

Indonesia: From Vigilantism to Terrorism in Cirebon

I. OVERVIEW

Anti-vice raids and actions against non-Muslim minorities are becoming a path to more violent jihadism in Indonesia. The 2011 suicide bombings of a police mosque in Cirebon, West Java and an evangelical church in Solo, Central Java were carried out by men who moved from using sticks and stones in the name of upholding morality and curbing “deviance” to using bombs and guns. They show how ideological and tactical lines within the radical community have blurred, meaning that counter-terrorism programs that operate on the assumption that “terrorists” are a clearly definable group distinguishable from hard-line activists and religious vigilantes are bound to fail. They also mean that the government must develop a strategy, consistent with democratic values, for countering clerics who use no violence themselves but preach that it is permissible to shed the blood of infidels (*kafir*) or oppressors (*thaghut*), meaning government officials and particularly the police.

These men represent a generational shift from the jihadis trained abroad or who got their first combat experience a decade ago in the two major post-Soeharto communal conflicts in Ambon, Maluku and Poso, Central Sulawesi. They are less skilled, less experienced and less educated than the Afghan and Mindanao alumni, most of them coming from poor backgrounds and relying on petty trade for their livelihood. Most of them were members of the Cirebon branch of the Indonesian Mujahidin Council (Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia, MMI) and Jamaah Ansharut Tauhid (JAT), two organisations led by Abu Bakar Ba’asyir, Indonesia’s most prominent radical cleric, now imprisoned, before leaving to form their own group.

This does not mean that the threat from other groups has disappeared. JAT has active cells in Poso and elsewhere, and the arrest outside Jakarta in July 2011 of Abu Umar, the Mindanao-trained leader of a Darul Islam splinter group, exposed the existence of a large jihadi organisation with a presence in Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines. There are other potential problems from disaffected or isolated members of older groups like Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) that have moved away from violence; fugitives from earlier operations; former high-risk prisoners

or men they recruited inside; younger siblings of slain or detained terrorism suspects; and individuals, including from JAT, who have taken part in Islamist military training (*tadrib*) and want to test their skills. But the Cirebon men represent a path to jihadism that may become the common pattern.

Its members not only absorbed the teachings of radical clerics like Ba’asyir and the even more radical Halawi Makmun, a preacher who argues that the Indonesian government is a legitimate target for attack. They also shared the widespread anger in the radical community over the arrests and deaths of suspected terrorists that arose in the aftermath of the breakup of the training camp in Aceh in February 2010. It is hard to overemphasise the impact these operations had or the desire for revenge they engendered. Because so many people were involved in the camp, from Sumatra, Java and points east, nearly every radical group in the country had a connection to someone who took part or was involved in trying to help fugitives or raise money for the families of those detained or killed. Anger at the police reached new heights, and Ba’asyir’s arrest in August 2010 pushed it further. In Solo, a group called the Hisbah Team (Tim Hisbah) evolved from vigilantism to jihadism as a direct result of anger over post-Aceh police operations.

The fusion of religious vigilantism in the name of upholding morality and orthodoxy with jihadism vastly complicates the government’s counter-radicalisation task. While most people are willing to condemn terrorism, hardline vigilantes often have support from officials in government and quasi-government institutions like the Majelis Ulama Indonesia, especially at a local level.

If the radicalisation of groups like the Cirebon men is to be halted, the government needs to develop a strategy that builds a national consensus on what constitutes extremism; directly confronts “hate speech”; and promotes zero tolerance of religiously-inspired crimes, however minor, including in the course of anti-vice campaigns.

II. THE CIREBON GROUP

The 15 April 2011 bombing of the Adz-Dzikir Mosque at the police command in Cirebon, West Java and the 25 September bombing of the Full Gospel Bethel Church (Gereja Bethel Injil Sepenuh, GBIS) in Solo were carried out by two men, Mohamed Syarif and Pino Damayanta alias Hayat, with the collusion of Syarif's brother. They were not acting on behalf of any organisation but had once been part of a larger group involved first in MMI, then JAT. Some members of that group left JAT in 2010 to found their own more extreme religious study group (*pengajian*) and were involved in separate efforts to produce bombs, though not in plans for the suicide attacks.¹

Through one of its members, the group had links to Tim Hisbah, the Solo-based group of vigilantes-turned-bombers led by Sigit Qordhowi, the scourge of the Solo entertainment industry.² When Tim Hisbah's members were pursued by the police in late 2010, the Cirebon group gave them refuge. After the April mosque bombing, the Solo group returned the favour, helping Cirebon members find housing and work.

The Cirebon group has a distinct socio-economic profile. The average age of the ten men on whom Crisis Group has personal data is 31, and all but two are/were married, including both suicide bombers. Seven were educated at secular state high schools. Syarif, the mosque suicide bomber, was the only one who spent time in an Islamic boarding school; he attended Gontor, the well-known modernist

pesantren in East Java.³ Half did not go beyond junior high. Most were petty traders, selling food on pushcarts, clothes in a night market or pre-paid mobile telephone cards. One rode trains between Cirebon and the next station stop, selling batteries for mobile phones. Another was a factory worker, and one had worked briefly for a coal company in South Kalimantan before returning Cirebon to hawk fried snacks.

A. THE ORIGINS

All members of the Cirebon group entered on their path toward extremism by attending religious study sessions run by a prominent local cleric, Ustadz Salim Bajri.⁴ A scholar of Arab descent, Bajri is a senior teacher at the State Islamic Institute (Institut Agama Islam Negeri, IAIN) in Cirebon, an executive of the local Islamic Scholars Council (Majelis Ulama Indonesia, MUI) and a member of the advisory council of the Cirebon Islamic Center. He has also been a key figure in three of the major hardline advocacy organisations in Cirebon, although he stresses that he has always forbidden violence of any kind, and any act of destruction runs counter to his teachings. He was particularly horrified by the mosque bombing.⁵

In 2001, he was one of the founders of the local branch of MMI and some five years ago sat on the *majelis syuro*, the highest council of the national MMI organisation. In 2004, he set up the Brotherhood of Islam Forum (Forum Ukhuwah Islamiyah, FUI), a coalition aimed at ending immoral-

¹ For more on terrorist networks in Indonesia, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°204, *Indonesian Jihadism: Small Groups, Big Plans*, 19 April 2011; Asia Briefing N°107, *Indonesia: The Dark Side of Jama'ah Ansharut Tauhid (JAT)*, 6 July 2010; Asia Report N°189, *Indonesia: Jihadi Surprise in Aceh*, 20 April 2010; Asia Briefing N°95, *Indonesia: Noordin Top's Support Base*, 27 August 2009; Asia Briefing N°94, *Indonesia: The Hotel Bombings*, 24 July 2009; Asia Briefing N°92, *Indonesia: Radicalisation of the "Palembang Group"*, 20 May 2009; Asia Report N°147, *Indonesia: Jemaah Islamiyah's Publishing Industry*, 28 February 2008; Asia Report N°142, "Deradicalisation" and Indonesian Prisons, 19 November 2007; Asia Briefing N°63, *Indonesia: Jemaah Islamiyah's Current Status*, 3 May 2007; Asia Report N°114, *Terrorism in Indonesia: Noordin's Networks*, 5 May 2006; Asia Report N°92, *Recycling Militants in Indonesia: Darul Islam and the Australian Embassy Bombing*, 22 February 2005; and Asia Report N°83, *Indonesia Backgrounder: Why Salafism and Terrorism Mostly Don't Mix*, 13 September 2004.

² A report released on 25 January 2012 by the Setara Institute, "Organisasi Radikal di Jawa Tengah & Yogyakarta: Relasi dan Transformasi" examines the background of Sigit Qordhowi in more detail, including his relations with other groups in Central Java and his ties to Tim Hisbah.

³ Of the remaining two, one attended a state madrasa (Islamic day school) to the junior high school level; another attended a school run by Muhammadiyah, a large Islamic social organisation.

⁴ Salim's rise to prominence is the story of the rise of radicalism in Cirebon more generally. In the 1980s, he befriended a businessman of Chinese descent, M. Susilawan Yukeng, a contractor for Pertamina in Indramayu, West Java. In 1983 Yukeng's business rivals, who were close to the New Order government, unfairly linked him to a theft at the state oil company, Pertamina, and his business collapsed. He sought solace by studying Islam and, at the end of Ramadan 1983, became a Muslim, in part under the guidance of Salim Bajri. Haji Yukeng, as he became known, then set up the Majelis Taklim Hidayatullah in Cirebon, a religious group with a distinct anti-government stance – it was known as the anti-Golkar *taklim* – that quickly grew to have a membership in the thousands. It drew on the influence of popular conservative preachers, including Salim Bajri, FPI founder Habib Rizieq, Syarifin Maloko, Abdul Qadir Djaelani and others. The three organisations Salim helped establish after the New Order fell – the Cirebon branch of MMI in 2001, FUI in 2004 and GAPAS in 2005 – all drew on alumni of Majelis Taklim Hidayatullah. See "Radikalisme Agama di Jabotabek dan Jawa Barat: Implikasinya terhadap Jaminan Kebebasan Beragama/Berkeyakinan", Setara Institute, 22 December 2010.

⁵ Crisis Group telephone interview, KH. Salim Bajri, 23 January 2012.

ity and “Christianisation” in Cirebon; it included the local branch of the Islamic Defenders Front (Front Pembela Islam, FPI), the country’s best-known group of religious vigilantes, and a group called the Anti-Vice Movement (Gerakan Anti-Maksiat, GAMAS). In 2005, he established the Front Against Apostasy and Deviant Sects (Gerakan Anti Pemurtadan dan Aliran Sesat, GAPAS) as a subsidiary of FUI. In 2008, when Abu Bakar Ba’asyir left MMI to form JAT, Bajri was not interested in following; he did not see JAT as very important.⁶ In November 2009 he brought influential local clerics together to establish the Cirebon Ulama Forum, with the aim of strengthening anti-vice campaigns and turning Cirebon into an area where conservative Islamic norms would prevail.⁷

Notable actions of GAPAS and FUI include closing down Cahaya TV, a Cirebon television station run by neo-Pentecostal Christians, in April 2008, accusing it of proselytising; various efforts to forcibly shut Protestant meeting halls on the grounds that they had no permits to act as houses of worship; working with the police to break up the “Surga Eden” sect in Mundu, Cirebon in January 2010; attacks on Ahmadiyah members in Manis Lor, Kuningan in July 2010; vandalising the Karaoke Fantasy club in January 2010; attacks on Alfamart stores that sold beer in September 2010; efforts in May 2011 to prevent an Easter celebration from being held, even though the group involved had a permit; and joint raids with the police to ban alcohol in Gunungjati subdistrict.⁸ The striking aspect of GAPAS and FUI is how closely they have worked with local authorities, despite their clearly extra-legal activities.

B. FROM MMI TO JAT

Salim Bajri’s *pengajian* met every Friday night at the Asy-Syafi’iyah Mosque in Cirebon. Syarif and his brother, Achmad Basuki, may have been among the first of the group to join; Achmad recalls that he started attending in 2001, soon after MMI was formed, when he was still in high school.⁹ Most of the others – Heru Komaruddin alias

Firmansyah, Hayat (the Solo church bomber), Musolah, Darno, Arief Budiman and Yadi al-Hasan – joined between 2004 and 2006. Bajri remembers Syarif and Musolah well, though there were usually around 200 people in attendance; he said they always sat in front and asked the most questions.¹⁰ Most of the group became members or sympathisers of MMI, and at least four – Musolah, Yadi al-Hasan, Heru and Darno – joined its security unit (*laskar*), taking part in anti-vice raids in the name of *amar ma’ruf nahi munkar* (the principle of commanding right and forbidding wrong).¹¹

Some also took part in quasi-paramilitary training (*tadrib*) conducted by MMI headquarters. In early 2007, for example, the Cirebon MMI branch sent Musolah and Yadi al-Hasan, together with *laskar* leader Andi Mulya (also the field coordinator of GAPAS) and another prominent member, Agung Nur Alam, to a two-day training for about 120 men in Sukabumi, West Java.¹² In addition to physical fitness and martial arts exercises, well-known MMI clerics came to give religious instruction, among them Abu Jibril, a former JI member; Halawi Makmun, then head of MMI’s Sharia (Islamic law) department; and Mustaqin Muzayin, a teacher at Ba’asyir’s al-Mukmin Pesantren in Ngruki, Solo. The focus was on the importance of military training to upholding Islamic law. Musolah was selected with three others for a second training at the end of 2007 at MMI headquarters in Yogyakarta, with Ba’asyir himself delivering a lecture that stressed the need to oppose *thaghut*.¹³

When Ba’asyir left MMI in 2008 to form Jamaah Ansharut Tauhid (JAT), the Cirebon radical community also split. Musolah, Yadi, Syarif and their friends left MMI to form JAT Cirebon in early 2009 and joined a *pengajian* that met twice a week at the al-Zaitun Mosque in Cirebon with about 35 participants.¹⁴ Bajri believes they were also

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ <http://matahari199.wordpress.com/2009/11/24/ulama-wilayah-iii-cirebon-satukan-tekad-untuk-amar-ma%E2%80%99ruf-nahi-munkar/>. Participants at the meeting, which took place at the house of KH. Makhtum Hanan of Pesantren Masyariqul Anwar in Babakan, Ciwaringin, included in addition to the host, KH. Dabas (Plered), KH. Hasan bin Abu Bakar (Benda Kerep), KH. Affandi (Indramayu) and KH. Jamhuri (Majalengka).

⁸ “Cahaya TV Cirebon Disegel Massa Karena Dianggap Menyebarkan Agama”, detik.com, 16 April 2008; “Hard-line groups renew attack on Ahmadiyah”, *Jakarta Post*, 30 July 2010; “Heboh Aliran sesat Surga Eden”, suara-islam.com, 23 January 2010; “Polisi dan ormas Islam razia miras”, *Pikiran Rakyat*, 11 December 2011.

⁹ Interrogation deposition of Achmad Basuki, 23 April 2011.

¹⁰ Crisis Group telephone interview, KH. Salim Bajri, 23 January 2012.

¹¹ This principle is common to Islamist organisations that wish to engage the community in a struggle for Islamic law. See Roel Meijer, “Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong as a Principle of Social Action: The Case of the Egyptian al-Jama’at al-Islamiyya”, in Roel Meijer (ed.), *Global Salafism* (New York, 2009).

¹² Interrogation deposition of Musolah, 6 May 2011. There were 120 participants from various MMI branches, with each branch sending between four and eight people.

¹³ Ibid. *Thaghut* literally refers to someone who worships anything other than Allah; it is a term used by radicals to describe Muslim government officials who act on the basis of man-made rather than God-given law or in a way perceived to be antithetical to Muslim interests. In the jihadi interpretation of the *Quran*, *thaghut* are legitimate targets of attack.

¹⁴ There is no link between this mosque and the well-known *pesantren* of the same name in the nearby town of Indramayu.

unhappy that he, as a lecturer at a state university, was a civil servant. "I told them they might as well live in the jungle if they didn't like the government, since it's the government that provides roads, water and electricity. Just go to the jungle!"¹⁵

Agung Nur Alim, the leader of the breakaway *pengajian*, eventually became the JAT amir of the Cirebon region. Once a month, Halawi Makmun came to give a special study course, with the discussion often focused on the conditions under which Muslims could be considered *kafir* and the obligation to wage jihad against Islam's enemies.¹⁶ Another frequent speaker was Ustadz Irfan, a JAT activist from Tasikmalaya. Several of the group members also routinely attended the *pengajian* of radical cleric Aman Abdurrahman at Mesjid As Sunnah, Cibiru, Bandung where they met followers of Aman from different cities.¹⁷ In late 2009, Yadi al-Hasan, inspired by a jihad how-to manual called *Sel Tauhid* that he had found on the internet, decided to form a separate cell to wage jihad in the form of secret killings (*ightiyalat*) and invited six friends from JAT to join him.¹⁸ The group did not include the two men who later became suicide bombers, Syarif and Hayat, or Syarif's brother Achmad, but Yadi's group continued to meet these three in the course of routine JAT activities.¹⁹

In early 2010, JAT held military training in Telaga Herang, Majalengka, West Java for about a dozen men, including Syarif, his brother; and two of Yadi's men. This was fol-

lowed by a training session in Gunung Ceremai, Cirebon some months later that included most of Yadi's group. The seven men also continued to take part in JAT anti-vice raids.²⁰

On 19 September 2010, GAPAS led a group of raiders in an attack on three Alfamart stores (a mini-market chain) in Cirebon that sold alcohol, smashing beer bottles and causing significant damage.²¹ Among the attackers were Agung Nur Alam, Musolah, Syarif and Hayat, all acting in the name not of JAT but of "al-Zaitun Mosque Youth", after the place where the JAT weekly meetings were held. Agung and five others were arrested and later tried and imprisoned; Syarif, Hayat and Musolah were placed on the police wanted list.

To escape arrest, Syarif and Hayat fled to Bandung, where Hayat's brother was staying. The latter moved out shortly after they arrived, and the two fugitives used the empty house to practice bomb-making. Yadi and Musolah fled to Tasikmalaya, West Java where they stayed with Ustad Irfan, head of the local JAT branch, who had been arrested with Ba'asyir in August but was quickly released. Through Irfan, they met a man named Dadang who recently had been released from prison for illegal possession of arms. This was almost certainly Dadang Hafidz, a Darul Islam member arrested in 2003 and released around 2008 who had once worked as a gun dealer in Bandung. Musolah told him he might be in the market, and they exchanged telephone numbers.²²

By November 2010, all of Yadi's group were back in Cirebon, more radical than ever, and local police seemed to have lost interest in pursuing the Alfamart case. Deep ideological differences developed with Agung, now in prison, reflecting the increasing acceptance by Yadi's group of the teachings of Aman Abdurrahman and Halawi Makmun. Yadi criticised JAT for its demonstrations demanding Ba'asyir's release. Not only were demonstrations a form of activity not undertaken in the time of the Prophet and thus an unwarranted innovation (*bid'ah*), he argued, but making demands on a *thaghut* government was also impermissible – a *thaghut* should be attacked, not appealed to.²³

In addition, Yadi, following Halawi, criticised Ba'asyir for using the Muslim Defence Team (TPM), the lawyers known for their defence of alleged terrorists. To have

The course was built around a book by the Egyptian radical Abdul Qadir bin Abdul Aziz, better known as Dr Fadl, entitled *Faith and Infidels (Iman dan Kuffur)*. The title of the original Arabic in Indonesian translation is *Al Jami Fi Qalbi Ilmi Asharif*.¹⁵ Crisis Group telephone interview, KH. Salim Bajri, 23 January 2012.

¹⁶ Interrogation deposition of Musolah, op. cit.

¹⁷ Aman Abdurrahman is an Arabic linguist who became an influential cleric in part through his prolific translations of the Jordanian scholar Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi. In the tracts translated into Indonesian, Al-Maqdisi argued for more attention to the iniquities of oppressive regimes at home rather than more distant enemies abroad. Aman Abdurrahman was arrested in 2004 for having run a bomb-making class outside Jakarta. He was released in 2008, only to be rearrested in 2010 in connection with the Aceh training camp.

¹⁸ Yadi's interrogation deposition calls the book *Sel Jihad*, but it has to be *Sel Tauhid*, a manual translated from the Arabic that was in wide circulation in Indonesian jihadi circles from late 2003 onwards. It contains detailed guidelines for how to set up a cell, the need to keep it small but have a division of labour with specialists in computer skills, bomb-making and intelligence, and even how to dispose of evidence if the police should come knocking. A copy of *Sel Tauhid* can be found on the websites www.ashhabulkahfi.com and <http://jahizuna.com/node/154>.

¹⁹ They were Musolah, Heru Komaruddin (married to Musolah's sister), Ishak Andriana, Darno, Rizal and Agung Brownis, also known as Agung Firmansyah.

²⁰ Interrogation deposition of Beni Asri, October 2011 (Crisis Group copy missing cover page with date).

²¹ "3 Alfamart di Cirebon diserbu dan dijarah puluhan Ninja", *Pos Kota*, 19 September 2010.

²² Interrogation deposition of Musolah, op. cit.

²³ "Menurai Polemik 'Takfir' Para Aktivis Bom Masjid Cirebon", *voa-islam.com*, 22 October 2011.

counsel at all was to submit to *thaghut* law; Ba'asyir, he argued, should have rejected a trial. He also subscribed to Halawi's teachings on the concept of *mesjid dhiror* – mosques that were legitimate targets of attack because they were used to divide the faithful. Agung, by contrast, stayed loyal to Ba'asyir.²⁴

Yadi's group decided to break completely with JAT. The seven members began meeting regularly at Yadi's house and called themselves Ashabul Kahfi, literally "people of the cave", a reference to the Quranic story of the seven sleepers.²⁵ There was ongoing contact between its members and Syarif and Hayat, but they were attracted to different forms of jihad: Yadi's group to secret killings, Syarif and Hayat to suicide bombings.

By January 2011, Ashabul Kahfi had taken on a little more structure, in accordance with that outlined in the *Sel Tauhid* manual. Yadi was amir, Musolah was deputy amir and arms procurer, Rizal was secretary and computer specialist, Darno was intelligence, Agung was the driver and Heru and Ishak were assigned to learn bomb-making. Their instructor was a member of a group based in Solo, Central Java, called Tim Hisbah, another anti-vice group that had turned toward terrorism.

III. ASHABUL KAHFI AND TIM HISBAH

Tim Hisbah, led by Sigit Qordowi, first came to police attention in late 2010, after some of its members joined a group from Klaten calling itself the Assassination Team (Tim Ightiyalat) in a series of bungled bomb attacks on churches and police posts.²⁶ Until that point, Sigit, a large, imposing man who sold honey for a living, had a reputation more of being a fanatic moralist than a jihadi, leading troops of anti-vice vigilantes in sweeps against bars, brothels and gambling dens.²⁷ He was also active in anti-"Christianisation" activities.

Born Sigit Herawan Wijayanto in 1975, he did not come from a particularly religious background, and in his university days he had been a vocalist with a rock band. He reportedly became more pious after his marriage. From about 2000 onwards, he founded a series of vigilante groups under different names, with Tim Hisbah, also known as

Laskar Hisbah, the latest, started around 2008. He became well-known in the community, to the point that like-minded neighbourhood leaders would call in his troops if they wanted a party stopped or got wind of some other iniquity. He reportedly was not above extorting protection fees from his targets, however, and he was also suspected of playing both sides with the police, to the point that some suspected him of having links to local police intelligence.²⁸ Unlike most jihadis, who shun any involvement in the political system, he had also dabbled in politics, heading the neighbourhood office of the Islamist Crescent-Star Party (Partai Bulan Bintang) from 1999 to 2004.²⁹

In 2005, he led an attack on Warung Doyong in Sukoharjo, a small store suspected of selling alcohol. For the destruction caused, he was sentenced to five months in prison, but was soon out and back on a moralist warpath. Every Saturday night he would send out his men to police the area around Solo and Sukoharjo, particularly to break up drinking parties. In early 2010, one of his followers said that he always instructed them before going out that they should never carry sharp weapons, must obey traffic regulations and never take more than one person on the back of a motorcycle.³⁰ His concern about orderly behaviour contrasts sharply with his decision to turn against the government only a few months later.

The story of how he came to be linked to the Cirebon group – even at one stage inaccurately being called the "mastermind" of the Cirebon police mosque bombing by a police spokesman after he was killed in a police operation in May 2011 – begins with the Cirebon JAT and Ashabul Kahfi member Musolah.

A. MUSOLAH, TIM HISBAH AND THE SEARCH FOR GUNS

In early 2010, Musolah and his wife, a regular *pengajian* participant and sister of JAT member Heru Komaruddin, decided to move to Solo temporarily to deepen their religious knowledge.³¹ They found a place to rent for four months, and while they earned enough to get by selling fried chicken and coconut drinks on a pushcart, they looked for discussion groups to attend with teachers from JI or JAT. One group they joined was a *pengajian* at the al-Ikhlâs Mosque led by Ustad Abdul Kholiq, a publisher married to the younger sister of JAT leader Lutfi Hadaeroh alias

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ The reference is to verses 9-26 of *Surat al-Kahf* that tells of seven men, persecuted for their faith, who took refuge in a cave, slept 300 years and found when they woke up that the surrounding area had become Muslim.

²⁶ See Crisis Group Report, *Indonesian Jihadism: Small Groups, Big Plans*, op. cit., pp. 13-14.

²⁷ "Sigit Sering Lakukan Operasi Pekat di Solo", *Suara Merdeka*, 16 May 2011.

²⁸ "Sosok Sigit Qordhowi", www.muslimdaily.net, 20 May 2011.

²⁹ Some media accounts say he led the PBB office from 2004 to 2008.

³⁰ Interrogation deposition of Nanang Irawan alias Nang Ndu, October 2011 (Crisis Group copy missing cover page with date).

³¹ Of all the members of the Cirebon group, Musolah was the least educated; he left elementary school at the age of thirteen to work in a rattan factory.

Ubaid, one of the Aceh camp leaders.³² They also joined discussion groups led by Sigit Qordowi at the Arafah and Al-Anshor Mosques in the Pasar Kliwon area of Solo. Every Saturday night, Musolah would join Sigit's anti-vice raids, and he came to be friends with a Tim Hisbah member, Edy Jablay.³³ At one point they had a discussion about how to find guns, and Edy said he heard West Java was the place to go – perhaps because the government munitions plant, PT Pindad, is there or because of the homemade gun industry close by.³⁴

In the meantime, in Solo, the tone of Sigit's lectures had changed. In the aftermath of the breakup of the Aceh camp and the arrest of Ba'asyir, he told his followers that the mujahidin at the camp were the true defenders of Islam and that the *thaghut* who attacked them – the police, army, prosecutors, judges, members of parliament and anyone who helped them – were the enemy. Now, said Sigit, was the time to wage jihad in Indonesia. He no longer banned the use of sharp weapons in raids, saying his men should have them for self-defence.³⁵

On 29 September 2010, Tim Hisbah joined other radical groups, including many jihadis, in the Solo area in a mass demonstration to greet the body of Yuki Wantoro, a young convert to Islam killed by police in an anti-terrorist operation in North Sumatra. It turned out Yuki was a member of Tim Hisbah. His burial, and the widespread belief that a young innocent had been senselessly killed, generated more anger against the police.³⁶

In October 2010, Tim Hisbah took a "pledge to the death" to mount an urban war on police.³⁷ Sigit ordered two of his followers, Nang Ndut and Ari Budi Santoso, to study

bomb-making with Tim Ightiyalat in Klaten.³⁸ He also sent Edy Jablay to Cirebon in December to work through Musolah to get arms. Musolah then contacted Dadang in Bandung, and obtained a few guns from him. Through Yadi, he also contacted Zulkifli Lubis alias Lebah, a follower of Aman Abdurrahman and dealer of airsoft guns, who was a business associate of one of the key figures in the Aceh training camp, Sofyan Tsauri.³⁹

The way in which the Cirebon group made contact with Zulkifli reveals much about the ease of communication across organisations – and how prisons become meeting grounds. In mid-January 2011, Yadi, through Facebook, had made contact with Zaki Rahmatullah, one of the Ring Banten members involved in the Aceh camp who was detained at Jakarta police headquarters. He asked if Zaki could obtain guns, and Zaki suggested he could. Sometime shortly thereafter, Zulkifli Lubis came to police headquarters to visit another friend detained in connection with Aceh, Hari Budiman. Hari introduced Zulkifli to Zaki, and Zaki asked him if he had access to real as opposed to airsoft guns. When Zulkifli said yes, Zaki said he had a prospective buyer. He took Zulkifli's phone number and told him to wait for a text message from someone using his name as a reference. It was Musolah who texted him and subsequently arranged to purchase guns and ammunition.⁴⁰

B. MUTUAL AID

In late January, police arrested members of the Klaten group for a series of attempted bombings that killed no one and caused only minor damage. But since Tim Hisbah had been a partner in crime, Sigit instructed his two followers who had worked on the bombings, Nang Ndut and Ari Budi Santoso, to flee Solo. Their fellow Hisbah member, Edy Jablay, brought them to Cirebon and asked Musolah's help in hiding them.

³² At the time they moved to Solo, the operation against the Aceh camp, which Ubaid led, had not yet taken place. Musolah in his interrogation deposition says he and his wife studied Islamic law on jihad (*fiqh jihad*) with Abdul Kholiq. For more on the Aceh camp see Crisis Group Asia Report N°189, *Indonesia: Jihadi Surprise in Aceh*, 20 April 2010.

³³ Edy Jablay was born on 3 April 1976. He left school after finishing at state junior high school and worked selling scrap iron. He married in 2005 but later divorced. He never left the neighbourhood where he was born and never had any specialised religious or military training.

³⁴ See Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°109, *Illicit Arms in Indonesia*, 6 September 2010.

³⁵ Interrogation deposition of Nanang Irawan, op. cit.

³⁶ Yuki Wantoro, 20, from Pasar Kliwon, Solo, was shot on 19 September 2010, when police arrested a number of suspects in the August robbery of the CIMB Niaga Bank in Medan. Some of the robbers had been involved in the Aceh training camp. Yuki's family later said he had been in Solo on the day of the robbery. He had converted to Islam four years earlier.

³⁷ Interrogation deposition of Nanang Irawan, op. cit.

³⁸ They in turn had acquired their bomb-making knowledge from a released former associate of Noordin Top, Heru Sigu Samboja alias Soghir, who was rearrested in June 2010. Fortunately, either Soghir was not a good instructor, the instruction was too cursory or his students were not very smart; in any case the skills passed on were not high.

³⁹ Zulkifli Lubis alias Abu Irbah alias Lebah was born in Bima on 5 February 1982. He went to private madrasas to the high school level, then graduated from LIPIA, a language academy affiliated to Ibn Saud University in Saudi Arabia, with a diploma in Arabic. He became a follower of Aman Abdurrahman in 2009 and also attended discussion groups run by Abu Jibril in Pamulang, Jakarta. In January 2010 he took part in a discussion group led by KOMPAK leader Abdullah Sunata, newly released from prison, at Sofyan Tsauri's house.

⁴⁰ Interrogation depositions of Dzulkipli Lubis alias Abu Irbah, 9 May 2011; Yadi al-Hasan, October 2011; and Musolah, 6 May 2011.

For the first few months, they rarely left their rented house. Yadi eventually allowed them to attend the discussion group at his house and then in early April 2011 decided they could be usefully employed in teaching two Ashabul Kahfi members, Heru Komarudin and Ishak Andriana, to make bombs. Ishak took the first fruits of their labour back to his home in Garut to test and sent a message back to Cirebon that he had done so successfully shortly before 15 April, the day that the police mosque was bombed.

IV. THE BOMBING OF THE POLICE MOSQUE IN CIREBON

At the same time, Mohammed Syarif, his brother, Achmad Basuki, and Hayat were also furthering their arms-making skills. In February 2010, they successfully made a “pen gun”, shaped like a ballpoint pen, that they tested in the yard behind the house of Syarif’s in-laws.⁴¹

From early 2011, Syarif became obsessed with martyrdom and talked repeatedly about waging jihad through suicide bombing (*istisyahadat*). He was also concerned about his brother’s religious education, asking him how far he had progressed in his study of the *Quran* and instructing him on jihad. He introduced Achmad to the concept of *mesjid dhiror* and said all government mosques fell in this category and should be destroyed; anyone who worshiped in them was a *kafir*. Achmad said he wanted at the time to argue back but did not have the religious citations (*dalil*) to do so.⁴²

About two weeks before the mosque bombing, Syarif came to Achmad’s house and spoke of his intention to undertake a suicide bombing because this was the only way to wage jihad. He would not tell Achmad more.⁴³ On 2 April, Syarif wanted to test one of his homemade guns in what he thought was a deserted area and got Achmad to go with him. But an alert soldier eating at a food stall they passed stopped them and asked to see their ID cards. Syarif gave a signal to Achmad, and they separately tackled the soldier and food stall owner. Syarif stabbed the soldier repeatedly, then slit his throat with a saw-toothed knife, nearly decapitating him.⁴⁴ The dead man was Corporal Sutedjo, assigned to the district military command 0620 in Cirebon. Achmad punched the other man until he lost consciousness, then Syarif slit his throat as well. Police found Syarif’s ID at the scene and went to the address listed, but neighbours said they had not seen him in

months.⁴⁵ In a video – one of 35 – found on Syarif’s mobile phone after the mosque bombing, he boasted of the crime, saying he had confronted the *thaghut* directly.⁴⁶

On 8 April, Syarif stopped by Achmad’s house again and told his brother to pray for him. He said he had told his wife that he was going away to look for work, then asked Achmad for forgiveness and hugged him. Their last communication was on 13 April, when Syarif called him to say that everything was ready, not to worry, and that he would drop some things off for him at the home of a mutual friend, Arief Budiman.

On 15 April, around 11:30am, Syarif, accompanied by his friend Hayat, stopped by Arief’s house to leave a backpack and his motorcycle. Arief asked him where he was going, and Syarif answered, “far away”. Before leaving he asked Arief if anyone could attend Friday prayers at the police mosque, and Arief told him yes – which suggested that Syarif, for all his determination to be a martyr, was not particularly well-prepared, if he did not even know a basic fact about his intended target.⁴⁷

Wearing an explosives-packed vest, he then proceeded to the mosque and blew himself up, injuring dozens including the police chief but causing no other deaths. Hayat went to a mosque at the army’s Air Defence Artillery command (Artileri Pertahanan Udara, ARHANUD) to do the same but lost his nerve. (He told one friend that he saw many schoolchildren and ordinary citizens around and could not do it; he told another he was simply scared.)⁴⁸ He then stopped by the police mosque just after Syarif’s bomb had gone off. Many police were outside, and he knew that if he detonated the bomb then, he could kill them, but again he hesitated.⁴⁹ Eventually he went back to Arief’s house, with his vest still on.

He was there when Achmad Basuki stopped by the house to pick up his brother’s belongings. When the television news came on about the bombing, Hayat, Achmad Basuki and Arief knew that Syarif was the bomber. Yadi’s group did

⁴¹ Interrogation deposition of Achmad Basuki, op. cit.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ “Syarif Diduga Buron Kasus Pembunuhan Anggota TNI”, *Media Indonesia*, 17 April 2011.

⁴⁶ “Syarif Akui Gorok Leher Anggota TNI Pakai Pisau Gerigi”, *tribunnews.com*, 19 May 2011.

⁴⁷ Syarif also left a last testament of sorts scribbled in the back of a book called *Jihad in Central Asia (Jihad di Asia Tengah)*, a chapter from a longer work by Abu Musab al-Suri translated from Arabic into Indonesian. The note read: “With the willingness of Allah, I die as a martyr, not because I want to be called a mujahid [holy warrior] but because the honour of martyrdom is close to my heart. ... My message is ‘Our life in this world is truly just a façade’”. See “Ini Wasiat Sang Bomber, M. Syarif”, *www.annah.com*, 20 April 2011.

⁴⁸ Interrogation deposition of Yadi al-Hasan, op. cit.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

not know of the plans but quickly recognised the photograph of the dead bomber shown on Indonesian television.

When Achmad inspected the backpack Syarif had left behind, he found that it contained seven bombs ready to use. He asked Arief to keep it for him, intending to come back and remove both it and the motorcycle, but he and other family members were taken by police to Jakarta before he could do anything. Arief called his *pengajian* friends, Musolah and Yadi, for help in disposing of the bombs. At first the two friends thought they might have a use for them, but after Arief was arrested, on 19 April, Musolah threw them into the Pamijahan River. He also arranged a meeting, at Hayat's request, with Yadi because with Syarif dead, Hayat wanted to join Yadi's group. Yadi says he was non-committal but agreed to help Hayat find a place to stay in Solo, through Musolah's connections with Tim Hisbah.⁵⁰

Yadi and his friends quickly realised that even if they had not known of Syarif's and Hayat's plans, they were too much part of the same circle for comfort. They also felt they had an obligation to help friends in trouble. On 16 April, the day after the bombing, Musolah brought Hayat for his own safety to the house that the men from Tim Hisbah, Nang Ndut and Ari Budi Santoso, were renting. He also took the bombs that Ishak and Heru had made, together with Hayat's unused vest, and gave them to a friend for safekeeping.

On 17 April, Yadi called Edy Jablay and asked his help finding housing in Solo. Edy had seen the news and immediately left for Cirebon. He agreed to help find a place to stay in Solo for Hayat and Yadi where they could set themselves up as *bakso* (meatball) sellers.

Musolah went to Bandung, West Java, where he met up with another friend from Tim Hisbah who was still looking for arms on Sigit's instructions. He contacted Zulkifli Lubis again, went to Jakarta to pick up a grenade and some bullets for Sigit, then eventually made his way to Tegal, Central Java, where he was arrested on 2 May.⁵¹

Yadi and Hayat realised Solo was also unsafe. Hayat decided to try to find work elsewhere – he told one friend he was going to Kalimantan, where he and his parents had lived as transmigrants, another that he was going to Karanganyar, a town to the east of Solo. Yadi went off to Bandung.⁵²

On 12 May, police arrested Edy Jablay, Ari Budi Santoso and a number of their friends; they shot and killed Sigit Qordhowi, his bodyguard and a bystander in the same operation.

V. BOMBING OF THE BETHEL CHURCH AND “LONE WOLVES”

For months after Sigit's death, all was quiet. Then on 25 September 2011, a suicide bomber struck the GBIS church in Kepunton, Solo as a Sunday service was concluding. This time it was Hayat, who finally summoned up the nerve to go ahead with the attack. He killed only himself but wounded some two dozen others, a few seriously. Had he been earlier, or chosen a different door, the damage would have been much worse.

The bombing came shortly after an explosion of violence in Ambon, Maluku on 11 September, which many in the hardline Muslim community blamed on Christians.⁵³ The violence was apparently one factor leading Hayat to select the church as a target, but GBIS was also known among Muslims locally for its efforts to seek converts.⁵⁴ It remains unclear whether Hayat acted entirely on his own or had assistance from any friends in Tim Hisbah or elsewhere. According to Yadi, Syarif had taught Hayat how to make bombs, and they had produced a few when Hayat was living in Bandung.⁵⁵

There is much discussion in terrorism literature on “lone wolves” and warnings from the U.S. and elsewhere that increasingly the danger of terrorism attacks is coming from individuals acting on their own, with no known affiliations to extremist networks.⁵⁶ Syarif and Hayat were lone wolves only in the narrowest sense. They were part of a larger circle that began to cohere in Salim Bajri's *pengajian* in Cirebon and became progressively more radical through involvement in MMI and JAT. They and Yadi's group were exposed to extremist ideology in public and at the same time as many others of roughly the same age and background; they do not fit the stereotype of loners hunched over computers becoming radicalised on their own and deciding to become suicide bombers after trolling

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Interrogation deposition of Musolah, 6 May 2011.

⁵² “Sering rebut dengan mertua karena berselisih paham”, *Radar Banten*, 27 September 2011.

⁵³ Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°128, *Indonesia: Trouble Again in Ambon*, 4 October 2011.

⁵⁴ See *ibid*, p. 8, for a statement issued on 28 September 2011 linking Hayat's actions to Ambon.

⁵⁵ Interrogation deposition of Yadi al-Hasan, *op. cit.* The exact dates when Hayat was living in Bandung and reportedly learning from Syarif how to make bombs are unclear.

⁵⁶ “Napolitano: Lone Wolf Terror Threat Growing”, CBS News, 2 December 2011.

through online chats.⁵⁷ The government could in fact do much more to counter the kind of radicalisation that the Cirebon group experienced.

VI. JIHADISM, VIGILANTISM AND ISLAMIST CIVIL SOCIETY

The merging of agendas of jihadi, vigilante and hardline civil society groups has been a gradual process. Jihadi groups, for example, have frequently decried moral decadence – it was no accident that the targets for the first Bali bombs in 2002 were a bar and nightclub favoured by Westerners – but they had bigger goals than stopping vice. As a covert organisation, Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) was not interested in trying to build street support through demonstrations and protests or use its highly trained men for bar-bashing. Laskar Jundullah in Sulawesi had an overlay of jihadism on what was largely a civil society base: initially set up as the security detail for a mass pro-Sharia organisation, it moved into anti-vice campaigns and was drawn into violence by the Ambon and Poso conflicts; some of its members were then involved in the 2002 bombings in Makassar of a McDonald's restaurant and an auto showroom. One of the clearest examples of the merging of jihadism and Islamist civil society was a Singaporean JI fugitive's recruitment in 2007 of members of an anti-apostasy organisation, FAKTA, in Palembang.⁵⁸

Several factors have facilitated the collaboration since, including the proliferation of hardline non-governmental organisations, the jihadis' focus on domestic targets and the popularity of public religious lectures (*taklim*) for religious instruction and social networking. The Cirebon group was the product of all three.

A. PROLIFERATION OF ORGANISATIONS

Ten years ago, the archetype of the jihadis was JI and of the hardline activists, the Islamic Defenders Front (Front Pembela Islam, FPI). While both were committed to the application and enforcement of Islamic law, the similarities ended there. JI was clandestine; FPI operated openly. JI was committed to replacing the government with an

Islamic state; FPI began as an extension of state security forces and was if anything ultranationalist, not rebellious. JI had a clear ideology in which jihad played a central role; FPI's activities were built around the general principle of "commanding right and forbidding wrong" (*amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*). JI required a long indoctrination process for members before induction; FPI was far less rigorous, with a membership that drew heavily on poorly educated urban gang members. JI's military training included sniper shooting and bomb-making to build combat capacity; FPI relied on sticks and stones to bash up bars and brothels. There was little or no overlap between them, and the government on occasion – and unsuccessfully – tried to use FPI leaders to woo young men away from JI.⁵⁹

Over time, the map of radical Islam in Indonesia has become far more complex. On the jihadi side, JI has weakened and splintered, the result of ten years of anti-terrorist operations, leadership loss and internal rifts. None of the groups that have arisen since have had the same combination of size, depth of leadership, ideological rigour, geographical scope, international linkages, or commitment to training, supported by a network of schools.

JAT comes closest, but it is a very different phenomenon. Ostensibly an above-ground advocacy organisation for the application of Islamic law, it has had from the beginning a clandestine military component whose members have taken part in organised military training and occasionally in violence, with or without direct orders from above.⁶⁰ It exemplifies the blend of jihadism and vigilantism and has a *hisbah* (morality department), committed to enforcing the *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* principle through mass actions. One of JAT's primary contributions to radicalisation has been the sponsorship of *taklim* across the country by extremist preachers who have encouraged attendees to see the Indonesian government as the enemy. These *taklim* have replaced Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) as a primary vehicle for recruitment, but it is not so much that preachers identify likely cadres at these meetings as that action-oriented young people can find the leaders they are seeking and form their own cells.

⁵⁷ There have been only two genuine lone wolf attempts in Indonesia thus far, both largely failures: the attempted bombing in Jakarta of an A&W restaurant in November 2006 and the "bicycle bomber" who tried to deliver a crude bomb to a police post, also in Jakarta, in September 2010. Not much is known about Mohammed Nuh, the A&W bomber; the "bicycle bomber" was an Acehnese apparently angry over police operations after the break-up of the Aceh training camp.

⁵⁸ Crisis Group Report, *Indonesia: Radicalisation of the "Palembang Group"*, op. cit.

⁵⁹ A possible exception is the arrest of two local FPI men in Pekalongan for helping hide jihadi leader and ex-JI member Noordin Top in 2005. They were drawn in through Said Sungkar, a local notable with ties both to the jihadi community and FPI. In late 2006, police invited Habib Rizieq, FPI's leader, to Central Sulawesi to try and persuade young men recruited into JI's local affiliate that their jihad should be directed at alcohol, not Christians.

⁶⁰ See Crisis Group Briefing, *Indonesia: The Dark Side of Jama'ah Ansharut Tauhid (JAT)*, op. cit. Also, JAT members arrested in connection with the shooting of two policemen in Palu, Central Sulawesi in May 2011 provided information on the formation of military units in JAT under the guidance of JAT headquarters.

The concept of *jihad fardiyah* (individual jihad) has also found its way into Indonesian jihadi thinking: the notion that if war against Islam's enemies is an obligation for all Muslims, then it is permissible to wage it without a large organisation or a command from an imam.⁶¹ Two or three people, even single individuals, working on their own can contribute to the global jihad. Small groups are thus ideologically justified, even if the primary reason for their emergence may be the desire to avoid detection or the failure of larger organisations to satisfy the thirst of younger militants for action.

As for the hardline Islamist activists, their numbers have skyrocketed, a result in part of the post-Soeharto flowering of civil society organisations, but also perhaps an indirect consequence of decentralisation. With the advent in 2005 of direct local elections including at the district level, hardline groups have found it expedient to lobby locally for policy changes, from banning alcohol to closing Ahmadiyah mosques. As in other democracies, politicians are most open to influence in the run-up to elections, and local groups are likely to carry more weight than outsiders, although support from national organisations for local causes can also be effective. *Amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* morality campaigns also tend to work better at the local level, with locals mobilised to undertake raids on known dens of iniquity or join protests against local Christian, Ahmadiyah or, more rarely, Shi'a institutions. Many municipalities and districts may have their local branch of FPI but also boast their own various mosque youth groups, anti-apostasy organisations and Islamist forums and fronts that find sympathetic officials to support their efforts.

The proliferation of groups has facilitated coalition-building between jihadis, particularly JAT, and hardline activists for specific causes. This was apparent in Bekasi, outside Jakarta, in 2010 when JAT joined marches on the district head's office to oppose the construction of a Protestant church and demand the removal of a statue considered offensive. Another example was in Bantul, Central Java, following the November 2010 volcanic eruption. JAT set up a "crisis centre" and volunteer humanitarian assistance arm called Disaster Volunteers of the Ansharut Tauhid Community (Komunitas Ansharut Tauhid Peduli Musibah, KATIBAH) to seek donations online and work with a coalition to prevent "Christianisation" of displaced Muslims. The coalition included the Anti-Apostasy Forum from Bekasi, the local chapter of Pemuda Muhammadiyah, the youth wing of one of Indonesia's largest Muslim social organisations and the local government religious affairs office.⁶²

B. THE FOCUS ON *THAGHUT*

Another development that facilitated collaboration between jihadis and hardline activists was the former's shift from foreign to domestic targets and particularly their focus on *thaghut* as the main enemy. At the height of JI's strength, around 2001, the main enemies were the U.S. and its allies, following the 1998 al-Qaeda proclamation in the name of the World Islamic Front, and local Christians, because of their involvement in attacks on Muslims in Ambon and Poso. The concept of *thaghut* was very much present in the jihadi literature, but the government was not so much a focus of jihadi wrath.

Two factors helped give it primacy of place. One was the anger in the Islamist community over the arrests and shootings by the counter-terrorism unit of the police, Detachment 88, particularly after the break-up of the Aceh camp. A second was the rise in influence of Aman Abdurrahman and Halawi Makmun, both of whom argued that there should be total rejection of any law other than Sharia and that *thaghut* were a main obstacle to the creation of an Islamic state.

The jihadis' focus on *thaghut* facilitated collaboration with the hardline activists, because it fit better with the latter's advocacy activities. The activists undertook raids, called "sweepings", of stores and restaurants serving alcohol because, in their view, the government had failed to act; they justified their actions against "unauthorised" churches or Ahmadiyah mosques on the same grounds. Both saw the government as unfairly targeting Muslims in anti-terrorism operations, with activists – and many others in the mainstream Muslim community – joining jihadis in the belief that these were being staged as a result of foreign pressure, as a trick to divert attention from police corruption scandals, or as a stratagem to keep counter-terrorism funds flowing. Clear ideological differences remained: the hardliners were critical of the government; the jihadis aimed to overthrow it. But the desirability of joining forces at the local level in many cases overcame this divide.

The more thoughtful jihadis, in their writings following the debacle of the Aceh camp, noted that the political impact of all the "martyrdom operations" (suicide bombings) that had been carried out in Indonesia since 2002 had been close to nil, acknowledging implicitly that the pro-Sharia civil society groups had been more effective. They argued that a division of labour was needed in which the same goals could be pursued by a range of different organisations acting in tactical alliance.⁶³

⁶¹ Crisis Group Report, *Indonesian Jihadism: Small Groups, Big Plans*, op. cit.

⁶² "Pengobatan Gratis dan Pengajian Umum Untuk Membentengi Kristenisasi", www.muslimdaily.net, 7 December 2010.

⁶³ Sidney Jones, "Countering Extremism on Indonesian Internet Sites", Paper delivered at conference of the UN's Counter-

C. RADICAL *TAKLIM* AS MEETING PLACES

The popularity of *taklim* as both a way to obtain religious instruction and a form of entertainment has soared with the post-Soeharto lifting of restrictions on freedom of association and assembly. A bulletin produced by the religious affairs ministry in 2004 notes that *taklim* serve multiple purposes: a way to obtain additional religious guidance beyond Friday sermons; introduce religious concepts or convey particular interpretations; and give people the satisfaction of studying in a group rather than merely absorbing teaching on one's own through radio or television.⁶⁴ They can attract anywhere from a few dozen to several thousand participants, and the teaching can encourage moderation, fanaticism or anything in between, depending on the speakers. For years, a popular Jakarta-based preacher named AA Gym held forth in his *taklim* on the rewards of entrepreneurship, and his followers were the essence of middle-class moderate Muslims.⁶⁵

Religious groups across the ideological spectrum use *taklim* as a way of building a membership base, and extremist groups are no exception. For JI in Poso, following its arrival there at the height of the communal conflict, public lectures by JI teachers with a combination of military experience and religious credentials were the primary means of *dakwah* (religious outreach). Freedom of expression at these events has been virtually absolute. In retrospect, the first congress of MMI in August 2000 can be seen as a test whether post-Soeharto governments would allow open advocacy of an Islamic state, once a taboo topic. The result was clear: no restrictions. Today extremist *taklim* are not only held openly, but they are also frequently broadcast over radical radio stations, an increasingly popular form of *da'wa*.

Both MMI and later JAT exploited Ba'asyir's celebrity status to hold *taklim* across the country that attracted large crowds and probably also raised funds. Aman Abdurrahman, after his release from prison in 2008 (and before his rearrest in 2010), Abu Jibril and Abu Rusdan, a JI leader, also became popular speakers. With the benefit of social networking media and radical websites, these lectures could be advertised and draw crowds that went beyond the jihadi community. From Solo to Klaten to Medan to Cirebon, some young men originally attracted by local anti-vice or anti-apostasy campaigns became interested in a more violent agenda through attending these talks, or joined weekly discussion groups after meeting people there that led them into more militant activity.

The influence worked in both directions. Members of jihadi organisations frequently attended *taklim* on subjects such as the dangers of Christianisation or the heresy of Shi'ism, delivered by leaders of the hardline activist community, and came away with new ideas for targets. Followers of a former Darul Islam leader named Abu Umar, for example, got the idea to wage jihad on Shi'a institutions after attending a lecture in mid-2011 by Cholil Ridwan, a hardline member of the quasi-governmental Majelis Ulama Indonesia.⁶⁶ They were arrested before they could act, however.

VII. NEED FOR A MORE COHERENT STRATEGY

The merging of jihadi and vigilante agendas as exemplified by the Cirebon group presents major challenges for any counter-radicalisation efforts. Recent Crisis Group reports have made a number of recommendations to the government in this regard, highlighting the need for community outreach programs, alternatives to radical media and expanded prison reform and post-release programs. Several programs in the name of counter-radicalisation or deradicalisation are underway, many of dubious utility. In what could be a useful move, the vice president's office since late 2011 has been working to develop a more comprehensive counter-radicalisation policy. But it is increasingly apparent that there is no national consensus on the nature of the problem.

The two largest Muslim social organisations in the country, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah, differ on where the danger lies. For NU, the problem is salafism, the ultra-puritan stream of Islam that not only preaches intolerance toward non-Muslims but also regards NU's traditional practices as *bida'* (unwarranted innovations). Salafis (as opposed to the more political salafi jihadis) may not use violence, it argues, but they employ "psychological terrorism" by accusing NU members of not being real Muslims. Many Muhammadiyah members in rural areas see anyone fighting for Islamic law as deserving of support, even if they may not agree with the tactics used.

Virtually no one outside the human rights community puts any priority on curbing religious vigilantes, and only few see a connection between vigilantism and terrorism. This may be in part because, in response to specific excesses, the only policy option advanced has been to ban the offending organisation, which immediately raises the spectre of restrictions on freedom of association. But the first step is much easier: a policy from the government of no

Terrorism Implementation Task Force, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 24 January 2011.

⁶⁴ H.M. Abdan Syukri, "Pengembangan Wawasan Keagamaan Melalui Majelis Taklim", Departemen Agama RI, 2004, pp. 1-2.

⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 3.

⁶⁶ Interrogation deposition of Mohammed Ikhwan alias Zulkifli alias Abu Umar, 7 July 2011.

cooperation with organisations that undertake raids, enforcement actions or any kind of action aimed at intimidating another group, even one deemed “deviant”. The MMI-GAPAS linkage in Cirebon is clear; so is the path of Mohamed Syarif from Ahmadiyah attacker and Al-famart smasher to suicide bomber. Any use of violence by non-state groups should be absolutely prohibited. But not only is there no sense of vigilantism as a danger – there is ongoing cooperation with these groups from local police and other government agencies.

Then comes the thorny question of “hate speech” and how to curb it. There is also no consensus in the Indonesian Muslim community on what constitutes unacceptable speech or incitement to violence. Many of the more radical clerics openly talk of how shedding the blood of a particular group – *thaghut*, *kafir*, Ahmadiyah or others – is permissible (*halal*) or that certain kinds of institutions, such as *mesjid dhiror*, are permissible to attack. It is clear from the Cirebon case that this can provide direct inspiration to the commission of violence, yet there is virtually no discussion on the consequences of such speech, let alone how to go about discouraging it. In democratic Indonesia, there is an understandable reluctance to promote stricter enforcement of laws against incitement or spreading hatred that were used in the recent authoritarian past to suppress dissent. Still, the government could set an example by setting standards for any *taklim* taking place on government property or in government-assisted schools, and withdrawing funding or other forms of support from institutes or individuals that promote hatred.

A Muhammadiyah leader notes that it should be easy to quietly prevent unwanted sermons or lectures. Every government institution with a mosque has an official who is required to approve a schedule prepared once or twice during the year of planned sermons, *pengajian* or *taklim* that will take place routinely or on major religious holidays. If the government wanted to discourage certain speakers or themes, it could work with the local religious affairs office to do so. Likewise, local mosques are required to register with the Islamic guidance directorate of the religious affairs ministry; most are also affiliated with the Indonesian Mosque Council (Dewan Mesjid Indonesia). If specific mosques were known to be hosting extremist *pengajian*, it would be possible in theory for the ministry to ask for a report of activities and provide “guidance” accordingly, without any legal action, intensive monitoring or blacklisting, all of which would be unacceptable to the public.⁶⁷ Unfortunately, the current religious affairs

minister has seemed more often to side with the hardliners than to register any disapproval of their behaviour.⁶⁸

None of these actions are possible without more agreement on what constitutes a serious threat, not just to Indonesia’s security but to its social fabric. Expressions of shock and horror every time there is an incident of religiously-motivated violence as in Cirebon or Solo are not a substitute for prevention.

Jakarta/Brussels, 26 January 2012

⁶⁷ Crisis Group interview, Abdul Mu’ti, member of Muhammadiyah executive council, Jakarta, 16 January 2012.

⁶⁸ The minister on several occasions suggested that the Ahmadiyah community was responsible for the violence against it because of its refusal to end its activities or stop calling its members Muslims. “Menag: Tragedi Cikeusik Karena Masyarakat Tidak Bisa Diatur”, Metro TV news, 7 February 2011; and “Melindungi HAM Jemaah Ahmadiyah Tidak Boleh Menlanggar HAM Umat Islam”, Media Banten, 8 February 2011. A 2008 government decree restricting the activities of the Ahmadiyah sect contained a clause that Crisis Group warned at the time was an open invitation to vigilantism. See Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°78, *Indonesia: Implications of the Ahmadiyah Decree*, 7 July 2008.

APPENDIX A

MAP OF INDONESIA

