

The Impact of COVID-19 on Counterterrorism and Preventing/Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) in Indonesia

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The COVID-19 pandemic and its social restrictions have affected almost every aspect of human activity, prompting widespread anxieties and universal uncertainty. Extremists and agitators from a range of ideological positions have sought to exploit these dynamics through strategic communications, often aimed at undermining national governments, which are stretched by the demands of their response. A small minority have even committed to violence as they estimate weakness in their perceived adversaries.

This assessment analyses COVID-19's impact on counterterrorism and preventing/countering violent extremism (P/CVE) initiatives in Indonesia. It begins by outlining notable features of the nation's response to the pandemic, before briefly assessing the activities of Indonesian jihadi militants during this period. It then considers state and civil society efforts to adapt their counterterrorism and prevention commitments during the pandemic, before suggesting some recommendations moving forward.

Research is based on detailed consultative meetings with some 25-30 stakeholders, including civil society stakeholders from roughly ten different organisations involved in P/CVE projects, and Indonesian government officials from the National Police, Directorate General of Corrections, Ministry of Religious Affairs, and the Witness and Victim Protection Agency (LPSK). Discussions were conducted using phone and video call platforms during July and August 2020. Secondary sources include media reports, policy papers, journal articles, websites and publicly available documents outlining legislation and regulation passed by the Indonesian government.

The project 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 specific knowledge of community associations. 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.

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)

COVID-19 in Indonesia

Amid significant outbreaks in neighbouring countries, Indonesia did not record its first infection until March 2, when a mother and daughter were confirmed to have contracted the virus.² The government then set up a 'rapid response' task force the following week, but chose not to impose lockdown measures due to concerns over the economic impact, particularly in the informal sector – preferring instead to encourage social distancing.³

Coordination between central and provincial government authorities proved challenging. Indonesia devolved to an arrangement of regional autonomy through reforms following the fall of the Suharto regime in the late 1990s, and analysts argue the pandemic has highlighted kinks in the system.⁴ The Jokowi administration passed regulations on 'large-scale social restrictions' (*Pembatasan Sosial Berskala Besar*, PSBB) in late March. But a number of leaders had by then implemented local measures to mitigate the virus in their own cities and communities, causing friction with central government.⁵

Civil society responses often filled the gaps. Indonesia ranks among the highest in the world for charitable donations and voluntary work, and observers have praised CSO efforts to support vulnerable communities.⁶ One argument 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 future crisis response.⁷

Violent extremist activity during the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia

Indonesia has seen waves of Islamist militancy emerge since the nation's struggle for independence in the 1940s. The latest iteration is largely associated with the 2010s rise of the Islamic State (ISIS), which injected enthusiasm into a movement disjointed by years of successful counterterrorism investigations.

A curious detail of the revitalisation was particular attraction to the eschatological narratives promoted by ISIS while it held territory in Iraq and Syria.⁸ When COVID-19 spread to Indonesia, many jihadi extremists apparently decided the end had finally begun and chose to stay at home expectantly.⁹

² Marchio Irfan Gorbiano, 'Jokowi announces Indonesia's first two confirmed COVID-19 cases', *The Jakarta Post* (2/3/20). Available at <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2020/03/02/breaking-jokowi-announces-indonesias-first-two-confirmed-covid-19-cases.html> (accessed 13/7/20)

³ Marchio Irfan Gorbiano & Ivany Atina Arbi, 'Lockdown not yet an option for Indonesia, says President', *The Jakarta Post* (16/3/20). Available at <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2020/03/16/lockdown-not-yet-an-option-for-indonesia-says-president.html> (accessed 13/7/20)

⁴ Jefferson Ng, 'Can Indonesia's fight against COVID-19 overcome troubled central-regional coordination?' *New Mandala* (28/4/20). Available at <https://www.newmandala.org/can-indonesias-fight-against-covid-19-overcome-troubled-central-regional-coordination/> (accessed 14/7/20)

⁵ Tim Lindsey & Tim Mann, 'Indonesia was in denial over coronavirus. Now it may be facing a looming disaster', *The Conversation* (8/4/20). Available at <https://theconversation.com/indonesia-was-in-denial-over-coronavirus-now-it-may-be-facing-a-looming-disaster-135436> (accessed 14/7/20)

⁶ 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)

⁷ 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)

⁸ 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)

⁹ Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict, 'COVID-19 and ISIS in Indonesia', *IPAC Short Briefing No.1* (2/4/20)

Analysts noticed quite a surge in activity online. An early target for both hard-line Islamists and more extremist jihadis was China, and the Jokowi administration's alleged accommodation of Chinese business interests in Indonesia – particular in the mining sector.¹⁰ Prominent rhetoric also claimed that a caliphate system would provide better healthcare, education and public information, which will be a concerning narrative throughout the slow economic recovery.¹¹

The most significant uptick in real world endeavour was in Central Sulawesi, where a ragtag band of pro-ISIS militants continue to evade capture in the hills between Poso and Palu. A period in early April saw two suspected informant farmers killed (one decapitated); a police officer shot in an ambush intended to steal his weapon; and two assailants fatally shot in the process.¹² Footage of the funeral circulating on social media displayed a concerning level of community support for the deceased militants.

Two attacks took place in June. The first was in a river-bank town in South Kalimantan, where a man allegedly carrying a sword and an ISIS flag entered a police station at 2am, killed one officer and seriously wounded another before he was shot dead at the scene.¹³ Three weeks later, a former prisoner convicted of terrorism offences injured the deputy chief of police in the Karanganyar regency (Central Java) and his driver, having attacked them in the street with sharp weapons.¹⁴

Police have been the primary target of jihadi violence in Indonesia over the past ten years, and the extent to which these incidents in 2020 are directly connected to the pandemic is not clear. However, officers from Indonesia's counterterrorism police unit Special Detachment 88 (Densus 88) said pro-ISIS extremists had indeed viewed the period as an opportunity to conduct attacks, and revealed they had seen chatter regarding the potential weaponization of the virus through infected children.¹⁵ Such threats are probably more disturbingly zealous than realistic, but ongoing enthusiasm for extremist violence in Indonesia is a serious and open-ended concern.

Indonesian Counterterrorism during the COVID-19 Pandemic

As the government introduced PSBB regulations, Densus 88 developed its own standard operating procedures to protect others from its frequently travelling personnel and themselves from the individuals they detained. New challenges emerged, such as the difficulty of conducting human surveillance with everyone wearing masks, but the police unit appears to have adapted effectively.

Through the first six months of 2020 around 100 individuals were arrested on suspicion of terrorist activity (compared to 300 during the full year of 2019).¹⁶ The direct impact of COVID-19 on this number is uncertain, but the slight decline does represent a smaller one-year

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Phone interview with Diastika Rahwidiati, Senior Strategic Communications Advisor, Love Frankie (July 2020)

¹² 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)

¹³ 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)

¹⁴ Kompas, 'Penyerang Wakapolres Karanganyar Pernah Dipenjara karena 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)

¹⁵ Zoom interview with Densus 88 officers (July 2020)

¹⁶ 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)

reduction than the previous year, when a period of violence in 2018 was followed by updated anti-terrorism legislation and a surge in arrests.¹⁷

Judicial authorities also made decisive changes to daily operations, promptly introducing distancing measures and work-from-home arrangements. In mid-April, the Ministry of Law and Human Rights issued an MoU on the implementation of criminal trials through teleconferencing.¹⁸ Two Jemaah Islamiyah leaders were convicted by video conference in July for facilitating the travel of Indonesian citizens to Syria, where they had trained or fought with al-Qaeda-linked militia.¹⁹

Prisons and Rehabilitation

At over double the intended capacity, Indonesia's prison system quickly realised its vulnerability and developed safeguards. Around 50,000 prisoners who would have completed two-thirds of their sentence by December 2020 were slated for release on probation (but this did not include extremists).²⁰ The corrections authority suspended all visitation and new prisoner arrivals, and issued an array of guidelines on mitigating measures – even the planting of crops for food security.²¹

During the pandemic, Indonesian prisons held 524 inmates convicted of terrorism offences.²² The largest concentrations were in two maximum security facilities called Pasir Putih and Karanganyar on an island just off the south coast of Java. While the latter is brand new, the former has been renovated in recent years and both have single-occupant cells monitored by CCTV. Beyond the suspension of visits, all externally organised and group rehabilitation initiatives throughout the prison system were put on hold, with only exercise and open-air activities permitted.

An interesting exception has been at the Sentul facility south of Jakarta, where the national counterterrorism agency (*Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Terorisme*, BNPT) organises pre-release 'de-radicalisation' classes for those at the end of their sentence. Among the three-year-old facility's initiatives is a course developed and run by psychologists from the University of Indonesia (UI), who attempt to elicit aspects of individual identity and explore sources of self-worth and personal significance.²³

Classes stopped in March but restarted in May by video link after a large screen, camera and microphone were installed in the prison classroom. This reportedly worked quite well. Facilitators were able to start a discussion and then switch off their camera, which stimulated more fluid conversations as participants forgot they were being observed and shared their feelings more freely.²⁴

¹⁷ Indonesia also held the Asian Games in late 2018, which is thought to have encouraged a police crackdown on militancy.

¹⁸ 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)

¹⁹ Channel News Asia, 'Indonesia jails two leaders of Jemaah Islamiyah on terror charges' (20/7/20). Available at <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asia/indonesia-jails-leaders-jemaah-islamiyah-al-qaeda-terrorist-12947984> (Accessed 22/7/20)

²⁰ Zoom interview with Directorate General of Corrections officials (July 2020)

²¹ Kementerian Hukum dan Hak Asasi Manusia RI; Direktorat Jenderal Pemasarakatan, Surat Edaran Nomor PAS-20.PR.01.01 Tahun 2020 Tentang Langkah Progresif Dalam Penanggulangan Penyebaran Virus Corona Disease (COVID-19) Pada Unit Pelaksana Teknis Pemasarakatan (26/3/20)

²² Data from the Directorate General of Corrections (July 2020)

²³ The same prisoners also attend occasional seminars organised by BNPT's deradicalisation division, but these are separate from the UI course, which is a good example of the ad hoc nature of government P/CVE programming. This lack of cohesion and structure would make evaluations difficult.

²⁴ Phone interview with Dr Mirra Noor Milla, Senior Lecturer, Universitas Indonesia (July 2020)

The fact that facilitators had already established a degree of trust in-person was likely essential to the seemingly smooth transition. But positive reports of such engagement via teleconference are an encouraging development, particularly in a country as vast as Indonesia.

State P/CVE Policy and Practice

BNPT celebrated its tenth anniversary in July 2020, and the organisation also witnessed a change in leadership during the pandemic. Commissioner General (Komjen) Boy Rafli Amar became the agency's fifth leader, replacing Komjen Suhardi Alius who was in charge from mid-2016. Komjen Boy previously held posts in Densus 88; as chief of police in Papua Province; and most recently, as national police spokesperson.²⁵

The incoming leader will need to make do with less, however, as the agency's budget has been reduced by almost 15% to roughly Rp.440 billion (US\$30 million) due to COVID-19 resource pressures.²⁶ The cuts are thought to be spread evenly throughout BNPT's three 'deputies' (prevention; operations; international cooperation), though Deputy One (on prevention, deradicalisation and protection) received the smallest reductions.²⁷

Following his inauguration, Komjen Boy told reporters that President Jokowi had instructed him to further develop the agency's de-radicalisation programmes and bolster coordination with stakeholders.²⁸ The agency was ostensibly established as a coordinating body but has often implemented its own programmes with limited external consultation. However, civil society practitioners say that BNPT is now "listening" and becoming "more open", which is encouraging.²⁹

A potential example of this intent is the recent development of a 'Knowledge Hub', which aims to collate information on P/CVE activities in Indonesia to facilitate cooperation and streamline activities. The BNPT's Deputy Three on International Cooperation requested that UNODC and the Australia-Indonesia Partnership for Justice (AIPJ) work on creating the Hub, which is genuinely promising and could lead to greater collaboration and more efficient coordination, both vertically and horizontally. However, the project will ideally require buy-in from all three BNPT Deputies, which do not always end up on the same page.³⁰

Workstreams can also prove messy among civil society stakeholders. The many small civil society organisations (CSOs) working on P/CVE in Indonesia are sometimes placed together on projects by donor organisations, but precise roles and responsibilities are not always clearly delineated. One experienced Indonesian CSO practitioner said that specific funding for improving small-organisation coordination would be impactful.³¹

While new avenues for cooperation may be positive, other recent BNPT initiatives are less convincing. Government Regulation 77/2019 issued late last year (very) roughly outlined

²⁵ 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)

²⁶ Laporan Singkat, Rapat Dengar Pendapat Komisi III DPR RI Dengan Kepala BNPT, Ketua LPSK dan Ketua Komnas Ham (23/6/20)

²⁷ Email correspondence with BNPT officers (August 2020)

²⁸ 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)

²⁹ Phone interviews with Jakarta-based civil society P/CVE practitioners (July 2020)

³⁰ This lack of internal coordination and communication has in the past allegedly extended to the three deputies withholding information from each other.

³¹ Phone interview with Mira Kusumarini, Former Director, Civil Society Against Violent Extremism, C-SAVE (July 2020)

updated approaches to de-radicalisation and counter-radicalisation intentions. The latter will focus on communications ('narratives', 'propaganda' and 'ideology') while promoting the nation's founding philosophy of Pancasila.³² An apparently related new proposal is the creation of a BNPT television 'news channel'. Details on content are conflicting, but the medium itself would seem to rule out a younger audience who much more likely engage with social media.

Various initiatives from Indonesian civil society attempt to chart and potentially counter extremist influence online. Efforts include developing the capacity of 'micro-influencers' and popular bloggers to incorporate relevant themes in their content, often involving humour.³³ The website *ruangobrol.id* addresses religious intolerance and extremism through a youth lens, such as one popular (and nuanced) debate over an Indonesian pop star singing in Arabic.³⁴ This work remains exploratory but must be considered a crucial set of experiments, particularly as the pandemic's social restrictions have increased online communication and engagement.

Civil Society and P/CVE during COVID-19

CSOs are involved in an array of programmes 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 some discussions moving to online videoconferencing platforms.

The impact of this shift apparently varied depending on the type of interaction. For discussions with stakeholders separated by distance (or Jakarta's traffic), the sudden adoption of videoconferencing facilitated more frequent coordination arrangements. One practitioner said: "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".³⁵

Yet the benefits come with caveats. Online communication is much less effective when levels of familiarity and trust lack development, and many people simply do not have the required technology, or they need to share devices among others in a busy household with unstable connections. Still, the normalisation of video calls is a useful development, and one with a range of possible applications – particularly as the technology becomes more widespread.

Several CSOs have maintained contact and continued to build good will among those they engage through the provision of humanitarian aid. The small but experienced foundation *Yayasan Prasasti Perdamaian* (YPP) arranged delivery of essential items such as rice, sugar, cooking oil and canned meat to dozens of families in the greater Jakarta region.³⁶ And the much larger Gusdurian Network delivered 30,000 aid packages containing food and hygiene kits – locally sourced where possible and often delivered through local ride-hail apps to spread the benefits.³⁷

Victims and Survivors of Terrorism during COVID-19

One particularly vulnerable group during the pandemic's hardships has been the victims and survivors of past terrorist attacks. Some even lost income associated with P/CVE, as several community engagement workshops and seminars incorporate the stories and experiences of victims, who often receive stipends for their contributions.

³² Peraturan Pemerintah Republik Indonesia Nomor 77 Tahun 2019 Tentang Pencegahan Tindak Pidana Terorisme dan Pelindungan Terhadap Penyidik, Penuntut Umum, Hakim, dan Petugas Pemasyarakatan

³³ Phone interview with Bahrul Wijaksana, Country Director, Search for Common Ground Indonesia (July 2020)

³⁴ Phone interview with Rosyid Nurul Hakiim, Editor, *Ruangobrol.id* (July 2020)

³⁵ Phone interview with Diastika Rahwidiati, Senior Strategic Communications Advisor, Love Frankie (July 2020)

³⁶ Phone interview with Mohamad Rizki Maulana, Capacity Building Officer, YPP (July 2020)

³⁷ Phone Interview with Alissa Wahid, National Director, Gusdurian Network (July 2020)

One organisation called the Indonesia Survivor's Foundation (*Yayasan Penyintas Indonesia*, YPI) has been distributing grocery packages to victims during the pandemic, with the support of the Indonesian Seed Cooperative (KOBETA).

A critical government regulation on victim compensation (35/2020) was finally issued in July 2020, paving the way for individuals to receive financial compensation and psycho-social support, including retroactively – dating back to the first Bali bombing attacks in 2002. Leading stakeholder, The Witness and Victim Protection Agency (*Lembaga Perlindungan Saksi dan Korban*, LPSK) has reportedly been providing emotional support through video apps during the pandemic.³⁸

BNPT has also been engaged with victim psycho-social support over the past two years. However, initiatives are largely limited to hotel events involving minor celebrities and entertainment. Such occasions have taken place in Bali and Lombok, and an event planned for the end of August 2020 in Yogyakarta had observers concerned about COVID-19 contraction.³⁹

A security agency is not a suitable stakeholder to be conducting this work. Particularly through events involving both former convicted terrorists and victims/survivors, some of these programmes could be doing more emotional harm than good.

Localised Prevention Policy and Practice

The vast majority of P/CVE policy has been formulated and activated from Jakarta over the past ten years, and many of the civil society organisations engaged with this set of issues are also based in the capital. Indonesia's response to COVID-19 has illustrated the difficulty of centrally managing a critical security threat dispersed throughout the nation's vast archipelago. This experience should be instructive for preventing violent extremism.

BNPT's primary initiative for P/CVE in the regions has been the Terrorism Prevention Coordination Forums (*Forum Koordinasi Pencegahan Terorisme*, FKPT), which were first established in 2012 and have since spread to most of the nation's 34 provinces. The forums have been criticised as top-down talk shops, where broad issues are presented to regional elites in upmarket hotels. Corruption in the form of 'kickbacks' has also featured, according to civil society practitioners.⁴⁰

However, recent feedback suggests that some forums, at least, may be taking more constructive steps. A local leader in the Sumbawa regency of Bima (which has a long history of Islamist militancy) is apparently engaging with villages known for extremist activity, while some affiliated academics have become enthusiastic about researching local drivers.⁴¹ FKPT content has often fallen short, but the 'architecture' itself is a highly promising structure for decentralising P/CVE initiatives in Indonesia.

In 2019, the Ministry of Religious Affairs' National Mid-Term Development Plan included a provision on reducing religious intolerance, which will apparently impel the ministry's extensive network of religious counsellors to conceive applicable strategies in their jurisdictions. This reach into local governance at the sub-district level and below is a positive step, but it will also

³⁸ Zoom interview with Pak Rianto, LPSK (July 2020)

³⁹ Phone interview with informed observer (August 2020)

⁴⁰ Phone interview with informed observer (July 2020). A number of others have cited this concern to the author over the past five years.

⁴¹ Separate phone interviews with Adhi Kustiadi, Australia-Indonesia Partnership for Justice, AIPJ, and Dete Aliah, Society Against Violent Extremism, SeRVE (July 2020)

depend on the buy-in of each counsellor, some of whom may not hold very progressive views themselves.

One obstacle for CSOs seeking to establish programmes in the provinces is the absence of statutory framework. An exception is East Java Province, which passed regulation on 'community tolerance' (PD 8/2018) following the May 2018 suicide bombings in Surabaya. The regulation opens the door for cooperation with third-party stakeholders and incorporates provisions on potential funding and use of provincial government infrastructure for P/CVE type initiatives.⁴²

Conclusion

While the Indonesian government has been criticised for its laboured response to the COVID-19 pandemic, agencies involved in the disruption of violent extremism appear to have adapted relatively well.

The effective counterterrorism police unit Densus 88 made changes to its operating procedures and managed to continue its operations. However, Densus officers stated an interest in learning more about relevant emerging best practice from other nations as they adapt to the 'new normal' of living with COVID-19.

Indonesian judicial authorities swiftly moved activities online, and while a broad analysis of this shift is beyond the scope of this assessment, the management of detained terrorism suspects did not appear significantly impacted.

The prison system also took a raft of measures that seems to have prevented a devastating outbreak within its walls. According to the Directorate General of Corrections, there were roughly 200 COVID-19 cases in Indonesian prisons as of August 2020.

Both state and civil society P/CVE activities were affected, but the transition to conducting some activities online may prove to be a useful asset moving forward, particularly as the requisite technology becomes more commonplace. An officer from the Directorate General of Corrections specifically asked if the United Nations could assist with the provision of monitors and webcams.

Strategic communication will likely feature more prominently as a P/CVE strategy following the surge in online activity during the pandemic. The Indonesian government should remember the ultimate impact of so-called 'counter-messaging' campaigns remains largely unproven, and that initiatives in this experimental field will be more effective if led by the youth. Promoting nationalism and Pancasila might sound good to military leaders, but young audiences will be less receptive.

Finally, P/CVE requires greater local ownership in Indonesia. Finding ways of supporting communities to act on their own behalf should be a priority.

⁴² Gubernur Jawa Timur, Peraturan Daerah Provinsi Jawa Timur No.8/2018 Tentang Penyelenggaraan Toleransi Kehidupan Bermasyarakat (19/11/18, Part II, Articles 6-7)

Specific Requests from the Government of Indonesia

- Training/Knowledge transfer on emerging best practice regarding safe, responsible and effective operating procedures for law enforcement and security agencies during the pandemic.
- Assistance with the procurement of monitors and webcams to facilitate online interactions among staff from the Directorate General of Corrections, for inmates to meet family remotely, and for the use by probation officers to engage with their clients more frequently and effectively.

Recommendations for UN Action and Ongoing Emphasis

- Prioritise the development of the BNPT's recent Knowledge Hub initiative, and include as much input as possible, particularly from small community organisations. Explore ways of employing the resource to facilitate collaboration and the outsourcing of certain functions to CSOs with the comparative advantages of local knowledge, networks, and credibility.
- Support and endorse FKPT grassroots endeavour and associated regional academic studies. FKPT forums should involve fewer hotel conferences, more local research, and more informal discussions/trust-building activities in villages/neighbourhoods. Given the 'architecture' already exists, FKPT represents an effective means for promoting more context-specific programmes at the local level.
- Consider developing a programme aimed at improving coordination among civil society organisations working on P/CVE, and effective ways of managing their relationships with state security agencies (and international donor organisations).
- Lobby provincial governments to follow East Java's lead and issue regulations that facilitate multi-stakeholder community engagement and crucial collaborations with small civil society organisations.
- Establish support for the reintegration of violent extremist offenders, which will become an increasingly pertinent issue in the years ahead. BNPT and civil society programmes to manage these transitions are underway, but there is certainly room for additional assistance. Potential programmes should focus on empowering communities to receive these returnees with acceptance and confident plans of action.
- BNPT is beginning to display renewed openness to working more closely with other stakeholders, including small civil society organisations. This dynamic should be encouraged however possible.