

**AN INDONESIAN DERADICALISATION
PROGRAM THAT WORKS**

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I. INTRODUCTION

A wave of arrests in Indonesia in late 2023 and January 2024, including more than a dozen men previously convicted, brought renewed scrutiny to the country's prison-based "deradicalisation" programs. Some of those programs, especially those run by the National Counter-Terrorism Agency (Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Terorisme, BNPT), have been poorly targeted and managed, but at least one, under the auspices of the counter-terrorism police unit, Detachment 88, has had genuine success with individuals once considered hardcore ideologues. Between 2019 and 2023, several leading pro-ISIS prisoners renounced their anti-government stance and declared their loyalty to the Indonesian republic. Their change of heart startled prison authorities, who had not expected such dramatic turnarounds from men considered extremist "influencers". The police program was only one factor in their decision to distance themselves from violent extremism and whether it will be lasting remains to be seen, but in most cases, the indications are good.

This report explores the "deradicalisation" of four such leaders, all of whom were first approached by police while serving sentences at super-maximum security facilities on the island of Nuskambangan, off the south coast of Java. They are:

- Kiki Muhammad Iqbal, a two-time recidivist from West Java, arrested the second time for involvement in a bombing in Kampung Melayu, Jakarta in 2017. Kiki's medical crisis in 2019 and the willingness of the police to assist him provided the trigger for his turnaround.
- William Maksum, a religious teacher from West Java who helped train a group known as the Mujahidin of Western Indonesia (Mujahidin Indonesia Barat, MIB) and joined them in several robberies in 2012 to raise funds for jihad. His transformation came about after ideological differences with other prisoners, and the friendship of one police officer. He was released in 2022.
- Iskandar alias Abu Qutaidah from Bima, a recidivist and once a close associate of radical cleric Aman Abdurrahman. He became the spokesperson for the prisoners involved in the uprising at the police detention centre known as Mako Brimob in May 2018. While still in prison, he began to question his own assumptions after reading a book analysing the opinions of Ibnu Taymiyya, a 13th century scholar whose writings, often taken out of context, serve as a key reference for many extremists. Iskandar was released in 2021.
- Sutomo, better known as Ust. Yasin, is a possible fourth. A radical cleric whose school in Poso became the centre for pro-ISIS support activity in the Poso area, Yasin's decision to sign the loyalty oath was particularly unexpected, but as he is serving a life sentence, his ability to influence the networks in Poso may be limited.

As is usual in these cases, multiple factors were involved, and not all were equally important for all four. A few interventions stand out, however. They include sustained attention from prison and police officials who are themselves devout Muslims and willing to spend time in discussion with prisoners who, under the supermax regime, have few visitors or

opportunities for conversation; assistance with overcoming personal crises; access to *salafi* books and preachers for those with some religious training; and clear incentives to cooperate, including the possibility to be moved from a supermax to a less harsh prison environment. The main disincentive is the prospect of being ostracised by other inmates, friends and family for any sign of willingness to cooperate with authorities.

While many of the incentives have been tried before, the (relatively) new element is the involvement of the Directorate of Identification and Socialisation (IDENSOS) of Detachment 88 that was set up in 2018 to coordinate deradicalisation programs. It is committed to trying to persuade convicted terrorists to reconsider their beliefs – thus, it is aiming at genuine deradicalisation, not just changes in behaviour - but also has particularly focused its efforts at leaders whose own shift might affect many others.

The problem is that a unit like IDENSOS must always be thinking one step ahead. The unit has made good use of a team of former militants led by Kiki Muhammad Iqbal that it calls “Safari Dakwah” to make the rounds of the six prisons at Nusakambangan and engage prisoners in discussion. But these transformed prisoners can have a “use by” date. Nasir Abas and Ali Imron, active in Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) from the mid- 1990s to the early 2000s, were effective with JI prisoners but mostly not with the wave of pro-ISIS prisoners that came later. Kiki and his team may have an impact until the next major movement or charismatic leader appears. Then the process will have to start over.

Still, it is important that the police and prison authorities realise when an opportunity has opened up and exploit it to the fullest. They need to analyse who among the extremist prisoners might be willing to renounce old loyalties – including to the leaders of their organisations – and see if there are any lessons that can be applied to more recalcitrant prisoners.

II. THE FIRST PHASE OF DERADICALISATION (2002-2009)

Detachment 88 has been involved with efforts to draw arrested terrorist suspects and convicted offenders away from radical networks since it first was founded in 2003, but the context has changed dramatically over time as ISIS emerged, and there was an increase both in the number of violent extremist organisations and the prison population. Its efforts fall into three broad phases.

In the first phase of deradicalisation (2002-2009), those arrested were mainly from Jamaah Islamiyah (JI) or organisations linked to it. The police relied heavily on two senior JI members, Nasir Abas and Ali Imron, who had become opposed to attacks on civilians and actively worked with police to promote arguments that might resonate with fellow detainees. Ali Imron, a prominent member of the Bali bombing team, had credibility as a religious scholar, while Nasir Abas was respected as a JI field commander.¹

¹ Ali Imron was serving a life sentence for the Bali bombings and was not supposed to leave prison, though he did from time to time under police supervision to attend seminars or discussions. Nasir Abas served a brief sentence but was quickly released and then travelled around, explaining why the JI understanding of jihad was wrong.

There were many efforts to reach out to individual prisoners, particularly those who had been arrested following a showdown with police in Poso in January 2007. When a new terrorism arrest took place, police would inquire about the individual's family, ask about economic concerns and then find the funds to address them in a way that encouraged cooperation. In one case, they arranged an in-prison wedding between a Poso detainee and his girlfriend, bringing the bride's mother and another relative to Jakarta for the ceremony.² But while police became convinced that economic assistance worked better than religious counselling as a strategy to pull prisoners away from extremism, the fact was that many of those who decided to stay away from extremist networks did so on their own initiative and their own calculations about what they wanted to do with their lives.³

Police at the time did not have any sophisticated tool for risk assessment of terrorist prisoners. They divided prisoners into five categories based on their level of cooperation with authorities after initial approaches, from 1 being the most cooperative to 5 being the most hardcore. Those rated cooperative were more likely to receive assistance packages.⁴ It was a crude scale and proved to be of little use as a guide to post-release behaviour. Two prisoners deemed deradicalised under this system returned to extremist activity almost immediately after their release.⁵

Police also encouraged the establishment of Forum Komunikasi Alumni Afghanistan Indonesia (FKAAI), an association of Indonesians who had gone to train on the Pakistan-Afghan border in the late 1980s and early 1990s but who had subsequently distanced themselves from terrorism. These men were mostly JI members, and they began meeting regularly in 2009 with the late University of Indonesia psychologist Dr Sarlito Warawan. The idea was that they could become preachers in areas vulnerable to extremism and use their status as "Afghan alumni" to persuade others that jihadist teachings were misguided. After taking a course at the Centre for Qur'anic Studies (Pusat Studi Al-Qur'an), a school run by moderate Muslim leader Dr Quraish Shihab, they were encouraged to give lectures or write bulletins that could be distributed at mosques. If the content was approved by a team working with Dr Sarlito, or if the men could provide photos of themselves lecturing, they would receive a cash honorarium. Neither the distribution of the bulletins nor the lectures, however, were targeted at known extremist mosques, and the numbers in any case were too small to make a difference. The program ended in 2010.⁶

It is hard to see this period as a success when many of the senior JI members returned to the organisation as it rebuilt after 2007 under its new *amir*, Para Wijayanto, and as a new

² International Crisis Group, "'Deradicalisation' and Indonesian Prisons", Asia Report No.142, 19 November 2007, p.13.

³ Julie Chernov Hwang, *Why Terrorists Quit: The Disengagement of Indonesian Jihadists*, Ithaca, 2018.

⁴ This scale was outlined in Petrus Reinhard Golose, *Deradikalisasi Terorisme: Humanis, Soul Approach, dan Menyentuh Akar Rumput*, Jakarta: Yayasan Pengembangan Kajian Ilmu Kepolisian, 2009.

⁵ These were Abdullah Sunata and Abu Tholut, released in February 2021 and October 2015.

⁶ In 2011, Dr Sarlito helped the Afghan forum set up a foundation in the hope that it would be then less dependent on him, but it was never very active and gradually collapsed after Sarlito's death in 2016 amid internal conflict. In 2021, Detachment 88 head Marthinus Hukom tried to revive the foundation, under a new name, the Communications Forum for Activists working to improve Moral Character in Indonesia (still using the same Indonesian acronym, FKAAI). In addition to some of the original Afghan alumni like Nasir Abas, members included victims of terrorism and more recently arrested prisoners. One of the latter who became a creative strategist for the new FKAAI was Abdul Muis from Palu, Central Sulawesi, a former prisoner.

organisation grew up in Poso that was even more militant than the old ones. Also, some of those who were deemed deradicalised joined the new organisation set up by Abu Bakar Ba'asyir in 2008 called Jamaah Anshorul Tauhid (JAT), many of whose members became ISIS supporters after 2013.

It raises the question of whether “success” can be judged in terms of changed behaviour in prison alone before an individual is subjected to all the pressures and temptations that come after release. And if prisoners do not return to violence after release, it is not at all clear whether police or prison interventions were the most important factor. In many cases, the former prisoners simply decided on their own not to risk another arrest.

III. THE SECOND PHASE OF DERADICALISATION EFFORTS (2010-2018)

The second phase of deradicalisation efforts covers the aftermath of the Marriott and Ritz-Carlton Hotel bombings in 2009 to the rise of ISIS in 2013-4, the emergence of MIT and the Surabaya church bombings. It covers the period from the creation of BNPT in 2010 through the adoption of a strengthened anti-terrorist law in 2018. It also marks the period when prisons began to struggle more seriously with the idea of using a risk assessment tool to determine who was a high risk for recruiting ordinary criminal offenders, creating other problems in prison, or returning to violence after release.

The upgrading of a counter-terrorism “desk” under the Coordinating Ministry for Political, Legal and Security Affairs to a full-fledged agency under the president had been under desultory discussion for years, but when the 2009 hotel bombings took place, its formation was fast-tracked, and it came into being by a presidential decree on 16 July 2010. President Yudhoyono had wanted the military to be involved, but since the police had been the lead agency on counter-terrorism since the 2002 Bali bombings, they managed to relegate the military to the prevention and deradicalisation role (Directorate I) in the new agency, keeping the operational role (Directorate 2) for officers linked to Detachment 88. This meant, among other things, that those in charge of deradicalisation at BNPT had no knowledge of or experience with those charged with terrorism, and they initially created deradicalisation programs and structures from the air with little understanding of key beliefs, organisational history, or radicalisation patterns. Some of the missteps that resulted have been described elsewhere, but BNPT’s involvement began a period where all the publicity about deradicalisation involved BNPT and not the police, even though police deradicalisation programs were ongoing, particularly in West Java.⁷

From 23 February 2011 to 21 September 2012, when a Densus counter-terrorism star, Tito Karnavian, served as the BNPT deputy for operations and capacity building, stories of BNPT success in CT efforts rose to new heights, especially because Tito transferred Detachment 88 colleagues, technology, and media savviness to his new organisation, encompassing

⁷ For a description of some of the missteps, see IPAC, “Countering Violent Extremism: Need for a Rethink”, Report No.11, 30 June 2014, pp.4-9. They included holding wayang performances in prison in the belief that this would draw extremists back to Javanese culture.

deradicalisation in a way that almost totally eclipsed the work of the military-led Directorate I.⁸ This was possible in part because the then head of BNPT, retired police general Ansyaad Mbai, wanted a “quick win” in deradicalisation, and the military had no relevant experience to make it happen. Detachment 88, under Tito, did. The transformation of Khairul Ghazali was one result. A JI member and former journalist arrested by the counter-terror unit in September 2010 for involvement in a bank heist in Medan, Ghazali wrote a book while still on trial, recanting his extremist views. The book, sponsored by BNPT, was launched in July 2011, with Ansyaad Mbai in attendance. After his release in November 2014, he founded an Islamic boarding school catering especially to the children of convicted terrorists.⁹

Tito’s transfer to BNPT did not mean that all deradicalisation programs formally under Detachment 88’s remit disappeared. Instead, while BNPT focused on prisons, Detachment 88 programs were concentrated on Jakarta police headquarters (Polda Metro Jaya) where some of the most high-profile prisoners were held, and the detention centre at Brimob headquarters in Kelapa Dua, Depok, West Java, where terrorism suspects were detained pending trial.

One of the police success stories during this period was the deradicalisation of Bali bomber Umar Patek.¹⁰ Patek was arrested in Abbotabad, Pakistan in January 2011 and was deported to Indonesia the following month. One of his requests to the Indonesian police who flew to Pakistan to question him was to ensure that he and his wife, whom he loved very much, were not separated (she was a Filipina convert to Islam whom he met while in Mindanao). Detachment 88 agreed and allowed his wife to return to Indonesia with him. It was this, more than any other factor, that led to his decision to cooperate from then on with police and prison authorities. After his return, the police also facilitated visits by his family, including his younger brother to whom he was particularly close, and who influenced Patek’s decision to move away from violent extremism and return to a “normal” life. Much of his evident change, however, was his own self-awareness rather than outside intervention, and by his own acknowledgment, he was able to influence other inmates.¹¹

A widespread belief took hold at this time within BNPT and elsewhere in the government that a major cause of violent extremism was “a weak sense of nationhood.”¹² This idea may have contributed to a new, controversial regulation in 2012 that required all serious offenders, including terrorists, to meet certain conditions for receiving sentence reductions (remissions) or conditional release.¹³ One was that they had to agree to become “justice collaborators”, or cooperate with the police in the investigation of their crimes, but another

⁸ After a stint as chief of police in Papua, Tito was promoted in March 2016 to head BNPT, a three-star position, making him eligible to become national chief of police, a position he secured in June 2016. He thus became the shortest-tenured BNPT head on record.

⁹ “Tersangka Perampok Bank CIMB Niaga Medan Tulis Buku, Mengaku Salah Pahami Islam,” *Republika*, 10 July 2011.

¹⁰ Umar Patek’s real name is Hisyam Alizein. Umar was the name he used in Mindanao and “Patek” was actually a corruption of “Pak De”, another nickname.

¹¹ See interview with Umar Patek on Metro TV, on Kick Andy, “Ketakutan di Balik Bebasnya Umar Patek,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YDgG4fgfV10>. Police also facilitated Patek’s meeting with victims of the Bali bombing during which he asked their forgiveness.

¹² BNPT, “Rencana Strategis Deputy Bidang Pencegahan, Perlindungan dan Deradikalisasi”, 2011.

¹³ This was Regulation 99 of the Ministry of Law and Human Rights.

was that they had to sign an oath of loyalty to the Indonesian government.¹⁴ The twin ideas that lack of nationalism was a contributing factor to extremism and that nationalism education was therefore a critical element of deradicalisation were to become even more symbolically important in the third phase of deradicalisation in 2019.

But there was a more important shift that took place after 2009 – a realisation that terrorism was not going to go away. The hotel bombings had led to an intensive effort to track down Noordin Top, the Malaysian who had been the mastermind of some of the most iconic suicide bombings targeted at Westerners in Indonesia after the Bali bombs. Once Noordin was caught and killed in September 2009, there was a collective sigh of relief and a palpable feeling that Indonesia had turned a corner in its fight against terrorism.

In quick succession, however, there was the discovery of a trans-organisational training camp in Aceh in early 2010, the emergence of MIT in Poso and the declaration of a caliphate in Syria in June 2014 that together transformed the violent extremist landscape. It also proved that none of the deradicalisation efforts in the first phase had helped predict or prevent the emergence of new alliances, some of which involved former prisoners.

Nor had those efforts provided any insights or capacity for dealing with ISIS, the new movement that took Indonesia, like much of the rest of the world, by surprise. Indonesia, the police, and the new anti-terrorist agency were caught fighting a new enemy based on outdated assumptions derived from fighting the old one. The use of social media, particularly Telegram, became more important than ever; the phenomenon of “self-radicalisation” took off; women became more active, including as suicide bombers; end-of-time prophecies had real-time consequences; and committed proponents of an Islamic state now had a new model to follow. With the arrival of ISIS and MIT, Indonesian police had to worry not just about deradicalisation but about re-radicalisation of influential former prisoners.

Risk assessment tools continued to be problematic. A failed effort in 2011 to introduce a tool used in Australia and Canada called VERA-II turned out to be an object lesson in how not to adapt instruments for use in radically different cultural environments, and different agencies – sometimes even different factions within the same agency - made use of different tools depending on the donors involved. In the end, police returned to simple tests and detailed information about the background of prisoners to determine where to place them after conviction.

The suicide bombings in Surabaya that marked the end of this second phase also resulted in the adoption of a strengthened anti-terrorism law, Law No.5/2018, that gave the police the capacity to undertake “preventive strikes” and vastly increased the number of arrests – meaning there was a greater burden than ever before on the criminal justice infrastructure including courts and prisons and a greater need to make deradicalisation programs more effective.

¹⁴ The term “justice collaborators” (in English) was used earlier in relation to corruption offenders but first became used in connection to convicted terrorism offenders with Regulation 99.

IV. THE THIRD PHASE OF DERADICALISATION (2019 TO THE PRESENT)

The third phase of deradicalisation has been marked by the emergence of IDENSOS. It coincided with the decline of ISIS after a string of defeats in the Middle East, though isolated attacks from pro-ISIS cells continued in Indonesia. Most of the remaining combatants in Poso had been tracked down and killed, but anger on the part of their relatives and other unresolved grievances made Poso a place to watch for the future.¹⁵ Follow-up from the arrests of several JI members returning from Syria led to the arrest of JI amir Para Wijayanto in 2019 and the realisation that while the police had been concentrating on ISIS, JI in Indonesia had rebuilt to nearly pre-Bali levels.

In terms of infrastructure, the third phase coincided with the construction of new supermax prisons on the island of Nusakambangan, off the south coast of Java, built on the model of “one person, one cell”, though the dramatic rise in arrests meant that there was soon doubling up. The hardship of solitary confinement provided a new opportunity for police and prison officials to offer a new incentive for cooperation: moving to less rigid conditions with greater opportunity for interaction with other prisoners and more time for family visits. Regular evaluations of terrorist and narcotics prisoners using a checklist of factors were supposed to be conducted to make determinations about who could be moved, but these frequently were undermined by the ability of the narcotics prisoners to bribe their way out, meaning there were no spaces in less stringent prisons to move the extremists who passed the assessment.¹⁶

The new law had other consequences. It mandated that a wide range of ministries and government agencies set aside funds for deradicalisation projects that BNPT would coordinate, meaning lots of money for projects that were often not well thought through.¹⁷ At the same time, it led to the creation of IDENSOS within Detachment 88, formalized through a restructuring of the police in 2019. IDENSOS had a specific mandate for deradicalisation and rehabilitation, focusing as much on post-release as in-prison programs. While it sometimes worked in coordination with BNPT, it was a very much a separate organisation, with a depth of experience and an ethos not shared by the coordinating agency.

The third phase was also marked by more systematic use of declarations of loyalty to the Indonesian republic in public ceremonies as a key element of deradicalisation effort.¹⁸ The declaration was the key to early release and post-release assistance, so there was a strong incentive to sign. But because prisoners who did so were often ostracised by their hardline colleagues or in some cases threatened with divorce by their spouses, it was not an action to be undertaken lightly – and helped serve to divide and weaken the extremist community,

¹⁵ IPAC, “Militants in Poso: Down but not Out”, Report No.86, 27 June 2023.

¹⁶ See <http://www.ditjenpas.go.id/standar-sistem-penilaian-pembinaan-narapidana-sppn>

¹⁷ IPAC, “Militants in Poso: Down but not Out”, op.cit.

¹⁸ The declarations, written and oral, usually included a commitment to uphold Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution; stay loyal to the Unitary Republic of Indonesia and its motto of Unity in Diversity; guard the unity of the people to create harmony, tolerance, a sense of community, and peace to achieve national goals; reject any organization or activity in conflict with Pancasila; and raise awareness about defending the nation by inviting all components of society to safeguard the unity of the nation.

which also may have been a goal of the effort. This also meant there was an extra burden on the police to sustain the gains of programs like *safari dakwah*.

The irony was that a more complex deradicalisation machinery was coming into place just as violence seemed to be declining, and many government agencies whose staff, budgets and other resources had expanded during Phase 2 would be hard-pressed to find enough useful activities to justify them. One question was whether the techniques that IDENSOS adopted and used successfully during Phase 3 would make the police better prepared to handle new threats and challenges.

V. IDENSOS AND DETACHMENT 88'S WEST JAVA TASK FORCE

The IDENSOS program emerged from Detachment 88's prevention directorate. Under a restructuring announced in 2019, the prevention unit focused on counter-narratives and counter-radicalisation, leaving IDENSOS to work on deradicalisation.¹⁹ The first director of IDENSOS was Djoni Djuhana, a career officer who moved into the position from heading Detachment 88's information section. Arif Makhfudiarso took over the position in 2021 with a promotion to one-star Brigadier General, after a long and successful tenure as head of Detachment 88's West Java task force, which in some ways was a model for the broader IDENSOS program.

West Java then and now was a stronghold of extremist groups. It was the original home of the Darul Islam (DI) insurgency and its fight for an Islamic State (Negara Islam Indonesia, NII).²⁰ DI/NII controlled significant swathes of territory until its defeat and the execution of its leader, Kartosoewirjo, in 1962. Resuscitated in the 1970s with the help of Indonesian intelligence, it has been around in different forms ever since, with many splinters finding a home in West Java and Banten.²¹ Many of Indonesia's violent extremist groups, including JI, can trace their lineage back to DI/NII.

The announcement of a caliphate by al-Baghdadi drew an immediate positive response in many DI strongholds. Indonesia's largest pro-ISIS coalition, Jamaah Ansharul Daulah (JAD), formed in November 2015, had five district-level branches in West Java, in Cirebon, Indramayu, Karawang, Bandung and Tasikmalaya. Members had taken part in the 2016 Thamrin bombing and the Cicendo and Kampung Melayu bombings in 2017, as well as many foiled plots. They had also sent many members to Syria and saw many others deported from Turkey.²² The depth of the extremist network, and the fact that it already went back three or four generations, convinced the police that deradicalisation of key players was critical to prevent yet a new generation from emerging.

¹⁹ "Peraturan Kepolisian Negara Republik Indonesia, Nomor 5 Tahun 2019", <https://peraturan.bpk.go.id>, 5 May 2019, p.12-13.

²⁰ See IPAC, "Weak Therefore Violent: The Mujahidin of Western Indonesia", Report No.5, 2 December 2013; "Extremists in Bandung: Darul Islam to ISIS – and Back Again?", Report No.42, 12 February 2018; and "The Search for an Islamic State in Indonesia: The Many Guises of DI/NII", Report No.82, 20 January 2023.

²¹ For an overview of the role Indonesian intelligence played in reviving Darul Islam, see Quinton Temby, "Imagining an Islamic State in Indonesia: From Darul Islam to Jemaah Islamiyah," *Indonesia* (Cornell University), No.89, April 2010.

²² According to data from PSMP Handayani, an agency under the Ministry of Social Affairs that received the deportees, 152 individuals were deported in 2017, of whom 45 were from West Java – the largest regional contingent.

The deradicalisation initiatives involved a combination of long discussions in prison; economic assistance, in the form of school fees for children and small enterprise capital; medical treatment, if needed; and the setting up of a kind of combination halfway house and boarding school in Tasikmalaya called Yayasan Ansharul Islam, run by a former ISIS supporter. It also involved identifying and freezing the assets of extremist charities – a measure that only took place after police realised that these charities were using funding to keep extremist families on side. While the police thought they were using assistance for deradicalisation, the charities were quietly engaged in a “re-radicalisation” program of their own.²³ In putting together these programs, the West Java task force worked together with local police and the local government, mostly at the district level.

VI. THE DERADICALISATION OF KIKI MUHAMMAD IQBAL

The *safari dakwah* program began in 2019 with the successful deradicalisation of Kiki Muhammad Iqbal after a health crisis. A recidivist and follower of radical cleric Aman Abdurrahman, Kiki was first arrested in 2010 in Cileunyi, West Java for making bombs in revenge for the police killing of many violent extremists as they fled the militant training camp in Jantho, Aceh. He was sentenced to six years, became pro-ISIS in prison, and was released in late 2015. He was rearrested for involvement in the May 2017 Kampung Melayu bombing in Jakarta and sentenced in 2018 to ten years in prison. He was sent to the supermax prison, Pasir Putih, on Nusakambangan.

When he entered Pasir Putih, Kiki was considered very hardline. Through preaching and discussions, he tried to persuade others in his block to stick to their extremist anti-government views. When prison staff greeted him with “Peace be with you” (*Salam alaikum*), he refused to respond. But at the end of 2018, Kiki developed an intestinal ailment. He was initially treated at the prison clinic, but the problem persisted. Eventually the prison authorities decided to send him to the hospital in Cilacap, the nearest city, for an operation. Detachment 88 shouldered all the costs. At the same time, the West Java Task Force arranged for his wife and children to come and visit, giving them the chance to meet and chat during visiting hours. After the family departed, prison and police personnel helped nurse Kiki. There was even a point after the operation when Kiki had difficulty controlling his bowels and these people took turns helping clean him up, to the amazement of the hospital’s regular nursing staff. When he was advised to drink warm liquids, it was the police and prison attendants who brought him hot tea. One of the regular nurses said, “Wow, you’re really good to him.” One of the prison staff laughed and said, “Yes, even though he keeps calling us kafir, he’s still a human being.” Kiki overheard this exchange and was silent. Not long afterwards, Kiki stopped one of the men taking care of him and asked “Do you people pray?” They told him they not only prayed but fasted and gave alms for the poor as well. In fact, the only pillar of the faith they had not yet performed was the pilgrimage to Mecca. After that, Kiki said, “If

²³ Several key charities were placed on the terrorist list maintained by the UN under Security Council Resolutions 1267 and 1373. The Indonesian version of the list, known as Daftar Terduga Teroris dan Organisasi Teroris, DTTOT, is maintained by Detachment 88 as part of the DTTOT Task Force. Some of the charities listed remained active as of 2023. See Financial Action Task Force (FATF), “Anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing measures: Indonesia”, Mutual Evaluation Report, Paris: 2023, <https://www.fatf-gafi.org/content/fatf-gafi/en/publications/Mutualevaluations/MER-Indonesia-2023.html>

that's the case, then you're not kafir." From that point on, when they greeted him with "Salam alaikum", he would give the traditional response of "And on you, peace."

Later Kiki would tell the police and prison authorities that it was the good treatment that he received while he was in hospital that persuaded him to change. He began to question his own beliefs that government officials working on Nusakambangan were the enemy and it was his duty to fight them, when during his illness, it was precisely these "enemies" who had tried to save him.

Kiki returned to Pasir Putih prison after he recovered from the operation, but not to his old block with the other hardliners. He was placed in the block of prisoners who were making the transition to disengagement (*blok pembinaan*). Prison authorities had decided to separate the blocks so that those who were beginning to change their views would not be unduly influenced by extremists who saw such change as betrayal. Usually, the first indication of change was a willingness to rethink the idea that all prison officials and police were *kafir*.

One of the men in Kiki's block was Dodi Suridi, who had also begun to question his beliefs. They were given frequent opportunity for discussion. The prison authorities also gave them access to books such as *Majmu Fatwa* of Ibnu Taymiyya, *Bidayah wan Nihayah* of Ibn Kathir and others, most of them from *salafi* ulama. These books had been recommended by police and prison officials who had had experience handling prisoners from the Bali bombs. One of the prison wardens was also a widely read Muhammadiyah preacher, and one of the Detachment 88 officers was a *salafi* adherent who attended religious discussions at Pesantren Imam Syafii in Cilacap, a *salafi* school. He had long discussions with the teachers there about books they would recommend for the hardline prisoners. These recommendations were conveyed to the prison authorities, and they allowed the books to be distributed.

From these books, Kiki began to understand the weaknesses of the ISIS arguments. Aware of this change, police and prison authorities began to have discussions with him. According to the prison regulations, a prisoner in a supermax who begins to change and according to assessments presents a declining risk should be moved to a less stringent facility. Before a prisoner could be moved out of a supermax facility, however, he had to sign a declaration of loyalty to the Indonesian republic in accordance with Regulation 99/2012.²⁴

The prison authorities discussed this with Kiki, but Kiki told them he could not sign yet, not because he saw anyone who signed as an apostate, but because he needed to convince his wife first. His wife was closely guarded by pro-ISIS women married to other prisoners, including the wife of Brekele, one hardliner who had sent his 12-year-old son to fight in Syria where he had been almost immediately killed. Brekele's wife had heard that Kiki had changed, and offered to find a new husband for Kiki's wife if she would divorce him. Detachment 88 then facilitated more communication of Kiki with his wife. The West Java Task Force visited her frequently, bringing basic goods, and also helped his wife and children travel to Nusakambangan more frequently. Eventually, Kiki convinced his wife to join him in leaving ISIS.

²⁴ We use the pronoun "he" because there are no women in supermax facilities in Indonesia.

Only then did Kiki sign the NKRI oath. He was then moved from Pasir Putih, the supermax, to Besi Prison, a maximum-security facility. It was after he had moved that Detachment 88 had the idea to undertake the *safari dakwah*, using deradicalised prisoners like Kiki to counter pro-ISIS narratives. They were invited to visit other supermax prisons to engage in discussions with other high-risk prisoners. Kiki was enthusiastic about the idea, because he felt a responsibility to convey his new understanding to those that he himself had radicalised.

VII. THE DERADICALISATION OF WILLIAM MAKSUM

William Maksum, a religious scholar from Bandung, had been arrested in 2013 for providing guns to the group known as Mujahidin of Western Indonesia (Mujahidin Indonesia Barat, MIB), an offshoot of Darul Islam.²⁵ He received a twelve-year sentence but was released early in March 2022, thanks to his willingness to sign the NKRI Declaration. When he did so in March 2019, several of his followers decided to leave ISIS with him.²⁶ He also urged them to join him in voting from prison in the 2019 general election. As of early 2024 was teaching in the pesantren run by his father in Banjaran, Bandung.

William was initially held in Madiun Prison in East Java but in late 2018 was moved to Batu Prison on Nusakambangan. At the time, Iwan Dharmawan alias Rois, from the 2004 Australian embassy bombing, and Ust. Abrory, from the extremist pesantren in Bima, were the ideologues that the most militant prisoners in Batu looked up to.

Not long after William was moved to Batu, he began to have differences with Rois and Abrory over the issue of whether the meat served in prison was *halal*. William said it was permissible to eat it, but Rois and Abrory said it was not, because it had not been slaughtered according to proper Islamic procedures. William argued that meat in Indonesia would certainly have been slaughtered by Muslims. The other two argued that the degree of their commitment to Islam had to be open to question unless proven otherwise. William had a relatively high level of religious knowledge, because he had been educated at Gontor, a well-respected modernist pesantren in East Java, but many other prisoners in Batu took the side of Abrory and Rois, and William was ostracised by his friends.

In this situation, William began to think that they and other prisoners were becoming too *takfiri* – i.e. too willing to brand fellow Muslims as infidels. A prisoner named Sholeh Abdurrahman, for example, declared his wife a *kafir* because she came to his trial bringing food, which he rejected because he considered the court to be a *kafir* institution.

After William was ostracised, the only person he could talk to was a prison official at Batu with long experience in handling terrorist prisoners. He reported to Detachment 88 on the rift between William and the two Batu prisoners, and eventually a Densus officer came to see William. They liked each other at once. The officer had long hair but pants that came above the ankle, signifying a devout Muslim. The bond deepened after they began talking, since it

²⁵ Mujahidin Indonesia Barat, a DI offshoot, was formed in December 2012 with Abu Roban as head. It proceeded to undertake robberies across Java and Lampung to raise funds for jihad.

²⁶ Eka Setiawan, "Melihat William Maksu, Sosok Pimpinan Teroris yang Ajak Ikut Pilpres," 15 April 2019, <https://ruangobrol.id/2019/04/15/fenomena/melihat-william-maksum-sosok-pimpinan-teroris-yang-ajak-ikut-pilpres/>

turned out the officer was familiar with religious texts that William used as references, such as the writings of Ibn Taymiyya. The officer was a *salafi* who frequently attended discussions at Pesantren Imam Syafii in Cilacap. After this first meeting, the officer frequently visited William Maksum, sometimes as often as twice a week to chat and eat together. They became friends, and other Detachment 88 officers began to pay more attention to William. None of them ever explicitly tried to use counter-narratives with him. They simply made a point of treating him well and ensuring that he had plenty of opportunity for discussion. The good treatment, however, was a critical element that marked the beginning of his transformation.

Around early 2019, police and prison authorities noticed a change in William's behaviour and lowered their assessment of his risk level. They offered to move him to a different prison. But according to PP 99/2012 he would have to sign the NKRI declaration before being moved. To the surprise of officials, he said he would. One of his concerns before had been what would happen to his wife and child if he cooperated with the government. They were then living at Darul Anshor Kayamanya, an extremist pesantren run by Ust. Yasin and his wife in Poso, and he knew that if he moderated his anti-government stance, they would be evicted. The police asked him about his wife, and he simply said he would take care of it. He did not even want to wait to talk to her but said he would go ahead and sign the declaration, regardless of her reaction. In the end, his wife made no objection, and William was able to move to Kembang Kuning, a lower-security prison where his fellow prisoners were less hostile.²⁷

The change in William's attitude startled senior Detachment 88 officials, including some of those in the West Java Task Force who were not convinced it was genuine. They requested that William be regularly monitored. They finally were persuaded, after William agreed to make a video explaining why he changed. In the video, he apologized to Umar Patek and Nasir Abas whom he had verbally attacked while in prison. He also agreed to take part in a flag-raising ceremony at the prison, usually considered anathema by hardline prisoners.

After this, Detachment 88 helped move his wife and child to Bandung in an effort to remove them from the influence of the extremist network. They then encouraged him to take part in the safari dakwah together with Kiki Muhammad Iqbal.

²⁷ William's father, with whom William had reconciled after a long estrangement, had agreed to take in his wife and child, so the issue of eviction from the pesantren was solved.

VIII. THE DERADICALISATION OF ISKANDAR: THE BOOK FACTOR

Another major success for police was the deradicalisation of Ruri Alexander Rumatarai alias Abu Qutaibah alias Iskandar. Born and raised in Jakarta of Mbojo (Bima) descent, Iskandar had been a close associate of radical cleric Aman Abdurrahman going back to the early 2000s. After JAT was formed in 2008, Iskandar became its major proponent in eastern Indonesia, particularly in Ambon and Bima, as well as a pivotal link among extremist groups in Lampung, West Java and Nusa Tenggara Barat (NTB) provinces. He was arrested in 2013 for helping hid fugitives, trying to set up a training camp near Bima, and receiving funds from jihadist robberies. After serving a sentence of three years, he was released in 2016, only to be rearrested in 2017 in connection with a bombing in Kampung Melayu, Jakarta.

The deradicalisation of Iskandar took more than two years. Most of it was a result of his own self-awareness through reading. The main role of prison and police officials was to facilitate his access to the books that ended up changing him.

His story begins when he was moved to Pasir Putih prison after the uprising at Mako Brimob in May 2018. After three months in Pasir Putih, he was seriously bored and told a prison official that he wanted something, anything to read. The official got him a book entitled *La Tay'as* (Do Not Despair), produced by a Jakarta NGO that works to bring about reconciliation between former terrorists and their victims, that tells the story of how a former terrorist changed his life.²⁸ It also recounts the experiences of some of the Indonesian victims of terrorist attacks. These stories touched Iskandar to the point that he began questioning the actions that he and his friends had taken that had hurt innocent victims. He thought about another book he had once read, *They were Mujahidin but They Made Mistakes* (Mereka Mujahid Tapi Salah Langkah) by Abu Muhammad Al Maqdisi, translated by radical cleric Aman Abdurrahman, that criticized actions by Abu Musab Al Zarqawi in Iraq that had also killed innocent civilians.²⁹ He began to question the jihadi operations that had been carried out in Indonesia, though it did not yet alter his understanding of *takfir* – he still regarded the government of Indonesia and its officials as infidels.

The staff of Pasir Putih began to notice a change in Iskandar. Even though he maintained his *takfiri* stance, he became more cooperative and friendly toward them. Before they could undertake any intervention, however, Iskandar was suddenly moved to Batu Prison (also in the Nusakambangan complex) because of a disturbance that took place in Pasir Putih in November 2018. The disturbance began when Syawaludin Pakpahan, involved in a 2017 attack at the Medan provincial police command, was being interrogated about his role in a May 2018 uprising at a paramilitary police detention center known as Mako Brimob. Pakpahan began shouting that he was being beaten by police investigators. His shouts prompted other prisoners to join in the shouting and bang the bars of their cells. The Pasir Putih authorities then decided to move a number of prisoners to Batu. Iskandar had not taken

²⁸ The book, by Hasibullah Satrawi, a graduate of al-Azhar University in Cairo, was titled *La Tay'as: Jangan Putus Asa: Ibroh dari Kehidupan Teroris dan Korbannya*. It was published in Jakarta in 2018 by Alliance for Peaceful Indonesia (Aliansi Indonesia Damai, AIDA).

²⁹ For more on the impact of this book in Indonesia, see International Crisis Group, "Jihadi Surprise in Aceh", Asia Report No.189, 20 April 2010, p.2.

part in the disturbance, but he was moved because he was considered an influential leader among the other inmates.

Iskandar used his time in Batu for study, exercise and conversations with the prisoners detained in nearby cells. He was bored and wanted books to read, but when he asked the prison staff if he could borrow some, they said they had none to lend him – and it was true that Batu, unlike Pasir Putih, had no lending library. His request was conveyed to Detachment 88 but received no response, partly because its investigators were still looking into Iskandar's own role in the Mako Brimob uprising. The police investigation continued into 2020 but at last the police concluded that Iskandar had not been involved. Even so, they made no effort to reach out to him because he was still considered to be a hardline ideologue. Then Detachment 88 officers received information that Iskandar had been talking to Zainal Anshori, the imprisoned head of JAD, who had already begun to change his pro-ISIS stance after taking part in a dialogue with the *safari dakwah* team of Kiki Muhammad Iqbal. Iskandar had asked Zainal for the religious references that he was using to support his changed stance. It was only then that the police showed interest in Iskandar's request for books.

A few days later, officers from Detachment 88 visited Iskandar, together with Kiki Muhammad Iqbal. It was just an ordinary conversation, after which they all shared a meal. There was no attempt at a dialogue between Kiki and Iskandar. But before they all parted, Kiki gave Iskandar a book in Arabic about *takfir* in Islamic law, referring back to the opinions of Ibnu Taymiyya.³⁰ Iskandar began reading it immediately and was startled to see that Ibnu Taymiyya believed that declaring a fellow Muslim a kafir or infidel was not something to be undertaken lightly. For example, if religious scholars were divided over whether a particular action was enough to expel a Muslim from the faith, Ibnu Taymiyya wrote that it was better not to rule him or her a kafir. Iskandar was shaken by this new understanding because it differed from what he had believed up till then. He undertook a special prayer (*salat istikharah*) to help him decide about adopting Ibnu Taymiyya's interpretation. After the prayer, he felt more comfortable in changing his stance.

It is worth noting that Iskandar was not the first extremist to change his views after reading a reinterpretation of Ibn Taymiyya. The Egyptian Gamaa al-Islamiyya famously justified their ideological reversal and criticisms of Al-Qaeda in part by citing Ibn Taymiyya's opinions.³¹ If from the *La Ta'yas* book, Iskandar questioned the validity of jihad operations, then from the book he borrowed from Kiki, he began to question the validity of the *takfiri* stance of many of his fellow ISIS supporters. The book that sealed his change of heart, however, was a translation of a tract by the late Abu Yahya al-Libi, a top al-Qaeda official. Entitled "Ramai-Ramai Mengkafirkan Anshor Thogut" (roughly, Debate over Excommunicating the Agents of Tyrants), it outlined how a wrong interpretation of *takfir* could lead to errors in conducting jihad operations. It used the example of Jamaah Islamiyah Musallahah (better known as Groupe Islamique Armé, GIA), one of the deadliest terrorist groups in Algeria, which killed the wives, children and elderly parents of police and military working for the secular

³⁰ The book title in Indonesian transliteration was *Qaidah Syariah Fie Takfir*.

³¹ "Al-Gama'a Al-Islamiyyah vs Al-Qaeda, <https://www.memri.org/reports/al-gamaa-al-islamiyya-vs-al-qaeda>, 27 September 2006.

government, on the grounds that because they had not condemned their own relatives as non-believers, they themselves deserved death.

After reading the book, Iskandar decided that ISIS was wrong, but before he announced this to others, he asked Detachment 88 if he could call his wife. He told her that he no longer believed in ISIS and why, giving her the relevant Qur'anic references. He asked her to be patient and wait until his release and he would explain more fully. He also asked her to explain his new stance to his second and third wives. She agreed to do so.

Then he was open about his change of heart, and news of his withdrawal of support for ISIS quickly spread throughout the prison and beyond. The impact on his family was immediate. All financial assistance from extremist sources suddenly dried up. Women in pro-ISIS networks stepped up pressure on Iskandar's first wife to divorce him since in their view, he had left Islam. She refused. Iskandar was particularly troubled by the hostility his children encountered at the pro-ISIS school they attended in Penatoi, Bima (Pesantren Abu Bakar Asidiq) from teachers and fellow students alike. Eventually his wife decided to pull them out.

After Iskandar changed his thinking, prison officials asked him if he would be willing to swear an oath of allegiance to the Indonesian government. He said he would, under one condition: he asked that they not immediately transfer him to Besi Prison, a less stringent prison regime than the one in place at Batu and usually considered a desirable move by the inmates concerned. A prison regulation also required that prisoners who swore the NKRI pledge be transferred from supermax to maximum security prisons. Prison officials were surprised by the request, but Iskandar said he wanted time to convince fellow inmates in Batu, particularly those from Bima. Chief among these was Abrori and Baharudin Amir, the pro-ISIS leaders from Penatoi.

In early 2021, Iskandar signed the NKRI declaration. He then asked the prison authorities and Detachment 88 to facilitate a dialogue with Abrori and Amir, which they did. He also asked Amir to read *Qaidah fi Takfir*. The result was that Amir also changed his thinking about *takfir*. With Abrori, the situation was different. He and Iskandar agreed to disagree on several points but in an amicable fashion, so that Abrori did not condemn Iskandar for his decision. He even sent word to his friends in Bima, telling them not to brand as kafir those prisoners who took part in deradicalisation programs.

In March 2021, Iskandar was finally transferred to Besi Prison. There he joined with the Safari Dakwah Team and took part in dialogues with prisoners in the supermax prisons, with the result that many revoked their oath of allegiance to ISIS and began to cooperate in prison programs. One prison official called Iskandar "the strongest vaccine for the radicalisation virus" because he could sometimes convince ISIS supporters to change only one or two meetings.³²⁾

This made some of the hardcore prisoners refuse to meet with Iskandar. One of these was Rahmat Hisbullah alias Bilal, from Bima. When Iskandar came to see him, he said had no interest in dialogue with his former teacher. Iskandar asked him to just hear the evidence, but Bilal angrily refused. He said as far as he was concerned, the argument over *takfir* was

³² IPAC interview by telephone with prison authorities, Nusakambangan, August 2023.

closed. Whoever took part in deradicalisation programs was a kafir. No dialogue took place, but afterwards, Bilal called his wife and claimed (falsely) that he had met with Iskandar, and Iskandar could not respond to the arguments he put forward. Rumours then began spreading that Bilal had defeated Iskandar in a debate. The rumours came back to Iskandar after a conversation with his wife when she asked him if it was true. Iskandar told her that there had been no dialogue. The news also reached Detachment 88, who approached Bilal for clarification. Bilal initially tried to say that it was not he who spread the rumours. But the police confronted him with evidence of the conversation between him and his wife, and he could not deny it, so he agreed to send a “clarification” to his wife. Bilal was not the only hardcore prisoner who rejected dialogue however. Another prisoner said that if Iskandar came to see him, he would spit at him.

In addition to taking part in Safari Dakwah, Iskandar also translated Qaidah Fie Takfir because he thought it important that other prisoners read it. He was released in December 2021 and has continued to take part in deradicalisation programs.

IX. THE CASE OF SUTOMO alias UST. YASIN

On 17 May 2023, Sutomo alias Ust. Yasin signed the declaration of loyalty to the NKRI in the supermax prison of Karang Anyar in Nusakambangan, the state-of-the-art prison used for only the most hardcore. It was a major victory for IDENSOS and a transformation that few would have believed possible – and some still are not persuaded that it will last.

Yasin, born in Semarang, Central Java in 1965, was a three-time recidivist who appears on the UN’s List of Terrorists and Terrorist Organisations. An architecture major at a Catholic university in Semarang, he had also been a radio broadcaster before he began to take part in JI activities in 1992 and eventually dropped out of school. In 2002, he moved with his family to Poso where Nasir Abas appointed him as treasurer of the local JI branch, and he was hired to teach math and physics at the al-Amanah pesantren in Poso, then the JI base. After a shootout with the police in the streets of Poso in January 2007, Yasin was arrested and served two years in prison in Palu, the Central Sulawesi provincial capital, where he proceeded to recruit for JI. When he was released in 2009, he joined Jamaah Anshorul Tauhid (JAT), the organisation set up a year earlier by Abu Bakar Ba’asyir and decided to open a branch in Poso. As the then-amir, it was Yasin who selected Santoso, later to become the commander of MIT in Poso, as head of JAT-Poso’s military affairs unit in 2010. Yasin was later replaced as head and reverted to being treasurer.

He was arrested the second time in 2012 for JAT activities, just after he and his wife had set up Pesantren Darul Anshor Putri, located eventually in the Kayamanya neighborhood of Poso.³³ That school became a recruiting, fund-raising and matchmaking center for MIT.³⁴ In many ways, Yasin was the cleric who provided the ideological justification for MIT as the local

³³ The pesantren was set up in the Weralulu area of Poso in 2012, moved to Kayamanya in 2013 in the complex around the Muhajirin Mosque, and then in 2014 moved to Jl. Pulau Nias in Poso in 2014.

³⁴ See IPAC, “Militants in Poso: Down but Not Out,” op.cit.

manifestation of the ISIS struggle. He was re-arrested in 2020 and was sentenced to life in prison in 2021.

No one would have considered him a likely candidate for deradicalisation. The effort to win him over began shortly after his third arrest with the “safari dakwah” program. Kiki Iqbal played a key role. The change began when prison authorities obtained a book called *Qowa'idu Syar'iyatin fi at-Takfir Qiro'atu Afkary Syaikhul Islam by Ibnu Taymiyya*. It was basically a new interpretation of the great Islamic theologian's rulings on *takfir*. It had been translated into Indonesian by another deradicalised hardliner, Iskandar alias Abu Qutaibah from Bima.³⁵ It stressed that Ibn Taimiyya, whose writings provided the ideological underpinning for much of salafi jihadism, had himself been very cautious about declaring fellow Muslims to be *kafir*. The book persuaded Yasin that his views on *takfir* had been intemperate and that he had perhaps been too hasty to declare all prison officials and police as *kafir*.

After this change in attitude, police facilitated a dialogue between Yasin and a senior JI prisoner, Ust. Arif Siswanto. (Siswanto, who was held at another prison in the Nuskambangan complex, had briefly taken over as JI's caretaker amir after the arrest of Para Wijayanto. He was released in October 2023.) The JI leader convinced Yasin that indeed his old views on *takfir* had been wrong. He also told Yasin that after he was free, he was planning to dissolve JI and turn it into an organisation that focused only on *dakwah* and education. (It is worth noting that a similar decision was taken as an emergency measure by the JI leadership in 2007 after a wave of arrests of the top leadership but it did not prevent the organisation's revival.) He advised Yasin to change his pesantren into a school for the general public.

The *safari dakwah* did not stop with Yasin but continued with his wife, Mei Ekowati, who was not in prison and had never been arrested but was also known to be hardline. Under duress, she had accepted government assistance to their pesantren but quietly continued to take aid from extremist charities.³⁶ Yasin was worried that she would divorce him if he changed his anti-government views, as some wives of prisoners had done. She said she would stand by him, but he asked the police to send her a copy of the book on Ibn Taymiyya to Poso. They did so, and she sent back a message that she agreed with it and would follow his change of heart.

In Yasin's case, a persuasive religious argument appears to have been a major factor in his decision to disengage, combined with discussions that went on over many months with men whose Islamic credentials he respected. At the same time, there was major pressure on his wife and their school in Poso to declare allegiance to the NKRI and accept government aid. No one knows at this stage whether the “deradicalisation” will prove to be lasting, but several things should be kept in mind.

There are many opportunities for backsliding. One factor is the logjam that now exists in moving cooperative terrorism offenders – those willing to sign the NKRI declaration – from supermax to maximum security prisons as they were promised. The lack of available cells,

³⁵ The book was by Ismatullah Inayatullah Muhammad and had been translated by another successfully deradicalized hardliner, Iskandar alias Abu Qutaibah.

³⁶ IPAC, “Militants in Poso: Down but Not Out,” op.cit.

because of both the high level of arrests made possible by the 2018 law and the rampant corruption in the process of transfers, means that someone like Yasin could begin to feel aggrieved that he did not receive what police promised him.

Second, some major incident could take place in Poso that could damage the considerable progress that has been made. The arrest and imprisonment by police in May 2023 of several minors linked to support for MIT, for example, caused widespread resentment.

Finally, it should be remembered that Ust.Yasin is serving a life sentence. He may not be subjected to the same temptations that he would be if he were back in Poso, but he also will have limited opportunity to persuade others there of his changed views. In this sense, Yasin's impact may be limited, and William Maksum, now released, may be a more important success, because he will be able to spread his views among vulnerable followers.

X. POST-RELEASE PROGRAMS

After the deradicalised prisoners are freed, the police arrange to accompany them home. Detachment 88 usually has a vehicle at the prison, with provincial IDENSOS staff on hand to serve as part of the welcome committee, together with local officials such as local political leaders, neighbourhood heads (RT/RW) and local police, to make sure they are not rejected when they arrive.

In the past, the police sometimes found themselves competing with extremist charities such as the pro-ISIS Anfiq Centre, which also maintained a travel agency called Sabiluna Travel. It also was prepared to pick up newly released prisoners and take them either home or to Solo, an extremist hub. One example was Arif Abid, a prisoner from Bima who had been detained at the prison in Tulungagung, East Java. When he was released in September 2022, both Sabiluna and Detachment 88 were waiting to pick him up and bring him home. Arif chose to go with Sabiluna to Solo. After a few days there, the agency bought him a ticket to return to Bima.³⁷

For those who choose to return with Detachment 88, the police assist with obtaining various forms of identification, including national identity cards (KTP) and drivers' licences. They also help the prisoners to join different foundations or cooperatives, some of which were set up by the police, to provide them with alternative social networks. These organisations become places to meet, socialise, get start-up business advice and help meet family needs.³⁸

In its assistance to prisoners in setting up businesses, Detachment 88 works with the private sector and the government. For example, in Sentul, Bogor, the ex-prisoners who join Yayasan HWI work together in developing Sentul City as a tourism center, known as Leuwi Pangaduan. Yayasan HWI has had its problems, however, due in part to the ex-prisoners' weak management skills. A cooperative in Banten works with PERHUTANI, the state forestry

³⁷ IPAC interview with prison official, East Java, June 2023.

³⁸ Examples are Koperasi Bina Insan Sukses in Solo, producing greenhouse melons; the Debintal Foundation in Bekasi that raises poultry; the Hizbul Wathan Indonesia (HWI) Foundation that focuses on tourism in Bogor, West Java; and the Bina Insyaf Mandiri Cooperative that produces coffee in Pandeglang, West Java.

enterprise, to manage a coffee plantation in Gunung Karang, Pandeglang, with Detachment 88 trying to find markets to take the coffee harvest.

In addition to these collective efforts, Detachment 88 has also worked with help individuals who need jobs or who want to set up their own businesses. For example, it helped facilitate cooperation between Yayasan Debintal in Bekasi, an NGO set up by ex-prisoners, with Panasonic to provide jobs for ex-prisoners in servicing air-conditioners. In Cilacap, IDENSOS helped prisoners find jobs in the private sector and secure micro-loans from the local Bank Mandiri branch to prisoners who wanted to set up shops or kiosks selling basic goods. Local banks also provided mentoring on how to manage these initiatives.

Opportunities for ex-prisoners to work more closely with the public and private sectors increased with the issuance of Presidential Regulation No.7 2021 on the National Action Plan to Prevent and Manage Violent Extremism. Local IDENSOS officers promised to closely monitor all business enterprises of former prisoners set up under this act.

XI. STRAINED RELATIONS BETWEEN DETACHMENT 88 AND BNPT

Relations between the counter-terrorism police and BNPT are often strained. They became particularly tense in September 2021 after many ex-prisoners got together and issued a petition to disband BNPT. More than a dozen of the signatories had taken part in BNPT deradicalisation programs, but all had taken part in police programs. BNPT not surprisingly suspected that Detachment 88 was behind the petition.

According to some of the prisoners, however, the petition was solely their initiative.³⁹ They felt they had repeatedly expressed their disappointment about the false hopes they believed they were given by BNPT. One issue was over mass vaccines for ex-prisoners. In July 2021, at the height of Covid, BNPT promoted a mass vaccination program, one of which was going to be conducted in the village of Tiwaa, Poso Pesisir in central Sulawesi. BNPT succeeded in getting 30 former prisoners to take part, but only because they were told that anyone who came and got vaccinated would receive Rp.15 million in cash. Those who came but refused to be vaccinated would still get Rp.5 million. Those who came, however, only received an envelope of Rp.500,000 and a packet of basic goods like rice and cooking oil. Reports of the actual amount received went viral among ex-prisoners, with many asking if they were promised Rp.15 million, who got the rest? They linked the false promises to others that BNPT had failed to fulfil, such as start-up capital for small enterprises.⁴⁰

Petitioners also complained that BNPT sometimes claimed responsibility for prisoners' post-release business successes that they had not been involved with. One former prisoner had built a shop with his own money. BNPT offered additional assistance, and the prisoner asked for a freezer, which BNPT bought for him. The agency then made a video, to the intense annoyance of the owner, implying the whole enterprise was the result of BNPT assistance.⁴¹

³⁹ IPAC interviews with ex-prisoners in Bogor, June 2023.

⁴⁰ metrosulteng.com, "Tak Jelas Program dan Janjinya, Eks Napiter Poso Dukung Petisi Bubarkan BNPT," 27 September 2021.

⁴¹ Interview with staff of Yayasan Debintal, Bekasi, September 2021.

Other prisoners who expected early release (*pembebasan bersyarat*, PB) after swearing loyalty to the Indonesian government found that the procedure was held up by delays in BNPT producing a needed letter.⁴² BNPT's failure to deliver on promises and its exaggerated claims about its own successes became a source of friction not only with the prisoners but also with the police and prison officials. This was particularly in evidence when ceremonies of oath-taking to the government took place in prison. BNPT would send a team to video the prisoners and then use the video in its presentations about the success of its deradicalisation program, when in fact, credit for the prisoners' change in thinking was more often due to police and prison staff or to their own decisions.⁴³

Interagency relations improved after Brig. Gen Nurwahid replaced Dr. Irfan Idris as director of BNPT's deradicalisation program, since the new director had managed the prevention program of Detachment 88 and understood the need to work out a clear division of labour. After his appointment, BNPT focused more on the medium security prisons on Nusakambangan while Detachment 88 worked on the supermax facilities. In Cibinong prison, police took the lead in in-house deradicalisation efforts, while BNPT focused on programs to support the prisoners' children.

XII. INTERNAL CHALLENGES

The IDENSOS program will face more challenges moving forward. In many ways it was the flagship program of Detachment 88 head Marthinus Hukom, who in early December 2023 was tapped to head the National Narcotics Agency, a promotion. It will be important for his successor to give IDENSOS the same amount of attention and support, but it is not clear that this will be forthcoming.

The program is unevenly implemented across the country, and some of the regional task forces put more emphasis on arrests than on prevention, even with evidence that a strong prevention and deradicalisation program reduces the risk of violence. This was the case in Tasikmalaya, described above, where the JAD branch broke up after intense deradicalisation efforts. It was true of Majalengka, West Java, where a JAD member named Imam Mulyana, who had taken part in the program, voluntarily turned over TATP explosives that he and his friends had stored at the foot of Mt. Ceremai. The program was also responsible for the weakening of JAD Bima especially after Iskandar and his friend Amir Burhanudin began to give lectures around Bima, refuting their old views, to the point that several neighbourhoods decided to disengage from ISIS.

This is not to say that the program is immune from setbacks and failures, but its relative success, especially with some committed ideologues, has been encouraging.

⁴² Terrorism offenders who wanted PB had to get a letter from Detachment 88 certifying that they were "justice collaborators" as well as a recommendation letter from BNPT. The letter from the police usually came within days or at most weeks, while the letter from BNPT would take months. In one case, it took so long that the prisoner had served his full term and had already been released before anything appeared from BNPT. One well-known prisoner, Hendro Fernando, to whom this happened became one of the initiators of the petition.

⁴³ IPAC interview, prison staff, Nusakambangan, May 2023.

XIII. CONCLUSIONS

The case studies of Kiki Muhammad Iqbal, William Maksum, Iskandar, and Ust. Yasin suggest several conclusions.

In the deradicalisation or disengagement process, there is no substitute for the cultivation of personal relationships and sustained attention over time. One of the reasons many BNPT programs have fallen short is that they involve only one or two meetings, often in large groups. The Safari Dakwah program is not just about religious discussions. It is about building an alternative network of police and fellow prisoners, as well as acknowledging the status of the senior prisoners who are its main target. The fact that this attention continues, through IDENSOS, well after the prisoners are released, contributes to its effectiveness. The Safari program has also involved close cooperation between police and prison officials, with police guaranteeing the safety of prison staff in the supermax facilities where meetings take place, and the prison staff ensuring that the prisoners who begin to show signs of cooperation are separated from more aggressive inmates.

The post-release activities carried out by IDENSOS need to be more evenly spread across the country, while authorities need to be careful not to create resentment on the part of ordinary criminal offenders that those responsible for the “extraordinary” crime of terrorism seem to get more privileges and better treatment than they do.

The poor quality of BNPT programs, driven in part by resources made available by particular ministries, needs to be addressed. Ensuring better coordination with Detachment 88 and allowing IDENSOS to be the lead agency would help.

The prisoners clearly need better access to reading material. Especially in the supermax prisons, the prisoners should have a constructive outlet for their boredom, and studying carefully selected texts can have a positive effect, as is clear from the cases of Iskandar and Yasin. But access to reading materials should not be restricted to religious texts. Many studies have found that access to books and educational materials of both an instructional and entertaining nature can play a major role in rehabilitation. (Access to well-stocked prison libraries is also one of the UN’s Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, the so-called Nelson Mandela Rules).

The women’s networks outside prison need more attention. Sometimes supported by extremist charities, they are an important source of pressure on other women to stay ideologically engaged and can be a vehicle for re-radicalisation of families. The cases in this report show how important approval or acceptance of their wives was for the prisoners who decided to cooperate with the government. Some of the former women prisoners could be helpful in playing the same role that Nasir Abas, Kiki and others have played for the men.

Cooperation with the private sector could be usefully expanded, perhaps with ex-prisoners who have benefited from the Panasonic project acting as mentors for those newly employed.

All of this means more training for IDENSOS local staff; for prison staff, especially on Nusakambangan but also in prisons elsewhere; and for community leaders in areas to which former prisoners have returned.

All agencies involved in the administration of early release need to streamline the procedures involved. No prisoners who cooperate with the government and declare their allegiance at some risk to themselves in the expectation of early release should have to wait to be freed until their full term is up just because of delays in getting the paperwork done.

The Directorate of Corrections needs to seriously address the issue of bribes from wealthier inmates, especially drug dealers, that allows them to pay their way out of supermax prisons and fill up the spaces in that otherwise would be available to deradicalised prisoners who were promised transfers to a more lenient prison regime. Corrections might also consider reserving new facilities on Nusakambangan (such as Lapas Ngaseman) for terrorist prisoners who fall in this category, so that incentives to cooperate can be maintained.

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