK.01.04.04 Tahun 2020 Tentang 'Pengeluaran dan Pembebasan Narapidana dan Anak Melalui Asimilasi dan Integrasi Dalam Rangka Pencegahan dan Penanggulangan Penyebaran COVID-19 (30/3/20)

[81] Ghina Ghalina, 'COVID-19: Indonesia releases more than 5,500 inmates, plans to free 50,000', *The Jakarta Post* (1/4/20). Available at https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2020/04/01/covid-19-indonesia-releases-more-than-5500-inmates-plans-to-free-50000.html (accessed 23/7/20)

[82] Kementarian Hukum dan Hak Asasi Manusia RI; Direktorat Jenderal Pemasyarakatan, Surat Edaran Nomor PAS-20.PR.01.01 Tahun 2020 Tentang Langkah Progresif Dalam Penenggulangan Penyebaran Virus Corona Disease (COVID-19) Pada Unit Pelaksana Teknis Pemasyarakatan (26/3/20)

[83] Zoom interview with Direktorat Jenderal Pemasyarakatan officers (July 2020)

[84] Ibid.

[85] Ibid.

[86] Data from Direktorat Jenderal Pemasyarakatan (July 2020)

2019. While the latter is brand new, the former has been renovated in recent years and both have single-occupant cells monitored by CCTV. All externally organised and group rehabilitation initiatives throughout the prison system were put on hold, with only exercise and in-house, open-air activities officially permitted.

An interesting exception has been at Sentul in Bogor, where the National Counterterrorism Agency (*Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Terorisme*, BNPT) organises pre-release classes aimed at 'de-radicalisation' for those at the end of their sentence. Opened in early 2017, the facility has so far accommodated four batches of prisoners convicted of terrorism offences, who stay for roughly 6-9 months before release. [87] An experimental course run by psychologists from the University of Indonesia appears to be a constructive feature of this initiative. Sessions take place in a classroom setting, where facilitators attempt to elicit aspects of individual identity and explore sources of self-worth and personal significance.

Classes stopped in March but restarted in May by video link, after a large screen, camera and microphone were installed in the prison classroom. According to the lead resource person, this worked surprisingly well. Facilitators were able to start a discussion and then switch off their camera, which apparently stimulated more fluid conversations, as the participants sometimes forgot they were being observed and shared their feelings more freely. The physical presence of facilitators seems to inhibit participants sometimes, and they end up simply asking questions rather than engaging the day's material through group discussion.[88] The introduction of an online modality overcame this challenge on occasion.

The fact that students had already met the facilitators in person was most likely to be essential to the seemingly smooth transition, and certain aspects such as assessment were also more difficult with no physical presence. Nonetheless, organisers see potential for technological solutions to continue playing a role in post-pandemic engagements, at least as a supplementary tool to allow more frequent interaction. Probation officers have also been using videoconferencing tools to engage their clients in and out of the prison system, which could become a crucial improvement for the geographically stretched officers, provided everyone involved has access to the required technology.

[87] Some expert observers have raised identified areas for improvement of this initiative, see Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict, 'Recent and Planned Releases of Indonesian Extremists: An Update', IPAC Report No.49 (10/8/18) p 4
[88] Phone interview with Dr Mirra Noor Milla (July 2020)

Policy Development and Fresh Initiative

State counterterrorism agency Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Terorisme (BNPT) celebrated its tenth anniversary as an executive agency in July 2020, and the organisation experienced a change in leadership during the pandemic. On May 1, Commissioner General (Komjen) Boy Rafli Amar became the agency's fifth leader, replacing Komjen Suhardi Alius, who held the top position since mid-2016. Komjen Boy previously held posts in Densus 88; as chief of police in Papua Province; and most recently as national police spokesperson.[89]

Following his inauguration, Boy announced that President Jokowi had instructed him to further develop the agency's de-radicalisation programmes and bolster coordination with both government and civil society stakeholders.[90] Managing the inherently multidisciplinary nature of initiatives aimed at countering violent extremism has been challenging. However, several civil society practitioners interviewed for this report expressed appreciation for BNPT's recent emphasis on openness and willingness for potential cooperation.

In early January 2021, the government passed a presidential regulation (Perpres 7/2021) regarding Indonesia's developing National Action Plan for P/CVE. A Joint Secretariat for the 2020-2024 strategy will facilitate the coordination and implementation of activities across a range of stakeholders, from central government agencies to provincial and municipal administrations, together with community participation.

Budget cuts resulting from COVID-19 will give even greater value to the involvement of partners and coordinating existing efforts more efficiently. As the government frees up resources for the unprecedented demands of the pandemic, BNPT has seen its funding reduced by almost 15% to roughly Rp.440 billion (USD30 million).[91] The amount set aside for 2020 was already lower than the Rp.700 billion budget allocation for 2019. Despite these challenges, and others, BNPT has launched several fresh prevention and

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[89] CNN Indonesia, 'Profil Boy Rafli Amar, Doktor Komunikasi di Pucuk BNPT' (6/5/20). Available at https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20200506092344-12-500546/profil-boy-rafli-amar-doktor-komunikasi-di-pucuk-bnpt (accessed 24/7/20)

[90] Marchio Irfan Gorbiano, 'New BNPT chief faces tough challenge of ending deradicalization behind bars', *The Jakarta Post* (12/5/20). Available at https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2020/05/12/new-bnpt-chief-faces-tough-challenge-of-ending-deradicalization-behind-bars.html (accessed 24/7/20)

[91] Laporan Singkat, Rapat Dengar Pendapat Komisi III DPR RI Dengan Kepala BNPT, Ketua LPSK dan Ketua Komnas Ham (23/6/20)

coordination initiatives, with General Boy actively engaging with the media to outline priorities and developments.

Among the most promising of the new plans is the creation of a Knowledge Hub, which was initiated by the agency's deputy for international cooperation, and aims to collate information on all P/CVE-related activities underway across Indonesia – including those of provincial governments and civil society organisations, small and large. A number of individuals and grassroots organisations in Indonesia have developed rich experience in this field over the past several years. Assembling the collective knowledge of practitioners on a shared platform would be a significant, positive step towards streamlining efforts and facilitating more effective collaboration.

Regulation and Strategic Communication

The divisive and subversive rhetoric emerging from certain corners of social media during the COVID-19 pandemic only escalated growing concern over attitudes online in recent years. Following a raft of updates to the nation's anti- intolerant terrorism legislation in June 2018, a regulation was passed 18 months later which roughly clarified the government's approach to P/CVE. Government Regulation No.77/2019 states that counter-radicalisation initiatives are to be conducted by relevant parties and coordinated by BNPT, with the involvement of regional governments (in accordance with statutory provisions).[92] The regulation also specifies that the counter-radicalisation priority is communications– by countering 'narratives', 'propaganda', and 'ideology' through a range of media and in-person events, with an emphasis on religious and national values.[93]

In March 2020, BNPT produced an energetic video outlining COVD-19 personal protection measures, such as safe distancing, mask wearing and good hygiene. Following this vein, the agency announced in July 2020 that it would be establishing a BNPT television news channel, as well as a task force of religious scholars from the two largest Islamic organisations (Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah) to counter extremist narratives and promote the contents of Indonesia's founding philosophy, Pancasila.[94] Regulation 77/2019 states the intention to train and empower community cyber activists to work on these issues, and in late June 2020 the agency committed to intensifying its

[92] Peraturan Pemerintah Republik Indonesia Nomor 77 Tahun 2019 Tentang Pencegahan Tindak Pidana Terorisme dan Pelindungan Terhadap Penyidik, Penuntut Umum, Hakim, dan Petugas Pemasyarakatan (Article 21)

[93] Ibid. (Articles 23-26)

[94] Farouk Arnaz, 'Cegah Propaganda Terorisme, BNPT Akan Buat Satgas Ulama', Berita Satu (9/7/20). Available at https://www.beritasatu.com/hukum/653857/cegah-propaganda-terorisme-bnpt-akan-buat-satgas-ulama (accessed 1/8/20)

efforts to counter propaganda more generally, through both mainstream and social media.[95]

P/CVE analysts are often sceptical about the efficacy of counter-messaging approaches to addressing extremism online, on the basis that strategies stress ideology at the expense of more nuanced drivers, and often struggle to connect with their intended audiences.[96] However, it seems clear that civil society actors are at least more likely to engage their anti-establishment targets than government agencies.[97] The BNPT's intention to work more closely with non-governmental stakeholders is therefore promising.

Indeed, as many practitioners continue to work from home amid COVID-19's restrictions, CSOs are refocusing efforts online as much as possible. Several organisations in Indonesia have been experimenting with content and engagement in recent years. The Maarif Institute and Search for Common Ground Indonesia (SFCG) have separately helped young people with the production of creative content – either through short films, comic formats or playful memes. SFCG has recently been developing the capacity of 'micro-influencers' (active social media users with around 2,000 followers) to incorporate narratives of peace and diversity in their active content.[98]

Another example is a relatively new popular culture website called ruangobrol.id, which is run by experienced P/CVE practitioners and young contributors who produce engaging topical material.[99] Meanwhile, a USAID funded initiative called Harmoni is facilitating the work of small Indonesian NGOs with unique ideas to strengthen social cohesion, such as rekindling local art performances and hosting musical jam sessions.

[95] PP 77/2019 (Article 25); Laporan Singkat, Rapat Dengar Pendapat Komisi III DPR RI Dengan Kepala BNPT, Ketua LPSK dan Ketua Komnas Ham (23/6/20)

[96] Eric Rosand & Emily Winterbotham, 'Do counter-narratives actually reduce violent extremism?' *Brookings* (20/3/19). Available at https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2019/03/20/do-counter-narratives-actually-reduce-violent-extremism/ (accessed 2/8/20); Christina Nemr, 'Strategies to Counter Terrorist Narratives Are More Confused Than Ever', *War on the Rocks* (15/3/16). Available at https://warontherocks.com/2016/03/strategies-to-counter-terrorist-narratives-are-more-confused-than-ever/ (accessed 2/8/20)

[97] For a persuasive discussion on the advantages of civil society credibility in this regard, see: Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), 'The Role of Civil Society in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism: A Guidebook for South-Eastern Europe', 2018

[98] Phone interview with Bahrul Wijaksana, Country Director, Search for Common Ground Indonesia (July 2020)

[99] Phone interview with Rosyid Nurul Hakiim, Editor, Ruangobrol.id (July 2020)

Community Engagement and Gender Mainstreaming

Civil society organisations are involved in an array of offline P/CVE initiatives throughout Indonesia, from engaging mothers in rural communities to training probation officers working with ex-offenders. From late March, all face-to-face meetings were forced to stop, with discussions moving to online videoconferencing platforms such as Zoom, Skype and Google Hangouts.

The impact of this shift varied depending on the type of interaction. For discussions with stakeholders separated by distance (or traffic jams), the sudden, near universal adoption of videoconferencing allowed practitioners to hold more frequent coordination meetings and save time. This technology has been available for several years, but the pandemic has normalised the practice. One Jakarta-based practitioner reported: "It used to take ages to organise meetings in the real world, but now we can just throw one together quickly online, which has been great".[100]

Yet the facilitation benefits come with caveats. Online communication may be effective at the organisational level and among those who know each other well, but much less so when levels of familiarity and trust lack development. For example, practitioners described the difficulty of maintaining online engagement with former prisoners convicted of terrorism offences, who are now reintegrating back into their communities.

Other P/CVE practitioners involved in community initiatives said it has been difficult to cultivate enthusiasm through online outreach meetings and events aimed at building relationships. Research has found that videoconferencing struggles to convey non-verbal communication, which hinders trust formation, particularly in multiple participant interactions.[101] More recent analysis has highlighted that barely perceptible time lags in reception can disrupt the flow of conversation, generate misunderstandings, and cause fatigue.[102] When these factors are combined with unstable internet connections, outcomes often fall short of in-person engagements.

The most proactive real-world initiatives from civil society organisations working on P/CVE during the pandemic have involved the provision of humanitarian aid to people in their communities of focus. Indonesia ranks among the highest in the world for charitable

[100] Phone interview with Diastika Rahwidiati, Senior Strategic Communications Advisor, Love Frankie (July 2020)

[101] David Nguyen & John Canny, 'MultiView: Improving Trust in Group Video Conferencing Through Spatial Faithfulness', *CHI Proceedings* (July 2007) pp. 1465-1474

[102] The Economist, 'Why Zoom meetings are so dissatisfying', (16/5/20). Available at https://www.economist.com/books-and-arts/2020/05/16/why-zoom-meetings-are-so-dissatisfying (accessed 1/8/20)

donations and voluntary work, and the pandemic has seen crowdfunding campaigns support informal economy workers throughout the nation.[103] One theory is that a fresh emphasis on locally coordinated humanitarian aid following recent earthquakes in Sulawesi and Lombok laid the groundwork for grassroots COVID-19 action, and that collective engagement with local leadership should be considered the optimal approach to crisis response moving forward.[104]

Practitioners working with prisoners have sent care-package deliveries through ride-hail apps. Yayasan Prasasti Perdamaian (YPP), which works with ex-inmates, drew on extensive contacts to identify households in particular need of help in the greater Jakarta region, and arranged for the delivery of essential items such as cooking oil, rice, sugar, and canned meat.[105] The much larger Gusdurian Network undertook similar endeavours on a larger scale. With representatives present in 70 cities across the archipelago, Gusdurian managed to deliver 30,000 aid packages containing food and hygiene kits, complete with masks, hand sanitizer and disinfectant. The products were locally sourced as much as possible, and delivered through ride-hail companies to broaden the economic impact.[106]

Women have been disproportionately impacted, as they comprise the majority of frontline healthcare workers and have assumed additional responsibilities and burdens in the home. women have also been at the forefront of much of this humanitarian work, while playing a key role in promoting social cohesion within communities, as well as combatting subversive misinformation and hoaxes online.[107]

A significant development among Islamist extremists in Indonesia since the rise of ISIL in the mid-2010s has been the increased involvement of women in all aspects of the movement, from recruitment to conducting attacks.[108] While traditionally male-

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[103] Shane Preuss, Indonesia and COVID-19: What the World is Missing', *The Diplomat* (24/4/20). Available at https://thediplomat.com/2020/04/indonesia-and-covid-19-what-the-world-is-missing/ (accessed 14/7/20)

[104] Puji Pujiono, Jess Lees & Jesse McCommon, 'Going local: Lessons from Covid response in Indonesia', *Lowy Interpreter* (1/6/20). Available at https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/going-local-lessons-covid-response-indonesia (accessed 14/7/20)

[105] Phone interview with Mohamad Rizki Maulana, Capacity Building Officer, YPP (July 2020)

[106] Phone Interview with Alissa Wahid, National Director, Gusdurian Network (July 2020)

[107] See: 'Talking Indonesia: Covid-19 and community engagement', *Indonesia at Melbourne* (16/7/20). Available at https://indonesiaatmelbourne.unimelb.edu.au/talking-indonesia-covid-19-and-community-engagement/ (accessed 16/8/20)

[108] Ana P. Santos, 'In Indonesia, 'Women Are Now a Permanent Part of the Jihadi Structure', *Pulitzer Center* (01/11/19). Available at https://pulitzercenter.org/reporting/indonesia-women-are-now-permanent-part-jihadi-structure (accessed 16/8/20); Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict, 'Mothers to Bombers: The Evolution of Indonesian Women Extremists', *IPAC Report No.35* (31/1/19)

dominated government security agencies have begun to adapt, women remain under-represented in the counterterrorism policy environment. Civil society has been proactive in this space for some time, however, and Indonesia has witnessed a "mushrooming of gender-based initiatives" to prevent violent extremism.[109] Many have been blending their engagement work with COVID-19 assistance, drawing on extensive grassroots networks.

Examples include the Asian Muslim Action Network (AMAN), who engage and empower mothers in select provinces (some with histories of conflict), and have created an inter-faith forum called Women's School for Peace, which operates throughout the nation. AMAN have initiated a CSO-led task force to monitor gender mainstreaming in COVID 19 response, and held frequent Zoom meetings with relevant government agencies throughout the pandemic.[110] UNDP is supporting the integration of gender-based approaches to P/CVE, and hosted a Forum in the East Java city of Malang in 2019 to explore developments and opportunities, while UN Women are actively engaged in a range of initiatives to mitigate hardships and foster future opportunities.[111]

Victims and Survivors of Terrorism

COVID-19 and the associated economic strains have had a more severe impact on vulnerable sections of society. One such group in Indonesia are the victims and survivors of terrorist violence. Updates to the nation's anti-terrorism legislation in June 2018 sketched out the government's intention of providing compensation and emotional support to victims of violent extremism, but a subsequent implementing regulation was required to clarify the processes. This came during the pandemic in July 2020, in the form of regulation (*Perturan Pemerintah*) No. 35/2020, which was signed by President Jokowi following a constructive meeting with stakeholders.

Regulation No.35/2020 allows for retroactive compensation claims for terrorist events that occurred as far back as 2002, a time period that includes the devastating bombing

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[109] Amalina Abdul Nasir, 'How Indonesia Can Address the Growing Number of Female Extremists', The Diplomat (28/5/20). Available at https://thediplomat.com/2020/05/how-indonesia-can-address-the-growing-number-of-female-extremists/ (accessed 16/8/20)

[110] Phone interview with Dwi Rubiyanti Kholifah, Director, AMAN (July 2020)

[111] See 'UN Women Indonesia COVID-19 Response' (June 2020). Available at https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/06/un-women-indonesia-covid-19-response (Accessed 15/7/20); Gender perspectives were not initially considered in the government's multi-agency COVID-19 response task force, but lobbying from the Asian Muslim Action Network (AMAN) led to a working group (*pokja*) on gender mainstreaming, involving the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and 167 CSOs working with women and marginalized communities.

attacks in Bali which killed 202 people and injured over 200 more.[112] The Witness and Victim Protection Agency (*Lembaga Perlindungan Saksi dan Korban*, LPSK) is tasked with overseeing and facilitating the application processes, which the regulation outlines in detail.

Beyond compensation (and, in theory, restitution from perpetrators), victims – including those of extremist violence abroad – are to be provided with medical and psychosocial support.[113] According to an LPSK official, the agency has been reaching out to victims of terrorism on video calling platforms throughout the pandemic.[114] However, the pandemic has thus far precluded offline out-reach events until travel restrictions are lifted.

Over the past several years, victims of violent extremism in Indonesia have been proactively involved in initiatives to either steer people away from terrorist networks or stop them joining in the first place. Participation in frequent seminars and events provide opportunities to prevent further tragedies. For some, who often participate as expert resource persons, these events also present a potential source of income support, as they receive stipends for their efforts.

This sometimes-crucial financial supplement has been lost during the pandemic's social distancing measures, but victims and survivors have received a degree of humanitarian assistance from a small number of dedicated charities. The Indonesia Survivor's Foundation (*Yayasan Penyintas Indonesia*, YPI), for example, has been distributing grocery packages during the pandemic to victims of past terror attacks, with the support of the Indonesian Seed Cooperative (KOBETA).[115]

Localising Prevention

The response to the COVID-19 pandemic has illustrated the importance, and the challenge, of coordinating across central, regional and local authorities. There is a strong parallel with the importance of coordination in P/CVE efforts. Indeed, grassroots

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[112]   CNN,   'Indonesia   passes   two   anti-terror   decrees'   (18/10/02).   Available   at https://edition.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/asiapcf/southeast/10/18/indonesia.antiterrorism.laws/ (accessed 4/8/20); See also: Simon Butt, 'Anti-Terrorism Law and Criminal Process in Indonesia', *ARC Federation Fellowship Background Paper No.1*   (August   2007).   Available   at https://law.unimelb.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/1546327/AntiTerrorismLawandProcessInIndonesia2.pdf (accessed 4/8/20)

[113] Presiden Republik Indonesia, Peraturan Pemerintah Republik Indonesia No.35/2020, Perubahan Atas Peraturan Pemerintah No.7/2018 Tentang Pemberian Kompensasi, Restitusi, dan Bantuan Kepada Saksi dan Korban (8/7/20)

[114] Zoom interview with LPSK representative (July 2020)

[115] See: https://www.penyintasindonesia.or.id/

responses are crucial for mitigating local versions of wider problems, from public health to violent extremism.

Indonesian civil society organisations working on P/CVE initiatives have been attempting to collaborate directly with local government administrations to channel support where it is most needed. In doing so, they have consolidated goodwill and relationships of trust, which will be valuable in meeting ongoing and emerging challenges. This is a promising development.

Nonetheless, obstacles to coordination and collaboration remain. Some CSOs interviewed for this report explained that when they approach provincial government officials (and particularly lower levels of government) with plans in hand to implement a P/CVE initiative, concerns are sometimes raised that current regulatory frameworks are insufficient to permit local action. Regional officials often view counterterrorism, and even 'softer' prevention or mitigation efforts, as the sole purview of national security agencies based in the capital, such as Densus 88 and BNPT. Yet the full continuum of P/CVE effort requires a whole-of-government, whole-of-society approach – as recognised by the Government of Indonesia in its burgeoning National Action Plan for P/CVE, and the United Nations in the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism.

East Java is a promising example of regional initiative. The province passed its own regulation on the management of community tolerance in November 2018, following suicide bombing attacks in Surabaya earlier that year. Provincial Regulation No.8/2018 states that its goals are to be achieved through capacity building and facilitation, with potential cooperation from other provinces and/or third-party stakeholders.[116]

The document lays out plans for inter-faith and inter-cultural exchange, workshops on Pancasila, legal awareness education, and incorporates provisions for funding and the use of provincial administration venues and infrastructure.[117] Further articles cover conflict resolution, comprising reconciliation, reintegration and rehabilitation.[118] The proactive approach and leadership of the East Java government towards addressing the root causes of violent extremism should be commended.

From the central government perspective, BNPT has made a commendable commitment to supporting regional, community-led initiatives. The primary avenues for achieving this

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[116] Gubernur Jawa Timur, Peraturan Daerah Provinsi Jawa Timur No.8/2018 Tentang Penyelenggaraan Toleransi Kehidupan Bermasyarakat (19/11/18, Part II, Articles 6-7)
[117] Ibid. (Articles 8-9)
[118] Ibid. (Article 10)

goal are the Terrorism Prevention Coordination Forums (*Forum Koordinasi Pencegahan Terorisme*, FKPT), which were first conceptualised in 2012 and have gradually spread to the majority of Indonesia's 34 provinces. The Forums hold events involving provincial government and retired officials, religious scholars, academics, civil society and youth representatives. While some observers have identified opportunities for improvement, [119] the intent of the FKPT is a promising practice that warrants additional resources and investment to fully localise prevention efforts.

Indeed, practitioners have highlighted that some FKPT Forums have been conducting potentially impactful grassroots initiatives, such as in the Sumbawa regency of Bima, where the FKPT Head reportedly visits villages known for extremist activity and looks for ways to engage. Others FKPT Forums currently involve academics enthusiastic about conducting research on local drivers of extremism, which is essential for evidence-based programming and appropriate targeting.

Conclusion

Despite initial fears, COVID-19 has not escalated the short-term threat of terrorism in Indonesia, particularly as the pandemic emerged following years of successful domestic counterterrorism investigations and prosecutions. Steadfast efforts in Indonesia decimated a new wave of violent extremism which had been revitalized by ISIL's rise in the Middle East.

Indonesian security agencies, such as Detachment 88 and the corrections directorate have found resourceful ways of continuing their operations during this difficult period. Establishing their own standard operating procedures and safety guidelines enabled such critical agencies to maintain their core functions while observing social distancing restrictions and related precautions.

Police continued to arrest terrorism suspects and the courts successfully prosecuted individuals charged with associated offences. Criminal trial proceedings by videoconference were established and two Jemaah Islamiyah leaders were convicted and sentenced through video link in July for facilitating the travel of Indonesian citizens to Syria, where they had trained or fought with al Qaeda-linked militia.

[119] For example, IPAC raised early concerns that FKPT material was largely written in Jakarta and could have explored issues relevant to particular communities in greater detail; Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict, 'Countering Violent Extremism in Indonesia: Need for a Rethink', *IPAC Report No.11* (30/6/14) p 5

Face-to-face engagement initiatives aimed at preventing involvement in violent extremism or recidivism have certainly suffered, but attempts to move some of this work online should be preserved when the world eventually returns to normality. The resourceful use of videoconferencing for rehabilitation classes at the Sentul 'de-radicalisation' facility is a good example. While the method may have limitations, technological solutions could prove a useful addition to programming, at least to facilitate more frequent interactions between resource people and prisoners, or those reintegrating back into far-flung communities.

Normalisation of this technology among civil servants and non-governmental practitioners could also improve the coordination of stakeholders divided by distance or traffic. Videoconferencing has its drawbacks, and the necessary technology and infrastructure are still insufficiently widespread to reach everyone. But in a nation twice as broad as the European continent and with several thousand islands, the use of apps like Zoom, at least among those with the means, can benefit organisational collaboration in a number of fields, including P/CVE.

Despite these positive developments, the challenge will be to address the medium to long-term threat of terrorism. Indeed, the long tail of recovery from COVID-19 has the potential to have a more significant effect on violent extremism conducive to terrorism than the uncertainty and turmoil of 2020.

Individuals tend to be 'pushed' or 'pulled' toward violent extremism for many and varied reasons. These include, as the UN Secretary General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism highlights (A.24-26), unsettled structural conditions, diminishing socioeconomic opportunities and rising inequalities. These provide a fertile environment for extremist narratives to prosper. The recovery from COVID-19 can either help or hinder such an environment. A recovery that is exclusionary and leaves segments of the population behind will provide a foothold for extremist narratives to grow. Instead, a recovery that is inclusive, human-centred and leaves no one behind, will erode the environmental circumstances that allow extremist narratives to gain traction in the first place.

The outpouring of humanitarian aid and community support across Indonesia during the pandemic symbolises the nation's resilience and suggests this universally common enemy may have brought people together. One civil society activist interviewed for this publication reported that she had witnessed a broad "culture of empathy" emerge while conducting her organisation's activities in 2020. The pandemic appears to have provoked people everywhere to re-evaluate what is important in their lives, and while a tiny

minority may end up following hate-inspired pathways toward subversive activity, it is tempting to be optimistic about communities emerging stronger and more closely-knit.

A human security approach to P/CVE can build on this sentiment, further emphasising a bottom-up participatory process in which communities are actively engaged in defining their problems and finding solutions. This could mean local management of a returning violent extremist offender on parole, or a community intervention that expels extremists from a neighbourhood mosque or after-school study group.

COVID-19 has demonstrated the importance of localised responses to critical threats, which is a valuable lesson learned for P/CVE programming. While the area expertise and resources of donor organisations and national government agencies are crucial, villages and neighbourhoods have the comparative advantage of local knowledge, networks, and credibility. Integrating these elements and empowering communities to act on their own behalf should be a priority going forward.

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GUYUB
P R O J E C T

Rukun agawe santosa, crah agawe bubrah