

# **THE SURABAYA BOMBINGS AND THE FUTURE OF ISIS IN INDONESIA**

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## I. INTRODUCTION

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On 13 and 14 May 2018, three Indonesian families blew themselves up attacking or planning to attack targets in Surabaya, East Java. The bombings raised fears that suicide bombings with young children might be a new deadly tactic; that the technical skills of Indonesians belonging to the pro-ISIS Jamaah Ansharud Daulah (JAD) had increased; and that ISIS's defeats in the Middle East were sparking a renewed commitment to violence at home.

Five months later, the attacks seem to have been an idiosyncratic act by a small group of friends, all JAD members, who were convinced the end of the world was imminent and wanted to ensure their place in heaven. Their intention to carry out suicide bombings was known to and encouraged by the JAD East Java leadership but the families were left to themselves to plan the details. Their decision to use their own children was condemned by some other extremists, including JAD founder Aman Abdurrahman, and there is little likelihood that others will be inspired to do the same.

No one higher up in JAD had to sign off on the bombings. Information from the arrests that followed suggest that JAD had already lost its central leadership and that by circumstance more than strategic choice, members were acting as a loose network of autonomous cells, not as part of a centrally-directed organisation. At the same time, members took their pledge to ISIS leader Abu Bakar al-Baghdadi seriously, and many, especially in the East Java branch, took to heart the exhortation from ISIS central to *mujahidin* around the world to wage war at home if they could not get to Syria. That commitment will continue to spawn new attempts at *amaliyah* or acts of terrorism, though with most of the East Java leaders under arrest, the stronghold of militancy may shift westward to Central and West Java.

There is no indication that anyone with experience in Syria had any direct links to the attack. The families had very much wanted to join ISIS and die in Sham (Greater Syria) rather than Surabaya, but getting in had become all but impossible. Khalid Abubakar, the preacher with whom the families had studied, had tried to go, only to be caught and deported from Turkey. He is one of the few individuals linked to the Surabaya group who remains at large, but he is not believed to have been involved in any way in the planning.

There is also no indication that the Surabaya bombers or anyone in JAD was significantly more proficient technically than before or that the bombing represented a major new skill transfer. The bombs were all prepared with triacetone triperoxide (TATP), the highly explosive compound made of easily available materials that ISIS terrorists reportedly refer to as "Mother of Satan". The ability of the families to pull off the coordinated attack may have been as much due to their unusual ability to keep secrets rather than their technical know-how. They did, however, make a huge number of bombs which they had hoped to distribute across East Java so that other cells could follow their example.

The bombings showed the limits of police monitoring capability, as surveillance of the perpetrators had stopped about three months before the attacks. Nevertheless, the speed of the round-up that took place afterwards, not just of East Java members but of JAD cells across the country, showed how extensive police knowledge of the network actually was. Even good intelligence, however, is not fail-safe protection against highly secretive cells.

While new family attacks are unlikely, a critical mass of ISIS supporters committed to violence in Indonesia remains, and the bombings are a reminder that radicalisation is not just a process affecting adult males. The Surabaya bombings have sparked major interest on the part of the government and donors in the role of women extremists, reintegration of pro-ISIS families deported from Turkey, and preventing radicalisation of youth. It remains to be seen whether this interest will translate into effective programs.

In the meantime, Indonesian authorities need to be alert to the possibility of new alliances forming among pro-ISIS elements as a response to the post-Surabaya crackdown.

## II. BACKGROUND: THE GROWTH OF JAMAAH ANSHARUL DAULAH (JAD)

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The story of JAD, which has undergone a number of name changes, begins in late October 2014 when Aman Abdurrahman decided to try to bring all pro-ISIS organisations in Indonesia together to support the newly declared caliphate in Syria and Iraq. By unifying the different groups, he also hoped to meet one of the conditions for making Indonesia an official province of Islamic State. He summoned four of his most loyal followers to the prison on Nusakambangan island, off the south coast of Java, where he was serving a nine-year sentence on terrorism charges. The four were Hari Budianto also known as Abu Musa, a former prisoner; Zaenal Anshori, formerly of the Islamic Defenders Front (Front Pembela Islam, FPI) in Lamongan, East Java; Tuah Febriansyah alias Muhammad Fachri who ran an active pro-ISIS website, *al-mustaqbal.net*; and Khaerul Anwar, head of JAT in West Java.<sup>1</sup>

Aman told them that that the caliphate was indeed the promised “caliphate of the Prophet” foretold in *hadith* that would emerge at the end of time and uphold Islam as practiced by the Prophet Muhammad. All Muslims were therefore obliged to take an oath of loyalty to the new caliph. Indonesians needed to unite in a single organisation to support the new Islamic State, bring all supporters into line with its teachings and practices and facilitate the departures of anyone who could leave for Syria to join it.<sup>2</sup>

They agreed to form an organization that was first called Anshorud Daulah Indonesia (ADI), then Jamaah Ansharul Khilafah Indonesia (JAKI) and eventually became known as Jemaah Ansharul Daulah (JAD). All of these are generic names for supporters of Islamic State that are widely used in other parts of the world. The exact name was not important; all that mattered was the allegiance to the *daulah*, or Islamic State.

Aman Abdurrahman proposed Abu Musa as the new overall *amir* with responsibility for consolidating support among all pro-ISIS groups in Indonesia. Zainal Anshori became the *amir* for East Java, initially the only other territorial command in the new organisation. Both men already had large personal followings of their own that they could use as the basis for further recruitment.

In November 2014, Zainal Anshori contacted a Malang cleric named Romly, better known as Gus Rom, and asked him to host a meeting to consolidate the pro-ISIS groups in East Java. At the time, Romly was associated with the radical group al-Muhajirun, a transnational splinter of Hizbut Tahrir founded in London by Omar Bakri and Anjam Choudry.<sup>3</sup> He agreed to become *amir* of Malang and several other regional *amirs* were appointed at this time.

The new group got a major boost when Abu Bakar Ba’asyir’s organisation, Jamaah Ansharul Tauhid (JAT), joined forces in 2015, enabling JAD to take on seven more regions: Lampung, Banten, West Java, Central Java, East Kalimantan, South Sulawesi and Maluku. By early 2015, several new JAD regional *amirs* had been named, many of whom were later arrested in connection

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1 Direktori Putusan Mahkamah Agung Republik Indonesia, Putusan Nomor 140/Pid.Sus/2018/PN.Jkt.Sel (verdict in case of Oman Rochman alias Aman Abdurrahman), 5 June 2018. Accessed 30 September 2018 at [file:///C:/Users/Administrator/Downloads/PN\\_JKT.SEL\\_2018\\_Pid.Sus\\_140\\_putusan\\_akhir.doc.pdf](file:///C:/Users/Administrator/Downloads/PN_JKT.SEL_2018_Pid.Sus_140_putusan_akhir.doc.pdf). Zainal Anshori also used the names Abu Fahry and Qomaruddin; Khaerul Anwar was also known as Abu Hatim.

2 Ibid.

3 Al-Muhajiroun (as spelled in the U.K.) was founded in London in 1986 as a militant splinter of Hizbut Tahrir that was willing to use violence in pursuit of its aims. It disbanded in 2004 as it was about to be banned by the U.K. government. For more on its activities in Indonesia, see IPAC, “Evolution of ISIS in Indonesia”, Report No.13, 24 September 2014, pp.2-9.

with attacks or bomb plots.<sup>4</sup>

JAD retained the hierarchical JAT structure, headed by a central board (*markaziyah*), followed by units at the provincial and district levels (*wilayah* and *mudiriyah*, respectively). At each level there was a military wing (*askari*) tasked to carry out jihad operations (*amaliyah*). The structure was designed to be the core of an ISIS government in Indonesia when it secured political victory (*siyasi*), with the *markaziyah* taking over at the national level and replicating the government's administrative units. Throughout 2015, under the direction of Abu Musa, local branches conducted ideological study sessions and military training (*tadrib*), mostly consisting of outdoor fitness exercises and hiking.

The next major step was consolidation of all regions at a meeting in Batu, Malang in November 2015, using the cover of a meeting on running businesses in herbal remedies.<sup>5</sup> Abu Musa, who was planning to leave for Syria, turned over leadership to Zainal Anshori, who in turn turned over his East Java position to Romly. Aman Abdurrahman and Abu Bakar Ba'asyir served as advisers from prison together with Sholeh Ibrahim, former head of JAT Solo and caretaker JAT leader.

During the Malang meeting, Aman Abdurrahman joined from prison via speaker phone so all the participants could hear. He stressed three points: the importance of bringing faith and practice of Indonesian ISIS supporters into line with the new caliphate and *daulah*; the obligation to move to Syria for those who could; and the obligation to undertake jihad operations in Indonesia for those who could not.<sup>6</sup>

This third point served as the rationale for JAD to become involved in terrorism, especially as by 2015 moving to Syria was becoming increasingly difficult. Some 150 would-be fighters and their families were caught in Turkey and deported by the end of 2015. The first pro-ISIS action involving JAD members was a bombing on New Year's Eve 2015 in front of the official residence of then Bandung mayor Ridwan Kamil. Two weeks later, on January 14, 2016, JAD members from Tegal, Cirebon, Indramayu and Jakarta were involved in a poorly executed attack on one of the main avenues of central Jakarta. Since then, more than 200 JAD activists have been arrested and tried for acts of terrorism.

### III. JAD EAST JAVA AND ABU UMAR

From the beginning, East Java was the largest region for JAD, with *mudiriyah* structures in thirteen cities: Jember, Malang, Blitar, Madiun, Gresik, Sidoarjo/Surabaya, Pandaan, Probolinggo, Tulungagung, Jombang, Mojokerto, Lamongan and Madura.<sup>7</sup> This was the result of four pro-ISIS groups joining forces, Tawhid Wal Jihad, consisting of Aman Abdurrahman's students;

4 These included Joko Sugito for Kalimantan, later to be arrested in connection with the November 2016 bombing in Samarinda; Saiful Munthohir alias Nazaruddin Mochtar alias Harun alias Abu Gar for Ambon, later arrested in connection with the January 2016 attacks in Jakarta; Iwan alias Ujang for Lampung, later arrested after the May 2018 attacks on the Riau police station; Khaerul Anam for West Java, who later left for Syria and was killed there; Abu Azzam for central Java; Abu Arkom for the Jakarta metropolitan area and Fajrun for Sulawesi. See verdict in Aman Abdurrahman case, op.cit (footnote 1), p.22.

5 Herbal remedies are a key part of Islamic medicine (medicine of the Prophet or *thibbun nabawi*) that many conservative Muslims believe is a desirable – and cheaper – alternative to Western medicine. Many in the extremist community make a living from selling these remedies, many of them made using black caraway seed as a base, since a hadith says that the black seed (*habbatus Sauda'*) cures every illness except for death.

6 Verdict in the case of Aman Abdurrahman, op.cit., p.23.

7 The original structure, as outlined in the testimony of Zainal Anshori in the trial of Aman Abdurrahman, was as follows: Amir, Zaenal Anshori; secretary, Hendro alias Abu Uwais; treasurer, Faruq; military affairs, Romly alias Gus Rom; education, Abu Umar alias Syarif; media, Abu Yusuf; and public relations, Marzuki. The regional amirs were: Malang, **Romly alias Gus Rom**; Blitar, **Abu Umar**; Jember, **Marzuki**; Madura, **Imam Hanafi alias Abu Zufa**; Jombang, **Abu Yusuf**; Gresik, **Hendro alias Abu Uwais**; Tulungagung, **Saefudin**; Pasuruan, **Usman**; Lamongan, **Abu Wafa**; and Sidoarjo, **Budi Satrio**. (He apparently forgot a few.)

Al Muhajirun; JAT; and Firqah Abu Hamzah or Fraksi Abu Hamzah (FAH). Abu Hamzah, a controversial cleric from Depok, outside Jakarta, had built up a large following before leaving for Syria sometime after the caliphate was declared in 2014.<sup>8</sup>

Romly's tenure as East Java leader lasted only three months: he was arrested in February 2016 for hiding one of the Jakarta attackers. In June 2016, JAD head Zainal Anshori called a meeting in Lamongan of East Java *mudiriyah* leaders. He instructed them to prepare their members for a big battle against the Indonesian government and informed them that JAD, through a member named Suryadi Mas'oeed, had already purchased weapons in Mindanao that would be brought to Indonesia as soon as possible. Zainal also appointed Syamsul Arifin alias Abu Umar, head of the Blitar *mudiriyah*, as Romly's successor to head the East Java *wilayah*.<sup>9</sup>

Four months later, in October, Abu Umar called a meeting in Probolinggo of the commanders of the East Java *wilayah*. Probolinggo was known to have some of JAD's most militant members, under the leadership of Muhammad Fatwa, a graduate of the Nurul Salam pesantren in Ciamis, West Java, long associated with extremists of Negara Islam Indonesia (NII). The October meeting was attended by Budi Satrio, *amir* of the Sidoarjo/Surabaya *mudiriyah* and influential because of his ability to raise funds and recruit middle-class members. One of his recruits, Dita Oepriarto, a producer of candlenut oil in Surabaya, later became the mastermind of the Surabaya bombings.

During the meeting Abu Umar told those present about the battle plans and asked each *mudiriyah* to prepare its members. He also ordered each region to form a team for conducting *amaliyah*, drawing on those who were most radical ideologically and most physically fit. When he returned from Probolinggo, he focused his lectures much more strongly than before on jihad and the virtues of martyrdom.

The men who became involved in the Surabaya bombings were regular attendees at meetings called by Budi Satrio, the Surabaya/Sidoarjo *amir*, at which Abu Umar was the key speaker. The aim was to instill a motivation for suicide bombings against churches and government offices, particularly those of the police. One such meeting took place in Sidoarjo in early January 2017, for example, when Abu Umar addressed local leaders together with their wives and children. Dita Oepriarto and Tri Murtiono, another man involved in the Surabaya bombings, were both present. Similar meetings took place throughout 2017.

But the big war never happened because the weapons never came. The guns that Suryadi Mas'oeed had purchased in the Philippines remained in Mindanao because no one could figure out a way to bring them safely into Indonesia. In March 2017, Suryadi and several other JAD members who had gone to Mindanao for training were arrested. Zainal Anshori was arrested two weeks later on 7 April, in Lamongan, in part on the basis of Suryadi's testimony.<sup>10</sup>

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8 The involvement of Abu Hamzah's group was noteworthy because of the rivalry that had erupted in Syria between BahrumSyah, who was Abu Hamzah's son-in-law, and Abu Jandal, a follower of Aman Abdurrahman and JAD's main contact in Syria. Their feud may have divided ISIS supporters elsewhere, but in East Java, it was not an issue. For more on Abu Hamzah, see IPAC, "Disunity among Indonesian ISIS Supporters and the Risk of More Violence", Report No.25, 1 February 2016, pp.3-4.

9 Abu Umar had a long history in Islamist organisations including Jamaah Tabligh, the political party PKS, Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI) and Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI). In 2009, he left HTI to join al-Muhajirun under Romly; he joined JAT sometime in late 2010 or 2011. When ISIS declared the caliphate in 2014, he swore allegiance to Abu Bakar Al Baghdadi and found himself back together with his old friends from al-Muhajirun.

10 Suryadi told police that in December 2015, Zainal Anshori had gone to Sangihe to pick up five pistols that he sent from the Philippines via a trusted boatman from General Santos City. Two of those weapons were reportedly used in the January 2016 attacks, and Suryadi initially acknowledged from photos that two of the guns were his. But Zainal Anshori denied he ever receiving five guns, though he had gone to Sangihe to arrange the transfer of the rest of Suryadi's weapons cache (unsuccessfully, as it turned out). On further investigation, it turned out that the guns used in the Jakarta attack were all home-made, while the five guns Suryadi had purchased were all factory-made. The whereabouts of his five pistols remains unclear.

#### IV. CONSEQUENCES OF ZAINAL ANSHORI'S ARREST

Shortly after Zainal Anshori's arrest, JAD East Java became embroiled in an ideological dispute. The top executive body in ISIS, the so-called "Delegated Committee" (*Lajnah Mufawadah*) that reports directly to al-Baghdadi, had issued a fatwa on 17 May 2017 that expanded the categories of Muslims that were to be declared *kafir*, or non-believers – effectively apostates.<sup>11</sup> It meant among other things that all Indonesian civil servants and anyone who voted in an election would be excommunicated, without exception.

The new hard line created deep splits among ISIS clerics in Syria but also in Indonesia, where it went far beyond the teachings of Aman Abdurrahman, who had encouraged his followers to examine the actions of individuals before declaring them *kafir* and guilty simply by virtue of their profession.<sup>12</sup> The fatwa split ISIS supporters in East Java. The JAD militants in Probolinggo, Magetan and Jombang supported it, but JAD members in Surabaya thought it went too far. They reasoned that ISIS itself was divided and the fatwa only represented the views of the most extreme faction. Also, Budi Satrio, amir of JAD Sidoarjo, preferred Aman's stance, not least because his wife was a civil servant.

The arrest of Zainal Anshori temporarily pushed the dispute to the side and created new divisions. Some members wanted to lie low, worried about their own safety. Others, including Abu Umar, Agus Satrio Widodo (deputy head of East Java) and Budi Satrio, wanted to take action. Even though Abu Umar and Widodo were ideological hardliners on the question of the Lajnah Mufawadah fatwa and Budi was not, the three were all in favour of revenge. Budi in particular was angry that JAD Lamongan members put up no resistance when Zainal was captured. In a meeting shortly after Zainal's arrest, Abu Umar informed all members to prepare to wage war against the Indonesian government with whatever means they had at their disposal – but also for the moment to stay quiet and not engage in any activity that would arouse suspicion.<sup>13</sup>

Among JAD East Java members, those in Surabaya were the most serious about undertaking jihad operations. Since 2017 Budi Satrio and his friends had routinely held bomb-making training sessions. The trainer was Agus Candi alias Latif, a JAD Sidoarjo member. His background is not very clear, but he had good Arabic and knew about bomb construction and taught both to Budi's friends.

The most enthusiastic in the group were three friends: Dita Oepriarto, Tri Murtiono and Anton Febrianto. They and Budi were the students of Khalid Abu Bakar Besleme, known in Surabaya as a preacher who called for strict implementation of Islamic law. When Khalid joined ISIS in 2015, they did as well. The wives were close, and their children frequently played together. The families attended JAD religious discussions without separating men and women, girls and boys as strict Muslims generally did, and the children were fully exposed to lectures on jihad, including the importance of suicide bombings. Their bedtime stories were about martyrdom and they were encouraged to watch ISIS videos before they went to sleep.

In mid-2017 Latif, the bomb trainer, moved to Syria – with money that had been collected as *zakat*, or alms for the poor – and Dita took over the JAD study program in Surabaya as he was believed to have the strongest religious credentials. He also had absorbed Latif's bomb-making skills. He was later appointed *amir* of JAD Surabaya, as Budi Satrio concentrated more

11 For a good discussion of the fatwa and the splits it created, see Cole Bunzel, "The Islamic State's Mufti on Trial: The Saga of the 'Silsila 'Ilmiyya'", *CTC Sentinel*, October 2018, <https://ctc.usma.edu/islamic-states-mufti-trial-saga-silsila-ilmiyya/> and R. Green, "Dispute over Takfir Rocks Islamic State", Middle East Media Research Institute, 4 August 2017.

12 In this regard Aman followed the opinion of Jordanian-Palestinian ideologue Abu Muhammad Al Maqdisi. For more on how the dispute played out in Indonesia, see IPAC, "Marawi, the 'East Asia Wilayah' and Indonesia", Report No.38, 21 July 2017, p.21.

13 Information from source close to JAD East Java, September 2018.

on managing finances at the provincial level.

The imminent end of time was a frequent theme of Dita's lectures. Over and over he stressed that the world would end in 2018 or 2019 and that everyone must prepare for the final battle between Islam and its enemies in which the Imam Mahdi would appear and lead the Islamic side to victory. The best place to be was Syria, because several *hadith* foretold that the final battle would take place there. The problem was that it was increasingly difficult to get there after ISIS lost much of its territory and Turkey was increasingly strict in patrolling its borders. Dita therefore asked the study group participants to prepare themselves for the coming war by learning how to make bombs for use at home. The sessions were frequently followed by training in archery, a martial skill recommended in a *hadith*.

Although he regularly exhorted fellow JAD members to carry out attacks, there was no indication that Dita himself was planning to do so. Even so, some Surabaya members began to suspect something was up around October 2017, when Dita began selling some of his property. Their suspicions were well-founded. Dita was buying chemicals for TATP bomb-making, such as hydrogen peroxide, from an online supplier so the police would not be alerted to purchases in a chemical store. And though police reportedly were monitoring purchases that were delivered to his house, there was nothing to suggest that these were anything but standard deliveries for his candlenut oil business. Dita also never used bank transfers but rather the financial services set up in minimarkets like Indomart and Alfamart.

The only people who knew of Dita's plans were Tri and Anton – and the wives of all three. They too were convinced the world would end in 2018.<sup>14</sup> First, however, according to a *hadith*, the stars would fall and a meteor would hit the earth in the East, causing a black cloud (*dukhan*) that would envelop the earth for 40 days, maybe longer. Transportation facilities would be destroyed, and all social activities would come to an end. Most of the world's population would die except for those who happened to be in the country that was particularly blessed – and that was Sham, or greater Syria. The Imam Mahdi would appear after the *dukhan*.<sup>15</sup>

Dita, Tri and Anton had wanted to bring their families to Syria, but that was now impossible. They worried that if they all died in the *dukhan*, there was no guarantee that they would enter heaven. The only way to ensure that they would die in a state of grace with all sins forgiven was to carry out a martyrdom attack before the black cloud came. That belief prompted the construction of bombs in Dita's house beginning in October 2017. Over the next five months, Dita, Tri, Anton and Budi made nearly 100 pipe bombs and some 64 “mug bombs”.

At the same time, they began to step up their interaction with neighbours and their attendance at the local mosque so as to present a picture to the outside world of being normal, pious Muslims, just like everyone else in the *kampung*. It was this willingness to engage with the community that became one factor in the police deciding to stop surveillance.

## V. OTHER PLOTS: THE PROBOLINGGO GROUP

As Dita was preparing his bombs, other cells were also busy. Abu Umar had urged everyone to prepare for “total war” against the government, but not everyone was on board. JAD Mojokerto, for example, rejected plans for *amaliyah*, while JAD Probolinggo, led by Muhammad Fatwa, eagerly endorsed them – so much so that he had already purchased a vehicle in early 2017 to be used in a car bomb.<sup>16</sup> The enthusiasm of the Probolinggo militants, however, was not matched

14 IPAC interview with law enforcement officer, Surabaya, August 2018.

15 For more on the *dukhan* and the apocalyptic meteor, see Abu Dujanah al Arkhabily, “Huru-hara Saat Jatuhnya Meteor di Akhir Zaman”, [waislam.net.wordpress.com](http://waislam.net.wordpress.com), 16 July 2015.

16 IPAC interview with law enforcement officer, Surabaya, August 2018.

by skills. There was only one member of the group who had ever tried to make a bomb. This was Ivan Suhardiyanto, a former JAT activist.

In mid-2017, Muhammad Fatwa ordered Irvan and several members of the Probolinggo JAD to make some bombs, just for practice, using very basic materials: powder made from matches; powder used in firecrackers and sugar. They successfully detonated the first test bomb, encouraging them to try a second, this time with potassium nitrate, but it did not explode. Fatwa ordered them to go back to the first formula, grinding up the match powder as finely as possible. “The more powder you make, the greater the rewards,” Fatwa told them.<sup>17</sup>

The original plan was to carry out suicide bombings with police as targets, but Fatwa decided to go for a remotely detonated car bomb instead. He was hoping that just as in Hollywood movies, not only the bomb but the car itself would explode. On 21 January 2018, Lutfianto, a Probolinggo member, was assigned to put the bomb under a police car at the office of the Lumajang traffic police, but it failed to detonate.

Fatwa and friends despaired of being able to make a decent bomb. But hopes rose again when Irvan’s younger brother was released from prison in March 2018. Isnaeni Ramdhoni aka Doni had been first arrested in 2014 for his involvement with Mujahidin Indonesia Timur (MIT) in Poso.<sup>18</sup> He was seen as a cooperative prisoner and as his sentence neared an end, he was moved to a prison in Sentul, Bogor known as the BNPT Deradicalisation Center, used only for prisoners whom BNPT considered to be fully rehabilitated. Muhammad Fatwa had deemed Doni a *kafir* because he had submitted a request for conditional release, thereby making use of Indonesia’s civil law legal system. This was anathema to extremists who insisted they would only obey Islamic law.

But JAD Probolinggo needed Doni’s expertise from Poso. Fatwa thus ignored his previous condemnation and offered Doni Rp.2 million [US\$132] to help make a bomb.<sup>19</sup> Fatwa also ordered Irvan to persuade his brother to overcome his resentment at being branded a *kafir* and rejoin the fold. The upshot was that Doni agreed to help. He also suggested a new concept of war against the Indonesian government, learning from MIT’s guerrilla- style resistance. He proposed to Fatwa to create a base camp in the hills outside Probolinggo area much as MIT fighters had hid out in the jungles of Gunung Biru, outside Poso.

Fatwa wholeheartedly approved the idea, and throughout March and April, JAD Probolinggo began searching for an appropriate place. They also began preparing personnel who would take part in guerrilla warfare and planning robberies that would provide a source of funds. But as they were still in the initial stages, a riot broke out on 8 May 2018 in the detention centre at paramilitary police (Brimob) headquarters in Depok, outside Jakarta, where terrorist suspects were held before trial or while awaiting transfer to the regular prison system. Around 50 inmates took over the centre and managed to take hostage several members of Detachment 88. On the night of May 8, pro-ISIS elements circulated an appeal over social media to all supporters of Islamic State in Indonesia to go to the Brimob headquarters to help the detainees. Muhammad Fatwa and another member of JAD Probolinggo left for Depok in response to the appeal.

Isnaeni Ramdhoni refused to go with Fatwa, but he urged other members of JAD Probolinggo to spark rioting in Surabaya and Malang by setting fire to police cars there in an effort to divert police attention. He was also willing to help make a Molotov bomb. Before they could do anything, however, the inmates in Depok surrendered after controlling the prison for 40 hours. The riot left five Detachment 88 officers dead, some slain with pieces of broken glass, others

17 Quoted in IPAC interview with law enforcement officer, Jakarta, September 2018.

18 MIT’s leader, Santoso, grandly referred to his group as the armed force of the caliphate in Indonesia, but at its height in 2014-15, it was probably no more than 40-50 combatants.

19 Information from source close to JAD East Java, September 2018.

executed by arms that the inmates secured. One inmate was also killed. Doni's plans came to nought.

## VI. THE SURABAYA BOMBINGS AND AMAN ABDURRAHMAN'S CRITICISM

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On Sunday morning September 13, 2018, three days after the detention centre riot, three churches in Surabaya were hit by suicide bombers. The perpetrators were Dita and his family. His wife, Puji Restu, and their two daughters, Fadhila and Pamela Rizkita, aged twelve and nine, detonated themselves at the Indonesian Christian Church (Gereja Kristen Indonesia) on Jalan Diponegoro. Sons Yusuf and Firman, aged eighteen and sixteen, set off their motorcycle bomb at the Santa Maria church on Jalan Ngagel Madya, while Dita used a car bomb at the Pentecostal Church on Jalan Arjuno.

Dita had wanted to undertake the attacks during Ramadhan, since in extremist circles, the fasting month is seen as the month of jihad (*syahrul jihad*). He seems to have moved plans forward by a month, however, after the riot at Brimob headquarters, perhaps fearing (correctly, as it turned out) that it would lead to a police crackdown. He did not want his long-planned attack to fail because of anti-terror operations.

The Indonesian public was still reeling from the shock of the church bombings when that evening, there was a bomb explosion at a flat in Rusunawa Wonocolo, a low-cost apartment complex in Sidoarjo, about an hour's drive from Surabaya. The occupants of the flat were Anton Febrianto and his family, Dita's close friends. The bomb exploded prematurely, killing Anton's wife and one of his daughters. Anton himself was wounded but still alive. He died when police who rushed to the site shot and killed him. Three of his other children survived.

The next morning, on 14 May, yet another suicide bombing took place at Surabaya police headquarters, carried out by Tri Murtiono and his family, riding two motorcycles. Tri, his wife and two sons were killed; the youngest daughter survived because the bomb explosion knocked her on to the ground.

The wave of family suicide bombers shocked not just Indonesia but the world. Even for extremists, the idea of parents preparing young children for martyrdom by strapping explosive belts on them was beyond imagining. The bombings got what all terrorists long for, saturation coverage in the international media. They also generated fears that JAD had embarked on a horrific new tactic, making use of young children as bombers.

It was not just ordinary citizens who were shaken. Even Aman Abdurrahman, the founder of JAD, could not believe that anyone claiming to defend Islam would sacrifice his or her own children to commit acts of terror. He released an audio statement that was posted briefly on the Millah Ibrahim channel on Telegram until a storm of protests forced the administrators to take it down. At one point in the recording, Aman says:

The actions of two mothers who guided their children to blow themselves up in the church parking lot could not have been undertaken by people who understand the teachings of Islam and the demands of jihad. They could not come from sane people. Likewise the idea of a father taking a little child on a motorcycle and blowing himself up in front of a police station, thank God the child fell off and is still alive. This was a cruel act under the pretext of jihad.<sup>20</sup>

The statement immediately sparked a debate among ISIS supporters in Indonesia. Some

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20 Audio recording of Aman Abdurrahman posted on Millah Ibrahim channel, Telegram, 24 May 2018.

agreed with Aman, some castigated him, using arguments in the ISIS online magazine *Rumiyah* as a reference.<sup>21</sup> Nuaim Baasyir, a nephew of Abu Bakar Ba'asyir detained in Tulungagung prison, said Aman should just keep quiet, because his criticism would only please the enemies of Allah, especially after National Police Chief Gen. Tito Karnavian asked the media to publicise it. Some militants even called for Aman to be declared a *kafir*.<sup>22</sup>

Some of Aman's critics suggested he issued the statement as a ploy to reduce his likely sentence, since the prison uprising coincided with the final stages of his trial on terrorism charges in connection with the January 2016 bombing. A few days earlier, he had issued a controversial statement on the riot, not supporting the inmates but urging them to stop because the issues they were protesting were worldly, not matters of principle.<sup>23</sup> The debate only stopped on May 25, 2018, when Aman was sentenced to death. He fell to his knees in the courtroom in a gesture of gratitude and refused to appeal. Both actions seemed to refute the notion that he had issued the statements in the hope of a lighter sentence.

## VII. IMPACT OF THE SURABAYA BOMBINGS

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The bombings had a huge impact.

On 25 May 2018, Indonesia's House of Representatives approved a new strengthened counter-terrorism law that gave the police wider grounds to arrest terrorist suspects and more time for pre-trial investigation. In late July, the South Jakarta district court, one of those designated for hearing terrorism cases, established JAD and other pro-ISIS groups as banned "corporate entities". Both legal developments enabled police to arrest and hold suspected JAD members without having to show evidence, as in the past, that they were involved in or preparing an actual attack. They also enabled the police to move aggressively to ensure that Indonesia's hosting of the Asian Games in August proceeded without incident. The result was the arrest between May and late August 2018 of some 280 suspected terrorists of whom 170 were eventually charged. Twenty-one others were killed in the course of police operations.

Many of the East Java JAD leaders were rounded up; some were killed. Abu Umar was detained on 14 May in Malang; seven others, including Widodo, were arrested in Surabaya. In Sidoarjo, police killed Budi Satrio on 14 May and two other suspects the next day, including the younger brother of Anton Febrianto. More arrests took place over the next few days in Sidoarjo, Pasuruan, Surabaya, Malang, Jombang and Probolinggo and then in mid-June, in Blitar.

Different parts of the East Java *wilayah* had different reactions to the Surabaya bombings. Some feared arrest, others were inspired to seek martyrdom. Widodo, who also doubled as the *amir* for Jombang, became very frightened when he received a package on 14 May containing pre-prepared bombs that Dita Oepriarto had made before he died. It turned out that Dita had asked a JAD Surabaya member to distribute bombs to others in JAD East Java so they too could carry out attacks. Widodo was a designated recipient because he and Abu Umar had repeatedly called on members to carry out *amaliah*. But when he got the bomb, Widodo wanted nothing to do with it. He contacted Sutrisno, the amir of JAD Magetan asking him to take it instead. But Sutrisno refused; like Widodo he was scared of the consequences – with good reason, since Widodo was arrested a few hours later.

In contrast, JAD Probolinggo leaders were fired up by Dita's actions and eager to show they could do the same. Two days after the Surabaya bombings, a member named Agus Purnomo went

21 See for example Abu Al Gharib who posted a long rebuttal to Aman based on Rumiyah arguments on the channel Just Share Knowledge with the title "Sesungguhnya Engkau diatas Manhaj Daulah Islamiyah".

22 One ISIS supporter, Abu Darda Alkhorbilly, wrote "Insulting the actions of mujahidin is tantamount to being a kafir." His statement appeared in a posting on the Telegram channel Sharing Agama 5 on 26 May 2018.

23 "Rekaman Negosiasi Aman Abdurrahman & Wakil Tahanan Mako Brimob", 11 May 2018, [www.tirto.id](http://www.tirto.id).

to see Irvan, the older brother of Isnaeni Romdhani. He said he was ready to carry out a suicide bombing and asked for a car bomb. Irvan asked his brother if he could make one, but Doni could not help; building a car bomb was beyond his capacity.<sup>24</sup> The Probolinggo militants nevertheless wanted to go forward, and Fatwa, Irvan and Agus met to discuss how to make a bomb to detonate at Malang police headquarters, since any attack in Malang would get greater coverage than in Probolinggo. Before they could do anything, however, they were all arrested.

## VIII. THE FUTURE OF JAD

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The crackdown on JAD could lead to two possible scenarios: regrouping under a new leader with a strategic vision or continuing fragmentation without any overall leadership but with an ongoing commitment to the *daulah*. If the latter, there is a possibility of increased competition with the Solo-based pro-ISIS group led by Abu Husna, originally known as Khatibul Iman but increasingly known as Jamaah Khilafah Indonesia (JAK).

The first scenario, regrouping under a new leader, would copy the path taken by Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) after a devastating police crackdown in 2007. Under the (reported) leadership of Para Wijayanto, JI managed to rebuild by avoiding violence and keeping all military activities totally secret and separate from largely above-ground religious study and outreach.

The question is whether there is anyone in JAD with the capacity to lead at this critical time, let alone develop a strategic plan for the organisation's survival. Thus far, JAD has turned to ex-prisoners to take over when vacancies have arisen, through arrests or travel to Syria. Thus, after Zainal Anshori was arrested, former prisoner Iskandar alias Abu Qutaibah, took over.<sup>25</sup> His re-arrest in June 2017 led to the eventual appointment in January 2018 of Musholah, a former prisoner linked to the 2011 Cirebon police bombing who was released in October 2017. Two months after his appointment as *amir*, he was arrested in Mindanao, and it is not clear who, if anyone, succeeded him.

Ex-prisoners are seen as desirable for two reasons. First, they have proved themselves through the acts of terrorism that got them convicted in the first place. Secondly, those who resist pressure in prison to cooperate with authorities and hold firm to their ideological principles are seen to have passed a test of commitment. This means the government needs to pay close attention to the releases and planned releases of pro-ISIS prisoners, because that is the pool from which the next JAD leader is likely to be chosen.<sup>26</sup> Qomarudin alais Mustakim alias Abu Yusuf, who was released on 12 July 2018, might have been a possible candidate but he had an ideological falling out with JAD and is no longer acceptable.

If no leader emerges to pull together some 1,000 JAD supporters across the country, two things can happen. Some members will lose their ideological commitment or defect to rival organisations like JAK. This happened after the JAD *amir* for Central Java, Achmad Romadlan Deny alias Azzam, was arrested in August 2017. With few JAD activities to attend, many members in the Solo area defected to Abu Husna.

Another possibility is that more and more JAD units will decide to act on their own. The Surabaya group was not the first to do so. In May 2017, the bombing in Kampung Melayu, Jakarta was undertaken by the East Bandung *qoriyah* (a subdivision of a *mudiriyah*), without any consultation with superiors in the JAD structure. The bombing resulted in a wave of arrests

24 IPAC interview with law enforcement officer, Jakarta, September 2018.

25 Ruri Alexander alias Iskandar alias Abu Qutaibah was first arrested in 2013 in connection with robberies carried out by the Mujahidin of Western Indonesia (Mujahidin Indonesia Barat, MIB) in Lampung. He was released in 2016 after serving his three-year sentence in full. Originally from Jakarta, he helped set up the Ambon and Bima branches of JAT. He became the spokesman for the inmates in the Brimob detention centre during the May 2018 riot.

26 See IPAC, "Recent and Planned Releases of Indonesian Extremists: An Update", Report No.49, 10 August 2018.

in Bandung, but the crackdown just produced more small cells willing to carry out “individual jihad” (*jihad fardhiyah*). The August 2018 exhortation from al-Baghdadi to strike against Islam’s enemies with small-scale attacks may encourage more such efforts.<sup>27</sup>

The cells most likely to attempt attacks are those with a critical mass of supporters still active and a high degree of militancy. One area to watch is the Indramayu-Cirebon-Tegal constellation, on the border between West and Central Java. This is the area that produced the men involved in the January 2016 Jakarta attack. It seems to have an inexhaustible supply of recruits, drawing on a network of former members of Darul Islam and FAH. Ex-FAH members may have been involved in the shooting of two police in Cirebon on 24 August 2018. The two gunmen were later tracked down and killed by police on 3 September.

All these potential scenarios are without reference to the possible return of foreign fighters in Syria or Iraq. No one should lose sight of the possibility that an important player could return, but there is no reason to believe that most of those trying now to get out of Syria are the ideological hardcore. For the latter, staying to the end – until their own death -- seems to be the ultimate test of commitment. The number of deportees has dwindled to a slow trickle, but some of those deported earlier can still prove dangerous. That said, it is the internal dynamics within Indonesia that remain most important to watch.

## IX. CONCLUSION

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The Surabaya bombings show that the decline of ISIS in the Middle East has in no way diminished the fervour of its supporters in Indonesia. JAD members in East Java and elsewhere took to heart the exhortation from ISIS central to wage war at home, and no one should think that the police crackdown has put an end to that determination. If past patterns hold, there may well be a period of dormancy until surveillance eases and complacency returns. But the problem is far from over.

The bombings transformed the map of violent extremism in Indonesia. They led directly to the passage of a new counter-terrorism law that in turn led immediately to hundreds of new arrests. This poses a huge challenge for monitoring detention centres and prisons, and while those arrested since May have mostly been denied the use of cell phones (finally), messages to followers still go back and forth via family members who are allowed to visit.

Like a water balloon, the arrests in East Java will lead to another cell popping up elsewhere to plan an attack. In addition to the West Java-Central Java border, one area to watch is Poso, particularly after the earthquake and tsunami in nearby Palu led to the escape of almost all prisoners. It is also not impossible that extremists could see the area as fertile recruiting ground, given unhappiness with the slow pace of aid deliveries and a well-entrenched extremist network in the area.

The intensifying rivalry between JAD and Abu Husna’s JAK is also important to monitor. Abu Husna is a former senior JI leader who still carries weight within the organisation. Although he is undoubtedly under close watch, some younger JI militants could be drawn into his orbit at the same time that JAD defections are taking place.

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27 For full text, see <https://kyleorton1991.files.wordpress.com/2018/09/abu-bakr-al-baghdadi-2018-08-22-give-glad-tidings-to-the-patient.pdf>. One passage reads, “O supporters of the Khilafah. Make whatever preparations are easy for you, place your trust in the Most High and Capable, select your targets, and carry out a strike that will tear out their hearts And Give Glad Tidings to Those Who Are Patient - 17 and make them lose their minds, for a piercing bullet, or a stab deep in the intestines, or the detonation of an explosive device in your lands is akin to a thousand operations here with us.” In the speech, Al-Baghdadi specifically mentions East Asia: “Join the caravan of the Khilafah in Iraq, Sham, Yemen, Sinai, Khurasan, Libya, West Africa, Central Africa, East Asia, Qawqaz, and other wilayat...”

The main lesson from the Surabaya bombings is thus not that more children are likely to be involved in suicide bombing. It is the more familiar one, that still bears repeating. Crackdowns do not eliminate terrorist networks; they just provide the occasion for them to regroup.

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