

The Consequences of Renouncing Extremism for Indonesian Women Prisoners

2 February 2023
IPAC Report No. 83

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I. INTRODUCTION

Deradicalisation and reintegration programs for extremist women in Indonesia have received less attention than those for men. Women face particular pressures from families, peers, and the broader community. If they try to disengage from extremism, they may be treated as traitors by their former networks. If they do not, they may be stigmatised as terrorists by their communities at home. In either case, they may be ostracised or face crises in their personal relationships. Authorities need to consider how to provide these women with the tools and confidence that can help them navigate these hurdles. Too often, the women are simply pressured to sign a declaration of loyalty to the Indonesian state (Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia, NKRI) without any sustained follow-up.

This report examines the prison and post-release experiences of five women convicted of terrorism. Some signed the NKRI loyalty declaration, others refused. The declaration contains four promises: to be loyal to the Indonesian state, revoke any oath of allegiance (*bai'at*) to extremist leaders, acknowledge and express remorse for past actions, and not reengage with extremist networks.¹ Men are pressed to sign the same statement, and both men and women are offered incentives for doing so, including the prospect of conditional release. Nevertheless, these incentives are not always the deciding factor for women. Calculating the consequences on their family situations is often equally or more important.

The report is based on interviews with the women themselves; the prison staff of women's prisons in Jakarta, Tangerang, and Bandung; sources in deradicalisation programs of BNPT and Detachment 88, the counter-terrorism unit of the police; and staff of NGOs who have assisted the women. It also draws on information from online media, court documents, and trial dossiers of convicted women.

II. RENOUNCING EXTREMISM WHILE IN CUSTODY

The number of women in detention for violent extremist activities has steadily risen, especially after a strong anti-terrorism law was passed in 2018.² Of 57 women arrested on terrorism charges between 2004 and 2022 (most of them after 2018 when a stronger anti-terrorism law was adopted), 27 were already released by January 2023, 25 were serving sentences in prison, four were still in police custody awaiting trial, and one had died while in police custody (see Appendix 1). Indonesia recorded its first case of an extremist woman recidivist when Detachment 88 re-arrested Meilani Indra Dewi in March 2022 for financing a pro-ISIS media channel, An-Najiyah Media Center. She had been released in 2021.

Women terrorism suspects are processed as follows. After arrest, most are placed in one of two police detention centres in Jakarta, the Jakarta Metropolitan Command (Polda Metro Jaya) and the South Jakarta police station. The women stay until their trials are finished, and then most are transferred from police custody to women's prisons under the authority of the Director-General for Corrections in the Ministry of Law and Human Rights. Some, however,

¹ See "Keputusan Direktur Jenderal Pemasyarakatan No. PAS-10.OT.02.02 Tahun 2021 tentang Sistem Penilaian Pembinaan Narapidana", Appendix IV, 10 February 2021.

² For earlier IPAC analyses of women in extremist movements in Indonesia, see "Mothers to Bombers: The Evolution of Indonesian Women Extremists," Report No. 35, 31 January 2017, and "Extremist Women Behind Bars", Report No. 68, 21 September 2020.

remain in Polda Metro Jaya even after sentencing and are therefore not included in Corrections statistics.

Corrections directorate staff give careful consideration to the placement of women extremists in prison, with particular attention to the prison's capacity, availability of trained personnel, and proximity to women's families, as well as to the risk the women pose to the prison itself and other inmates.³ All women's prisons in Indonesia are categorised as "medium security", meaning they are not built to hold high-risk prisoners.⁴ Thus, Corrections needs to ensure that each prison has at least one or two experienced staff to handle women terrorism offenders, with no more than three or four such prisoners per facility. The one exception to this rule is in South Sulawesi, where the women's prison houses six convicted extremists.⁵

COVID restrictions after 2020 caused a halt in women's prison placement, particularly outside Java. It caused many women to stay in police custody longer without access to assistance or deradicalisation programs. Some finished their sentences in the detention centres and were released without ever going to women's prisons.⁶ In 2021, Corrections began transferring some women to prisons but mostly to those in the greater Jakarta area. This caused some resentment among women who had been promised they would be placed near their families if they renounced extremism, only to find that promise unfulfilled. The distribution of women to prisons around the country was back to normal in 2022 as restrictions eased.

A. Procedures for Renouncing Extremism

Despite the absence of deradicalisation programs, nineteen women inmates decided to declare loyalty to the NKRI while in police custody between 2020 and 2022. Detachment 88 assigned more women police officers to facilitate the development of trust and communication on a personal level among the inmates and persuade them to sign the declaration. Those who agreed would be categorised as "cooperative" and put under the code colour "green", whereas those who refused would be coded as "red", indicating hardliners. These two groups would be assigned to different cells at the detention centre to avoid friction. Those in the "green" category would be offered incentives, including a reduced sentence for those still awaiting a trial in their trials, or a choice of prison if already sentenced.⁷

³ IPAC, "Extremist Women Behind Bars", op.cit., pp. 2-3. While proximity to the women's families should be prioritised according to the UN guidelines for women prisoners known as the Bangkok Rules, there is a need to think through whether the families will encourage or reinforce the women's extremist convictions. If so, then proximity might not be such a good idea.

⁴ As of early 2023, women were incarcerated in nine different prisons: Bandung (3), Jakarta (3), Tangerang (1), Medan (3), Semarang (2), Lampung (4), South Sulawesi (6), Klaten (1), and Yogyakarta (2).

⁵ The exception is Sungguminasa women's prison near Makassar. Five of the six women there were part of Villa Mutiara network in Makassar, South Sulawesi that was responsible for the March 2021 Makassar Cathedral bombing. All renounced extremism while in police custody. Detachment 88 had requested that they be incarcerated close to their families. IPAC interview with Corrections officer, 23 November 2022.

⁶ One such case was Arti Alifah Aviandari Rahardjo, deported from Turkey on 30 November 2018 with her husband, Uzair Cholid. She was sentenced to two years in prison on 9 January 2020. She renounced extremism at Polda Metro Jaya and served her full sentence there. Another case is Lasmi alias Ummu Syifa, wife of MIT leader Ali Kalora, who was arrested on 29 July 2020 and sentenced to 2.5 years on 28 September 2021. She renounced extremism while in police custody and spent only four days in Tangerang prison before her release.

⁷ For detention procedures and placement, see IPAC, "Extremist Women Behind Bars", op.cit., pp. 2-3.

Renouncing extremism while in police custody does not guarantee the same status in the prison system. Prison staff must evaluate the sincerity of the prisoner's renunciation. This process can be subjective as there are no good assessment tools. It depends on the information provided to the prison staff and their own experience with terrorism offenders. One indicator is the prisoners' willingness to let their pro-NKRI status be made known through the media (print, broadcast and electronic) and more importantly, to their spouses. This means they are willing to leave their old networks, cooperate with the government, and live with the consequences of their decision, even if it means rejection or in some cases divorce when the decision becomes public.

In February 2021, Corrections adopted the "Standard for Evaluating Guidance Programs for Convicted Prisoners" (*Standar Penilaian Pembinaan Narapidana, SPPN*), that contains a checklist to assess the progress and behavioural changes of prisoners in response to in-prison programs. It includes a behavioural checklist for terrorism offenders and can be a useful tool for prison staff, although its use was still limited in early 2023. Many prison staff were unfamiliar with it and preferred old approaches such as regular observation and interviews – which indeed are still valuable.

Prison staff and assessors from the Corrections Centre (Balai Pemasyarakatan, BAPAS) assess the prisoners' progress every six months. This process is called *Penelitian Kemasyarakatan* or *Litmas*. The results will be taken into account in a meeting of the Prison Observation Team (*Sidang Tim Pengamat Pemasyarakatan, Sidang TPP*), in which representatives from the prison and Corrections Centre, including prison staff in charge of the prisoner (*wali pemasyarakatan*) and evaluators, discuss the state of a particular inmate. If they judge that she is ready, the prison head (*Kalapas*) will request Corrections to hold a ceremony for her to recite a pledge of allegiance to the Indonesian republic in front of an Indonesian flag. Then, she will sign the NKRI declaration, also signed by the prison head, and witnessed by representatives of BNPT, Detachment 88, the Minister of Religious Affairs, and BAPAS.

Signing the NKRI declaration is supposed to provide convicted women with two benefits: a reduction in their risk category and a reduction in their prison sentence. Reduction in the risk category from maximum to medium security entails a transfer from a single-person cell to a shared cell.⁸ Women extremists are also allowed to participate in in-prison programs, such as vocational training, making it possible to get extra pocket money. These promises are not always fulfilled, and the sense of grievance if they are not can be serious. Sentence reductions may take the form of remissions, parole, leave, and other benefits. Remissions are given twice a year, on major religious holidays and national independence day (17 August). In addition, those who have served at least two-thirds of their sentence can apply for early release, with an obligation to report to provincial parole officers.

Even though these incentives are appealing, they do not fully explain the women's rationale for renouncing extremism. The following case studies will make some of their calculations clearer.

⁸ See "Keputusan Direktur Jenderal Pemasyarakatan No. PAS-10.OT.02.02 Tahun 2021 tentang Sistem Penilaian Pembinaan Narapidana", op.cit., p. 7.

B. Less Ideologically Committed: The Case of Nur Fazillah alias Umu Dila

Nur Fazillah alias Umu Dila, sentenced to four and a half years for helping recruits from Java, Medan, and Jambi join a pro-ISIS military training camp in North Aceh in 2018, had little difficulty renouncing extremism. She made the decision to do so soon after her arrest in 2019, saying her involvement with ISIS was mainly motivated by a desire to help others, rather than a commitment to ISIS teachings.

Dila was born to Acehese parents in Jakarta in November 1981 but spent most of her childhood in Pidie Jaya, Aceh. The youngest of four children and the only girl, she was raised in a poor but devout family of a Masyumi background.⁹ Her father was frequently unemployed, her mother a preacher (*da'iyah*). As a child, Nur wanted a more modern life and did not want to be trapped in the poverty-stricken religious world that her mother inhabited.¹⁰ She only began regularly attending religious study circles when she was in junior high school.

In 2002, when she was 21, she married Dimas, a member of the paramilitary police (*Brimob*) from Bandung and moved with him to Jambi province.¹¹ She had constant problems with her in-laws, and Dimas turned out to be a drug user. Eventually, forced to choose between his wife and his parents, Dimas chose the latter. He divorced Dila in 2013 via text message (SMS), after ten years of marriage and no children.

That same year, Hasbi, one of her brothers, who had studied in southern Thailand and fought in Pattani, introduced her to Zulfahmi alias Abu Islam, a Salafi scholar and lecturer at Malikussaleh University in Lhokseumawe, Aceh.¹² They married soon afterward. Zulfahmi taught Dila about jihad against infidels and end-of-time prophecies, about the legitimacy of suicide bombing and the evils of democracy.¹³ It was through him that she came to know about ISIS. He told her about the ISIS exhortation to join the fight in Syria or wage war at home, although he himself never recommended violence in Indonesia. Dila was eager to go to Syria, but Zulfahmi forbade her, saying that women's jihad is at home, not on the battlefield. In 2015, he told her he was going to Malaysia, but she learned from a friend that he had actually gone to Syria. A few weeks later, Zulfahmi sent a text message to a sibling that he had divorced her. Dila only learned of the text indirectly through a cousin. Not long afterwards, she was informed by another ISIS supporter that Zulfahmi had been killed.

Dila took Zulfahmi's message to heart and steered clear of direct involvement in terror activities. She decided not to pledge allegiance to al-Baghdadi, because she felt unready for the consequences and did not want to be committed to any group.¹⁴ She also said that, unlike other ISIS sympathisers, she never had any problem dealing with the government.¹⁵ She

⁹ Masyumi was the first Islamic party in Indonesia, established on 7 November 1945 from various Islamic organizations, but became closely associated with Muslim modernist organisations such as Muhammadiyah. It was particularly popular in strongly Muslim areas outside Java, such as West Sumatra and Aceh. In 1960, Indonesia's first president, Soekarno, banned the party for accused involvement with the rebel movement, the Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Indonesia (*Pemerintah Revolusioner Republik Indonesia, PRRI*).

¹⁰ Notes from interview with Nur Fazillah by Dete Aliyah of SERVE, made available to IPAC in October 2022.

¹¹ Trial dossier of Nur Fazillah, East Jakarta District Court, 18 November 2020.

¹² Notes from interview with Nur Fazillah by Dete Aliyah of SERVE, op.cit.

¹³ Verdict of Nur Fazillah alias binti Hasballah, No. 804/Pid.Sus/2020/PN Jkt. Tim, pp. 4-5.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ IPAC interview with Nur Fazillah, 4 November 2022.

worked with the provincial agriculture department from time to time in her main income-earning activity as a producer of organic fertiliser.

When asked about her involvement with pro-ISIS groups in Aceh, Dila said she just wanted to help. She claimed that she and her late husband had regularly given support and donations to many different groups from ISIS supporters to Muhammadiyah and NU. The specific charges against her stemmed from her role in helping a pro-ISIS group secure land in Aceh for a clandestine military camp, preparing for jihad at home and in Syria.¹⁶ Dila helped supply the camp, but always declined offers to join them.¹⁷ The police raided the camp in December 2018 and captured some male jihadists, leaving the wives and children in limbo. Dila again came to the rescue and raised funds to shelter and supply them through April 2019, when everyone left the shelter separately. In the meantime, she married another hardline jihadist and a former terrorist convict from Solo, Joko Jihad. She went to Solo to visit him several times until she was arrested upon her return to Aceh in November 2019.

Responding to her arrest, she said, “They should have captured me a long time ago when I was still a hardliner, when I wanted to join my husband in Syria.”¹⁸ She found herself no longer ideologically committed and felt there was no reason to refuse to sign a declaration of loyalty to the Indonesian republic – especially if doing so would give her the benefit of choosing which women’s prison she would go to after trial. She signed the declaration in late 2019 in Polda Metro Jaya and then immediately divorced her new husband.

While in police custody, Dila became a figure respected by other terrorist convicts. Her older age and her experience living in Aceh, a conflict zone, led her fellow inmates to view her as wise.¹⁹ They confided in her and asked for advice, especially when dealing with doubts about renouncing extremism. Dila usually responded to these by reminding them that in the end, whatever consequences they face, they would be on their own. They would not be able to count on their husbands nor their networks. She said:

The stress these women face! When they’re separated from their families, when they have to confront them [after renunciation] ... One said to me, “Sister, I’m afraid – what if my husband divorces me?” And I know she’s upset, she’s not eating, her weight fell to 37 kilos. But they’re still young, they’ll have to be stronger.²⁰

On 18 November 2020, Dila was found guilty and sentenced to four years and six months in prison. She normally would have been sent directly to a women’s prison, but Covid restrictions forced her to stay longer in police custody. She was transferred to Tangerang women’s jail in June 2021, which was not what she had requested. She had wanted to be sent to Medan or Aceh, where she could be close to her family, and it upset her that even taking the huge step of swearing allegiance to the NKRI did not get her what she wanted.

According to the prison staff, she is introverted but compliant and actively participates in prison activities, including attending deradicalisation lectures.²¹ In BNPT-sponsored

¹⁶ The camp and Dila’s role are described in more detail in IPAC, “Extremist Women Behind Bars”, pp.24-25.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ IPAC interview with Nur Fazillah, 4 November 2022.

¹⁹ IPAC interview with prison staff, several women inmates, and former prisoners, including Fitri Diana, October and November 2022.

²⁰ IPAC interview with Nur Fazillah, 4 November 2022.

²¹ IPAC interview with Tangerang women’s prison staff, Nur Aini, 4 November 2022.

lectures, which only took place three times over 2021 and 2022, she mostly would sit in silence. Sometimes she asked questions, but the prison staff claimed that her questions were not designed to get answers but to rather to test the resource persons' reaction and perspectives. Aside from BNPT, Detachment 88 also conducted prison programs through Yayasan Debintal, an organisation of former terrorist prisoners based in Bekasi, West Java. In June 2022, Debintal signed an agreement with the Corrections Department to conduct in-prison deradicalisation programs but as of October 2022, had only made one visit to a woman's prison (Tangerang).²²

Dila said that she felt more comfortable with the Debintal program, led by Sofyan Tsauri, a former police officer in Aceh and former prisoner.²³ Having a similar background and using terms she was familiar with to describe extremist teachings made the program seem more like a sharing session. She also had known Sofyan Tsauri before her arrest through his Acehese wife, and he visited Dila several times in Polda Metro Jaya. For Sofyan Tsauri, Dila's influence among her peers made her a useful person to have in the program. This was in line with Detachment 88's strategy of targeting leaders for deradicalisation in the hope that their followers would also join.²⁴ Dila also made it possible for Sofyan to understand the dynamics among extremist women, as his access to the women's circles was limited.

Sofyan's assistance to Dila continued even after her early release on 15 November 2022.²⁵ He formed a Whatsapp Group consisting of former women inmates he had assisted: Dila, Rini Ilyas, Nesti Ode, and others.²⁶ The group has three major functions: to ensure that the women keep their promise of allegiance to the state and do not re-engage in extremist networks; to produce updated information about them and assist them as needed; and to provide them with Islamic teachings about non-violence through regular online study circles (*pengajian*). It did not try to impose a single interpretation of Islam; group members have the right to choose whichever interpretation suits them best.

Dila chose to remain in the Salafi circle and promised not to get involved in any extremist activities. She returned to Banda Aceh while on parole, and when that period is over, she intends to return to her family in Meurudu village, Aceh, to rebuild her organic fertiliser business.

C. Battling Personal Doubts: The Case of Fitri Diana

Fitri Diana, sentenced to nine years in prison for having tried to stab a police officer as her husband stabbed then Coordinating Minister Wiranto in October 2019, faced a complicated journey to renounce extremism. Just 20 years old when she was arrested, Fitri believed that a woman must be totally devoted to her husband. It was in furtherance of this belief that she joined her much older husband, Abu Rara, in the stabbings in Pandeglang, Banten. It also

²² "Tingkatkan Keterlibatan Masyarakat, Ditjenpas Jalin Kerja Sama dengan Berbagai Pihak", indopos.co.id, 27 June 2022.

²³ M Sofyan Tsauri alias Ustad Sofyan was arrested on 6 March 2010 for supplying weapons to the jihadist training camp in Jalin Jantho, Aceh. He was sentenced to 10 years in January 2011 and served his time in Cipinang prison. He was released in October 2015.

²⁴ The program was named *Safari Dakwah* and involved Detachment 88 officers with a strong religious background going to prisons with some ex-prisoners to visit terrorist inmates and engage them in discussion. The aim was to build trust and was followed up by invitations to cooperate with the government.

²⁵ IPAC interview with Sofyan Tsauri, 27 November 2022.

²⁶ Rini Ilyas and Nesti Ode were policewomen from North Maluku who had become radicalized after attending extremist lectures that they had been sent to monitor.

became the major obstacle to her disengagement, as constant pressure from her husband and extremist women made her go back and forth on whether to carry through with renouncing violence.

Born on 5 May 1998, just a week before Soeharto resigned, Fitri grew up in a small village in Brebes, Central Java. Her parents worked as farmers and could only afford her education through elementary school. Around 2013, she decided to go and work in a bigger city, as many in her village did. After working temporarily at several places, she landed a job as a domestic helper in an upper middle-class neighbourhood in Tangerang, a suburb of Jakarta. Fitri described her employers, an old Chinese-Catholic couple, as very kind. Their children lived overseas, and they often treated Fitri as their own child. They never pushed her to do extra work and often gave her gifts.

Fitri had not been a religious person. She learned to pray from another helper working in the house. In their spare time, her friend also invited her to attend religious study circles (*majlis taklim*). Fitri gradually became more attracted to radical teachings. She found videos of Ihsan Tanjung, a radical preacher who often talked about end-of-time prophecies, particularly appealing and began to attend religious study sessions in person.²⁷ She also joined extremist chat groups.

It was through these online groups that Fitri met Abu Rara.²⁸ She was initially in the same group as Ratu Ayu Lestari, Abu Rara's second daughter by an earlier wife (he had had at least three wives and likely more), and they became close friends. One day Ratu said that she wanted to have a mother like Fitri, and Fitri felt flattered. At that stage Fitri had not met Abu Rara; she had only heard from her circles that he was a decent man. Ratu then sent a photo of her father, only showing his back while praying, but it was enough for Fitri to think that the man would be a good imam for her family.²⁹ They met through Whatsapp in May 2019 and married the following July with the help of Fazri Pahlawan alias Abu Zee, a JAD member from Bekasi.³⁰ Fitri's parents disapproved of the marriage because of the age difference: the groom was thirty years older than the bride. No one in her family came to the wedding.

In September 2019, police arrested Abu Zee on terrorism charges. The arrest frightened Abu Rara, and he moved with Fitri and Ratu Ayu to Menes village, in Menes subdistrict, Pandeglang. They were so poor that they were barely able to have regular meals. Abu Rara was not making money and spent most of the time on his phone to stay in contact with his extremist network. Frustrated, he decided that if he was going to be caught anyway, he might as well do something big. He therefore devised a plan to attack high-ranking officials. On the morning of 10 October 2019, he woke his wife and daughter and told them of the plan. He

²⁷ Ihsan Tanjung is a popular preacher on various online platforms, particularly YouTube. His teaching is not necessarily pro-ISIS or pro-violence, but his proclamations that the end of time is near and would occur in Syria complemented ISIS's appeal to its sympathisers to join the fighting there.

²⁸ IPAC interview with Fitri Diana, 1 November 2022.

²⁹ Fitri knew that she was not Abu Rara's first wife, but it seems that she did not know about Abu Rara's past marriages. According to Marifah Hasanah, who was arrested for being part of the same extremist circle, he had been married four or five times before meeting Fitri. She added that Abu Rara was considered very ordinary among extremists, and was never been seen as someone who would have the bravery to conduct an attack as he did. IPAC interview with Marifah Hasanah, 16 November 2022.

³⁰ Verdict of Fitri Diana bin Sunarto, No. 474/Pid.Sus/2020/PN Jkt.Br. Abu Zee was arrested in September 2019 for planning TATP bombings. He received a four-and-a-half-year sentence and will be released in May 2023. He was a former member of Khilafatul Muslimin.

would aim for Wiranto while Fitri and Ratu targeted his security guards. They all were immediately arrested after the incident.

Police brought Fitri to Polda Metro Jaya after her arrest. These early days were a nightmare. She never thought she would find herself in prison.³¹ She was disappointed with herself and afraid of upsetting her family. She also heard that her family was in shock, and her father fell ill after her arrest. She could not eat well for months. Other women in the same cell, including Nur Fazillah, were concerned over her health. Even when her condition stabilised, she dared not call home, worried that her family would disown her.

Fitri spent most of her days, conversing with other detainees. She was in the same cell with cooperative inmates (under code colour “green”), including Nur Fazillah, Dewi Anggraini and Arti Alifah; most of them had signed the NKRI pledge.³² Fitri declined to renounce extremism at first as she thought her husband would dislike the idea. But her misgivings started to wear off as communication with Abu Rara became less intense and was replaced by sharing and discussing with her cellmates.³³ A female Detachment 88 officer approached her several times, asking her to sign the letter. It took a long time for her to finally agree. She said:

The Detachment 88 woman asked me, “Fitri, do you want to be NKRI?”

“What is NKRI?” I asked.

The policewoman had [the declaration] on a sheet of paper, and she explained that it meant to leave the network, become a better prisoner, revoke the bai’at, and so on.

I said, “But then my cellmates will blame me.”

“Let me ask you, Fit,” she said. “Is there anything kafir in this declaration? Does it say we have to worship Pak Jokowi or Pancasila? Read it again.”

I read it again. “You’re right, I said, there’s nothing there. But wait a little, don’t rush me. I need to think first.”

“How much more time do you need?”, she asked.

“A month,” I said.

She came back two weeks later. Lasmi, the wife of Ali Kalora, was there too. The Detachment 88 woman immediately began to berate us in a harsh voice. “What’s this? You’re still thinking about it?? Are you scared? Worried you’ll be judged by the others? Remember, Fitri, Lasmi, you’re in this cell by yourselves now, you don’t have other people around you.”

³¹ IPAC interview with Fitri Diana, 1 November 2022.

³² Dewi Anggraini alias Ummu Muslim, was the wife of Rabbial Muslim Nasution, who attacked Medan police station on 13 November 2019. She was arrested on 14 November 2019 and sentenced to three years in November 2020 for supporting and withholding information about her husband’s action. She renounced extremism in Polda Metro Jaya and released from Medan women’s prison on 12 November 2022. For the case of Arti Alifah, see footnote 6.

³³ Inmates were permitted regular conversations with their spouses and families via the prison telephone system. During Covid, when families were not allowed to visit, the inmates were allowed to have video calls, using the wali’s handphone. And in some cases, they were able to use handphones that other inmates had smuggled in.

I thought about it some more. It was true, what she said, but I had to think about it. I had to think about my parents. They were waiting for me at home. I am their daughter. How can I be so selfish while I have disappointed them?

“Enough, now”, I said, “Let me talk to some of the others.”

The policewoman said, “Ok, I’ll give you a week. Don’t make me wait too long.”

After she left I talked to Dewi, Arti and Dila. One said, “Just follow your heart. If you have doubts, don’t do it.”

I prayed to convince myself until the policewoman came again a week later. “Ok Fitri, it’s your turn now, get ready.” Then I read the text and swore an oath under the Qur’an. Then I read the text [of the renunciation] and paid respect to the Qur’an and the Indonesian flag.³⁴

The decision came with a cost. News of Fitri’s renunciation spread fast and reached Abu Rara in Tangerang prison. He was furious and immediately repudiated their marriage. Fitri was deeply hurt, as she had always wanted to be a dutiful wife. Meanwhile, the hardline women in the detention centre also questioned her stance. Fitri felt cornered and asked her cellmates to keep her NKRI status to themselves while she pretended that she was still committed to extremist beliefs.

In June 2020, Fitri received a nine-year sentence.³⁵ Since she had signed the NKRI pledge, she was allowed to request which prison she would go to. She chose Jakarta women’s prison and moved there in January 2021. Fitri was uncommunicative when she first arrived, confusing the prison staff as she came with “green” status. The prison official in charge, Devita, had handled terrorist convicts before and had a psychology background. Looking at Fitri’s behaviour made her question her sincerity in signing the NKRI declaration.³⁶ She tried unsuccessfully to assess her views on extremism. She decided to keep approaching Fitri through daily communication.

Another way to approach Fitri was by facilitating video calls with her family. Fitri said she always worried that her family loathed her for marrying Abu Rara without their approval and for getting involved in terrorism. Her encounters with the family, however, showed otherwise. Her mother was happy that she was healthy and said she hoped they could reunite soon. Her younger sister promised her that she would not get married before her release. Everyone in the family seemed very pleased to talk to her. Fitri realised that to be a good Muslim, she needed to be a good daughter in addition to being a dutiful wife.

These efforts bore fruit as Fitri started to open up. She told Devita that she worried about her marriage. She did not want to face her husband directly because she feared offending him. The stigma of being a divorcee also haunted her. She did not know how to navigate her life after release without her husband.

As Fitri began to question her marriage, prison staff encouraged her to attend prison programs. She attended a knitting class, a baking class, and sometimes attended Arabic lessons, held by a local NGO. The prison staff invited her to attend preparation classes for

³⁴ IPAC interview with Fitri Diana, 1 November 2022.

³⁵ Verdict of Fitri Diana, *op.cit.*, p. 59.

³⁶ IPAC interview with Jakarta women’s prison staff, Devita, 16 October 2022.

national junior high school equivalency examination (*Paket B*) but she refused. She was more interested to learn about religion and focus on Quranic memorisation. On one occasion, BNPT invited a lecturer from the Islamic State University in Jakarta (Universitas Negeri Islam, UIN Jakarta) to discuss Islamic jurisprudence and history. The lecturer asked Fitri which topic she wanted to learn, explained it in detail, and facilitated a two-way discussion until she was satisfied. This was different from previous BNPT programs, which tended to involve lecturing the inmates on selected topics.³⁷ Fitri learned about *tauhid* (the oneness of God), jihad, and Islam's compatibility with democracy. These discussions were also supplemented by selected books provided by prison staff, including an interpretation of the teaching of Ibn Taimiyyah, translated by Abu Qutaibah, a follower of Aman Abdurrahman who was detained on Nusakambangan from 2018 until his release in 2021.³⁸ The book unpacked the fallacy of ISIS teachings and emphasised the need for careful consideration before branding fellow Muslims as non-believers (*takfir*). It opened up Fitri's views about her past beliefs and made her more willing to learn about Islam from various sources.

Fitri studied Islamic marriage law with the UIN lecturer and reflected on her marriage situation. She learned that in Islamic law, the bride needs to be accompanied by her father or other male guardians for the marriage to be considered valid, which was not the case in her marriage. On one occasion, the lecturer asked her if she was given a chance, who would she choose, her family or her husband. The question shook her. "Both my family and my husband loved me, but my husband's love came with a demand that I should be faithful to (extremist) beliefs while my family's love seemed unconditional."³⁹ Fitri was also disappointed with her husband. Given that he was more than twice her age and more educated than she was, she expected him to be an ideal husband. She understood that if one party, especially the husband, had not withdrawn the repudiation of marriage within three months of his first pronouncement of divorce, the split would be final. It had been more than three months already, and for her, they had already divorced.

As of November 2022, there had been no direct contact between Fitri and Abu Rara since Fitri moved to Jakarta prison. The prison staff did not authorise communication before they were confident of Fitri's decision to renounce extremism. However, another prison official said that Fitri wrote a letter that had reached Abu Rara. She wrote in part, "I hope you are still consistent in your beliefs (*istiqomah*)", which he interpreted as meaning that Fitri was still loyal to ISIS teachings. Nevertheless, Fitri kept telling others that she was ready to get over him and move on with her life.

Fitri's biggest challenge was to prove that her decision to leave extremism was sincere, and that she would not be swayed by negative reactions by other extremists. As of early 2023,

³⁷ BNPT-sponsored lectures were of limited utility, as the case of Meilani Indra Dewi illustrates. Meilani, who was arrested for terrorism financing in November 2017, was serving her sentence in Tangerang prison when BNPT sent a woman psychologist to lead a deradicalisation session. Meilani felt the woman was judgmental and decided not to attend any further sessions. The prison staff eventually persuaded her to come once more but then she lost interest. Meilani was re-arrested in March 2022. IPAC interview with Tangerang prison staff, Nur Aini, 4 November 2022.

³⁸ Abu Qutaibah was one of the surprising success stories of the police deradicalization program known as safari dakwah, aimed at changing the minds of the hardline ideologues. For more on the importance of Ibnu Taimiyyah to the extremist network in Indonesia, see IPAC, "After Ahok: The Islamist Agenda in Indonesia", Report No. 44, 6 April 2018, p. 8, footnote 34. The book had been circulated in prisons to help extremist prisoners rethink their past beliefs.

³⁹ IPAC interview with Fitri Diana, 1 November 2022.

the prison staff were still unsure whether her renunciation was genuine, while at the same time trying their best to meet her needs. They facilitated a phone call with former women prisoners so that they could share their post-release experiences and how they deal with stigmatisation and pressures from their past network. They also connected her to a former prisoner named Adi Jihadi to discuss Islam and the democratic system. Adi had once been considered a hardcore inmate but came to work for an in-prison deradicalisation program.

Hesitancy in renouncing extremism is common among women prisoners. Nesti Ode Samili, a former policewoman from North Maluku, was also faced with a similar dilemma. She almost withdrew her NKRI declaration for fear of being labelled as an infidel by her peers. Meanwhile, Dian Yulia Novi, Indonesia's first would-be suicide bomber in a 2016 presidential palace bombing plot, was also swayed to sign the declaration so that she could be reunited with her son. However, her decision was impeded by her husband, Nur Solikin, who as of early 2023 remained a strong ISIS supporter.⁴⁰ External factors, such as weak ties to extremist networks and support from family members, played a significant role in persuading women to leave their extremist networks behind. They face many challenges, however, including from extremist bullies, both men and women.

D. Dealing with Extremist Bullies: The Case of Harmawati alias Ummu Faruq

Harmawati alias Ummu Faruq, arrested in connection with the Abu Rara case and sentenced to four years in prison, is one of the women inmates who harassed those who moved toward disengagement. She was born in April 1971 to a poor family in Madura, East Java where she attended state Islamic schools through junior high school. In 1987, at the age of 16, she left school to get married. The marriage lasted seven months. Her second marriage, in 1992, lasted only two months longer. (Her first two husbands were both Madurese.) Her third husband was a man from Semarang, Central Java. That union lasted only five months. Her fourth marriage, with a Javanese man from Madiun, lasted four years and produced a daughter named Hakiki, but was also marked by domestic abuse, and they divorced. Harmawati then went to Saudi Arabia as an undocumented migrant worker, returning in 2004.⁴¹ After moving from place to place, she and Hakiki eventually moved to Yogyakarta.

Shortly after she settled there, she felt ill with stomach pains and went to a traditional Islamic healer in a nearby mosque.⁴² He rebuked her for not wearing a face veil (*niqab*) and told her that women need to cover their bodies from the tip of their hair to their feet. At his urging, she changed her dress and began regularly attending religious study sessions (*pengajian*) linked to Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI) and JI. This was her introduction to extremism, she said that she often met Abu Bakar Ba'asyir and Abu Jibril in those meetings.

In 2009, Harmawati decided that it was time for Hakiki to marry, even though the girl was only 15 and had just graduated from junior high school. She was intelligent, once winning

⁴⁰ See their more detailed story in IPAC, "Extremist Women Behind Bars in Indonesia", op.cit., pp. 10-11.

⁴¹ Harmawati had a visa for making the *umroh*, or lesser haj. It does not permit employment. She returned after traumatic experience in Saudi Arabia – escaping after another Indonesian living in Jeddah reportedly tried to sell her. Interview recording made available to IPAC by Dete Aliyah, October 2022.

⁴² Medicine of the Prophet (tibbun nabawi) is seen by many Muslims as an alternative to Western medicine. The three main elements are herbal remedies (many based on habbatussaudah or black caraway seed); cupping or *bekam* (putting several glass suction cups on the patient's back and extracting "dirty" blood); and exorcism (*rukhiyah*).

second place in an English competition, and she wanted to continue her education. Harmawati told her that she had chosen a good man, a devout Muslim named Syamil from Solo, to be her husband. It turned out he was also a jihadist. Hakiki eventually relented, and the marriage went ahead.

Soon after the wedding, all three – Syamil, Hakiki and Harmawati – moved to Solo and became increasingly involved in extremist circles. Harmawati married again in 2010, this time as the second wife of a man from Solo who divorced her after five months. She sold herbal remedies to support herself. The next year she remarried her second husband and had another child. Hakiki and Syamil moved to the group around Aman Abdurrahman and eventually joined ISIS in 2014. They left for Syria in 2016 through a pro-ISIS network in Bandung. Syamil was killed in Baghouz in 2019, and his wife and children have been in the al-Hol camp ever since.⁴³ Hakiki kept in contact with her mother, even after Harmawati was in prison.

In 2017, Harmawati began to raise small amounts of money online for jihadists in need, both those in prison and those who were simply unemployed and seeking support. Among the proposed recipients were Abu Rara and Fitri Diana, whom she had met in a Telegram chat group called Study Together (“Belajar Bersama”).⁴⁴ They had asked her for money to start a snack business, but before she could raise the amount (about USD\$200), they were arrested for the attack on Wiranto. Harmawati herself was arrested on 19 October 2019 for withholding information before the attack. Her first place of detention was the Jakarta metropolitan police command, and it was here where she began to harass other women, urging them not to revoke their *bai’at*. One woman who became the target of her pressure was Marifah Hasanah, also jailed in connection to the Abu Rara case.⁴⁵ They knew each other before their detention, though their relationship was already hostile. Harmawati once suspected Marifah of being a spy for the police (*jasus*) by infiltrating ISIS sympathiser groups.

The relationship worsened when Marifah decided to sign the NKRI declaration in the police detention centre. Marifah was initially placed in a “green cell” with other convicted women who had declared loyalty to the state. One day, she was put in a red cell along with Harmawati and other hardline women.⁴⁶ Marifah said she lived in agony. For months the other inmates called her derogatory names, such as ‘the veil-wearing infidel’ and said her blood was halal, meaning killing her would be considered a pious act. The bullying became unbearable, and

⁴³ Hakiki Fitri Ariyanto alias Shameel Nisreen had an active social media presence circa 2019-21. She posted her updates in English, reaching a bigger audience and more international network than her Indonesian counterparts. Not long after Harmawati’s arrest in 2019, she posted a picture of her holding a congratulatory banner of the arrest, taking it as part of jihad. Hakiki had not made any new post as of October 2021, but Harmawati claimed that she still talked with her through voice note as of mid-2022. IPAC social media observation, 2020-2022.

⁴⁴ Verdict of Harmawati alias Ummu Faruq alias Ummu Hakiki alias Tasnim, No. 597/Pid.Sus/2020/PN Jkt.Tim.

⁴⁵ Marifah Hasanah alias Ummu Iffah was arrested on 15 October 2019. She was also charged with terrorism financing for helping to fund a Quranic memorization school called Sama Taat in Bekasi, West Java, led by Ustad Jarwadi from JAD Tasikmalaya. As of 14 October 2022, her name appears on Indonesia’s terrorist list (*Daftar Terduga Teroris dan Organisasi Teroris*, DTTOT). She was sentenced to four years on 16 September 2020.

⁴⁶ Marifah was not sure why she was moved to the “red cell”, but she thought of two possibilities. First, there was a misunderstanding between Marifah and another woman detainee, Nila Yetti, who thought that Marifah was still loyal to ISIS and that her renunciation was a lie. Second, because Marifah was fearless toward extremist bullies, the police assumed that she was aggressive. Either way, the police did not ask her nor conduct a thorough investigation. IPAC interview with Marifah Hasanah, 16 November 2022.

Marifah retaliated by slapping Harmawati in the face. This incident only pushed them into further hostility, lasting until they moved to Bandung women's prison in January 2022.

Harmawati turned out to be even more of a bully while in Bandung prison. She tried to provoke another prisoner, Dian Yulia Novi, into harassing Marifah. Dian, who was more often quiet, did not take kindly to Harmawati's pressure. At one point she threw a chair in a rage, accusing Harmawati of being too self-righteous. Harmawati targeted not only convicted terrorists but other inmates as well. She often came to religious study sessions at the prison's mosque only to argue that their version of Islam was false. Similar incidents occurred many times, and she was eventually banned from the mosque during religious programs.

Her determination to punish women who in her view had betrayed their *bai'at* extended beyond prison walls. She frequently contacted her network by the prison phone system to get updates and find out who had been released early, assuming that they received parole. One day, she reached Rini Ilyas, the former policewoman whom she had met only once in court. Rini claimed to know Harmawati only in passing and gave her a relative's phone number to maintain contact after she was released. Harmawati, however, used this number to verbally attack Rini. In distress, Rini called Nur Fazillah, afraid that her decision to disengage from extremist networks was misguided.⁴⁷ Nur Fazillah responded by calming Rini, telling her to change numbers and to focus on herself and her family. Nur Fazillah also reported Marifah's behaviour to the prison authorities, Detachment 88, and Ustad Sofyan, urging them to deal with the situation quickly.

How was a hardline extremist, supposedly in maximum security custody, able to contact other inmates and make phone calls to extremist groups? As of early 2023, women's prisons did not yet have clear prison protocols for dealing with extremists. Prison staff worked based on best practices in handling such women, and the staff person in charge, Suci, was among the most experienced, as she had maintained a good relationship with Dian Yulia Novi. She gave the women more space outside their cells, hoping to expose them to a wide range of people and so encourage them to be more open-minded.⁴⁸

The strategy was not effective for Harmawati, and Suci expressed frustration at her behaviour. She tried reaching out to Harmawati's husband, but he also could not handle her strong personality and anger.⁴⁹ She then turned to BNPT for help and had Harmawati meet with a psychologist, but there were no significant changes. As of early 2023, more intensive counselling sessions with the psychologist were planned. Getting Harmawati to disengage from extremist networks might be a monumental undertaking and pushing her to pledge loyalty to the Indonesian state is clearly backfiring.

Bandung women's prison also faces infrastructure constraints, because it is overcrowded and was not designed for high-risk prisoners. It is almost impossible to isolate a prisoner like Harmawati from other inmates.

⁴⁷ IPAC interview with Nur Fazillah, 4 November 2022.

⁴⁸ IPAC interview with Bandung women's prison staff, Suci, 16 November 2022.

⁴⁹ Harmawati's husband is not affiliated to the terror groups. He was originally from Madura, East Java, like Harmawati. He was the husband she married twice. Harmawati tried to lure him into extremist circles, but he was not interested. He declined offers from pro-ISIS charities to help the medication of their youngest daughter, Tasnim, when Harmawati in prison. Her husband maintained good communication with prison staff and was supportive of efforts to persuade her to leave extremist networks.

III. DISENGAGEMENT AFTER RELEASE

Some female prisoners decide to leave extremist groups only after their release. Ika Puspitasari alias Tasnim Salsabila and Siska Nur Azizah are two examples. Ika was charged in connection with several bomb plots in 2015-16, while Siska was involved in the 2018 Mako Brimob riot in Depok, West Java. Both became actively engaged in anti-terrorism campaigns organised by the local government and NGOs.

A. Forming New Ties After Release: The Case of Ika Puspitasari

Ika Puspitasari alias Tasnim Salsabila, born in Purworejo, Central Java on 22 July 1981, became an early supporter of ISIS and ended up assisting Dian Yuli Novi, the woman who hoped to become Indonesia's first suicide bomber. She was released in August 2021 after serving her full four-and-a-half-year sentence, and as far as anyone knew, left prison as radical as when she went in.

Growing up in a low-income family, Ika became a migrant worker when she was 16, first in Malaysia in 1997, then in Hong Kong from 2004 to 2016. Living abroad from a young age seemed to lead her astray. She reportedly often spent time with village thugs, drinking liquor during holidays and generally seemed to prefer the company of men to that of women. Other women workers called her a *tomboi*, an Indonesian term taken from the English "tomboy" referring to a woman who acts like a man.⁵⁰

Ika's interest in extremism started when she saw the news of a church bombing in Solo, Central Java, on 25 September 2011.⁵¹ She was curious as to what motivated the bomber and did some digging online, exposing her to videos on Muslim suffering in many parts of the world. She also read articles from radical Indonesian websites such as Ar-rahmah, VOA Islam, and al-Mustaqbal. She came to admire extremist groups, particularly al-Qaeda, for their bravery in defending Muslims and advocating Islamic law. She decided to become more religious and quit what she now saw as her impure life.

In Hong Kong, Ika was active in online forums, managed mainly by other migrant workers, and took the pledge of allegiance to ISIS online in 2014. In July 2015, she married Zaenal Akbar, a Makassar-born jihadist whom she had met online. In December 2015, Ika offered money to some would-be bombers, including her husband, to help with an attack on the Shi'ah community in Indonesia. Police managed to foil the plot and arrested those concerned, including Zainal. After that, Ika laid low by shutting down her social media accounts.

In September 2016, as her work visa was about to expire, she went to the immigration office to renew it, but her request was denied. Her only option was to return to Indonesia, knowing there was a risk of getting arrested because of her financing activities. She then contacted one of her online acquaintances, Nur Solikin, from Azzam Dakwah Center, a JAD-linked charity in Solo, Central Java, offering herself as a suicide bomber and asking him for help.⁵²

⁵⁰ See Nava Nuraniyah, "Not Just Brainwashed: Understanding the Radicalization of Indonesian Female Supporters of the Islamic State", *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 30 (6), 2018, p. 16. The paper defines *tomboi* as "...a term used by Indonesian women workers in Hong Kong to refer to those who cross dress, act like men, and sometimes date other women."

⁵¹ "Suicide Bomber Strikes Indonesian Church", *aljazeera.com*, 25 September 2011.

⁵² Verdict of Ika Puspitasari alias Tasnim Salsabila, No. 479/Pid.Sus/2017/PN Jkt.Tim.

Shortly thereafter, in November 2016, she arrived safely in Indonesia and reached out to Nur Solikin again. He asked her to be the suicide bomber for an attack in Bali on 20 December 2016.⁵³ Again, the police thwarted the plan and arrested Ika on 15 December 2016.

Ika was among only a few extremist women in detention before a strengthened anti-terrorism law was passed in 2018. Police experience in handling women terrorist prisoners was still limited. All were placed in a single large cell without any specific programs or interventions. Ika was detained in Mako Brimob in Kelapa Dua, Depok, West Java, with Dian Yulia Novi, Tutin Sugiarti, Anggi Indah Khanza and Meilani Indra Dewi.⁵⁴ Except for Meilani, all were former migrant workers. On 11 October 2017, she was sentenced to a prison term of four years and eight months. She was moved to Medan women's prison in April 2018, just a few weeks before the Mako Brimob riot.

Ika was the first convicted women extremist serving her sentence in Medan women's prison. The prison staff received little background information on her and had no idea on how to handle high-risk prisoners. They treated Ika the same way as other prisons treated male terrorist inmates: placing her in solitary confinement with almost no activities.⁵⁵ The treatment angered Ika because she knew that the treatment of women extremists at other prisons was more lenient.⁵⁶ Some were placed in a shared cell; others received vocational training with other inmates. She felt discriminated against and continued to rebel. The prison staff were afraid of her and did not try to open communication channels.⁵⁷

Supervision over Ika tightened in November 2019 after the attack on the provincial police station in Medan. Ika was initially reported to have radicalised the perpetrator's wife, Dewi Anggraini, as she was listed several times on the list of the prison visitors. Ika admitted that she met Dewi and received her gifts but did not know her personally. Prison authorities did not believe her. They installed a CCTV inside her room to observe her around the clock, a measure usually reserved for inmates in Super-Maximum Security (SMS) prisons. Learning this, she was furious and threw water over the CCTV, damaging it. The prison staff became even more afraid of her, as a result, leaving her with even less assistance and access to prison programs.

Ika was released in August 2021 and returned to her hometown in Purwokerto, Central Java. She said that she had few difficulties in reintegrating back into society as her neighbours had

⁵³ Nur Solikin was the husband of Dian Yulia Novi, the woman who planned on attacking the presidential palace in Jakarta on 11 December 2016. Dian received a seven-and-a-half-year sentence. Ika had helped introduce Dian to Nur. See "Terungkap, Ika Puspitasari Calon 'Pengantin' yang akan Ledakkan Bom di Bali", okezone.com, 22 December 2016.

⁵⁴ For the case of Meilani Indra Dewi and Dian Yulia Novi, see footnotes 36 and 50, respectively. Tutin Sugiarti was arrested on 15 December 2016 for facilitating attack plots by Nur Solikin. It was Tutin who introduced Dian to Nur Solikin. She also managed chatgroups among migrant workers and raised money to help pro-ISIS families at home. Tutin spent her three-and-a-half-year sentence in Tangerang, and was released on 25 August 2017 without renouncing extremism. Anggi Indah Kusuma, alias Khanza, was arrested on 14 August 2017 for her involvement in the plan to bomb police headquarters in Depok, West Java and a state-owned weapon factory, PT. Pindad. Anggi served her three-year sentence in Jakarta prison and was released on 19 August 2020.

⁵⁵ In 2017, the Corrections Department and Search for Common Ground developed a protocol for managing high-risk prisoners. All female convicts, regardless of the risk category, are put in women's prisons. See: "Keputusan Menteri Hukum dan Hak Asasi Manusia, No. M.HH-02.PK.01.02.02 Tahun 2017 tentang Pedoman Kerja Lembaga Pemasyarakatan Khusus Bagi Narapidana Resiko Tinggi (High Risk) Kategori Teroris", 14 November 2017.

⁵⁶ Ika admitted that she was able to gain this information from other inmates after smuggling a handphone into her cell. IPAC interview with Ika Puspitasari, 11 October 2022.

⁵⁷ IPAC interview with Medan prison staff, 18 May 2020.

already known her since childhood. They welcomed her with open arms, even waiting for her arrival in front of her house.⁵⁸ But Ika's first instinct was to reconnect with her extremist network on social media. She then made a Facebook profile, added some friends, and rejoined old chat groups, only to become disappointed with the current jihadist environment. To her, the fire to conduct violent jihad had declined. ISIS sympathisers seemed more interested in discussing marriage or sex, or becoming involved in unending theological debates over who could be categorised as an apostate.

In April 2022, she received an invitation from Gema Salam, a foundation of former terrorist convicts based in Solo, Central Java, to attend a public event commemorating Earth Day, run by the City Council.⁵⁹ Ika found no harm in this and agreed to come, without realising her presence hinted at a willingness to cooperate with the state. Photos of her at the event were circulated within the extremist network, and news about her renunciation travelled fast. Her then-husband, Zaenal Akbar, also released but still hardline, immediately divorced her. Extremist groups cut ties with her and treated her like a traitor.

The ostracism did not affect her. She proved to be a bubbly and sociable person who could adapt and make friends in new circles. Her profile and story also made for good media material: a former would-be suicide bomber turned anti-terrorism advocate. News outlets reached out to her, and she seemed to enjoy the attention.⁶⁰

Ika's popularity led to more access to new people and networks. Aside from Gema Salam, there was also Persadani in Semarang, led by Machmudi Hariono alias Yusuf, formerly affiliated with Jamaah Islamiyah. Yusuf introduced her to Achmad Supriyanto, an ex-terrorist convict who had been released in January 2021, a just a few months before Ika.⁶¹ It turned out both were detained in Mako Brimob at the same time but never crossed paths. Achmad became the key to Ika's deradicalisation. He had renounced extremism in Batu prison, Nusakambangan, after intense discussions with other prisoners as well as reading anti-ISIS material and reflections on the mistakes of ISIS teachings. He then shared with Ika everything he learned in prison. It was not easy at first. Ika kept asking, and they sometimes disagreed, but he could answer all questions and provide sound arguments, which made Ika want to learn more.

Ika married Achmad in August 2022. They became involved in efforts to counter violent extremism by speaking at campuses and government institutions. The exposure also brought them financial benefits. As of late 2022, they were planning on establishing a café in

⁵⁸ Eka Setiawan, "HUT Kemerdekaan RI, Napiter Ika Puspitasari Bebas dari Lapas Medan", ruangngobrol.id, 17 August 2021.

⁵⁹ "Peringati Hari Bumi, Eks Napiter dan Yayasan Gema Salam Tanam Pohon", lingkarjogja.com, 22 April 2021.

⁶⁰ Ika's story was covered in a documentary launched in 2018 by Ruang Ngobrol, an NGO working to counter extremist narratives. See: "Pengantin, Kisah Perempuan Pertama Calon Pengebom Bunuh Diri", republika.co.id, 30 June 2018.

⁶¹ Achmad Supriyanto, originally from Tegal, Central Java, was arrested on 23 March 2017 for trying to purchase guns for JAD in Mindanao. He took part in military training in Basilan in 2016 in the southern Philippines. Achmad was among the most hardline convicts, causing him to be put in the super-maximum security prison, Pasir Putih on Nusakambangan. There, he met Abu Qutaibah alias Iskandar alias Rury Alexander, who encouraged him to read more books and reflect on ISIS fallacies (see footnote 37).

Purwokerto with the support of the provincial government.⁶² They also envision establishing a foundation to help former extremist prisoners.⁶³

B. Personal Grudge against the Justice System: The Case of Damayanti

Damayanti alias Yanti is an example of a former prisoner who refused to sign the NKRI declaration but who also wanted to be independent of the extremist networks after her release. She was arrested for a peripheral role in the 2018 Surabaya bombing and received a three-year sentence. She was released in September 2021.

Born in 1984, Damayanti was originally from Nganjuk, East Java. Her mother died when she was young, leaving her only with her father and two younger siblings.⁶⁴ To help her family's finances, she went to Sidoarjo, near Surabaya, after graduating from senior high school to look for more opportunities. There she met a woman from Cirebon, Central Java, who shared similar dreams and became her business partner and closest friend. Together they set up a small-scale tailoring business in 2015 and eventually managed to open a kiosk in a local market.

They lived together for three years and went to *pengajian* in their spare time. In one of those sessions, the speaker was Ilham Fauzan, a leader of Firqah Abu Hamzah (FAH), an extremist group in Sidoarjo, who turned to ISIS, as did many other members of the group, after 2014.⁶⁵ There she met her husband, Agus Satrio Widodo, then head of JAD Jombang and secretary of JAD East Java. According to Damayanti, she did not mingle with her husband's network because she was busy with her business and was never informed about their activities.⁶⁶ She agreed to marry Agus because of her mature age (then 32) and thought he would be a good husband, even though she would be his second wife. Her family disapproved, as did his first wife, but they married anyway in March 2018.

She continued to live with her best friend months after the wedding while still looking for a place to live with Agus. Agus paid occasional visits, but one on 13-14 May 2018 changed their life forever. That night, Agus had been busy with Ilham Fauzan discussing what to do with boxes of small bombs sent by Dita Oepriarto, the main perpetrator of the Surabaya bombings.⁶⁷ They asked several people to take the boxes, but all refused. Finally, in the early morning on 14 May 2018, Ilham Fauzan and his wife, Emil Lestari, brought the boxes to

⁶² Sumarni, "Cerita Eks Napiter, Mendanai Aksi Teror hingga Hampir Jadi Pengantin ISIS", Gatra.com, 22 August 2022.

⁶³ Yayasan Gema Salam asked Ika to manage their initiative for wives of convicted terrorists, namely Srikandi, but she politely declined the offer as it is located in Solo city, far away from her house. For more about Srikandi, see Ahmad Antoni, "Mengenal Srikandi Gema Salam, Koperasi yang Beranggotakan Istri Eks Napi Terorisme", inews.id, 16 September 2022.

⁶⁴ Trial dossier of Damayanti alias Yanti, 14 March 2019.

⁶⁵ Firqah Abu Hamzah was a cult-like organisation that held to a very literalist interpretation of Qur'an and considered anyone outside the group as kafir. It also banned marriages outside the group. Its leader, Agus Surpiyadi alias Abu Hamzah from Depok, West Java became one of the early ISIS supporters from Indonesia who went to Syria to join the new caliphate. He then commanded his followers to join as well, including the group in Surabaya, led by Ilham Fauzan. For more on FAH, see IPAC, "Disunity Among Indonesian ISIS Supporters and The Risk of More Violence", Report No. 25, 1 February 2016.

⁶⁶ IPAC interview with Damayanti, 14 October 2022.

⁶⁷ Trial dossier of Damayanti, op.cit.

Damayanti's house, intending to deactivate the bombs. Police tailed them and captured them immediately. Ilham died after being shot by the police.⁶⁸

Damayanti faced a series of blows after her arrest. The business she had worked so hard for over the past three years collapsed. It was just a month before the end of Ramadan, and she had already received orders for Muslim veils.⁶⁹ Not only could she not keep her promises to clients, but she could not even apologise as the police confiscated her phone. All the assets, including the sewing machines, hundreds of yards of fabric, furniture, and her savings, that she had collected over the years were gone.

Aside from the financial loss, Damayanti also lost contact with her family. A policewoman said the family had disowned her because she was accused of terrorism. She felt she had let her family down despite the good relationship they had maintained ever since she went away. The arrest caused her father to fall ill, followed by an accident that hindered him from visiting Damayanti. After his recovery, he and her younger brother travelled from Nganjuk to Surabaya, hoping to meet her at the Surabaya detention centre, only to be informed that she had already been transferred to Jakarta, even though in fact she was still in Surabaya at that time. She moved to Polda Metro Jaya on 12 September 2018.

While in detention, Damayanti also found that she was pregnant. Physical and psychological stress almost caused her to give birth prematurely. She delivered the baby safely in the police hospital in Kramat Jati, East Jakarta and spent four days there. Her cellmates helped care for the baby, as did other detainees, sometimes giving her cash to get baby products. (The detention centre gave her some, but often they were insufficient.) Nonetheless, access to clean water, sanitation, and sunlight was minimal, and bad air quality was exacerbated by smoke from the cigarettes of other detainees.

She received a prison sentence of three years and four months on 14 March 2019 and was then moved to Semarang women's prison. She had requested Jakarta or Bandung, where her closest friends were, but later found that the placement was to her advantage. In Semarang, she was placed in a special facility for mothers with children and had more time outside the cell for her infant.⁷⁰ In addition, she was allowed to participate in a batik class and earned a little money from sale of the batik products. Her relationship with prison staff and other inmates also went well, even though she never agreed to sign the NKRI declaration.

She sometimes received packages of food and baby clothes from what she assumed from her husband's network. She never met the sender as the prison never permitted contact with outside family members. The support stopped after Agus Widodo renounced extremism in early 2021.⁷¹

Damayanti completed her prison term on 17 September 2021 and returned to her father and siblings in Nganjuk.⁷² As with Ika, she did not find it hard to reintegrate because the people had long known her. Her bigger problem, was economic, as there was no compensation for her lost goods. She did not have any source of income, and now she had an additional mouth

⁶⁸ Suparno, "Dua Wanita Terisak di Depan Makam Terduga Teroris", detik.com, 21 May 2018.

⁶⁹ IPAC interview with Damayanti, 14 October 2022.

⁷⁰ IPAC interview with Semarang prison staff, 19 August 2020.

⁷¹ IPAC does not have the exact date of his renouncement, but he was listed as having an NKRI status in April 2021.

⁷² Eka Setiawan, "Damayanti, Perempuan Pelaku Teror Bom Surabaya Bebas dari Lapas Perempuan Semarang", RuangNgobrol.id, 17 September 2021.

to feed. She tried every channel she knew of without success. Through a phone call, her husband once asked her to submit a formal application to the police, but she refused:

What, apply to Densus [Detachment 88]? When my husband said that, I was so angry. I had listed all my lost assets until my hands got tired. I showed him that I was being bounced around by all these people, but he insisted that some people get full compensation. I do not care if they do, the fact is that I did not. I got angry, that's why I decided to work on it by myself.

This was the way he was. It wasn't that I didn't love him but maybe the love was a little thin. We'd only been married three months, we had just met each other, I barely knew him, and now we were being tested like this. I was really annoyed. Why keep begging Densus for what should have been yours by right? And then if they don't give it to you, you keep begging. I will not write a proposal to them, I won't, it's a question of dignity!⁷³

Damayanti's refusal to renounce extremism was not due to ideological reasons. She was distraught after her arrest, which had triggered many misfortunes in her life: her business crumbled, her assets and money were confiscated, her little family was torn apart, her child had to endure a horrible situation in custody, and her relationship with her father and siblings was almost ruined. On top of it, her father died just weeks after her release. All of these catastrophes happened one after another, and it broke her heart. Looking toward the future, Damayanti wanted to focus only on her son and not be affiliated with any risky activities. She was unlikely to resume any engagement with extremist circles, especially given Agus's renunciation of extremism. She intended to just work hard while waiting for her husband's release in 2023, while still resenting the hardships she endured in prison.⁷⁴

IV. CONCLUSION

The decision by extremist women prisoners to renounce extremism can be influenced by multiple factors depending on their background and life experiences. The level of ideological commitment is an important determinant of whether they decide to leave or stay in extremist circles, but support from family members, particularly spouses, peers, and prison staff, also has a significant role in moving the women towards making a public declaration of allegiance to the Indonesian state.

Women prisoners, like their male counterparts, are under pressure to sign that declaration, but few in the prison system believe it is proof by itself of deradicalisation. It becomes more difficult to move back to identification with extremist networks, however, because the act of signing becomes known to other inmates as well as friends and family and is understood as an indication of willingness to cooperate with the government. It thus becomes the first step in weaning individuals away from their extremist past. The declaration needs to be followed up, however, with more intensive assistance to help the women resist pressures from extremists while still in prison and after their release.

⁷³ IPAC interview with Damayanti, 14 October 2022.

⁷⁴ Agus was originally due for release on 20 May 2026, but since he signed the NKRI declaration, he will likely be released in 2023.

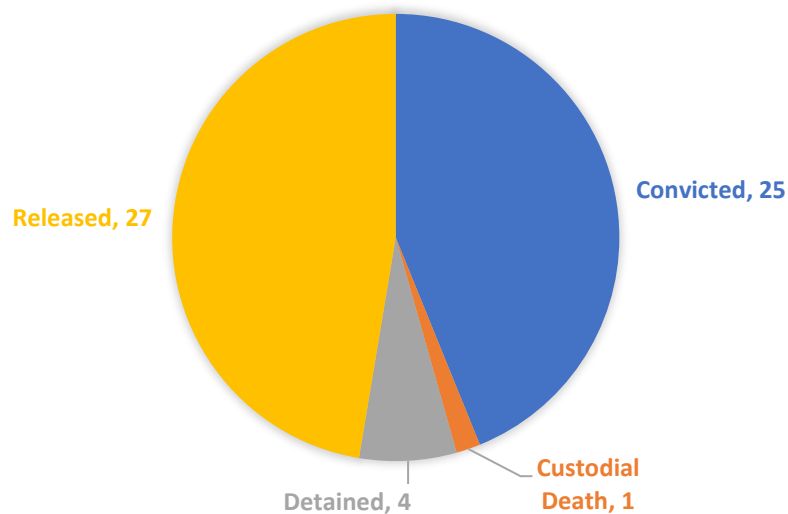
There are few effective programs in prison. A few of the women found BNPT-sponsored lectures useful, but these only took place once or twice a year. Some others found the Detachment 88 approach more helpful as it provided sharing sessions with former inmates, but none of the women had any sustained religious counselling or systematic training in vocational skills based on their own interests and skills and labour market needs.

Post-release assistance for women extremists is also under-resourced. Released women are often not given priority for aid, partly because they are not seen as possessing strategic roles in violent extremist organisations and thus are not considered potential security threats. While many women prisoners face similar economic problems upon release as men, since many of them are the family breadwinners or contribute significantly to the family income, they should have equal access to assistance. Women also deserve full compensation for any goods confiscated during arrest.

Peer support and ties with new networks can also help women to stay away from their past circles. In the five cases studied here, efforts by civil society and organisations of former prisoners to hold discussions about their shared experiences proved helpful, but more systematic programs are needed.

Appendix 1

Women Arrested on Terrorism Charges, 2004-2022



Appendix 2

List of Extremist Women Renouncing Extremism as of January 2023

No.	NAME	Date of Arrest	Reason for arrest/death	Place of detention	Case-Type
1	Ika Puspitasari alias Tasnima Salsabila	15-Dec-16	Migrant worker in HongKong who sent funding for suicide bombings, volunteered to be a suicide bomber in the presidential palace in 2016.	Mako Brimob; Medan women's prison	Released
2	Arti Alifah Aviandari Rahardjo	30-Nov-18	Arrested by the Turkish authorities while planning to cross over to Syria, deported on 30 November 2018.	Polda Metro Jaya	Released
3	Betty Rinawati	14-May-18	Linked to Surabaya bombings, JAD East Java.	Polda Metro Jaya; Jakarta women's prison	Released
4	Nurhasanah alias Nana	15-Jul-18	Attacked Indramayu police office with husband (killed) on 15-Jul-18.	Polda Metro Jaya; Lampung women's prison	Released
5	Siska Nur Azizah alias Fatimah	12-May-18	Planned to help inmates in 2018 Mako Brimob riot.	Polda Metro Jaya; Malang women's prison	Released
6	Dewi Anggraini alias Ummu Muslim	14-Nov-19	Withholding information about Rabbial Muslim Nasution, her husband,	Polda Metro Jaya; Medan women's prison	Released

			who attacked Medan police station in November 2019.		
7	Fitri Diana alias Pipit	10-Oct-19	Tried to stab police officer as her husband, Abu Rara, stabbed Minister Wiranto.	Polda Metro Jaya; Jakarta women's prison	Convicted
8	Marifah Hasanah alias Ummu Iffah	15-Oct-19	Financing two male jihadists in helping 2018 Mako Brimob riot; Funding RQ Sama Taat (pro-ISIS school); Withholding information on/showing support for Abu Rara's attack in 2019.	Polda Metro Jaya; Bandung women's prison	Convicted
9	Nesti Ode Samili alias Maryam	26-Sep-19	Former police officer-turned- ISIS supporter. Member of WARTACTIC (online chat group). Her husband planned on conducting an attack but failed.	South Jakarta detention center Tangerang women's prison	Released
10	Novita Aditia alias Maryam	16-Oct-19	Linked to Abu Rara through a pesantren in Kediri. Learned how to make molotov bombs online, involved in online propaganda	Polda Metro Jaya Tangerang women's prison	Convicted
11	Nur Fazillah alias Umu Dila	15-Nov-19	helped recruits from Java and Jambi for military training in Aceh, provided refuge for fugitives and shelters for families of Abu Hamzah groups	Polda Metro Jaya Tangerang women's prison	Released
12	Rini Ilyas alias Asiyah	12-Oct-19	Former police officer turned to be ISIS supporter. Member of WARTACTIC (online chat group).	South Jakarta detention center Tangerang women's prison	Released
13	Listiyowati alias Salwa	5-Jun-20	Migrant worker in Hongkong who was involved in failed weapon purchasing attempt. Planned to use the weapon as preparation before joining ISIS in Syria.	Polda Metro Jaya, Klaten women's prison	Convicted
14	Lasmi alias Ummu Sifa	29-Jul-20	Married to Ali Kalora from MIT in March 2015. Climbed Gunung Biru to join MIT in July 2020.	Polda Metro Jaya, Tangerang women's prison	Released
15	Sobah Rahardjo Tjakraningrat	26-Sep-20	Encouraged entire family to support ISIS. Went to Turkey to join ISIS in Syria	Polda Metro Jaya Yogyakarta women's prison	Convicted

	alias Ummu Sobah		but was arrested by Turkish authorities. Mother of Arti Alivah (also in this list)		
16	Ainun Pratiwi alias Ainun Pretty Amelia	6-Jan-21	Daughter of the Jolo bombers. Providing funds to younger sisters who are in custody in Mindanao	Polda Metro Jaya, Semarang women's prison	Convicted
17	Aulia Saleh Mama Aul	6-Jan-21	Linked to JAD Makassar (Villa Mutiara network and the 2021 cathedral bombing)	Polda Metro Jaya Yogyakarta women's prison	Convicted
18	Rosnina Zulfikar alias Nina	6-Jan-21	Linked to JAD makassar (Villa Mutiara network and the 2021 church bombing).	Polda Metro Jaya, Lampung women's prison	Convicted
19	Darny alias Diah	30-Mar-21	Linked to JAD makassar (Villa Mutiara network and the 2021 cathedral bombing)	South Jakarta detention center Tangerang women's prison	Convicted
20	Fadillah Mutmainnah alias Dila	30-Mar-21	Linked to JAD makassar (Villa Mutiara network and the 2021 cathedral bombing)	Sungguminasa women's prison	Convicted
21	Indah Wati Tomia alias Indah	30-Mar-21	Linked to JAD makassar (Villa Mutiara network and the 2021 cathedral bombing)	South Jakarta detention center Sungguminasa women's prison	Convicted
22	Latifah Nur Aini alias Ummu Adam	30-Mar-21	Linked to JAD makassar (Villa Mutiara network and the 2021 cathedral bombing)	South Jakarta detention center Sungguminasa women's prison	Convicted
23	Miranti Mahsum alias Ummu Khayrah	30-Mar-21	Linked to JAD makassar (Villa Mutiara network and the 2021 cathedral bombing)	Polda Metro Jaya Semarang women's prison	Convicted
24	Irmawati Amir alias Ummu Faraby	24-Apr-21	Linked to JAD makassar (Villa Mutiara network and the 2021 cathedral bombing)	South Jakarta detention center Sungguminasa women's prison	Convicted
25	Masita alias Sita	30-Apr-21	Linked to JAD makassar (Villa Mutiara network and the 2021 cathedral bombing)	South Jakarta detention center Sungguminasa women's prison	Convicted
26	Irma Kurniati alias Umu Hafshoh	28-May-21	Managed chatgroup for recruitment, part of pro-ISIS Merauke. Plot to bomb Merauke churches and kill Catholic bishop;	South Jakarta detention center Lampung women's prison	Convicted

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