

# **THE CRACKDOWN ON ISLAMIST “RADICALS” IN INDONESIA**

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## I. INTRODUCTION

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Indonesian President Jokowi’s crackdown on “radical” Islamists appears to have broad public support but runs the risk of undermining civil liberties, creating a political backlash and pushing a few angry activists toward violence.

The government’s particular target since late 2020 has been the Islamic Defenders Front (Front Pembela Islam, FPI), an Islamist vigilante group with a history of attacks on religious minorities and places of “vice”. It was never a terrorist organisation but for decades worked closely with police as a civilian enforcer of public order and a partner in protection rackets. It only began to be treated as a security threat after it played a leading role in the massive Islamist-led protests in 2016 to bring down the then Jakarta governor on blasphemy charges.

Government accusations that it was pro-ISIS and supportive of terrorism intensified after the November 2020 return from Saudi Arabia of FPI’s “grand imam” Rizieq Shihab after three years of self-imposed exile. His return triggered a series of events that led to the killing of six of his bodyguards; his own imprisonment and the arrests of other leaders; and the formal dissolution of the organisation on 30 December 2020. The danger now is that some of FPI’s more militant members could be pushed by a sense of unfairness and persecution to more lethal violence, thus making the government claim that it is linked to terrorism a self-fulfilling prophecy. The arrest of a group of bomb-makers in Condet, East Jakarta in late March 2021 may be an example of this phenomenon.

This report examines the escalation of the Jokowi government’s anti-radicalism campaign and its implications. The campaign has three prongs: subjecting Islamist groups and their leaders to greater scrutiny and surveillance based on a very loose definition of “radicalism”; intensifying indoctrination in the state ideology Pancasila, on the premise that one cause of radicalism has been insufficient nationalism; and partnering with “moderate” organisations such as the huge Muslim social organisation Nahdlatul Ulama in the formulation of religious policy. It is the broad scrutiny and surveillance of law-abiding citizens that has raised concerns about civil liberties among human rights groups but with very little outcry from the broader public.

Surveys continue to show that Indonesia is growing more socially conservative and less religiously tolerant. The support for the crackdown thus may not indicate any shift in religious attitudes but rather approval for a president seen as decisive and firm.

The reaction of Islamist groups to the FPI ban and the anti-radicalism campaign more generally has been muted, in part because their usual form of protest, turning out to the streets in large numbers, has not been possible under Covid restrictions. It may also be because intimidation by the state seems to have worked. The leaders of major Islamist organisations, themselves facing a variety of charges, have elected to stay quiet, waiting to see how developments unfold and protecting their ability to serve and perhaps expand their constituencies through regular religious study sessions and outreach.

## II. BACKGROUND: THE GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE 212 MOVEMENT

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The current crackdown began when Jokowi and his advisers realised that the Islamist brand of populism as practiced by coalition known as the 212 Movement in 2016 to bring down the Jakarta governor, familiarly known as Ahok, could be used by political opponents to force policy

changes and potentially determine election outcomes.<sup>1</sup> A steady rise in attacks on minorities, especially the Ahmadiyah sect, and vigilante closures of “unauthorised” churches from 2005 onwards had not attracted much attention from the government, and the perpetrators, who often included FPI members, frequently went unpunished.<sup>2</sup> The anti-Ahok campaign was different. It was bigger, it was clearly a political challenge, and it could be seen as part of a broader strategy of conservative activists to Islamise society from the grassroots up that seemed to be working. Public opinion polls consistently showed more support for application of Islamic law, less willingness to allow houses of worship of a different religion in one’s community, and a strong belief that Muslims had an obligation to only elect Muslim leaders.

The term “radical” came to include any organisation associated with the 212 Movement. The main components of the coalition were FPI, Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI); Forum Umat Islam (FUI); Wahdah Islamiyah; and a Salafi educational network led by Bachtiar Nasir. In the aftermath of the rallies, police moved against the leadership by bringing mostly unrelated charges against them as a form of intimidation and by banning HTI, the one coalition member that was part of a transnational organisation.

It was inevitable that the coalition over time would break apart over differing agendas and personal rivalries, but to the extent it was able to maintain any cohesion, it was through identification of Jokowi as the enemy. He was defined as the personification of liberalism, pluralism and secularism and accused of opening the door to a revival of Communism and Chinese economic control.<sup>3</sup>

#### A. *Islamists and the Elections*

The Islamists had allied with Jokowi’s rival, Prabowo Subianto, in the 2019 presidential elections on the principle of “the enemy of my enemy is my friend” even though some had doubts about his commitment to their agenda. The election results reflected a country polarised along religious lines. In deeply conservative Muslim areas of Java and in most of the Muslim outer islands, Prabowo won, securing more than 85 per cent of the vote in Aceh and West Sumatra and winning every other province of Sumatra except for North Sumatra. The Islamist activism frightened minorities with its majoritarian messages and suggestions of Islamic exclusivism, giving Jokowi more than 90 per cent of the non-Muslim vote. Jokowi pulled out a victory with the help of moderate Nahdlatul Ulama constituencies in central and east Java, but many outside the Jokowi camp believed the Prabowo campaign’s propaganda that the elections were stolen and joined the protests at the office of the Election Supervisory Body (Bawaslu) in Jakarta on 21-22 May 2019, which turned violent and ended in nine deaths.

FPI was among the main organisers, together with Prabowo’s Gerindra party, of those protests, with its secretary-general Munarman and one of its firebrands, Bernard Abdul Jabbar, working as field coordinators.<sup>4</sup> FPI members were also shaken – and some radicalised – by the shooting, still unexplained, that took place on the night of 22 May when four men were shot

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1 The designation “212” derived from the date of the group’s largest rally, 2 December 2016. For background on the anti-Ahok mobilisation and its aftermath, see IPAC, “After Ahok: The Islamist Agenda in Indonesia”, Report No. 44, 6 April 2018;

2 See Sana Jaffrey, “In the State’s Stead? Vigilantism and the Policing of Religious Offence in Indonesia”, in Eve Warburton and Thomas Power, eds, *Democracy in Indonesia: From Stagnation to Regression?*, pp. 303–25. Singapore, 2020 and Robin Bush, “Religious Politics and Minority Rights during the Yudhoyono Presidency”, in Edward Aspinall, Marcus Mietzner and Dirk Tomsa, eds., *The Yudhoyono Presidency: Indonesia’s Decade of Stability and Stagnation*, Singapore, 2015, pp239-257.

3 IPAC, “Indonesian Islamists: Activists in Search of an Issue”, Report No.65, 13 August 2020; “Indonesian Islamists and Post-election Protests in Jakarta”, Report No.58, 23 July 2019.

4 IPAC, “Indonesian Islamists and Post-Election Protests in Jakarta,” Report No.58, 23 July 2019.

and killed near FPI headquarters. They included two FPI members, one man who was guarding Riziq Shihab’s residence and another man who lived close by. Islamists believe they were killed by the paramilitary police, Brimob, but conclusive evidence was never forthcoming.

The FPI central leadership council held a press conference on 26 May in which KH Awit Mashuri, the council’s head, expressed condolences to the “victims of the brutality of the security apparatus” and the hope that they would be accepted as martyrs; condemned what FPI termed excessive use of force and serious human rights violations and the hope that these would be investigated by both domestic and international bodies; and said that the peaceful elections protests were an exercise in freedom of assembly and expression as guaranteed by the constitution. He said it was clear that there was a deliberate effort to portray FPI headquarters in Petamburan as the source of the violence, despite the fact that it was far from the location of the protests, and the shooting erupted long after the peaceful protest at Bawaslu had ended.<sup>5</sup>

From Saudi Arabia, Rizieq issued an provocative call for Muslims to avenge the deaths of fellow Muslims in blood, but local FPI leaders ignored him, preferring to try and cool things down, mindful among other things that their registration permit would expire in June 2019 and they would need government support to renew it.

### *B. The Focus on Religious Moderation*

After he was safely re-elected, Jokowi shocked the hardliners by bringing in their erstwhile political protector, Prabowo, as defence minister. The president then proceeded to make a renewed emphasis on religious moderation and Pancasila a cornerstone of plans for his second term. The focus on the latter got a boost with his unexpected appointment of a retired army general, Fachrul Razi, as Minister of Religion. It was the first military appointment to the post since the Soeharto era and one of many steps taken by Jokowi that showed his reliance on military personnel in non-military roles, including agricultural extension, infrastructure development and enforcing Covid restrictions.<sup>6</sup>

In November 2019, the new minister announced the establishment of new “centres for religious moderation studies” in all state Islamic universities and higher education institutes. Later the same month, the government issued a worrisome joint ministerial decree on preventing radicalism in the civil service. It listed eleven actions that would be grounds for denying someone a position or for imposing various forms of administrative sanctions, including dismissal. The decree was designed to keep religious radicals out of government but with radicalism broadly defined as being “intolerant, anti-Pancasila or against the unitary republic of Indonesia”, it seemed like a throwback to Soeharto-era.<sup>7</sup> Among the proscribed actions were “expressing of hatred toward Pancasila, the 1945 Constitution, the national motto (unity in diversity), the unitary republic of Indonesia or the government”, including via social media. Not only were original postings expressing hatred to be banned but also shares, retweets, reposts, and indications such as “like”,

5 “FPI Evakuasi Korban Meninggal Akibat Kerusuhan 22 Mei,” Gatra.com, 24 May 2019 and Kiblat News YouTube Channel, “Banyak Korban Meninggal pada Aksi Kemarin, FPI Minta Komnas HAM Lakukan Investigasi”, 26 May 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yAIU0xpc53w&t=184s>. For a detailed account of the violence, see IPAC, “Indonesian Islamists and Post-Election Protests in Jakarta”, op.cit.

6 See IPAC, “The Expanding Role of the Indonesian Military”, Report No.19, 25 May 2015 and “Update on the Indonesian Military’s Influence,” Report No.26, 11 March 2016.

7 The language was reminiscent of that used during the Soeharto years to ensure that civil servants had a “clean background”, i.e. were free of leftist influence. Irfan Teguh, “Bersih Diri dan Bersih Lingkungan Gaya Orde Baru,” tirta.id, 11 May 2018.

“dislike” and “love”<sup>8</sup>

As one analyst noted, “The new government policy was not formulated based on any thorough academic research on incidences of radicalism within the civil service. No government official has cited any academic studies to provide evidence on the severity of Islamic radicalism among civil servants – which could have set the context for the implementation of the policy.”<sup>9</sup> Moreover, while the decree included a complaint portal whereby anyone could report suspected radicalism, there was no procedure for appeal or for individuals so reported to defend themselves.<sup>10</sup>

In December 2019, Indonesian Ulama Council announced a process for training and certifying Muslim preachers involved in religious outreach as moderate.<sup>11</sup> This was reinforced by a certification process announced by the Ministry of Religion in August 2020 that immediately drew protests from the Islamist community: why was it only Muslim preachers that were required to undergo training and certification and not clerics of other religions? <sup>12</sup> Objections to the program came from across the Muslim ideological spectrum and the national parliament.

In September 2020, the Ministry of State Apparatus Utilization and Bureaucratic Reform launched an internal government app called “ASN NO Radikal” designed to facilitate communication across ministries, state agencies, and local government officials to watch for signs of radicalism in state civil servants.<sup>13</sup> Candidates for civil service posts were being scrutinized to make sure that they were not anti-Pancasila, including by having their social media accounts tracked.<sup>14</sup> By April 2021, the government reported that 40 people per month were being dismissed from the civil service for suspected radicalism.<sup>15</sup> Many Islamist groups complained that the government was making no distinction between banned groups like HTI and perfectly legal above ground groups like the political party Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (PKS) and conservative Salafi organisations.

Fachrul Razi was replaced as Minister of Religion in December 2020 by Yaqut Cholil, the head of Nahdlatul Ulama’s youth (and paramilitary) wing, who scrapped the unpopular certification program in April 2021. In the meantime, however, conservative preachers were reportedly removed from mosques near state enterprises and replaced with NU members.<sup>16</sup>

### III. THE GOVERNMENT CRACKDOWN: BEFORE THE SHOOTINGS

The government had moved very cautiously against FPI after Rizieq went into exile on 26 April 2017 to avoid arrest on pornography charges. It made a point of not acting on FPI’s application for extension of its organizational permit that expired in June 2019, but few saw this as a precursor to banning. It was more a reminder to the leadership that the government retained ultimate control

8 “Keputusan Bersama Menteri Pendayagunaan Aparatur Negara dan Reformasi Birokrasi”, Menteri Dalam Negeri, Menteri Hukum dan HAM, Menteri Agama, Menteri Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, Menteri Komunikasi dan Informatika, Kepala Badan Intelijen Negara, Kepala Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Terorisme, Kepala Badan Kepegawaian Negara, Kepala Badan Pembinaan Ideologi Pancasila dan Ketua Komisi Aparatur Negara tentang Penanganan Radikalisme dalam Rangka Penguatan Wawasan Kebangsaan pada Aparatur Sipil Negara, 12 November 2019.

9 A’an Suryana, “Challenges in Tackling Extremism in the Indonesian Civil Service”, ISEAS Yusof Ishak Institute, Issue 15, 2020, p.5.

10 Ibid, pp.10-11.

11 “Program Sertifikasi Penceramah Dimulai Bulan ini”, voaindonesia.com, 10 September 2020 and “Ditjen Pendis Sedang Menyiapkan Instruktur Nasional Moderasi Beragama”, pendis.kemenag.go.id, 31 December 2019.

12 For the PKS reaction, see “Terkait Sertifikasi Da’I, HNW: Kemenag Distrimatif dan Bisa Jadi Kado Buruk untuk Umat Islam,”fraksi.pks.id, 19 August 2020.

13 “Peluncuran Aplikasi ASN No Radikal”, menpan.go.id, 02 September 2020.

14 “Pemerintah Intip Medsos Calon Pegawai Negeri”, detik.com, 12 November 2019.

15 “Menpan RB: Setiap Bulan 40 PNS Terpapar Paham Radikal Dipecat,” nasional.sindonews.com, 18 April 2021.

16 “Masjid di Kantor BUMN Akan Diisi Ceramah Ulama-Kiai NU”, cnnindonesia.com, 20 November 2020. See also Ady Amar, “Anti Kritik Rezim yang Ditorpedo”, hidayatullah.com, 10 April 2021.



and that it had better lie low if it wanted to continue functioning. FPI would become technically illegal after the permit expired in June but could plausibly be treated as just another casualty of normal bureaucratic delays. Rizieq’s sudden, unexpected return in November 2020 and the huge outpouring of support in the midst of Covid restrictions suddenly changed the equation. From a nuisance, Rizieq became a threat – socially and politically – and the government campaign against him intensified. It was ratcheted up further after the still unexplained police killing of Rizieq’s bodyguards on 6 December. Rizieq might have still been arrested and FPI banned had the killings not taken place. But the need to justify them may have been a factor in the next phase of the crackdown: the dubious accusation that FPI was a terrorist organization.

#### A. *Controversy over Rizieq’s Homecoming*

Rizieq’s return to Indonesia on 10 November 2020 after three years in self-exile in Saudi Arabia was unexpected. News reports suggested he was deported because he had overstayed his visa, which he had many times but the last expired on 20 July 2018. Rizieq said he had received an extension until 11 November 2020. He announced his return over FPI’s online channel, Front TV. He said the Jokowi government had imposed a ban on his return a month before his visa expired, but that he had lobbied the Saudi government, showing them a letter from BIN as proof of an agreement reached with the agency in 2018. The Indonesian authorities denied they had ever banned Rizieq from returning.<sup>17</sup>

Rizieq claimed senior BIN officials visited him in Saudi Arabia and told him that all charges would be dropped as long as he stayed out of politics – this was in mid-2018 as the presidential elections were fast approaching and FPI was already allied with Prabowo. Charges against Rizieq were dropped in May and June 2018 but Rizieq stayed in Saudi Arabia. The alleged agreement with BIN has never been made public.<sup>18</sup>

Once it became clear that Rizieq was on his way back, the dominant message from the government was that there was nothing to worry about. Security Coordinating Minister Mahfud downplayed any security concerns. He acknowledged Rizieq’s constitutional right to return and said it was fine for supporters to go to the airport to greet him as long as they stayed orderly and peaceful, as Rizieq himself had urged. “We know all supporters of Habib Rizieq are good people,” he said. He warned police about going overboard and said the military and police should prepare “non-repressive measures” to secure the airport and escort Rizieq and his supporters to FPI headquarters in Petamburan.<sup>19</sup>

But the government was completely unprepared for the numbers that showed up to greet him. An estimated 50,000 people showed up at Jakarta’s international airport, causing severe traffic congestion, numerous flight delays, and damage to some public facilities at the airport’s Terminal 3, and President Jokowi was said to be furious.<sup>20</sup> At a time when he was trying to woo

17 Minister of Political, Legal, and Security Affairs (Menkopolkam), Mahfud MD and the Indonesian Ambassador of Saudi Arabia, Agus Maftuh Abegebriel, both said that the Indonesian government had never banned Rizieq’s return. “Rizieq Shihab pulang: Apa arti kepulangannya bagi politik Indonesia dan bagaimana kasus-kasus hukum yang dihadapinya”, *bbc.com*, 09 November 2020; “Mahfud Ungkap Rizieq Shihab Akan Dideportasi dari Arab Saudi”, *cnnindonesia.com*, 06 November 2020; “Dapat Perpanjangan Visa, Rizieq Shihab akan Tuntut yang Menyebutnya Overstay”, *kompas.com*, 04 November 2020.

18 “Cawe-cawe BIN dalam Kepulangan Rizieq Syihab dan Kesalahan Analisis Intelijen”, *Tempo*, 14 November 2020. See also “Temui Rizieq Diam-Diam di Saudi, Ini Kata Kapolri Tito”, *rmol.id*, 18 August 2017 and “Polisi hentikan kasus dugaan pornografi Rizieq Shihab: ‘Saya tidak takut pulang ke Indonesia’”, *bbc.com*, 17 June 2018. See also “Kasus Habib Rizieq: Dilaporkan Sukmawati, Distop Polisi”, *detik.com*, 5 May 2018.

19 Kemenko Polhukam RI YouTube Channel, “Menko Polhukam: Kepulangan HRS adalah Hak yang Harus Dilindungi”, 09 November 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xKNv-UNJ4-Y&list=LL&index=1>. See also Karni Ilyas Club YouTube Channel, “Mahfud Bicara! Masalah HRS, sampai ‘Serangan’ di Rumah Ibunda”, 5 December 2020 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XcTZXq9dauk&list=LL&index=8>.

20 “Cawe-cawe BIN dalam Kepulangan Rizieq Syihab dan Kesalahan Analisis Intelijen”, *Tempo*, 14 November 2020.

foreign investors, the optics were terrible.

### B. *The Government Approach to FPI Hardens*

The inability of police to predict or manage the airport crowd or prevent subsequent mass gatherings in that were clear violations of Covid protocols quickly altered the government’s seeming lack of concern.<sup>21</sup> On 13 November, thousands of people turned out at a program in Megamendung, Bogor; and later a similar crowd attended a celebration of the Prophet’s birthday (*Maulid*) at FPI headquarters in Petamburan, Jakarta. The next day saw an equally massive crowd appear at the wedding reception of Rizieq’s daughter in Petamburan. Many did not wear masks to these events. On 16 November 2020, during a cabinet meeting, Jokowi ordered more assertive measures against FPI.<sup>22</sup>

Rizieq, for his part, made no effort to hide the political nature of his activities. He received a steady stream of top opposition politicians at his home, including Jakarta Governor and presumed 2024 presidential candidate Anies Baswedan, the man who had once won praise for his tough measures against Covid in the early days of the pandemic.<sup>23</sup> During the Maulid celebration, Rizieq said his call for moral revolution (*revolusi akhlaq*) would challenge the Jokowi government on its efforts to secularize the state, criminalise ulama and political opponents, protect blasphemers, promote the Omnibus Law and “protect the oligarchy that rules the economy”.<sup>24</sup> He then tried to merge the Islamist wave he was riding with mass demonstrations against the Omnibus law from workers and students.<sup>25</sup>

Rizieq had been planning a mass reunion of the 212 Movement on 2 December, but Covid restrictions made this impossible, especially in light of FPI’s earlier gatherings. On 18 November 2020, the “212 Alumni Brotherhood” issued an official letter announcing that the reunion would be held online in an event entitled “Dialogue of 100 Ulama and Leaders”, broadcast through FPI YouTube Channel.<sup>26</sup> Bachtiar Nasir provided the venue at the AQL Islamic centre in South Jakarta. Top Islamists joined in online, including Zaitun Rasmin of Wahdah Islamiyah; Felix Siauw, a popular HTI preacher; veteran politician Amin Rais; and PKS leader Hidayat Nur Wahid.

21 See “Pontang-Panting Istana setelah Kepulangan Rizieq Syihab”, *Tempo*, 21 November 2020. On 13 November 2020, Rizieq held a meeting at his Pesantren Markaz Syariah, Megamendung, Bogor, West Java. The next day, he celebrated the Prophet Muhammad’s birthday commemoration (Maulid) and his daughter’s wedding in Petamburan, attended by thousands of his followers. The hashtags #JokowiTakutFPI (Jokowi is afraid of FPI) and #RizieqKebalHukum (Rizieq is above the law) became trending topics on Twitter, showing public unhappiness with the government’s failure to stop these events.

22 “Presiden: Keselamatan Rakyat adalah Hukum Tertinggi”, setkab.go.id, 16 November 2020 and KompasTV YouTube Channel, “Breaking News: Konpers Menkopolkukam, Mahfud MD Soal Kerumunan dan Protokol Kesehatan”, 16 November 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5evYI8dx1Ac>.

23 “Ditemui Banyak Tokoh, FPI: Para Tokoh Langsung Datang Temui Habib Rizieq”, *wartaekonomi.co.id*, 12 November 2020. Other notable visitors included former Deputy Secretary-General of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) Tengku Zulkarnaen, the founder of Ummat Party Amien Rais, a declarator of the Coalition to Save Indonesia (KAMI) Marwan Batu Bara, President of Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) Ahmad Syaikh, the head of PKS advisory council Salim Segaf Al-Jufri, and Deputy Chairman of Gerindra party Fadli Zon.

24 The video of Rizieq’s speech had been uploaded on FPI Front TV’s YouTube Channel, but after FPI was disbanded this channel was no longer accessible. See also Afifur Rochman Sya’rani, “The Impact of the Indonesian Government’s Crackdown on Islamists”, *www.newmandala.org*, 7 January 2021.

25 “Iyut Aktifis Buruh: Berharap Momentum Kepulangan Habib Rizieq Syihab Menyatukan Energi Menolak Omnibus Law”, *fpi-online.com*, 14 November 2020. A labour activist, Mangihut Hasudungan, had an audience with Rizieq at FPI Headquarters in Petamburan on 12 November 2020. He hoped that Rizieq’s return could be built into momentum to form an alliance between leftist and Islamist groups to fight against unfair and harmful government policies.

26 “Ganti Reuni 212: Habib Rizieq dan 99 Tokoh Lainnya Isi Dialog Nasional”, *wartaekonomi.co.id*, 18 November 2020.



Rizieq explained that his “moral revolution” was completely in line with Pancasila and not an act of rebellion (*makar*) against the ruling government. He said that he and other FPI leaders would travel to every province in the country to hold mass meetings (*tabligh akbar*) so that Islamic figures across the country could consolidate their agendas.<sup>27</sup> Rizieq warned the government not to get in the way, in what seemed tantamount to a declaration of political war on the Jokowi government. The government responded by moving toward an approach that treated FPI less as a mere violator of health protocols and more as a security threat. Officials began circulating lists in the media of FPI members with alleged ISIS connections, of which more below.

### C. *The Military Moves In*

On 15 November 2020, TNI commander Air Marshal Hadi, issued a sharp warning in a short video that “anyone who disturbs the unity and integrity of the nation will deal with the military”.<sup>28</sup> On 19 November 2020, another short video went viral on social media, showing a group of vehicles belonging to the Joint Special Operations Command (Koopssus), the new combined elite force of the TNI, stopped in front of FPI’s headquarters in Petamburan. Many people regarded this as the military “show of force” against Rizieq.<sup>29</sup> This was then followed by another ultimatum from Major General Dudung, the Jakarta military commander, on 20 November 2020 during a ceremony at the National Monument, Jakarta. It was explicitly addressed to Rizieq.

I am warning you that I will not hesitate to act harshly; don’t try to disrupt the unity and integrity of this country; don’t suggest that you represent the Muslim community. Don’t think you can do as you please, as if you’re the one who’s always right. We can’t have that. If it’s necessary to dissolve FPI, then we’ll dissolve it. If you want to challenge the military, we’re ready for you!<sup>30</sup>

Major General Dudung set up a temporary post and also ordered soldiers to take down the thousands of posters, banners and billboards of Rizieq that supporters had put up across Jakarta and other cities from late July onwards.<sup>31</sup> Human rights defenders raised concerns that the military was being deployed for political purposes.<sup>32</sup>

## IV. THE KILLING OF RIZIEQ’S BODYGUARDS

The campaign against FPI intensified still further after a still-murky clash with police on 6 December 2020 that left six of Rizieq’s bodyguards dead. It was followed directly by the arrest of

27 “Rizieq Akan Keliling Indonesia untuk Konsolidasi Revolusi Akhlaq”, *tirto.id*, 15 November 2020.

28 For the video, see KompasTV YouTube Channel, “Tegas! Panglima TNI Siap Hadapi Pihak yang Mengganggu Persatuan dan Kesatuan”, 15 November 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8=qthhZrE2K2I>.

29 “Beredar Video Kendaraan Taktis Koopssus TNI Show of Force di Depan Markas FPI”, *detik.com*, 19 November 2020.

30 See Warta Kota Production YouTube Channel, “Pangdam Jaya Respon Hinaan Habib Rizieq ke TNI Polri Saat Acara Maulid Nabi di Petamburan”, 20 November 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AkZvpaDDqKE>.

31 “Panglima TNI Dukung Langkah Pangdam Jaya Turunkan Baliho Habib Rizieq, Kapuspen Beri Penjelasan”, *pikiran-rakyat.com*, 23 November 2020. Supporters had put up the posters in response to an incident on 27 July 2020 when PDIP supporters in an organisation called Movement to Guard Indonesia (Gerakan Jaga Indonesia, GJI) had ripped up and burned a poster of Rizieq in front of the national parliament. In retaliation, over the next several days, a group of FPI supporters in West Java threw molotov bombs at PDIP homes and offices in Bogor and Cianjur. Police arrested ten suspects and charged them under Article 187 of the Criminal Code, deliberately causing an explosion or fire. Posters of Rizieq then began to appear at major intersections in Jakarta and other cities with the words, “For every poster torn down, we’ll put up a thousand more.”

32 “Penurunan Baliho Oleh TNI, Dipertanyakan Urgensinya hingga Permintaan agar Tak Agresif”, *kompas.com*, 21 November 2020. See also “Indonesian military deployed for coronavirus fight”, *thejakartapost.com*, 21 September 2020. For a detailed analysis of how the deployment of the military represents a new shift in the Jokowi government, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic, see Jun Honna, “Military Politics in Pandemic Indonesia”, *The Asia-Pacific Journal* 18 (2020).

Rizieq, to the formal banning of FPI, and a stepped-up effort to brand it a terrorist organisation. The first was already in the works. Had the killings not taken place, there might not have been such a perceived need to paint the FPI as armed and dangerous. The terrorist charge in particular was spurious; if the organisation was such an enemy of the state, why had it been a partner of the police in so many places for so long?<sup>33</sup>

According to an investigation by the National Human Rights Commission (Komnas HAM), the shooting incident began when Rizieq’s eight-car convoy left Bogor for Karawang. It became clear they were being followed. Three cars appeared from behind and tried to obstruct the convoy but the two cars at the back succeeded in preventing them from doing so, allowing the cars carrying Rizieq, his family and FPI leaders to turn off and evade the pursuers.. The remaining two FPI cars, a Toyota and a Chevrolet, each with six men, became involved in a chase with police, with the Chevrolet repeatedly ramming and bumping one of the police cars while the Toyota went on ahead. It was the Chevrolet that the police claim opened fire on them.

Police shot back, killing two. Shot in the tires, the Chevrolet came to a stop outside the rest area at Kilometer 50. At this point, police transferred four of the bodyguards into a police car. None was handcuffed; all were later shot in the chest at close range inside the car. Komnas HAM later deemed these unlawful killings and subsequently, three police were named as suspects. One died in a single car accident on 3 January 2021, leaving two to be prosecuted under the Criminal Code for murder and assault.<sup>34</sup>

There is much that is still unknown about the killings, including why FPI bodyguards were carrying guns, who the mysterious figures were that were seen by witnesses at the rest area and how the police who carried out the killings understood their orders. Some of these details may come out at the trials of the two police, but if senior officials were involved at any point, the questions may never be answered.

#### A. *Rizieq’s Detention: 12 December*

In the meantime, Rizieq was detained on 12 December 2020 and charged with thirteen crimes in three separate cases. Two involved the mass gatherings in Petamburan and Megamendung that violated Covid protocols; Rizieq was charged with incitement, not obeying officials, violating health quarantines, obstructing efforts to prevent an epidemic and committing acts of violence that violated public order. The third case involved his lying about his own positive Covid status. He had entered the Ummi Hospital in Bogor claiming exhaustion, on 25 November 2020 but in fact he was ill with the virus. He was charged with three different counts of spreading false information as well as violations of the health quarantine act.<sup>35</sup> Rizieq’s legal team included 53 lawyers, only twelve of whom could enter the courtroom at any one time.

As the accusations against FPI mounted, more and more leaders were taken into custody so that by February 2021, much of the top leadership had been indicted.<sup>36</sup>

33 For a history of that partnership, see Ian Wilson, “Morality Racketeering: Vigilantism and Populist Islamic Militancy in Indonesia,” in Khoo Boo Teik, Vedi Hadiz and Yoshihiro Nakanishi, eds, *Between Dissent and Power: The Transformation of Islamic Politics in the Middle East and Asia*. London: 2014, pp.248-274. In 2013, the then Minister of Home Affairs called FPI a “national asset”. See “Mendagri: FPI adalah Aset Bangsa,” *kompas.com*, 24 October 2013. In one of many examples of partnership, in 2014 FPI worked with police to evict extremists from a mosque in South Bekasi, a suburb of Jakarta. See IPAC. “Countering Violent Extremism in Indonesia,” Report No.11, 30 June 2014, pp.9-10.

34 “3 Polisi yang terlibat Kasus Tewasnya Laskar FPI di Tol Jadi Tersangka,” *idntimes.com*, 6 April 2021.

35 “Tiga Dakwaan dan 18 Pasal Berlapis yang Menjerat Rizieq Syihab”, *merdeka.com*, 24 March 2021.

36 They were Shabri Lubis, former FPI general; Maman Suryadi, former FPI commander; and other FPI members: Haris Ubaidillah, Ali bin Alwi Alatas, and Kepala Seksi Acara, Habib Idrus. See “Kejagung Tahan Eks Ketum FPI Shabri Lubis Berserta 6 Orang Lainnya”, *jawapos.com*, 8 February 2021.

## B. FPI’s Banning: 30 December

On 30 December 2020, the government officially banned FPI through a joint decree (*Surat Keputusan Bersama*, SKB) signed by six ministries and agency heads.<sup>37</sup> The decree noted that even though the FPI was an illegal organisation since its registration expired in June 2019, it nevertheless continued to engage in activities inimical to public order. All activities and attributes (signboards, flags, posters and so on) were henceforth prohibited, and the public was asked to report any violations of the ban to the police.<sup>38</sup>

The ban was announced in a press conference led by Mahfud MD, surrounded by the relevant ministers and security heads. He showed a video purporting to demonstrate FPI’s support for ISIS, including footage from a January 2015 rally at FPI headquarters in Makassar, South Sulawesi that ended in a mass pledge of loyalty to ISIS. That rally, with FPI Secretary-General Munarman in attendance, became a critical part of the government’s effort to link FPI to terrorism, as will be seen below. He also drew attention to a list that had first surfaced in November 2020 of some 35 active or ex-FPI suspects linked to terrorist activities.<sup>39</sup>

The Ministry of Communication and Informatics (Kominfo) immediately blocked FPI’s website and related social media.<sup>40</sup> This was followed by the issuance of a notice on Compliance with Prohibition of Activities, Use of Symbols, and Attributes of the FPI by the national police, which prohibited the public from “accessing, uploading, and disseminating FPI related contents through the internet and social media.”<sup>41</sup> The government banned civil servants from taking part in the organization in any way and blocked 92 FPI-related bank accounts.<sup>42</sup>

Many human rights and democracy activists saw the ban by executive decree rather than judicial process as more evidence of a deteriorating democracy. The mass organisations law has a very clear procedure for dissolving an organisation, starting with the Attorney-General’s office making a submission to the local district court based on a written request from the Ministry of Law and Human Rights. It is a complicated process but it was made so deliberately, in part to protect freedom of association and make it more difficult for the government to arbitrarily ban organisations. Human rights lawyers had objected to HTI’s banning in 2017 on the same grounds.<sup>43</sup>

FPI made a half-hearted effort to get around the ban by coming up with other names that kept the same initials. The first was “Islamic Unity Front” (Front Persatuan Islam), announced on 30 December, with support rallies in different cities.<sup>44</sup> Then, after complaints from the longstanding

37 The official Indonesian title of the decree was “Surat Keputusan Bersama Nomor 220/4780 Tahun 2020, Nomor M.HH/14.HH05.05 Tahun 2020, Nomor 690 Tahun 2020, Nomor 264 Tahun 2020, Nomor KB/3/XII Tahun 2020, dan Nomor 320 Tahun 2020 tentang Larangan Kegiatan Penggunaan Simbol dan Atribut Serta Penghentian Kegiatan FPI.” The signatories were Home Affairs Minister Tito Karnavian, Minister of Law and Human Rights Yasonna Laoly, Minister of Communication and Information Johnny G. Plate, national police chief Idham Azis, Attorney General ST Burhanuddin and BNPT head Boy Raffly Amar.

38 “Isi Lengkap SKB tentang Pembubaran dan Pelarangan Kegiatan FPI”, *kompas.com*, 30 December 2020.

39 Different versions of the list had 33, 35 and 37 names. For the longest version, see “Ini 37 Nama Anggota FPI yang pernah gabung jaringan teroris,” *suara.com*, 17 December 2020.

40 “Kominfo Langsung Blokir Medsos & Website Terkait FPI usai Dilarang”, *tirto.id*, 31 December 2020.

41 “Isi Lengkap Maklumat Kapolri Larang Pakai Simbol FPI di Masyarakat”, *detik.com*, 1 January 2021.

42 “Aturan Baru: PNS Dilarang Berhubungan dengan HTI dan FPI, Ini Sanksinya Jika Dilanggar”, *tribunnews.com*, 28 January 2021. “PPATK Ungkap Alasan Umumkan Pemblokiran 92 Rekening FPI”, *cnnindonesia.com*, 24 March 2021.

43 “Amnesty Internasional: Pembubaran FPI Langgar Hak Berserikat”, *suara.com*, 31 December 2020. See also, “KontraS-YLBHI: SKB Pelarangan FPI Bertentangan dengan Prinsip Negara Hukum”, *detik.com*, 30 December 2020.

44 “FPI Dilarang, Front Persatuan Islam Dideklarasikan di Ciamis”, *detik.com*, 4 January 2021. See also “Beredar Deklarasi Front Persatuan Islam di Makassar, Diketuai Eks Ketua FPI”, *sulses.inews.id*, 4 January 2021; “FPI Dibubarkan, Beredar Video Deklarasi Front Persatuan Islam Kaltim”, *okezone.com*, 2 January 2021; “Beredar Video Deklarasi Front Persatuan Islam di Bandung dan Ciamis”, *jabar.inews.id*, 6 January 2021; “Deklarasi FPI Jadi Front Persatuan Islam di Banten”, *detik.com*, 1 January 2021; “Front Persatuan Islam Deklarasi Di Lampung, Komando Tetap Di Bawah Habib Rizieq”, *rmol.id*, 4 January 2021.

Islamic organisation Persatuan Islam (PERSIS) that the name was already in use, FPI said on 8 January that the initials now stood for Islamic Brotherhood Front (Front Persaudaraan Islam).<sup>45</sup> As of this writing, the formation of the organisational structure, statutes, and bylaws were said to be still in process. Meanwhile, the new FPI continued the old one’s humanitarian programs, providing assistance to earthquake victims in West Sulawesi and to flood victims in Jakarta and South Kalimantan.<sup>46</sup> FPI had no more intention of shutting up shop than did Hizbut Tahrir, but publicly, it would abide by the ban. In a popular television show in early April, Munarman referred to FPI as “almarhum”, the term used for a deceased person.

The ban took place as the Jokowi’s government continued to push for “repressive pluralism” or “imposed moderation”.<sup>47</sup> On 25-27 January 2021, the MUI held a National Congress to appoint new board members for the period 2020-2025. Islamist and 212 leaders like Bachtiar Nasir, Yusuf Martak (the head of GNPF-Ulama), and Tengku Zulkarnaen were removed, and the new leadership was dominated by the moderate mainstream: NU and Muhammadiyah. Miftahul Akhyar, the NU chairman, was appointed as the new MUI chairman, and the vice president Ma’ruf Amin, became chairman of MUI’s Advisory Council.<sup>48</sup>

The government’s support for moderation was of course a desirable goal.<sup>49</sup> The problem was that the means for achieving it raised serious concerns about whether civil liberties were being sacrificed in the process.

## V. THE TERRORISM ACCUSATIONS

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The allegations that FPI was a terrorist organisation intensified after the killings, as if there was more need than ever to portray it as a criminal organisation. Initially, the allegations had focused on the fact that some FPI members or ex-FPI members had been convicted of terrorism, as per the list prepared in late 2020. From 30 December onwards, the focus was on FPI’s sponsorship of a mass pledge of allegiance to ISIS leader al-Baghdadi in Makassar in January 2015, as if to prove that FPI had been pro-ISIS from the outset. And the day after the Makassar cathedral bombing on 28 March 2021, police arrested a group of FPI supporters in Condet, Jakarta and Bekasi, West Java, who were suspected of making TATP bombs in support of a vague plot to free Rizieq or attack Chinese interests.

There was no connection between the cathedral bombing and the Jakarta arrests, but the police made it seem as though there were. In a press conference on 29 March, the Jakarta police commander said that the arrest of the four men in the bomb plot was the tail end of the Makassar bombing: “Starting with the Makassar cathedral bombing, our national chief ordered that all ranks step up their vigilance toward the danger and threat of terror” – a signal to his subordinates that if they had any suspects, now would be a good time to bring them in.<sup>50</sup>

45 “Anatomi Front Persatuan Islam: Wajah Baru Kelompok Petamburan Usai FPI Dilarang”, tempo.co, 2 January 2021.

46 “DPP Front Persaudaraan Islam Terbitkan Maklumat Agar Anggotanya Terjun ke Lokasi Bencana Bantu Warga, tribunnews.com, 17 January 2021. See also “Setelah Bantu Korban Banjir Kalsel, FPI Kirim Relawan ke Mamuju”, kumparan.com, 18 January 2021.

47 The term “repressive pluralism” was coined by Greg Fealy, “Jokowi in the Covid-19 era: Repressive Pluralism, Dynasticism and the Overbearing State,” *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*, Vol.56, 4 December 2020, pp.301-323.

48 “Gerbong 212 Tak Lagi Ada di Kepengurusan MUI”, detik.com, 27 November 2020.

49 For more discussion on the new face of MUI, see Syafiq Hasyim, “Indonesia’s MUI Today: Truly Moderate or Merely Pragmatic?”, ISEAS Perspective 2021/3, 21 January 2021.

50 “4 Terduga Teroris ditangkap di Bekasi dan Condet, Berperan Penyedia Dana hingga Pembuat Bom,” kompas.com, 29 March 2021.



### A. *The List of FPI “terrorists”*

After the 6 December shootings, FPI claimed its members never carried guns. Although that seems to have been disproved in the case of the bodyguards, one aim of the list may have been to demonstrate that many FPI members had a history of using firearms or explosives. But most of those named had left FPI long before they became involved in terrorism.

For example, No.1 on the list was Chandra Jaya, from Luwu, South Sulawesi, arrested for helping Santoso in Poso in 2008. At the time he was arrested, police suggested he was head of FPI in his hometown, Belopa. An FPI spokesman at the time that Chandra had been in the organisation but had long since left. There was no FPI branch in Belopa; there was not even an FPI office in Luwu district at the time, though FPI was planning to open one.

No.2 was Maryanto alias Temeng from Bantul, Yogyakarta, a food vendor arrested in July 2018 for making a bomb for a pro-ISIS organisation. He had last been involved with FPI in December 2009 when he had been involved in a brawl with a cement truck driver who had struck an FPI motorcycle. Maryanto joined a gang of FPI members to go to the cement plant and beat up the driver. He received a short prison sentence as a result. His activities in 2018 had nothing to do with FPI.

No.3 was Arief Hidayatullah, a man from Solo who had been a high school classmate of Bahrudin Naim, an Indonesian ISIS member who from early 2015 tried to instigate attacks via social media from his post in Raqqa, Syria. Naim had been a member of Hizbut Tahrir and successfully persuaded some of his old HTI friends to join ISIS. Arief belonged to another organisation used by Naim that started out as an Islamist protection racket called Tim Hisbah. (They would threaten to attack karaoke bars and the like unless the owners paid up.) Tim Hisbah, for various reasons, crossed over into terrorism in 2010. Arief, who had been in FPI before he joined Tim Hisbah, was no longer a member at the time of his arrest.

There were similar issues with others on the list. Nine of the men listed belonged to an FPI group in Aceh who had been deliberately deceived into believing that they would be training to go to Palestine, not joining a terrorist training camp in Indonesia led by former JI member Dulmatin. Another group from Lamongan represented a militant pro-ISIS splinter of the local FPI chapter whose leader accused Rizieq of being “an idolatrous servant of an infidel state.” He was expelled accordingly and ceased being an FPI member long before ISIS even existed.<sup>51</sup>

Many convicted terrorists had a history of experimenting with different Islamist organisations before they settled on ISIS. Many had passed through Jemaah Tabligh, for example, the conservative, non-violent Muslim missionary organisation. Others had been active in the perfectly respectable modernist organisations, Pemuda Muhammadiyah or Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam (HMI). Stigmatising FPI as terrorist because some pro-ISIS prisoners had once been members was a calculated distortion to make FPI seem worse than it was. It ignored FPI’s long collaboration with police; it also ignored the fact that FPI and ISIS were theological enemies. The celebration of the Prophet’s birthday (Maulid) which had been the occasion for one of Rizieq’s Covid-violating rallies was seen as idolatrous by ISIS clerics.

### B. *The Makassar Connection*

The police raid on the JAD cell in Makassar took place on 6 January 2021, only a week after FPI was banned. The targets, who had long been under surveillance and therefore could have been arrested at any time, were members of a cell linked to the extended family of the Makassar couple who had bombed Jolo cathedral in the southern Philippines in January 2019. Several

51 IPAC, “Indonesia’s Lamongan Network: How East Java, Poso and Syria are Linked,” Report. No.18, 15 April 2015.

of the men in the family had been FPI members and had taken part in the mass pledge to ISIS in January 2015, thereby providing exactly the kind of link between FPI and terrorism that the government was trying to showcase. In the raid on the housing complex known as Villa Mutiara Baru, Rizaldy, who was the eldest brother of the female Jolo bomber, was shot dead by police, together with his son-in-law. This killing may have provided an additional trigger for the bombing of Makassar cathedral – which in target, method and husband-wife perpetrators bore striking similarities to the attack on the cathedral in Jolo two years earlier.

The Jolo suicide bombers were Rullie Rian Zeke and his wife, Ulfah Handayani. The history of how they got to the Philippines has been set out in detail in earlier IPAC reports. The relevant point here is that one of their daughters, Cici, was arrested in Jolo in October 2020, shortly after her Indonesian husband, Andi Baso, was killed fighting with a pro-ISIS faction of Abu Sayyaf Group. Cici’s family in Makassar had likely been under surveillance since Rullie and Ulfah were first identified as the bombers and DNA tests were carried out around June 2019. There were taps on their telephone communications, revealing that several members of the Makassar family were not only in touch with Cici but were also sending her small amounts of money.

In the Makassar raid, police not only killed Rizaldy and his son-in-law. They also arrested three of Rizaldy’s brothers – Zulfikar, Zulkifly and Mohamed Akbar Muslim – as well as a sister, Aulia S; Akbar’s son Fikri; and Zulfikar’s wife, Rosnina. They also arrested Cici’s older sister, Ainun “Pretty” Pratiwi.

Rizaldy was the amir of the Villa Mutiara group. He, his brothers, and his late brother-in-law Rullie had been FPI members. They had taken part in the 25 January 2015 rally at which one of Makassar’s leading extremist preachers, known as Ustad (“teacher”) Basri led the pledge (*baiat*) to al-Baghdadi by reading it out and asking all those present, an estimated 700 people, to raise their hands if they agreed. Everyone, including the FPI’s Munarman who was present, did as instructed. Another leading pro-ISIS cleric, the late Fauzan al-Anshori, whose pesantren was later to be the staging centre for the January 2016 JAD attack in central Jakarta, was also present.

FPI Makassar quickly grew wary, however, of seeming to be too close to Ust. Basri’s network, and in April 2015, FPI members reportedly had to choose: stay with FPI or join Basri. At that point, all of Ulfah’s family except Akbar went over to Basri. Basri himself was arrested in April 2015 on charges of harbouring a wanted perpetrator of a 2012 attack against the then governor of South Sulawesi (in 2021 Minister of Agriculture) Syahrul Yasin Limpo. He died of natural causes – but inadequate healthcare – in prison in 2018.

The police killing of Rizaldy may have contributed to the determination to go forward with the Makassar cathedral bombing, but plans were apparently already underway. The perpetrators, a young man named Lukman, 23 years old, and his wife, Yogi Shafitri Fortuna alias Dewi, were protégés of Rizaldy and had been married at his house six months before the bombing took place. Yogi was four months pregnant when she died.

Akbar also reportedly claimed that while he strongly disagreed with his brother Rizaldy’s pro-ISIS views and had several times tried to persuade family members to turn away from violence, he was also so angered by Rizaldy’s death that he contemplated a revenge attack against police. It was his reported planning for such an attack that led to his arrest.

The cathedral bombing on Palm Sunday shocked the nation. The Makassar attack showed not only that cells continued to emerge, but that suicide bombers could slip through even the closest surveillance.



The bombing led to many more arrests in Makassar, so that by early May 2021, more than 58 people had been detained, including the top leadership of FPI Makassar. The bombing and the campaign against FPI diverted attention temporarily from the more interesting question of what the communication between Cici and her uncles revealed about links between JAD supporters in Makassar and the Abu Sayyaf Group in the Philippines.

It is important to underscore that the Makassar bombing was not the inexorable result of a rogue FPI cell having joined JAD-Makassar and steadily becoming more committed to violence. The attack appears to have been inspired by the Jolo bombing and was one of several involving husband-wife teams that Rizaldy’s group had planned before the 6 January raid.

### C. *The Condet Group*

The men arrested in Condet, East Jakarta and Bekasi, West Java on 29 March were part of a militant religious study group led by a former FPI leader named Habib Hussein al-Hasni – whom FPI claimed to have expelled in 2017. All appeared on Indonesian television, social media and YouTube on 4 April explaining their respective roles in a bombing plot. Zulaimi Agus, who served as bomb instructor for the group, was the only one who departed from his prepared script. He said he had started studying bomb-making because he had been angry at the injustice in Indonesia ever since the May 2019 election protests and was particularly outraged at what he termed the arbitrary actions of Brimob then. He had been brought into Habib Hussein’s group by Bambang Setiono, who himself had only become an FPI sympathiser after Rizieq returned from Saudi Arabia. He said the group had discussed how China was now controlling Indonesian labor and resources and discussed the desirability of attacking Chinese shops and industries in Indonesia, as well as petrol stations and police posts.<sup>52</sup> All stressed that one top goal was to free Rizieq. The four who appeared on television had gone to see a shaman in West Java to make themselves invulnerable before proceeding further with their plans.

Several other members of the study group were subsequently arrested in April and May. While there was clearly an FPI connection through Habib Hussein and they were unquestionably committed to violence, the group was not acting under FPI auspices. It was an indication, however, that the government’s campaign against FPI ran the risk of creating a backlash and turning angry militants into terrorists. There are several precedents for this in the history of Indonesian extremism.<sup>53</sup>

## VI. WHY THE ESCALATION?

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The best explanation for the escalating crackdown is that it was not all planned in advance but rather that Rizieq’s behaviour and missteps by the government combined to produce a steady ratcheting up of the campaign. There also may have been turf considerations. A new national police chief, Listyo Sigit, chosen largely for his close personal ties to Jokowi, was installed in late January and may have wanted a chance to exercise his authority.

52 Kesaksian 4 Terduga Teroris, Semua Mengaku Baru Bergabung dengan FPI, *kompastv*, 4 April 2021, “[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UtWg8NwwM\\_s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UtWg8NwwM_s).”

53 These include the decision of Abdullah Sungkar, a Masjumi supporter, to join Darul Islam, a violent extremist organization, after Masjumi was banned. This was the first in a series of steps that led to the founding of Jemaah Islamiyah in 1991. In 1984, the Tanjung Priok riot coming shortly after anger over a Suharto decision to insist on Pancasila (rather than Islam or any other religion or ideology) as the “sole foundation” of all organisations led others to join Darul Islam as well and go to Afghanistan for training.

An alternative explanation focuses on the economic factors. According to this explanation, Jokowi’s second term has been marked by his determination to improve the investment climate, as exemplified by his push for the Omnibus Law, passed a month before Rizieq returned from Saudi Arabia.<sup>54</sup> In July 2019, Jokowi had already said that the dissolution of FPI was possible because the organization’s radicalism could obstruct investment climate and growth and undermine Indonesia’s reputation as the embodiment of “moderate Islam”.<sup>55</sup>

The economic argument was echoed by the new chief of Jakarta regional police, Inspector General Fadil Imran after the killings of the FPI bodyguards, when he said that the state’s decisive action against thugs would have a good impact on the economy. “Economic development needs legal certainty; it needs social order and security; if these are good, investment will come,” he said.<sup>56</sup>

All indications were that the tough stance against FPI was supported not just by the business community but by the Indonesian public. Mahfud claimed that before the FPI ban, surveys indicated that 80 per cent of Indonesians wanted FPI shut down.<sup>57</sup> The reality was more complicated, and there were strong pockets of opposition.<sup>58</sup> It is also important to underscore that support for the ban should not be seen as a harbinger of greater tolerance in Indonesia, as polls continue to show conservative trends in different sectors of the population.<sup>59</sup>

## VII. ISLAMIST REACTION TO THE CRACKDOWN

The reaction from Islamist groups to the crackdown was surprisingly muted, helped by Covid protocols that limited the use of street protests and mass mobilisation, though the outrage over the killings was deeply felt.<sup>60</sup> Rizieq told his followers that FPI would pursue the case in the courts until the truth was revealed, and asked them all for patience:

We will find out who carried out the massacre in the field and who was the mastermind, All will be revealed, the ones who directed all this will be revealed. But if you are emotional; if you struggle on your own, then this will get buried and the truth will never come out. So, be patient, be patient! There will be a time when we will fight back. That time will come! There will be a moment! Our six martyrs, they have carried out their duties to guard the *habib*, to guard the ulama, and they have received their reward from Allah and died as martyrs.<sup>61</sup>

On 22 January, eighteen individuals and organisations, many of them linked to the 212 movement, joined forces to form what they called “Team to Guard the Murder Incident” (Tim

54 “Jokowi sampaikan Manfaat Omnibus Law Cipta Kerja di Forum APEC”, merdeka.com, 4 April 2021. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UtWg8NwwM\\_s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UtWg8NwwM_s).

55 “AP Interview: Indonesia Leader to Speed Reform in Final Term”, apnews.com, 27 July 2019.

56 “Terungkap! Ini Alasan Kaplda Metro Jaya Garang Hadapi Ormas Pengganggu Kamtibmas”, kabar24.bisnis.com, 11 December 2020.

57 “Mahfud MD: FPI Dibubarkan, Justru Banyak yang Senang, Lebih dari 80 Persen”, pikiran-rakyat.com, 12 January 2021. See also, Deddy Corbuzier YouTube Channel, “FPI Habis Sudah! Bongkar Gerak Maut Mahfud MD”, 12 January 2021.

58 According to one of the country’s most reliable polling institutes, 71 per cent of the respondents had heard of FPI. Of these, 77 per cent knew FPI had been banned. Of these, 59 per cent (or 32 per cent of the population) agreed with the ban and 35 per cent did not. See Saiful Mujani Research and Consulting, “National Attitudes Toward HTI and FPI”, survey carried out 28 February- 8 March 2021. <https://saifulmujani.com/sikap-publik-nasional-terhadap-hti-dan-fpi/>

59 See for example Lembaga Survei Indonesia, “Tantangan Reformasi Birokrasi: Persepsi Korupsi, Demokrasi dan Intoleransi di Kalangan PKS”, 18 April 2021, and Marcus Mietzner and Burhanuddin Muhtadi, “The Myth of Pluralism: Nahdlatul Ulama and the Politics of Religious Tolerance in Indonesia”, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol.42, pp.55-84.

60 In Jakarta, FPI, the 212 Alumni Brotherhood, and GNPF-Ulama attempted to organise a protest rally on 18 December that they called the “1812 action”, but police banned it on Covid grounds

61 [Front TV, “Sambutan Habib Rizieq Shihab, Pemakaman 6 Laskar FPI.” youtube.com, 9 December 2020.](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UtWg8NwwM_s)

Pengawal Peristiwa Pembunuhan, TP3). They included many veteran politicians like Amien Rais and opposition figures with ties to Islamist factions in parliament, but no one who constituted a serious problem for the Jokowi government.<sup>62</sup> Despite the ban on FPI online accounts, FPI supporters continued to open new Telegram groups to express anger against the government and accuse it of using the terrorism label to legitimise the killings of the bodyguards.<sup>63</sup>

Many Islamists were unhappy with Komnas HAM’s assessment, announced on 10 March, that the killings, while unlawful, did not meet the threshold of a “serious” human rights violation under Indonesia’s human rights law because there was no evidence that it was part of a systematic and widespread policy or that there had been a direct order from the government to kill them.<sup>64</sup> There had indeed been an order to follow the convoy, the Komnas investigators concluded, but the deaths resulted from the dynamics in the field, not from a high-level command.

Islamists also saw the prosecution of Rizieq as discriminatory. Why, they asked, were clear violations of Covid protocols during the 2020 regional elections ignored and why did Jokowi’s visit to Maumere, East Nusa Tenggara on 25 February 2021, which attracted huge crowds, go unpunished? If Rizieq tried to discourage mass protests on his behalf, the government showed no signs easing the pressure on FPI. Instead, more arrests of senior FPI leaders took place: Munarman on 27 April, then senior FPI leaders in Makassar on 5 May.

Salafi groups within the 212 alliance – Bachtiar Nasir’s Council of Young Ulama and Intellectuals (Majelis Intelektual dan Ulama Muda Indonesia, MIUMI) and Zaitun Rasmin’s Wahdah Islamiyah – also called on the government to form an independent fact-finding team to investigate the six killings.<sup>65</sup> To show his solidarity, Bachtiar stood beside Rizieq at the burial ceremony.<sup>66</sup> But neither Bachtiar nor Zaitun challenged the government directly; it was not their style and they both had their educational networks to consider. Even so, police announced on 21 December 2020 that they were continuing long-running investigation into charges of money-laundering by Bachtiar.<sup>67</sup>

By mid-2021, the Islamists seemed to be as off-balance as they were when Jokowi took Prabowo into his cabinet in 2019. Jokowi had the public – or at least the Javanese public – on side with his crackdown on radicalism.<sup>68</sup> No influential public figure was interested in coming to FPI’s defence, except for men like Amien Rais whose best days were long behind him. Even Anies Baswedan, the Jakarta governor who made a point of greeting Rizieq on his return, seemed to accept that there was little to be gained from challenging the Jokowi government over FPI. Covid continued to be a valid reason for preventing mass mobilisation, the one powerful tool in the non-violent Islamist arsenal. Even had mass rallies been possible, anger over the killings was not as powerful a unifying factor as an attack on the faith, which had been the rallying cry in 2016. Jokowi was disliked more than ever in Islamist circles, but the president had won this round.

62 “18 Anggota TP3 Penembakan Laskar: Amien Rais Hingga Eks KPK”, *cnnindonesia.com*, 22 January 2021.

63 The new groups included Mujahidid212, Front Persaudaraan Islam, ANGIN GUNUNG, ANGIN NUSANTARA, PEOPLE POWER 313, OPPOSITE6890, SPIRIT UKHWAH 212, and BEBASKAN IB-HRS.

64 “Komnas HAM: Kasus Penembakan Laskar FPI bukan Pelanggaran HAM Berat,” *merdeka.com*, 10 March 2021.

65 “Pernyataan Sikap Wahdah Islamiyah terhadap Terbunuhnya Anggota FPI”, *Wahdah.or.id*, 10 December 2020; “MIUMI Dukung Dibentuknya Tim Pencari Fakta Independen Ungkap Penembakan Anggota FPI”, *alaqshadelatinos.org*, 09 December 2020.

66 See “Sambutan Habib Rizieq Syihab | Pemakaman 6 Laskar FPI yang Syahid”, *op.cit.*

67 “Polri Buka Lagi Kasus Bachtiar Nasir”, *beritasatu.com*, 21 December 2020.

68 The SMRC poll cited in footnote 58 showed that opposition to the ban was higher in non-Javanese ethnic groups, especially the Sundanese from West Java and Banten, Betawi from Jakarta and Minang from West Sumatra.

## VIII. CONCLUSION: TRYING TO MAKE SENSE OF THE CRACKDOWN AND RESPONSE

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What happens next depends on the Islamists. They have several options. One is to avoid any further direct antagonism and work on finding a candidate they can back in 2024 that will further their goal of greater state enforcement of morality and orthodoxy. A second is to focus on quietly building and expanding their respective grassroots bases. A third is to wait until Covid restrictions are lifted and then look for an issue that can be exploited for mass mobilisation. These are not mutually exclusive, and first two will almost certainly be pursued, regardless of whether Rizieq supporters and others will try for another round of street protests. If they do, it would have to be for an issue of deeper significance than one man’s arrest or one organisation’s dissolution – a solidarity march for Palestine in the context of the current conflict with Israel could be such an occasion. That said, it will still be important to watch the Islamist reaction to the verdicts in the case of Rizieq and the police accused of killing the bodyguards.

For the moment, passive resistance through options one and two is more likely than confrontation, but it is not impossible that another tiny group of angry militants like the Condet group could seek revenge through violence.

The response will also depend on the actions of violent extremists. A terrorist attack or evidence of military training in Indonesia that involved crossovers from any of the components of the 212 Movement could play into the government’s hands and provide the justification for more arrests or more organisational bans. A widened crackdown could involve more intrusive vetting of candidates for jobs in the public and private sectors; more scrutiny of email and social media; and more intimidation of journalists and others who raise concerns about the impact of such measures. If opinion polls are correct about broad public support for the government crackdown on Islamists, such measures are not likely to meet serious objections from the public, particularly if portrayed as a necessary measure to fight terrorism.

Finally, these developments raise the issue of whether the concern over Muslim majoritarianism, so pronounced in the aftermath of the anti-Ahok campaign, was in fact overblown. The answer is almost certainly no. The recent government crackdown against Islamists does not negate the wider religious polarization that is prevalent in society and in state institutions. Despite support for the FPI ban, opinion polls continue to show a decline in religious tolerance. Government efforts to enforce pluralism are also subject to challenge by conservative elements in the judiciary. This is a country, after all, where the Supreme Court ruled in May 2021 that state schools could require non-Muslim students to wear headscarves to conform to local culture, overturning a decision by three ministries that religious attire was a matter of individual choice.<sup>69</sup> The presidential election in 2024 could be even more polarised than in 2019. Though much will depend on who the candidates are, opposing views on the role of religion in public life are bound to define the terms of political contestation for the foreseeable future.

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<sup>69</sup> “SKB 3 Menteri Dibatalkan MA”, *tirto.id*, 8 May 2021.

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