

ONLINE ACTIVISM AND SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE AMONG INDONESIAN EXTREMISTS

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I. INTRODUCTION

Indonesian extremists have a long history of online activism, but links to the Islamic State (still better known in Indonesia by its former acronym ISIS) have raised questions about whether social media usage is significantly changing patterns of radicalisation and recruitment. The answer seems to be a qualified no, but ISIS propaganda seems nevertheless to be having an impact, persuading some Indonesians that the “caliphate” in Syria and Iraq is a well-run state where devout Muslim families can find fulfilment. Where social media has made a difference is in its ability to turn anyone with a Twitter account into a potential propagandist, meaning that the ISIS message may start with friends and family linked into online networks but quickly reaches a much broader public.¹

Despite the heavy reliance of Indonesian extremists at home and abroad on Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp and similar services, “self-radicalisation” and “lone wolf” actions have been extremely rare. Personal contacts and direct face-to-face engagement in religious discussion groups (*pengajian*) remain important, with friendships reinforced through Internet messaging and mobile phone communication. As one analyst notes, individuals do not become supporters of ISIS by simply by being exposed to propaganda, but the propaganda can help transform them from passive supporters into active members.²

Social media may play a more important role in recruitment in countries like Malaysia with a very strict legal regime, where police monitoring of suspected extremists is so strict that the only relatively “safe” means of interaction is online—and then only with some form of encryption. In Indonesia, however, it is easy for extremists to hold meetings and discussions, and this is where recruitment generally begins. The very few Indonesian groups that have identified potential members through Facebook have been among the least competent, in part because they have not been able to vet potential members properly.

The Indonesians who have joined ISIS frequently have been involved in sustained and systematic efforts via WhatsApp and other forms of phone communication to persuade friends and family to migrate (*berhijrah*) to Syria. As the attraction of ISIS has reached into various diaspora groups, including Indonesian workers abroad, communications networks over Telegram and Zello have helped Indonesians living in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea, Malaysia and the Gulf countries find transit routes to Syria, accommodation, contacts for crossing borders, and occasionally, funding. Even these groups, however, started out as *pengajian* in the individual countries concerned.

Over time, the use of Facebook and similar media among ISIS supporters has changed. As Indonesians and many other nationals began joining militias Syria in 2013, they posted detailed accounts on Facebook of living conditions, training regimens, battle news and travel experiences, and communicated regularly with family and friends, usually through WhatsApp but also through Instagram and YouTube. The ISIS leadership seems to have realised the security problems of this information flow and seem to be trying to exert more control: by 2015, the posts on Facebook and other social media had become much less interesting. They are now used more to disseminate ISIS-approved videos and news bulletins than for personal news.

Google, Facebook and Twitter, under pressure from governments, have reacted to the ISIS propaganda campaign by suspending accounts. ISIS supporters, including in Indonesia, have

1 This phenomenon is well-documented in Charlie Winter, “The Virtual ‘Caliphate’: Understanding Islamic State’s Propaganda Strategy”, Quilliam Foundation, (London, 2015) and Yannick Veilleux-Lepage, “Paradigmatic Shifts in Jihadism in Cyberspace: The Emerging Role of Unaffiliated Sympathizers in the Islamic State’s Social Media Strategy,” draft paper for the European Consortium for Political Research General Conference, 26-29 August 2015, available at www.academia.edu.

2 Charlie Winter, “The Virtual ‘Caliphate’”, op.cit., p.7-8.

turned this into a game to see how many times they can reopen suspended accounts under slightly different names, with newly re-established accounts sending out the word with message such as “I’m back!” and requests that readers “shout out” the new name. Some accounts have been reestablished twenty or more times with a single different digit or letter in each new name. One Twitter account began as @SEAMujahid, was suspended and re-opened as @SEAsianMujahid.

Thus far, ISIS supporters in Indonesia do not seem to have used the Internet very creatively. In the past, extremists engaged in online fund-raising, through hacking and credit card fraud, with one major success. They attempted sabotage of government websites, without causing serious damage. Even less successful were efforts at virtual training in skills such as bomb construction; not a single bomb made by individuals who taught themselves through Internet instructions worked as intended, although one, the 2011 bombing of a police mosque in Cirebon, came close. None of these skills seem to be much in evidence today. This may reflect the fact that terrorist activity in general is down, as the extremist community seems to be spending more of its time and resources trying to get to Syria, rather than to plan operations at home.

One other use of social media has taken off in the last two years: marriage by mobile phone. Both fighters with ISIS and extremists prisoners in Indonesian jails have used WhatsApp and the video functions on their phones to marry, sometimes for the first time, occasionally for the second or third. The “ceremony” is held with the bride in her hometown and the groom in prison or overseas, with a designated proxy standing in when the actual marriage is legalised under Islamic law. These marriages are used for a variety of purposes: to cement alliances, reinforce social hierarchies, satisfy the “biological needs” of prisoners, or bring women out to the Middle East for unmarried fighters.

The Indonesian government has not been effective in countering extremism online in general or ISIS propaganda in particular, but neither have many other governments. It is hard enough to counter the multiple messages of ISIS, let alone the crowd-sourcing methods used to disseminate them. At the moment, though, the top priority of Indonesian agencies involved in counter-terrorism work probably should be focused as much on getting more and better-trained personnel with the skills to analyse social media content as on developing counter-narratives. The urgent need is for a more informed understanding of how, where and why ISIS support develops, since that knowledge should underlie prevention programs.

This report places the current use of Internet and social media by Indonesian ISIS supporters in historical perspective to examine patterns of radicalisation and recruitment. The big difference from earlier periods in the age of ISIS is not so much the method of recruitment but the number of individuals being reached.

II. INTERNET USAGE IN INDONESIA

Indonesian extremists do not lack access to the Internet. Indonesia is ranked eighth in the world in 2015 among global Internet users (behind China, India, the US, Brazil, Japan, Russia and Nigeria), although its level of penetration (percentage of users per total population) is only 28.3 per cent—just a little higher than Bangladesh or Mongolia.³ Internet usage is expanding dramatically, however, with an increase of 3,550 per cent between 2000 and 2015.

Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter are among the most popular services. Over 96 per cent of Indonesian internet users had a Facebook account, making Indonesia the fourth leading Facebook user in the world in 2014, behind the U.S., India and Brazil. Over 84 per cent of Indone-

3 For world rankings, see www.internetworldstats.com/top20.htm; for Asia rankings see www.internetworldstats.com/stats3.htm.

sians active who were active online in 2014 used Twitter.⁴ Some 33 per cent of Indonesians used their mobile phones to get access to the Internet, and of these, 52 per cent used WhatsApp.

The growth of the Internet in Indonesia roughly parallels the evolution of the jihadi movement in Indonesia. The first commercial Internet Service Provider (ISP) in Indonesia started operations in 1994 and usage began spreading rapidly in 1997-98, as the New Order was coming to an end.⁵ Jemaah Islamiyah began a series of attacks in Indonesia in 1999-2000 as a response to the eruption of conflict in Ambon and Poso, just as groups on all sides of those conflicts began to make use of the Internet for news, propaganda and communication. Four clear periods emerge in which technological advancements paralleled ideological and organisational change, as follows:

- From 1999 to 2003, the movement was dominated by Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), culminating in the Bali bombings of 2002. A JI member, Imam Samudra, who was also the field coordinator of the Bali bombs, championed the use of the Internet before and after his arrest as a mechanism for outreach, communication, fund-raising and warfare through hacking. (Underscoring the theme of continuity, Imam Samudra's son was reported killed in Syria fighting for ISIS on 14 October 2015.) Jihadis, like other interest groups, relied on list-serves to reinforce group identity and disseminate material. They also, like most other Indonesians, relied on Internet cafes (*warung internet, warnet*) for access. Communication within the group was largely through text-messaging.
- The period 2004-2009 was dominated by the al-Qaeda-style bombings of Noordin Top, the former JI member from Malaysia who broke with JI to form a splinter group that consciously sought to emulate the style and goals of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, founder of the Islamic State of Iraq, the progenitor of ISIS. Separately, JI built up its base in Poso, Central Sulawesi, only to have it crushed by police—temporarily, as it turned out—in early 2007. Arrests and ideological differences spurred the fragmentation of the jihadi community with the emergence of Jamaah Ansharul Tauhid (JAT) in 2008. In this period, list-serves gave way first to chatting over an internet relay service (MIRC) and then to various other chat forums and messaging services. Jihadi blogs tied into websites and print media took off; and a tiny handful of Indonesian extremists tried to link up to the global jihad through establishing communication with al-Qaeda's Global Islamic Media Front (GIMF). Computer skills were in much demand but were still used overwhelmingly in the service of indoctrination rather than recruitment. Jihadis continued to rely on *warnets* to send emails, and their overreliance on texting and mobile phone communication facilitated efforts by police to track them down.
- The period 2010-2013 began with the breakup of a terrorist training camp in Aceh with over 100 jihadis arrested and some two dozen killed in the police operations that followed. It exacerbated the fragmentation of the jihadi community and the rise of autonomous cells, with members who were generally poorly trained and inept. One spectacular case of hacking to raise money only underscored how rarely such incidents occurred. It was clear that a few relatively skilled computer specialists could not compensate for the movement's absence of strong leadership, skills or organisational strategy. The Aceh debacle also led to the rise of a small armed group in Poso, built on the ashes of the former JI structure, which became the symbolic heart of the jihadi movement. Social media

4 In the fourth quarter 2014, Indonesia was ranked No.1 in Asia for Facebook penetration but Vietnam, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, India, Hong Kong and Taiwan were all close behind. On Twitter, Indonesia with 84 per cent penetration was far ahead of the No.2, India, with 67 per cent. See www.statista.com/statistics/254803/twitter-penetration-in-selected-apac-countries/ and www.statista.com/statistics/238516/facebook-penetration-apac-countries.

5 Jennifer Yang Hui, "The Internet in Indonesia: Development and Impact of Radical Websites", *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 33, 2010, p.173.

usage skyrocketed in this period, especially Facebook and Twitter, as did the use of smart phones, making use of *warnets* less critical. The eruption of the Syrian conflict, with its echoes of Islamic prophecies, generated a new thirst for international news that jihadi websites tried to slake.

- The rise of ISIS in 2013, the declaration of the caliphate in June 2014 and the desire of many Indonesians to join gave a new purpose to online media. Indonesian nationals, like others in Syria, saw it as their responsibility to urge others to do the same. This was also in line with the ISIS leadership's "call to *hijrah*". The increasing availability of smart phones enabled those in Syria to transmit photos and videos and urge others to come, in a way that clearly convinced some of the recipients. The relatively low numbers, however, suggest that even today, with social media usage at unprecedented levels, interest in ISIS does not automatically translate into recruitment.

Advances in communication technology and increasing penetration of the Internet and social media in Indonesia have meant that it is possible to follow developments in Syria and elsewhere in close to real time. They have also made jihadi communications far harder to track. Instead of one list-serve or chat forum, there are hundreds of thousands of private Facebook and Twitter accounts as well as cross-regional and international conversations taking place over WhatsApp and other services. It thus becomes much harder to assess trends or know for sure that what seems apparent on the surface—for example, that departures for Syria are still largely controlled by existing radical groups—is still the case.

III. THE JEMAAH ISLAMIYAH PERIOD, 1999-2003

Jemaah Islamiyah dominated the extremist movement during this period, as monumental political changes were taking place and conflict erupted in different parts of Indonesia. Suharto had resigned in 1998. East Timor had voted for independence in 1999. Christian-Muslim fighting had erupted in Ambon, Maluku in January 1999 and a simmering conflict in Poso reached a new level of violence in May 2000. Both provided JI and other extremist groups with a powerful recruitment rationale: come to the aid of fellow Muslims under attack. JI's activities in these areas, however, went largely unnoticed because of the much more visible role from April 2000 onwards of Laskar Jihad, a several thousand-strong salafist militia that had the open support of the Indonesian military.⁶ It was a measure of the political confusion of the time that when JI detonated bombs across eleven cities on Christmas Eve 2000, no one knew who was responsible because the list of plausible perpetrators was so long.

Internationally, al-Qaeda in February 1998 had called on Muslims everywhere to attack America and its lackeys wherever and however possible.⁷ JI, which then had administrative divisions in five countries—Indonesia, Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia and Australia—heeded the call. After 9/11 and the U.S operations in Afghanistan, a JI special force unit began planning a series of attacks in Southeast Asia. Singapore and Malaysia discovered and arrested networks of JI operatives in late 2001, with several fleeing to Indonesia; arrests in the Philippines soon followed. The U.S. invasion of Iraq in March 2003 kept the focus on America and its allies as the most desirable targets.

Throughout this period, JI as an organisation was attracted by the potential of the Internet but did not have the expertise to fully exploit its use. JI's clandestine nature also hampered the

6 For background on Laskar Jihad, see Noorhaidi Hasan, *Laskar Jihad: Islam, Militancy and the Quest for Identity in Post-New Order Indonesia*, Cornell Southeast Asia Program (Ithaca, 2006).

7 The statement, on 23 February 1998, was signed by the World Islamic Front, led by Osama bin Laden and called for a jihad against Jews and crusaders.

ways it could be used for outreach. Above-ground organisations like Laskar Jihad were able to exploit the new technologies much more effectively.

A. *Imam Samudra and the First Jihadi Websites*

The first major champion of cyber-jihad in Indonesia was Imam Samudra, the Bali bomber who until just before his execution in 2008 was urging Indonesians to wage jihad online—and teaching many how to do so from inside prison. Beginning in 2000, when he began to become interested in the potential of the Internet, he joined several list-serves through Yahoo, including the first online network set up by Jemaah Islamiyah, then the largest jihadi organisation in Southeast Asia. It was called “Al-Bunyan” and its main purpose was to disseminate news about the progress of the jihad in Ambon and Poso. Imam Samudra was a regular contributor of posts to the list, using the name Rere Tambusai.⁸ Long before the word “counter-narrative” became fashionable, visitors to the site from outside the jihadi community were pushing back in a way rarely seen today, perhaps because the jihadi discourse was more of a novelty. Among the challengers were Yusuf Hajar, an Indonesian human rights activist based in the Netherlands and activists in the Liberal Islam Network (Jaringan Islam Liberal). After a few debates with Yusuf, Imam Samudra was urged by his friends to stop responding because it only encouraged their detractors.⁹ None of Indonesia’s mass Muslims organisations and no government agency appeared to be interested in following or reacting to the rants of “Rere Tambusai”.

In 2001, Imam Samudra established a website to promote and claim credit for JI’s operations, including the December 2000 Christmas Eve bombings. The URL was tibb.beritaislam.com, with “tibb” short for Tentara Islam Batalyon Badar, the Badar Batalyon of the Islamic Army, a reference back to one of the great battles in early Islamic history. The site went unremarked, and long after Imam Samudra was behind bars, most Indonesians never knew that he had claimed responsibility online for JI’s biggest pre-Bali attack—although he did not mention JI by name.

He also published an online justification for the 2002 Bali bombings on a site he had created for the purpose called www.istimata.com. Istimata means “suicide act” in Arabic. The declaration made clear that the bombers were using al-Qaeda’s definition of the enemy. “For you, crusader-infidels,” it read, “if you say that the killing was directed against innocent civilians from your countries, know that you have done far worse. Are 600,000 babies in Iraq and half a million women and children in Afghanistan considered an army that deserves to be hit by thousands of tons of your bombs?”¹⁰

Imam Samudra was arrested in November 2002 and sentenced to death ten months later, but he continued to preach the value of cyber-jihad from prison and several of his followers set up sites to promote news of the global jihad, most of them short-lived. The most professional of these was www.muhammad.com, influenced directly by al-Qaeda’s media unit in Pakistan, which came online around April 2004.¹¹

But Imam Samudra did not just pioneer online propaganda for Indonesian jihadis. He was also interested in using electronic media to raise funds and attack the enemy through hacking. By the time he was arrested, he had managed to engage in small-scale credit card fraud online,

8 The significance of this pseudonym is not clear.

9 “Al Qaeda: Fighter, Killer, Hacker”, www.gebrak-usa.com [accessed 2002, no longer in operation].

10 www.istimata.com, photocopy of text of original Indonesian in IPAC’s possession.

11 Other sites were www.perangsalib.cjb.net; www.irhaby.co.nr; and www.istimata.cjb.net. [Muhammad.com](http://www.muhammad.com) was more sophisticated, in part because Abdul Rahim Ba’asyir, the younger son of Abu Bakar Ba’asyir, was involved in its creation. Abdul Rahim had visited the al-Qaeda media unit in Pakistan and wanted to develop a higher capacity in Indonesia to promote jihad via electronic media.

including to purchase domains for new websites.¹² His 2004 book, *Aku Melawan Teroris*, devoted a chapter to hacking with instructions in bold graphics for beginners. With one exception discussed below, however, no one really took it up.

IV. THE NOORDIN PERIOD, 2004-2009

The period 2004-2009 in terms of terrorism is best known for the attacks of Noordin Top's splinter group: the 2004 bombing of the Australian embassy, the second Bali bombing in 2005, a failed attack in Palembang in 2008 and the 2009 hotel bombings in Jakarta. But there was much more going on. Indonesia held its first direct democratic election for president, electing Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono by a landslide. The conflicts in both Ambon and Poso had subsided after peace agreements were signed in 2002 and 2001 respectively, but some in the extremist community had an interest in trying to stir them up.¹³ Darul Islam and the organisation KOMPAK were active in Ambon in 2004 and 2005. A Mindanao-trained JI leader in Poso embarked on a string of targeted assassinations and bombings that lasted from 2004 to 2007. But whatever support there had been in the Muslim community for violent jihad at the height of these conflicts was steadily eroding, and each successive bombing by Noordin's group brought greater public outrage.

Internet usage increased dramatically but most users—some 60 to 70 per cent according to one estimate—were still accessing it through *warnets*.¹⁴ In some cases, extremists ran their own *warnets*, particularly in the Solo, Central Java area.¹⁵ Cumbersome list-serves (*milis*) partially gave way to new modes of communication, first through internet relay chatting (MIRC), then through password-protected fora associated with particular websites.¹⁶ The list-serves were still used for posting longer tracts, however. Texting also gave way to various messaging services—Blackberry Messenger (BBM) and Yahoo Messenger. The last had the advantage of the users being able to see each other by video. Some jihadis also saw it as safer than regular texting.

Throughout this period, marked by a high level of jihadi activism inside Indonesia and new, more sophisticated technologies, there is no real evidence that significant jihadi recruitment took place online. Most people still met at lectures or discussion groups in mosques or schools and only then followed up with Internet chatting. In several cases, individuals met in online chats and then decided to work together, but the covert aspect of jihadi activity made security concerns too great for this to happen on a wide scale.

One of only two “lone wolf” jihadi attacks that Indonesia has experienced to date took place in this period: the attempted bombing of an A&W restaurant at a mall in East Jakarta in November 2006. The would-be terrorist, who seems to have become radicalised through reading jihadi material online, made the bomb himself. The explosion broke a few windows, but there were no casualties.

A. Online Religious Study Groups and Relay Chatting

If jihadis were going to explore the potential of the Internet more systematically, however, they

12 In 2002 he used funds from credit card hacking to buy domains for the sites www.gebrak-usa.com and a mirror site, www.serbu-usa.com (both names meaning “attack the U.S.”).

13 See International Crisis Group, “Weakening Indonesia’s Mujahidin Networks: Lessons from Maluku and Poso”, Asia Report No.103, 13 October 2005.

14 Jennifer Yang Hui, “The Internet in Indonesia”, op.cit., p.173.

15 One *warnet* owner was Bahrin Naim who was operating a *warnet* in Solo in 2009 and who as of mid-2015 was in Syria.

16 Relay chatting is defined as “short message exchange in synchronous, real-time, multiuser arena”. See E.Sean Rintel and Jeffrey Pittam, “Strangers in a Strange Land: Interaction Management on Internet Relay Chat”, Human Communication Research, Vol.23, No.4, June 1997, p.509.

needed computer specialists. Imam Samudra had recruited a few before the Bali bombs, and they continued to work with him afterwards, taking advantage of the lax security in Kerobokan Prison, Bali, where he was held.¹⁷

One use to which they put their skills was the development of online religious study groups. Such study groups were the standard vehicle through which extremist recruitment took place. In discussions around a particular topic, leaders could see who asked the most interesting questions or contributed actively to the debate. Those individuals could be asked to join a smaller group and eventually invited to join an organisation. Likewise, anyone interested in jihadi activities could attend a lecture by an extremist preacher and if interested, could become a regular participant in a regularly scheduled study group. Until use of the Internet became more widespread, these groups were necessarily geographically based. A *pengajian* in Solo could attract people from elsewhere in the vicinity but it was harder for anyone in East Java, let alone Sumatra, to attend. Online *pengajian* could eliminate these geographic limitations and broaden the outreach.

Accordingly in 2004, Imam Samudra's disciples developed a *pengajian* via MIRC, an internet chatting protocol that:

fosters casual chat, in that all users are present in the same real-time time frame; messages are not saved, appearing on the screen only until enough conversation occurs to scroll them off the top of the screen; [...] and messages are usually answered with little time delay.¹⁸

This chatting was conversational, much like a telephone conversation, that enabled the chatter to get to know the other users, but without video and without the occasional social awkwardness of direct interaction. It was an ideal medium for shy or withdrawn individuals who might not otherwise be drawn into a group; it was also a way that women could take part in jihadi discussions, and it occasionally served as a way for jihadi couples to meet, almost like a dating service. Two of the most popular MIRC channels among the extremists were #cafeislam and #ahlussunnah.

Nurul Azma, one of the few women arrested for terrorism, wrote of her use of chatting as follows:

When I was at university [2004], I used to like to open the MIRC channel #cafeislam. I got to know an Acehnese named Andre who lived in Dipinang Aceh. At the time I was using the chat name "Tasnim" while Andre was calling himself "Faisal". Then Andre asked for my cell phone number because he wanted to contact me to ask me some questions about Islam. After a while he asked me marry him, but I told him I couldn't because at the time I was engaged to a man from Solo named Rukmani who was studying in Yemen.¹⁹

Imam himself joined the #cafeislam discussions after May 2005, thanks to a laptop smuggled into prison by a sympathetic guard. He used the name *irhaby*, the word for terrorist in Arabic. Through these discussions, a number of individuals from outside JI who had been separately active in online discussions about jihad were brought into Imam Samudra's orbit. One of them was Tuah Febriwansyah alias Muhammad Fachry, a former Hizbut Tahrir activist who had joined the UK-based organisation al-Muhajiroun in 2005 after hearing the online lectures of Omar Bakri Muhammad, the group's founder.

17 One of those he recruited was Agung Setiyadi, an activist from Semarang, who taught computer science at a private university there. Agung helped Imam train JI members in online credit card fraud, with the aim among other things of buying domains to establish jihadi sites. He was arrested in 2006 on terrorism charges and released in 2010.

18 Rintel and Pittman, op.cit.p.509

19 Testimony of Nurul Azmy Tibyani, March 2012, Jakarta.

These discussions also provided an impetus to the translation into Indonesian of jihadi tracts from Arabic websites. Some of the lecturers at JI schools were mobilised as translators, and the books they produced were distributed free on line as well as sold in the rapidly developing jihadi publishing industry.²⁰

B. *The All-Purpose Website, www.anshar.net*

One person who joined Imam Samudra's online *pengajian* via MIRC was Agung Prabowo, a university student in Semarang, who had managed to break into various Internet banking sites to fund his studies and open a *warnet*. Agung agreed to help Imam Samudra buy a site in the UK for a new website that became www.anshar.net and register the domain in Germany.

They coordinated with Noordin Top who in July 2005 arranged for a small group to come together in Pekalongan and design the site that was to be in the name of Anshar al-Muslimin (Muslim Partisans). One was a high-school computer teacher, Abdul Aziz, and at least one of the meetings with Noordin, then the country's most wanted terrorist, took part in the school's computer lab.

Noordin had clear ideas of what he wanted in terms of logo and content. The site was to include a section on jihadi doctrine, under the heading *manhaj* (method); materials on the first Bali bombing, together with an exhortation from Mukhlas, one of the three Bali bombers on death row, on why Muslims should wage jihad rather than just sitting around talking about it. There was a section on jihadi news and an online military manual, under the heading *askariyah* (military). The latter included instructions on how to kill infidels in Jakarta, with diagrams of how to conduct a drive-by shooting by motorcycle near the Australian embassy. The site went up sometime in September, shortly before the second Bali bombing. After the bombing, Noordin's men uploaded a video of him justifying the bombing and warning the Australians in particular that there would be more. The last statements of the three suicide bombers involved were also uploaded.

It took the government almost six weeks after the bombings on 1 October 2005 to shut the site down, by which time it had attracted a huge amount of media attention and anyone who wanted to could have downloaded the material. It seems to have been the first site blocked by the Indonesian government on its own initiative because of terrorism concerns. There were a few other efforts after Anshar.net's closure to use extremist websites to provide instructional materials for would-be jihadis, but few were successful. As noted, no bomb or poison made from Internet instructions ever worked as intended. The decision to include such material on [anshar.net](http://www.anshar.net) may have been a substitute for any real training opportunities. By 2005, no systematic training was taking part in the former conflict areas of Ambon and Poso, and international opportunities had dried up. There was still a trickle of men going to the Philippines from Darul Islam, but for all practical purposes, the only available weapons training between 2005 and the Aceh camp was virtual, via cyberspace, and it simply was not effective.

C. *Websites and Blogs After Bali II*

With the second Bali bomb, counter-terrorism police activity picked up substantially, with many of the key plotters arrested. A key partner of Noordin Top and his top planner and bomb-maker, Dr Azhari Husin, was tracked down and killed in Malang, and the police sent a special task force sent to Poso to investigate the spate of bombings and killings there, including the beheadings of three schoolgirls in October 2005.

²⁰ See International Crisis Group, "Indonesia: Jemaah Islamiyah's Publishing Industry", Asia Report No.147, 28 February 2008.

As police intensified their search for Noordin, several top jihadis decided that they needed to concentrate on the Internet front. They believed that propaganda and religious outreach (*dakwah*) were as important as actual battle; they also believed that Indonesia had to be brought back into the global jihad.²¹ Several important extremist websites thus appeared with the aim of *tahrid*, or stirring up enthusiasm for jihad. They included www.arahmah.com and www.muslimdaily.net, both managed by men with international experience. Muhammad Jibril, who had studied in Karachi, set up the first in 2006; Abdul Rahim Ba'asyir, the younger son of Abu Bakar Ba'asyir who had studied in Pakistan and Yemen, ran the second.²² In terms of organisational affiliation, Jibril came from a JI family but he and his father were now more associated with Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia, the above-ground pro-shari'ah advocacy organisation set up in 2000 by Abu Bakar Ba'asyir and Irfan Awwas, Jibril's uncle. Muslimdaily.net seemed to represent the interests of the Ba'asyir family and the Ngruki community more than JI, which had its own much more extensive publishing network but not a website per se.

M. Fachry, the al-Muhajiroun activist, joined Muhammad Jibril in 2007 to help develop arahmah.com, a site that had been in operation for a year. They had met through #cafeislam and both were interested in the potential for online jihad. They were also interested to see how far they could develop the Arrahmah.com site into a commercially profitable multimedia operation that would publish books, magazines and videos.²³ Both Arrahmah.com and Muslimdaily.net differed from other extremist sites in that they were professionally run with salaried staff and regularly updated. Arrahmah quickly grew into one of the most popular sites serving the radical community, although its readership remained small compared to more mainstream sites.

Other sites emerged around the same time. In late 2006, JI intellectuals who had gone over to Noordin Top's splinter group joined the growing use of Internet for dissemination of jihadi materials by setting up the sites www.sabiluna.net and www.alqoidun.net, the first more for ideological indoctrination, the second both indoctrination and news. Both were closed by 2008 as the police continued to round up Noordin's associates.

June 2007 saw the creation of Forum Jihad al-Firdaus (www.alfirdaus.org), hosted in Solo. It provided hacking tips and suggested hacking course websites, but its members never did any serious damage and it was moribund a year later.²⁴

Around 2006-2007, extremists also discovered the joys of blogging via blogspot.com and wordpress.com using the blogs to post jihadi tracts that their own circle of friends would then read and discuss. Most of these rose and fell in short order, with the blogs stopping as a result of arrest or death of the blogger, but sometimes simply for lack of new material.²⁵

The followers of Aman Abdurrahman, an imprisoned cleric, were particularly assiduous bloggers, disseminating his tracts and translations, especially of the writings of leading Jordani-

21 IPAC interview with the former manager of a jihadi site, Depok, September 2015.

22 Muhammad Jibril, self-styled "prince of jihad", had returned to Indonesia in 2003 from the Abu Bakar Institute, Karachi, Pakistan where he was part of the al-Ghuraba cell, set up by his father, Abu Jibril, an Indonesian then living in Malaysia. He made frequent trips to Solo to visit the younger Ba'asyir and they initially became close before falling out for personal and business reasons.

23 In 2008, arahmah.com began to publish books, including, in January 2009, the best-selling trilogy of books written by the three Bali bombers Mukhlas, Amrozi and Imam Samudra before their execution in November 2008. Their magazines included the short-lived glossy and expensive *Jihadmagz*, which was aimed at an upper-class market, and the bulletin, *al-Muhajiroun*.

24 Jennifer Yang Hui, "The Internet in Indonesia", op.cit., p.185. One member managed to hack a Friendster account belonging to a member of a civil society group called Faith Freedom Indonesia.

25 Some of the better-known blogs were abahzacky.wordpress.com, mujahidkoko.wordpress.com, abubakr1400.blogspot.com, irhaby88.wordpress.com, gurobabersatu.blogspot.com and ghur4ba.blogspot.com.

an scholar Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi. They also circulated MP3 recordings of his lectures.²⁶ The online presence of Aman became increasingly prominent in 2006-7 while he was still in prison and helped ensure a devoted audience across the country when he was finally released in 2008, before his re-arrest two years later. The blogs included www.anshar-tauhid-wa-sunnah.blogspot.com and www.millahibrahim.wordpress.com. The latter was set up on 2 February 2007 and survives until this day as a platform for Aman's teachings.

D. Forum Jihad at-Tawbah

In February 2008 a new extremist chat site appeared called Forum Jihad at-Tawbah, registered in Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia but controlled by Indonesians.²⁷ Different than the MIRC chats, it was much more careful about who was allowed in, and became a place for exchange of ideas among those most committed to violent jihad in Indonesia—among them Imam Samudra, from his cell in a maximum security prison on the island of Nusakambangan, and Bagus Budi Pranoto alias Urwah who had just been released from prison in Jakarta and had opened his own media company, Muqowamah Publishing. The two established contact through the MIRC channel, #jihad, set up by Samudra and Muhammad Jibril for about ten very carefully selected individuals. They decided to open an online forum consciously modelled after those used by al-Qaeda.

The forum differed from the MIRC chats in a number of different ways. It included jihadi teachings, relying heavily on al-Qaeda material, and how-to manuals for terrorists, taken from other non-Indonesian jihadi fora such as Shumukh al-Islam Network, Anshar al-Mujahideen Forum and Fida' Network and translated into Indonesian.²⁸

Urwah acted as moderator, and any new member had to be recommended by an existing one as well as approved by him. He also had the authority to expel members, and one of the first to go was Jibril, not because of any ideological deviation but because he and Urwah had turned into business rivals with their competing publishing companies.²⁹

Some Forum members, including Imam Samudra, were in direct touch with al-Qaeda media staff in Pakistan and discussed opening a branch of the media unit in Southeast Asia. Imam Samudra suggested that Jibril be the man to run it, especially given his years in Pakistan, and subsequently tried to patch up the differences between Urwah and Jibril. In response to an al-Qaeda request for information technology (IT) assistance, Imam also suggested that forum member Cahaya Fitriyanta, a computer science expert, be sent to help out.

Noordin Top, still at large, was also brought into the picture. In August 2008, he met Jibril in Bintaro, outside Jakarta. Jibril told him of his plans to go to Saudi Arabia to raise funds for the Southeast Asia media unit. Noordin asked that he take along one of his operatives so that they could raise funds for jihad operations at the same time.³⁰ The mission met an unhappy end, with Jibril and the operative briefly detained by Saudi immigration authorities, making any meetings with contacts impossible.

26 Oman Rachman alias Aman Abdurrahman was born in 1972 in Sumedang, West Java. He was the leader of a militant group sometimes referred to as Tauhid wal Jihad, although it never had a structure, and was first arrested in 2004 when his followers accidentally caused an explosion while attending a bomb-making class. He was sentenced to seven years in prison. He was released in 2008 and capitalised on his popularity for two years to preach the necessity of an Islamic state, to be established by force if necessary. He was rearrested in 2010 and later sentenced to nine years in prison.

27 Anthony Bergin, Sulastri Bte Isman, Carl Ungerer and Nur Azlin Mohamed Yasin, "Countering Internet Radicalisation in Southeast Asia", Special Report, Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI), March 2009, Issue 22, p.6.

28 IPAC interview with the former manager of a jihadi site, Depok, September 2015.

29 Ibid.

30 The operative in question was Syaifudin Zuhri, who went on to act as field coordinator for the 2009 hotel bombings. He was killed in a police operation following the attacks.

The execution by firing squad of Imam Samudra in November 2008 ended any further discussion for the moment of a Southeast Asia media unit, although Samudra's followers managed one hacking incident in his honour before he died.³¹ Jibril managed to provide a video clip of the "martyrdom" of the three Bali bombers to the al-Qaeda media unit, which appeared, together with a brief eulogy, in a statement released by al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri on 1 December 2008.

E. *Iraq as an Inspiration*

From the beginning, Indonesian extremists followed news of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and the development of the Islamic State in Iraq but from different perspectives. The big ideological debate from the second Bali bombing to the Jakarta hotel bombings in 2009 was about the relative merits of two different war strategies, *qital nikayah* and *qital tamkin*. The first was to make repeated hits against the enemy to demonstrate its weakness; this was the strategy of Zarqawi in Iraq and the man who aimed to emulate him in Indonesia, Noordin Top. The second was to use jihad in the service of establishing an Islamic state, which meant focusing on the control of territory where Islamic law could be applied and using jihad against anyone who put obstacles in the way.³²

In the beginning, Aman Abdurrahman was firmly in the second camp, following the line taken by the man he most admired, al-Maqqdisi, Zarqawi's former mentor who broke with him over the brutality of his tactics in Iraq. His translation of al-Maqqdisi's critique, published in Indonesian in 2007 as *Mereka Mujahid Tapi Salah Langkah* (They are *Mujahidin* but They Made Mistakes) infuriated some of the JI intellectuals who had gone over to the Noordin camp.

But by 2008, some of these same intellectuals had begun to come around to the idea of *qital tamkin* because they saw Zarqawi as having used *qital nikayah* tactics to successfully establish an Islamic government or *imarah*, the Islamic State of Iraq (*Daulah Islamiyah Iraq, DII*). The two strategies could apparently be compatible, rather than mutually exclusive. The emergence of the Islamic State of Iraq thus provided the key to cooperation between Aman Abdurrahman and the Noordin group.

For a brief period, the major extremist factions and their websites were in relative harmony because all could agree on the desirability of DII. This meeting of the minds facilitated the creation of a training camp in Aceh designed to work toward an *imarah* in Indonesia. All major extremist groups with the exception of Jemaah Islamiyah participated. It turned out to be a bad idea, poorly executed, and police broke it up in February 2010, making more than 100 arrests.³³

V. AFTER THE ACEH TRAINING CAMP: 2010-2013

Technology and ideology changed again after the debacle of the Aceh training camp. Police tracked down and killed one of the main promoters of the camp, Dulmatin, as he sat at a computer on the second floor of a *warnet* outside Jakarta. One of the criticisms levelled at the camp's organisers in the aftermath was how oblivious its members seemed to be about security. The massive arrests carried out in the aftermath were a major factor leading to the adoption of a new strategy of "individual jihad" where small cells working toward the same goal could operate

31 On 25 October 2008, some hackers got into the Ministry of Information website and changed the home page to a picture of the three condemned Bali bombers. They left a statement calling for the death of all the judges, prosecutors and other officials involved in the upcoming execution. See www.foznawarabbikakbah.com.

32 See International Crisis Group, "Jihadi Surprise in Aceh", Asia Report No.189, 20 April 2010, pp.1-2.

33 Ibid.

more safely than working through a large organisation.³⁴

Smart phone use began to take off in Indonesia around 2011. A few of the better educated extremists had i-phones, Samsung Galaxy and other state-of-the-art phones, but most still used older models of Nokia and Blackberry.

This period saw the first and only effort at hacking for funds online that produced a significant haul for the extremist cause: close to \$500,000. The failure to try again may reflect the fact that the best and brightest of Indonesia's extremists have expended more effort trying to get to Syria, not fund the movement at home.

It also saw the second of Indonesia's two "lone wolf" jihadi attacks, the unsuccessful effort of an Acehese man on 30 September 2010 to target a police post in Bekasi, outside Jakarta, with a crude nail bomb. The bomb, which he was carrying on a bicycle, blew up prematurely, injuring only the would-be bomber. The failed attack appeared to be in retaliation for the arrests related to the Aceh camp.

A. *The Rise and Fall of Forum Jihad al-Busyiro*

A new jihadi forum, Forum Jihad al-Busyiro emerged in 2010 to continue the online jihad that Forum Jihat al-Tawbah had tried to ignite. Inspired by the idea of "individual jihad", it was the brainchild of Arif Wicaksana Aji alias Hendro, a 2005 alumnus of al-Mukmin *pesantren*, Ngruki, who had married the daughter of his teacher, Afief Abdul Madjid, a year after graduation.³⁵ He then returned to his hometown in South Kalimantan, physically isolated from contact with fellow jihad enthusiasts.

By all accounts he was so obsessed with the Internet that his friends referred to his computer as his second wife and gave him the nickname Hendro Laptop. He was determined to open a new discussion group about jihad, keeping al-Busyiro closed to carefully vetted members but then using his blog, al-ansar007.blogspot.com, to distribute jihadi materials to a wider audience.³⁶ He wanted to have an "open source jihad" that anyone could access, much like *Inspire*, the online magazine of Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. It also harked back to the all-purpose aims of Anshar.net in 2005, one-stop shop that would have news, jihadi statements and media releases and military instruction manuals all in the same place. He believed, despite strong evidence to the contrary, that virtual training could replace face-to-face instruction, and among other things, he uploaded the popular *Inspire* article, "How to Make a Bomb in the Kitchen of Your Mom." The article was later used by extremists at the Umar bin Khattab *pesantren* in Bima, Sumbawa in June 2011 to build an arsenal of pipe bombs. The death of one of the teachers at the school when a bomb exploded prematurely meant that the school came under police siege before the extremists there could do any serious damage.

By 2012, enthusiasm for the idea of individual jihad had begun to fade, as illustrated by Hendro, one of its strongest promoters, leaving for Poso to join forces with Santoso as media adviser. In making the move, he was reportedly inspired by the example of Humam Khalil Mohammed

34 This was a strategy promoted in a book called *A Call to Global Islamic Resistance* by al-Qaeda scholar and theoretician, Mustafa Setmariam Nasar, better known as Abu Musab al-Suri. Al-Suri's key concepts were published in Indonesian in October 2009 in a book called *Perjalanan Gerakan Jihad (1930-2002)*.

35 Afief Abdul Madjid, 62, is a former JI member who left in 2002 to join MMI and then left MMI in 2008 to join JAT. He first went to Syria with a humanitarian aid mission in January 2013, then returned in December 2013 and spent a few weeks at an ISIS training camp. On his return in January 2014, he became a major ISIS promoter until his arrest in August 2014. Prosecutors tried to charge him under an obscure provision of the criminal code (assisting a rebellion against a friendly state) but the judges threw it out. He was eventually sentenced to four years for having assisted in fund-raising for the terrorist training camp in Aceh in 2010, raised to six years in October 2015 on appeal of the prosecution to the High Court. The High Court accepted the prosecution's argument that by going to Syria, Afief had been involved in a conspiracy to commit terrorism.

36 Members could access the forum through www.al-busyiro.org.

alias Abu Dujana al-Khorasani, the Jordanian doctor who had been the moderator of a jihad forum and then left for Afghanistan to undertake a suicide bombing at an American military base.³⁷ Hendro's account name in the al-Busyro forum was Handolah al-Khurosani.

Hendro believed that Santoso's efforts to revive Indonesia's jihadi movement and provide training to would-be *mujahidin* was insufficiently appreciated at home and abroad, and his main goal in joining Santoso was to get him that recognition. He drafted the statement that announced Santoso's formation of a new coalition, the Mujahidin of Eastern Indonesia (MIT) in October 2012 as well as MIT's declaration of war against the Indonesian police the same month.

On 3 June 2013, Hendro hacked into the Indonesian military website, changing its home page to a statement that announced the creation of a new MIT media division.³⁸ On 9 July, he uploaded a video to YouTube with Santoso exhorting the people of Poso to resist the counter-terrorism police, Detachment 88.³⁹

In one of his last acts, he made a video called "Fight Against the Army of Satan" (*Perangilah Tentara Syaitan Itu*) and hoped to have it distributed by GIMF. On 4 February 2014, however, he was killed by police in a village not far from Santoso's camp in Poso Pesisir; the video was finally released two months afterwards. Sawt al-Jihad Nusantara (SJN), GIMF's Indonesia branch, published a short sketch on Hendro in "Biographical Series on the Martyrs of Nusantara" in which he is referred to as an SJN manager.⁴⁰

Hendro's involvement in Poso meant that Forum al-Busyro suffered. It was down in for a while in late 2013, only to return on 16 December, a few months before Hendro's death, to announce its return and a link for new members who wanted to register.⁴¹ The access site had changed from al-busyro.org to albusyro.com and albusyro.info. The announcement also praised the work of the sites it relied on for material.⁴²

A week after Hendro's death, the managers of al-Busyro met to decide on a successor, and Arif Tuban, who also used the names Abu Kholid al-Indunisy and *jaisy_554*, was given the job. Arif established contact with Santoso through an intermediary and began communicating with him via WhatsApp. Using the forum, Arif secured a donation from a forum member who used the name Saif al-Irhab, who made an electronic transfer of Rp.4 million (about \$350) to a bank account set up by Arif, for the purchase of explosive material. It was the first of several such transactions arranged through the forum.⁴³

Arif had tried to continue Hendro's efforts to link into the global jihad through Sawt al-Jihad, and the publication of Hendro's video in April 2014 was one result; it was the first time that a video from MIT had formally been released by the al-Qaeda media unit. Cooperation was brief, however. In May, Sawt al-Jihad released a statement on Syria, ostensibly calling for unity among all those fighting in Syria but in fact urging supporters of al-Baghdadi and ISIS to submit to the authority of al-Qaeda's leader, al-Zawahiri. Forum al-Busyro, whose members were strong supporters of ISIS, reacted angrily and rejected Sawt al Jihad's claims to speak on behalf of all

37 Sawt al-Jihad Nusantara, "Biography of the Shaheed Arif Wicaksana Aji" in "Biographical Series on the Martyrs of Nusantara, Part 1", azelin.files.wordpress.com.

38 For the full text of the MIT statement, see www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=520184091380675&id=492756764123408&stream_ref=5.

39 For a transcript of the video, see suarajihadislam.blogspot.co.id/2013/07/video-eksklusif-mujahidin-indonesia.html.

40 "Biographic Series on the Martyrs of Nusantara, Part 1," op.cit.

41 Forum al-Busyro, "Kabar Gembira atas Kembalinya Forum Islam al Busyro dan Pendaftaran Anggota Baru", shoutussalam.com, 17 December 2013.

42 Ibid. These included GIMF, MIT Media Division, Forum Islam at-Tawbah, Ansar al-Mujahideen English Forum (AMEF), Ansar al-Mujahideen Arabic Forum (AMAF), Syumukh al-Islam Network, Forum Islam al-Fidaa and Markaz Media al-Fajar [all spellings as in original].

43 Trial testimony of Arif Budi Setyawan alias Arif Tuban, Jakarta, 24 June 2014.

Indonesian *mujahidin*. Their statement concluded, “Good riddance, GIMF”⁴⁴

In 2014, Arif also established communication via WhatsApp with Salim Mubarak Attamimi alias Abu Jandal, one of the prominent Indonesian ISIS recruiters in Syria, and used the app to send video and texts of Santoso’s oath of allegiance to al-Baghdadi.⁴⁵ Arif also conveyed Santoso’s request to ISIS for additional funds and personnel. This led directly to the diversion to Poso from Kuala Lumpur of a small group of Uighurs, four of whom were arrested in September 2014, en route to Santoso’s camp.⁴⁶

Arif was arrested in June 2014, then tried and sentenced to four years and ten months in prison. Forum al-Busyru struggled to survive after his arrest. Its demise was formally announced in October 2015.

B. *Al-Mustaqbal.net*

For much of 2013 and 2014, www.al-mustaqbal.net was the leading pro-ISIS site in Indonesia. It was the direct outgrowth of a split between Jibril and M. Fachry, who remained the amir of al-Mujahirun in Indonesia. The main reason for the split was ideological, over whether members of the security forces could be considered infidel, because of their institutional affiliation, or whether each individual case had to be considered separately.⁴⁷

Fachry, who supported the first interpretation, decided to leave Arrahmah in 2012. He hired a website designer and gave him Rp.2 million to build a new site to disseminate news about jihad. The new site had several rubrics: World of Islam, Mujahidin on the Front Lines, Muslim Prisons, Enemies of Islam and Muslim Affairs. He recruited an IT administrator who lived in Pontianak, West Kalimantan and six writer-translators who could translate from Arabic and English. Three worked on an unpaid basis; Fachry convinced them that their jobs were as important a contribution to jihad as fighting in battle. He raised about Rp.3 million a month from donations and took in a little more through advertising.

The content of al-Mustaqbal was mostly recycled from other jihadi sites with a similar ideological stance, or compilations of news items with a few additional sentences added. He regularly took material from Aman Abdurrahman’s site, www.millahirahim.wordpress.com.

When the conflict erupted in Syria between ISIS and its al-Qaeda-linked rival, Jabhat al-Nusra (JN) in April 2013, al-Mustaqbal initially tried to stay neutral but after his mentor, Shaikh Omar Bakri, decided to stand with ISIS in October 2013, Fachry followed suit. It became the first website in Indonesia to consciously disseminate ISIS propaganda and had his staff look for material to translate from pro-ISIS sites such as global-islamic-resistance.blogspot.com. Al-Mustaqbal’s content in turn was picked up by other sites, not just in Indonesia but also in Malaysia where one site, muslimori1.blogspot.com, reproduced virtually all of al-Mustaqbal’s posts.

Like most other sites that were dependent on one or two people, however, al-Mustaqbal did not survive the arrest of its founder. Fachry was arrested in March 2015, and the site collapsed shortly thereafter.

44 For the Sawt al Jihad statement see “Suara Jihad Nusantara menyerukan persatuan kepada mujahidin di negeri Syam”, Arrahmah.com, 21 May 2014 and for the Forum’s response, see “Penjelasan Forum Islam Al Busyru atas Pernyataan yang Mengatasnamakan Dari Shoutul Jihad Nusantara yang berjudul ‘Panggilan Kepada Mujahidin di bumi Syam’”, islamnewsupdate.wordpress.com, 21 May 2014.

45 Trial testimony of Arif Budi Setyawan alias Arif Tuban, Jakarta, 24 June 2014

46 Testimony of Arif Budi Setyawan alias Arif Tuban as a witness in the case of Abdullah alias Altinci Bayyram, Ahmed Mahmud, Ahmad Bozoglan and Abdul Bazid alias Tuzer, Jakarta, 6 November 2014.

47 For more on the debate in the extremist community between *takfir mu’ayyan* and *takfir am*, see IPAC, “The Evolution of ISIS in Indonesia”, Report No.13, 24 September 2014, p.6-7.

C. *One Successful Hack*

For all of Imam Samudra's embrace of cyber-jihad as a strategy to attack the enemy, Indonesian extremists actually spent very little time trying to hack, let alone succeeding. The one exception was a Samudra protégé, Cahya Fitriyanta. Cahya had been an IT student at Surabaya Institute of Technology when he first met Imam Samudra through MIRC chatting; at the time the Bali bomber was using the name Nik Islamblade. It was Cahya whom Imam had wanted to send to Pakistan in 2008 to assist al-Qaeda with its media effort but for various reasons, the plan fell through.

In 2011, however, working with a group in Medan that want to raise funds for Santoso in Poso, Cahya hacked into an online currency trading site based in Malaysia called www.speed-lineinc.com. He entered the server of the website and downloaded its database, with the names of the members, their logins, passwords and the amount they had invested. He was able to transfer the money from accounts of members as sellers of Euros to one member as a buyer of rupiah, then transfer the rupiah amassed thereby to a bank account he had opened at a local Bank Central Asia branch. He then withdrew it with an ATM card.⁴⁸

The scale of the fraud not only helped Santoso in Poso; it also went to the purchase of a house and swimming pool for the leader of the group in Medan, much to the annoyance of his colleagues.⁴⁹

Cahya is one of a very few among convicted terrorists who acknowledges having become radicalised through surfing the Internet, and says he was particularly attracted by sites such as the unjustmedia.com, inshallahshaheed.wordpress.com, qoqaz.com and ekhlaas.net.⁵⁰

D. *One Case of Facebook Recruitment*

If this immediate pre-ISIS period saw one successful hack, it also saw one successful case of a group put together through Facebook friending. In many ways it is the exception that proves the rule: recruitment through social media has been extremely rare. It is also a sign of weakness. If a group has to resort to Facebook for recruits, it can mean that the individuals in question do not have access to those with good contacts in the extremist community and therefore have even less practical or ideological experience than the norm.

The group in question, led by a man named Abu Hanifah, was arrested in 2012 for a feckless plot to bomb the U.S. embassy that was intercepted before anyone even got close. But one of those arrested, Miko Yosiko, presents a fascinating portrait of a would-be jihadi with no idea how to translate his dreams into reality. When he was caught, police confiscated an Asus Netbook and eight cell phones: a Samsung, a Sony Ericsson, three Nokia, a Blueberry with four SIM cards, a MITTO with two and a brand called Smart. He and his friends had watched every jihad video they could get their hands on, downloaded lectures by radical ulama, and read the books of all the Bali bombers. He was an avid reader of every website mentioned in this report. He took part in both Forum at-Tawbah and Forum al-Busyiro. He had joined a faction of Darul Islam when he was 20, then looked for other opportunities for jihad. He wanted to go to southern Thailand but could not find a way to do so. Eventually he spent more and more time on Facebook, meeting like-minded people with Facebook names like Kalasnikov al-Jawi (Javanese Kalashnikov) and Jannaholic Hellphobia. A few of these people eventually came together as the would-be bombers.⁵¹

48 For more on this incident, see Petrus Reinhard Golose, *Invasi Terorisme ke Cyberspace*, (Jakarta, 2015), p.116.

49 For the full story of this plot and the links to Poso, see International Crisis Group, "How Indonesian Extremists Regroup", Asia Report No.228, 16 July 2012.

50 Trial testimony of Cahya Fitriyanta, West Jakarta District Court, February 2013.

51 Trial testimony of Miko Yosika alias Usman Alias Eko alias Kapal Laut. West Jakarta District Court, September 2013.

Miko's group is about as far as one can get from a carefully vetted membership organisation with progressive levels of indoctrination.

VI. ISIS TAKES OFF IN INDONESIA: 2014-2015

The emergence of ISIS, its declaration of a caliphate in June 2014 and the departure of hundreds of Indonesians took place just as smart phones were coming down in price and mobile phone apps were taking off. The penetration of social media was already extensive within the jihadi community, and smart phones meant that one no longer had to go to *warnets* to access them.

Many people were excited by the idea of going to Syria but despite the buzz on social media, relatively few have actually gone, given Indonesia's population and its small but resilient jihadi community. At least until very recently, it seems that social media, like chatting and list-serves of earlier eras, have been used far more for propaganda and ideology than for actual recruitment. Recruitment in Indonesia was always far more personalised, through direct face-to-face interaction, and it was friends and family one recruited, not strangers.

One example is Dr Harfan Amsura from Blitar, East Java who tried to go to Syria with a group in December 2014 but was intercepted and turned back at Jakarta airport. Since at least 2011, he had been involved in several radical discussion groups, where a frequent topic was the danger of Shi'ism and where videos of the Syrian conflict, portrayed as the brutality of Shi'a against Sunni, were often shown. A fellow participant named Affan alias Abu Ayman, who has become a senior member of the Indonesian ISIS contingent in Syria, called him up on WhatsApp in 2014 and said ISIS badly needed doctors and drugs and urged him to come. When Dr Harfan agreed, Affan made all the arrangements.⁵²

For a while, it looked as though the descriptions of life in a "pure" Islamic state by newly arrived Indonesians and Malaysians might lead to an increase in departures, with Facebook postings of those who had made the *hijrah* attracting a huge number of readers who wanted to go too. But the routes to Syria were tightly controlled by those with links to existing radical organisations.⁵³ Even if someone was attracted by ISIS propaganda, it was not just a matter of getting a ticket and flying out. ISIS required a recommendation from someone already in Syria, and only with that endorsement could one obtain the necessary contacts to get across the Turkish border. The use of social media has increased the chances of finding those contacts. One example is a policeman, Syahputra alias Abu Azzayn, from Jambi, Sumatra who left for Syria in March 2015. He seems to have been radicalised through a *pengajian* but then became active in a closed discussion group on Telegram, Junud Daulah Khilafah, with more than 100 members. It was through Telegram that he established contact with Abu Jandal, the Indonesian ISIS member in Syria, and made arrangements to go.⁵⁴ He was killed in battle in June 2015.

The control that radical organisations have exerted over contacts, and the fact that by and large people have to raise their own funds to go, means that social media have not played as big a role in mobilising Indonesians to *hijrah* as many analysts feared, even though the few hundred that have gone may cause problems enough. It is much more difficult to know how many sympathisers have been created at home, but there are some independent countervailing forces at work.

52 Testimony of Dr Harfan Amsura, 22 December 2014, Jakarta.

53 As of mid-2015 there were about five "selection committees" in different parts of Indonesia controlled by pro-ISIS groups. See IPAC, "Indonesia's Lamongan Network: How East Java, Poso and Syria Are Linked", Report No.18, 15 April 2015, p.12.

54 Private communication with Telegram member, June 2015.

A. *Jihad via Social Media*

Just as ISIS central became skilled at using social media for propaganda, its Indonesian supporters followed suit. They particularly took to Facebook Fan Pages to support ISIS, with pages in the name of Khabar Dunia Islam, Khilafah Dawla Islamyah, Para Pendukung Khilafah, We Are All Islamic State and others. Because they openly advocated violence, many were closed down by Facebook, only to open again under a slightly different name. Few lasted long enough to attract many followers.

Most of these fan pages were managed by the administrators of Kabar Dunia Islam (KDI), a media wing of ISIS support in Indonesia. Most were disciples of Aman Abdurrahman and also managed the site kdiofficial.blogspot.com. The Facebook pages took news from the KDI website and added material from [waislam](http://waislam.com), Shoutssalam.com (an ISIS mirror site) and [al-Mustaqbal](http://al-Mustaqbal.com). The administrators were in Syria as well as Indonesia. One was Siti Khadijah alias Ummu Sabrina who left with her husband, Abu Qaqa, in March 2014 and settled in Harariyah, Aleppo province. She and her husband were able to manage the KDI website because the amir of Harariyah, Abu Muhammad Al Amriky, later killed in Kobani, gave them a house with an internet connection.

Siti Khadijah became known after she posted an account of her travel to Syria with her husband and four children in a post entitled “Perjalanan Hijrah Ummu Sabrina”, published in June 2014.⁵⁵ In September 2014, she published a second account, “Kisah Ummu Sabrina di Bumi Khilafah”, where she described her furnished apartment, monthly stipend, free schooling and healthcare. She also described how she and her husband had been in a motorcycle accident when he was driving. ISIS forces had taken them to a doctor, brought them home and then arranged for the motorcycle to be repaired, at no cost to them. Her Facebook page was flooded with questions from Indonesians wanting to know how they too could go to Syria.

One of these was a man who used the Facebook name of Shabran Yaa Nafsi, a sandal-seller in a night market, who despite being poor was determined to bring his entire family to Syria. Inspired by Siti Khadijah’s story, he first contacted her in July 2014 and they began a correspondence. He eventually made it to Syria in early 2015—apparently on his own—only to be killed in a battle on Mt. Sinjar around 26 March 2015. Siti Khadijah help increase support for KDI’s Facebook page; the number of visitors to the site kdiofficial.com (since closed) also shot up.⁵⁶ By 2015, however, she had reportedly been given a new assignment running a safehouse, Madhafa Anisa Al-Arkhabily, for Indonesian women who had just arrived or whose husbands were in training, at war or dead.

B. *Resistance and Decline of Some Social Media*

Use of Facebook and other media like Google Plus by pro-ISIS supporters, and activity on pro-ISIS websites in Indonesia seemed to decline in 2015, and there were several possible reasons: resistance to ISIS propaganda; stricter policing by social media services; loss of personnel; stricter control from ISIS central; and the rise of alternative services.⁵⁷

Reporting on ISIS in the mainstream media in Indonesia was strongly negative anyway, but challenges to the ISIS narrative came from two sources in particular: supporters of Jabhat al-Nus-

55 The full text can be found on a number of pro-ISIS blogs. See fursansyahadah.blogspot.co.id/2014/09/perjalanan-hijrah-ummu-sabrina-full.html; jalanallah.wordpress.com/2014/10/26/perjalanan-hijrah-ummu-sabrina-bagian-3/; and weareallislamicstate.wordpress.com/2014/10/14/kisah-ummu-sabrina-salah-satu-keluarga-dari-indonesia-yg-berhijrah-menjalani-kehidupan-di-bumi-khilafah-lengkap/.

56 According to Alexa, the global ranking of kdiofficial.com was 11.8 millionth in June 2014; it increased to 1.1 millionth in September 2014, after Siti Khadijah’s accounts were published.

57 The impression of a decline in Facebook and Google Plus is confirmed by some members of Telegram groups who stopped using these services. IPAC has not itself conducted quantitative research on pro-ISIS Indonesians’ use of social media over time, nor has it seen any in-depth studies conducted elsewhere.

ra (JN) and strict salafis. The first was represented by Facebook and Twitter accounts of Arrahmah.com and Muqawamah.net, a site run by several JI prisoners in Cipinang.⁵⁸ The second was led by Fathi Yazid Attamimi of the Syrian Medical Mission (Misi Medis Suriah, MMS). MMS began a fund-raising campaign on Facebook to raise money for Syria in August 2013 and in three months was able to attract donations of some Rp.1.5 billion. By September 2015, this had risen to Rp.22 billion (about \$1.6 million). The funds were used to send doctors, humanitarian volunteers, repair roads, build a bread factory and provide other forms of humanitarian aid. The recipient of most of their aid was the militia Ahrar al-Sham. Attamimi's antipathy toward ISIS stemmed from an incident in January 2014 when an MMS team was nearly killed by ISIS forces while delivering aid in Latakia, Syria. The MMS site has been a strong critic of ISIS and at the same time far exceeds any pro-ISIS website in popularity, with 14,535 "likes" in October 2015. ISIS supporters tried to counter MMS criticism by setting up anti-MMS Facebook pages and circulating postings about the hypocrisy of Attamimi but they made little dent in his popularity.

Facebook, Google, Twitter and YouTube became much more assiduous about policing pro-ISIS sites that advocated violence. ISIS supporters had a difficult time maintaining fan pages on Facebook given the speed with which they were shut down. One still active as of October 2015 was Manjanik.com, which had just over 1,700 "likes". It was affiliated to a website that had only appeared in August 2015, and a Twitter account, both with the same name. KDI also had trouble keeping its website updated and had to repeatedly change names and spellings. Two of the most recent incarnations are khilafahdaulahislamiyyah.wordpress.com and daulahislamiyahb-aqiyyah.wordpress.com.⁵⁹

Pro-ISIS sites were also repeatedly hacked by the group Ghostsec whose mission, according to its website is:

to eliminate the online presence of Islamic extremist groups such as Islamic State (IS), Al-Qaeda, Al-Nusra, Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab in an effort to stymie their recruitment and limit their ability to organize international terrorist efforts.⁶⁰

Loss of personnel was also a factor. Some of the more than 50 Indonesians killed since March 2015 in Syria and Iraq were active Facebook users. Many of the pro-ISIS sites were maintained by one or two individuals, so as with Forum Jihad al Busyro, the loss of key people through death, arrest or *hijrah* to Syria could cause it to fold.

There is some evidence that ISIS central was trying to exert more control over messaging. One Indonesian leader in Syria, Abu Jandal, came under criticism for posting a video in December 2014 challenging the Indonesian military to a fight, because the posting was unauthorised. A Malaysian woman doctor, whose story of her marriage to a Moroccan ISIS fighter went viral, was apparently criticised for tweeting about the high death toll of Indonesians and Malaysians in battle in April 2015.⁶¹

58 Among the prisoners linked to this site are Abu Dujana (released in October 2015) and Lutfi Haedaroh alias Ubeid. While it might have seemed as though it was in the government's interest to have an anti-ISIS site, there is no indication that Muqawamah.net was endorsed by prison authorities or anyone else in government, since it was one of those blocked by BNPT in March 2015.

59 Earlier versions were kdiofficial.blogspot.com from 1/2014 to 10/2014; khilafahdawalislamiyah.wordpress.com from 10/2014 to about 5/2015; khilafahdawalislamiyyah.wordpress.com (with the addition of an extra "y") from 5/2015 to 8/2015.

60 See www.ghostsec.org. Its homepage further says, "This site provides a means for people to report known islamic extremist content including websites, blogs, videos and social media accounts. Once verified by our Intel team, our operations teams set to work on removing the content."

61 For more on the doctor, who used the Twitter name @birdofjannah, see "An ISIS Love Story", Buzzfeed.com, 18 September 2014.

C. *Azzam Media*

Azzammedia.com, the Indonesian/Malay language propaganda arm of ISIS, came into being on 3 March 2015, with regular news accounts of each “province” or *wilayat* of Islamic state, news of martyrdoms, videos (including of Indonesian and Malaysian children training with rifles), and translations of the ISIS magazine, *Dabiq*. The editor was Arkan al-Fadil, a former activist with the JAT-linked Movement of Students for Islamic Law (Gerakan Mahasiswa untuk Syariat Islam, Gema Salam). He became the editor of the extremist site Shoutussalam until he left for Syria with his wife and child in 2014. On his Twitter account he identifies himself as “Journalist and Translator, Islamic Sharia Activist, Observer at World History, Global Jihad and Islamic Revolution”.

Ghostsec attacked Azzammedia in May 2015 but it reappeared immediately, accessible through azzammedia.net and azzammedia.org as well as azzammedia.com.

In some ways, the emergence of Azzammedia obviated the need for separately maintained ISIS sites. Local jihadi news was still available on sites like Vvoa-islam.com and Ppanjimas.com, for example stories on raids by Detachment 88 on suspected terrorists or Indonesian developments that were considered haram or appeals to aid needy members of the jihadi community. But for news from ISIS, supporters could simply use their individual social media accounts to send links to particularly compelling stories or videos directly from Syria. In the words of one analyst:

The most important aspect of Islamic State’s evolved use of the media and the internet concerns its initial methods of distribution and the role of non-affiliated supporters who further disseminate content, rather than the content itself.⁶²

This involvement of individual social media users as propagandists means that even with the decline of sites and fan pages, the overall availability of ISIS propaganda in Indonesia has almost certainly risen.

D. *Mobile Phone Apps and Prison-Based Chatting*

The most important factor in the apparent decline in the use of Facebook, Google Plus and Twitter, was the rise in the use of mobile telephone apps such as WhatsApp, Telegram and Zello, all of which were considered much safer, especially for communication between the Middle East and Indonesia but also among ISIS supporters in Indonesia.

In mid-2015, for example, a group of Indonesians who had already sworn an oath of loyalty to IS and al-Baghdadi decided to form an umbrella organisation called Partisans of the Islamic State (Ansharud Daulah Islamiyah). Among other things, they were intent on building a South-east Asia *wilayat*. For security reasons, they formed a chat group on WhatsApp called Junud Daulah Islamiyah with about 100 members, moderated by Slamet Pilih Utomo, a convicted terrorist serving a six-year sentence in Cirebon prison, West Java. A former JI member from Solo, he crossed over to a more militant group and was arrested in May 2013 for giving bomb-making instruction to its members.⁶³

Telegram has become another favourite service because it is encrypted and because it allows for twice as many members in the group as does WhatsApp (200 as opposed to 100). One Indonesian group, “Wa Aiddu”, is devoted to preparing people who intend to join ISIS forces. There are at least ten identified but many more unidentified Indonesian Telegram groups that serve

62 Yannick Veilleux-Lepage, “Paradigmatic Shifts”, op. cit, p.1.

63 Born 27 April 1977, Pilih joined al-Qaida Indonesia led by Badri Hartono and helped recruit men to send to Poso for training with Santoso. He received a six-year sentence in March 2014.

various purposes: news sharing, religious study groups, personal chats, *hijrah* tips, and even on-line business opportunities. Some women avoid mixed-gender groups and hence the emergence of women-only groups. Some, especially those that contain sensitive information about *hijrah* contacts and tips for preparation (*idad*), are more exclusive than others and require new members to be vouched for by at least one existing member.

For audio communications, some ISIS supporters have turned to Zello, an application that acts like a walky-talky over international radio bands. It works reasonably well when strong mobile phone signals are not available. ISIS supporters use Zello for religious discussions as well as for teleconferencing. In Aceh, ISIS supporters reportedly held a discussion sometime in August or September 2015 about the pros and cons of trying once again to establish a secure base in Aceh.

The belief that communication via these apps is secure has led to at least one instance of planning a terrorist attack, although police arrested the plotters before they could do anything.⁶⁴ In June 2015, a Solo-based activist named Ibadurrahman alias Ibad received a Facebook message from Bahrun Naim, an Indonesian who left for Syria in January 2015. The two were close friends, having grown up in the same village and before Bahrun's departure, attended pro-ISIS discussions together in the Solo area. In the message, Bahrun gave his Telegram account number and the two began to communicate the encrypted service. Bahrun asked Ibad to recruit a few friends and train them to make bombs; he would cover all costs. He also promised to help Ibad get to Syria, though Ibad was more interested in going to Mosul, to study at an ISIS-run university there.

Ibad agreed. He had worked with the same group as the prisoner Slamet Pilih Utomo, above, but also had ties to other extremists. He managed to recruit five men, partly on the strength of Bahrun's promise that he would help them all get to Syria. Bahrun then transferred Rp.3.5 million (about \$250) to buy explosives and other incidental costs. He also provided instructions via Telegram on how to mix saltpetre, since Ibad's limited expertise in bomb-making was on the electronic circuitry aspects. The idea was that once the bombs were made, the team would carry out three attacks: one on a church, as revenge for the burning of a mosque in Tolikara, Papua in July 2015; one on a Buddhist temple, as revenge for Buddhist attacks on Muslims in Myanmar; and one on the police, as revenge for arrests of ISIS supporters. All were to take place on Indonesia's national day, 17 August. Police got wind of the plot, however, almost certainly through the standard mobile phone conversations of some of those involved, and Ibad and two others were arrested.

The use of Telegram, Zello and other apps has helped reinforce group solidarity, and members have been able to assist each other with information, for example about how to get to Syria. But by and large, individuals only come into the circle if they have already been radicalised outside. It is not as though the mobile apps are used deliberately to recruit people for ISIS.

VII. THE ONLINE BATTLE BETWEEN AL-NUSRA AND ISIS

Throughout 2015, the online media war between pro-JN and pro-ISIS factions picked up in Indonesia with Aman Abdurrahman coming under sustained verbal attack by the JN side, including Muqawamah.net and Arrahmah.com. In the pro-ISIS camp were al-Mustaqbal, at least until Fachry was arrested in March; Shoutussalam.com; and the various manifestations of KDI, including daulahislamiyyah.com and the Google Plus account, KDIPress. Many of the contributions on both sides were from prisoners convicted of terrorism using their smart phones from behind bars to join the debate.

64 The information about the plot comes from confidential documents made available to IPAC in October 2015.

In February 2015, the pro-JN sites posted a tract called “The Character of the Modern Extremist: A Critical Study of the Deviance of the Aman Abdurrahman School” by someone calling himself “Abu Jihad al-Indunisy”.⁶⁵ The author accused Aman of provoking his followers into jihadi actions, then abandoning them and disclaiming responsibility, and allowing marriages without the guardian of the bride being present, since often the fathers of Aman’s female followers disagreed with his teachings. The marriages thus amounted to little more than adultery.⁶⁶ He also quoted approvingly from Abu Tholut, a former JI prisoner on the JN side who said that ISIS was worse than the original *khawarij* (an extremist Islamic sect from the 7th century that had rebelled against the caliph) because they constantly lied about their actions.

A few days later, the pro-ISIS sites published a riposte by Abu Hataf Syaiful Rasul alias Mujadid alias Brekele, a pro-ISIS prisoner in Permisan prison, Nusakambangan.⁶⁷

The online war went back and forth, with the JN camp generally more aggressive, bringing into their attacks the leading anti-ISIS voices among radical ulama such as Abu Qatadah, Al Maqdisi and Al-Zawahiri.

On 31 August 2015, Muqawamah.net published a tract called “Is Aman Abdurrahman an Ulama?” again by “Abu Jihad”.⁶⁸ It was quickly picked up by arrahmah.com. The author accused Aman, the most influential ISIS supporter in the country, of being a *khawarij* because he tended to brand as apostate anyone who disagreed with him or who refused to take an oath of loyalty to al-Baghdadi. “Abu Jihad” wrote that Aman was a self-taught man who had never formally studied with learned teachers and only got his knowledge from books. He thus did not deserve the status of *alim*, or Islamic scholar, and thus had no right to issue *fatwa*, or opinions.

Aman did not respond to the article but his supporters did. Amir Mahmud, a former JI member turned ISIS supporter in Solo, accused the author of being jealous of Aman, and suggested that “Abu Jihad” was in fact Abu Jibriel, father of Arrahmah.com’s owner.⁶⁹ Aman, he said, was far more skilled in Arabic than Abu Jibriel. (In fact, the author of the tract was not Abu Jibriel but Sofyan Tsauri, a prisoner convicted of terrorism for his role in the 2010 Aceh training camp who was released from Cipinang Prison, Jakarta in October 2015.

On 9 September, the KDI site published a taped statement from Abu Bakar Ba’asyir refuting the charges of “Abu Jihad” and saying that only partisans of the oppressors would dare lay such accusations against Aman.

More systematic attacks on Aman may be coming, however. There are reports that Bahrum Syah, leader of the Indonesian ISIS combat forces, wrote a letter in mid-2015 to Abu Bakar Ba’asyir complaining about Aman Abdurrahman and suggesting that he no longer has the confidence of at least one faction of ISIS fighters. Admiration for Aman’s teachings has been the one thread tying a very disparate pro-ISIS community together, and if it dissipates, then more wars of words online can be expected.

VIII. THE RISK OF “LONE WOLF” ATTACKS

As noted, Indonesia to date has only experienced two lone wolf jihadi attacks since 2002, neither of them successful in that only the would-be bomber was hurt. (A few such bombings not linked to extremist groups have also taken place, linked to business disputes or extortion attempts.)

65 “Adab dan Akhlak Khawarij Modern: Studi Kritis Kesesatan Mazhab Aman Abdurrahman”, Arrahmah.com, 3 February 2015.

66 Ibid.

67 “Mereka Pendusta dan Tukang Fitnah: Bukan Daulah”, plus.google.com/+KDIPress/posts/9C1LrZaVYVH, 25 February 2015.

68 Ali Akram, “Menggugat Status Ulama yang Disematkan kepada Aman Abdurrahman”, 31 August 2015, Arrahmah.com.

69 Interestingly, both Amir Mahmud and Abu Jibriel had sons killed in Syria but on opposite sides. Amir Mahmud’s son, Rusydan Abdul Hadi, died fighting for ISIS on 15 May 2015; a second son, Hadid is still there. Abu Jibriel’s son, Muhammad Ridwan Abdul Hayyie, died fighting for al-Nusra on 26 March 2015.

One question is whether use of social media by ISIS supporters increases the possibility of more such attempts. There are at least four potential ways such an attack could take place:

- Individuals acting on general ISIS instructions, such as the 22 September 2014 order from ISIS spokesman Abu Mohamed al-Adnani to kill, by any means available, citizens of any country taking part in the US-led anti-ISIS coalition.
- Individuals acting on specific instructions from other Indonesians in ISIS.
- Individuals seeking recognition from ISIS or wanting to prove on their own that ISIS support extends to Southeast Asia.
- Individuals frustrated at being stopped from going to Syria, either by being intercepted before leaving Indonesia or deported en route.

There is no shortage of big mouths in the closed discussion groups who talk about the desirability of attacks, including on foreigners. Some of the Indonesian-language videos produced by Azzam Media and what appears to be an associated media unit, Furat, have also included exhortations to wage jihad at home if one cannot leave to join the caliphate. But that kind of fulmination does not necessarily translate into attacks, and while fellow users of social media can provide positive reinforcement, they can also urge caution. In some fora, members have expressed concern that some of the fieriest talkers are actually spies or provocateurs.

While it is possible that an Indonesian all on his or even her own could decide to pick up a gun and aim it at a policeman or foreigner, it is worth remembering that for Indonesian extremists thus far, jihad has been at heart a social activity, where being a member of a group has been part of the appeal. That could always change, but a loner attack still seems less likely than a group effort.

IX. ONLINE MARRIAGES OF EXTREMISTS

One other use of social media is worth noting—the uniting of extremist couples in marriage. The phenomenon is not new, but the volume is.⁷⁰ Both prisoners and fighters in Syria are finding mates online.

Many inmates serving sentences on terrorism charges use their mobile phones to trawl the Internet for second and third wives, and seem to have little difficulty finding women eager to be married to men they consider heroes unjustly imprisoned by the infidel Indonesian state. The first meeting usually takes place via Facebook, with a process of getting to know one another (*ta'aruf*) online. If they decide they are compatible, they can proceed to marriage. One case is Ikhsan Adriyanto, a Solo man arrested for bomb-making in 2012 and serving a six-year sentence in Kedung Pane prison, Semarang. He was already married, but took two more wives in 2015, with only months separating the second marriage from the third. Many other such marriages have taken place.

Several online marriages have taken place among radical domestic workers in Hong Kong with ISIS in Syria, in the hope that the marriage will facilitate their acceptance there. One worker, Najma, 25, married an Indonesian man known as Abu Arianto by phone after they met online and shared pro-ISIS sentiments. Abu Arianto came to Hong Kong briefly en route to Syria after the marriage. Najma then borrowed money from friends for travel to Syria and promised to pay it back after she joined her husband. She left Hong Kong for Syria on 27 February 2015, seven months pregnant. Weeks after she arrived, Abu Arianto was killed.⁷¹

70 One of the first instances that became public was the marriage of Putri Munawaroh, widow of a man killed in 2009 in the police operation to capture Noordin Top, to Ridwan Lestahulu. They were married by videophone in 2010. She was imprisoned in Jakarta, he in Surabaya at the time.

71 “Hutang Uang, Diduga Gabung ISIS”, www.kindo.hk, 24 March 2015.

Another Indonesian domestic worker in Hong Kong named Ummu Ghalia, 48, from Ponorogo had worked in the Middle East before going to Hong Kong and wanted to go Syria to join ISIS. Inspired by Najma's marriage, she married a Javanese named Budi Santoso by phone. Budi, who also wanted to go to Syria, went to Hong Kong for the honeymoon, then returned to Indonesia. It turned out that Budi's first wife had not given him permission to take a second, so Budi then divorced Ummu Ghali online. Ghalia subsequently married the administrator of a pro-ISIS group on Telegram, but as of October 2015, neither had made it to Syria.⁷²

The online marriage issue underscores another characteristic of ISIS propaganda, the extent to which it is reaching and attracting women. Social media is after all an equaliser, where women can be as active participants as men. Many families are leaving for Syria as a unit, and in some cases, the women have driven the departures, attracted by the idea of bringing their children up in an Islamic state.

X. THE GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

The Indonesian government's response to online and social media activities of pro-ISIS extremists has not been particularly effective, in part because there is no clear legal ban on joining, supporting or training with ISIS.⁷³ Some of its efforts have also faced pushback from human rights groups rightly concerned about broader attempts to control the Internet.

On 27 March 2015, the Indonesian National Anti-Terrorism Agency (Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Terorisme, BNPT) asked the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology to block nineteen websites that it believed were spreading extremist ideology. It appeared to be aimed at ISIS, but the list included several avowedly anti-ISIS sites, such as Arrahmah.com and Muqawamah.com (now Muqawamah.net), as well as several sites that while conservative, also reached well into the Muslim mainstream, such as Hidayatullah.com and Eramuslim.com. The blockage took place in the context of BNPT's largely unsuccessful efforts to get the information minister under the previous government to take its requests for blocking seriously. The new minister, appointed in late 2014, was eager to help but relied on BNPT to make an accurate judgment of what constituted a security threat. The list was not well prepared.⁷⁴

Protests over the blocking came from all quarters. Hidayatullah said if the government or BNPT had problem with the content, they should block the URL in question, not the domain, especially because BNPT could only come up with two problematic postings on the site.⁷⁵ After a week, twelve, including Hhidayatullah.com, were unblocked after being reviewed by a team in the information ministry's office called Forum for the Handling of Websites with Negative Content (Panel Forum Penanganan Situs Internet Bermuatan Negatif). Even those that remained blocked, like daulahislam.com, remained easily accessible through proxy free sites or through slightly altered names that returned online.

Potentially more effective was the effort to charge M. Fachry of al-Mustaqbal.net under a controversial 2008 law on Information and Electronic Transfers (ITE). It contains provisions banning the distribution of information designed to spread hatred or hostility toward individuals or groups based on ethnicity, religious, race or group identity, or containing threats of vi-

72 "ISIS Bentrok, 24 Tewas. 2 BMI HK Dikawini Lewat Telpon "Isis", www.kindo.hk/blog/?e=1995, 30 August 2015.

73 In August 2014, the Yudhoyono government declared ISIS a banned organisation but this was more a policy directive than an instruction or regulation with the force of law. See "Evolution of ISIS", *op.cit.*, p.21.

74 The nineteen sites were arrahmah.com; voa-islam.com; ghur4ba.blogspot.com; panjimas.com; thoriquna.com; dakwatuna.com; kafilahmujahid.com; an-najah.net; muslimdaily.net; hidayatullah.com; salam-online.com; aqlislamiccenter.com; ki-blat.net; dakwahmedia.com; muqawomah.com; lasdipo.com; gemaislam.com; eramuslim.com; and daulahislam.com.

75 "Hidayatullah.com Minta Kemenkominfo Hanya Blokir Konten, Bukan Situs", *Harian Terbit*, 5 April 2015.

olence or fear-mongering.⁷⁶ Human rights organisations repeatedly expressed concern about the law's overly broad language, and their fears have been borne out by several prosecutions related to the law's defamation provisions, not extremism, that should never have come to trial. Indonesian prosecutors have few legal tools at their disposal, however, to prosecute online ISIS propagandists, and Fachry's case, underway as of this writing in West Jakarta District Court, could set a precedent.

BNPT is working with some NGOs to try and get crowd-sourced rejoinders to ISIS tweets, but the pro-ISIS twitter sources are so many and appear in so many new guises that it remains unclear what impact the initiative will have. Moreover, this kind of response needs to be based on analysis of what aspects of the ISIS message resonate most strongly with Indonesians. One study of ISIS propaganda notes that its six themes are brutality, mercy, victimhood, war, belonging and utopianism, and the latter two may be the most powerful.⁷⁷ The images in photos and videos of the camaraderie of Indonesian ISIS fighters and of the normalcy of this "pure" Islamic state combine to exert a potent pull, so it may be these messages that need a response, more than the images of violence.

As noted above, the government has made no headway in preventing convicted prisoners from gaining access to the Internet and social media through mobile phones, although in some cases, it may be encouraging JN supporters to get their anti-ISIS tracts online.

The biggest task for the government, however, is probably intelligence collection through analysis of pro-ISIS social media traffic, and this is where the government lacks skills, training and resources. One member of the counter-terrorism police unit, Detachment 88, acknowledged that it had access to the right technology but lacked sufficient skilled analysts to keep up with the volume.

XI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

An overview of how extremists have used the Internet and social media since the Bali bombs suggests that even with the sophisticated propaganda outreach of ISIS via social media, the fundamental pattern of recruitment in Indonesia has not radically changed. Direct face-to-face interaction is still crucial. If there had been a dramatic change through social media, the numbers of Indonesians going to ISIS would be much higher. The number of foreign fighters from Indonesia, even if one uses BNPT's figure of 800, which is almost certainly too high, is still far below the ratio of foreign fighters per million population from Belgium, France, the UK or Denmark.⁷⁸

But some changes are worth noting. One is the appeal to women and families, which makes it different than the generation of *mujahidin* who went to train on the Afghan-Pakistan border in the period 1985-94. Those fighters also went with the explicit intention of returning home to wage jihad. Families leaving to join ISIS have no intention of coming back, and often sell all their worldly possessions to raise funds for the trip.

Second is the role of individual propagandists, meaning the ISIS message is reaching a far greater number of people and giving them a sense that they too can take part in this extraordi-

76 Articles 28 and 29 of Law No.11/2008 on Information and Electronic Transactions, available at kemenag.go.id/file/dokumen/UU1108.pdf.

77 "The Virtual Caliphate", op.cit, pp.22-30.

78 As of October 2015, BNPT was suggesting that 800 Indonesians had joined ISIS, of whom 284 had been identified by name and 516 needed "further clarification". (Notes from a government Powerpoint presentation, 17 October 2015.) It should not be considered a reliable figure. The cases requiring "further clarification" are in some cases based on unverified rumours, in some cases individuals who have gone on short-term visits, and in some cases individuals who may have gone to Syria but not to ISIS. Even the 284 figure includes women and children (a high proportion of Indonesians with ISIS have gone as families). It is also not clear that fighters killed in battle are regularly deducted from the total.

nary re-establishment of a caliphate, even if they stay home and re-tweet. Any increased support for ISIS in Indonesia also increases the potential for violence, although several analysts point out that it is not ISIS violence that exerts the strongest pull on supporters but its message of the pure Islamic life.

Understanding how ISIS propaganda is affecting communities inside Indonesia is an essential prerequisite to effective prevention attempts. Among policies that the Indonesian government could consider are the following:

1. Strengthen the capacity to analyse social media communications by adding qualified personnel with advanced computer skills to Detachment 88 and BNPT. The focus should be as much on analytical as technical skills. Some in the police are advocating the establishment of a new National Cyber Center, but without enhanced analytical skills of the personnel recruited to it, it could become another government body with a bloated budget and no clear strategy.
2. End the access of convicted terrorists and other high-risk offenders to cell phones and other electronic media. Effective monitoring of the Internet and social media is not possible without better prison supervision. If Indonesia is not able to control the access of prisoners to the Internet, then it suggests a lack of capacity to carry out any other preventive measure effectively.
3. Support research in Indonesian academic institutions aimed at understanding the use of social media and the impact of ISIS messaging.
4. Using knowledge gained from 1 and 3, undertake a public interest campaign to counter ISIS messaging that is more sophisticated than the early “Reject ISIS” (*Tolak ISIS*) message. Advanced techniques of crowd-sourcing are probably essential, and here Google, Twitter and Facebook computer analysts and other parts of the private sector could help—but so can disillusioned returnees who have come back from Syria with stories of corruption, false promises and discrimination by Arabs who treat Southeast Asians as second-class citizens.

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The Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict (IPAC) was founded in 2013 on the principle that accurate analysis is a critical first step toward preventing violent conflict. Our mission is to explain the dynamics of conflict—why it started, how it changed, what drives it, who benefits—and get that information quickly to people who can use it to bring about positive change.

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