

## Children and Terrorism: Human Rights for Indonesian Cubs of Caliphate

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### **Abstract:**

*This paper aims to analyze the intertwined relations among the children's involvement in terror activities and the freedom of religion or belief. The new pattern of terrorism in Indonesia occurs within the involvement of family on several terror bombings including one of the massive tragedies in Surabaya during 2018. As the largest home of Muslim population in the world, Indonesia has struggled with radicalization issues but the latest horrifying phenomenon is the terrorism involving children in the activities. It raises the notion of human rights protection for children not only among their basic human rights but also their freedom of religion or belief. By using literature research method and interview with BRSAMPK Handayani Jakarta, it concludes that all children, including the child of terrorist, should be considered as victim of terrorism. Their presence in terror actions is the result of ideological indoctrination that violating children's human rights including freedom of religion or belief.*

**Keywords:** *Children, Terrorism, Human Rights, Indonesia, Freedom Of Religion Or Belief.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The involvement of children in several terror cases emerges the new pattern and strategy of terrorism. Their presences considered as giving beneficiaries for the groups because children could regenerate the group and preserve their ideologies to achieve their political interests (van der Heide & Geenen, 2017). Take ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) as an example. ISIS calling the terrorist children with "the cubs of caliphate". As the next *caliph* (the literal meaning is a leader but usually, it refers to an Islamic leader), the children would be trained and armed as they expected would commit a terrorist attack in the name of holy war. Instead of their regeneration aim, they also exploit children's innocent sense to attack enemy's sympathy (Bloom et al., 2016). The ISIS's propaganda videos which are showing children's action in training phase, learning Koran about jihad and killing the enemies propose to frame children's fight ability in the name of crusade as future's caliphs (Vale, 2018). Moreover, it would cause uncomfortable feeling for the enemy to confront children. In other words, the terrorism organization proposes to shift the paradigm that children are not always considered as victim but also threat. The child terrorist experienced forced to participate in war, indoctrination, religious radicalism education and child bride. Furthermore, these issues would reveal the violation of human rights among children.

Some scholars have been researched about the relations between human rights and child terrorist academically. It begins with understanding that radicalism and extremism ideology become the main fundamental cause of terrorism (Schmid, 2013). Then, the radicalism and extremism will lead into the usage of violence to achieve the means. In the case of children, the gradual education related to radicalism would normalize the usage of violence and the ideologies as a perspective (Harahap & Irmayani, 2019). Parents potentially influenced and influencing the children's way of thinking especially toward radicalism through religious education while if the parents have misunderstood on religious value, it would cause a misleading toward religious teaching (Sikkens et al., 2018) such as blind obedience and absolute truth. Not only through parental influence, but national crises and war might place children in difficult situations. The limit of law protection, poverty, loss of the loved one, and the social gap would bring them to seek for power, maintain their self-defense, and keep survive. This would be more difficult if they never experience parental guidance from the parents since they were born because the parents have already joined with the extremist group or became victims of the war (H Gray & Owen Matchin III, 2008). Children and terrorism emerge an issue of human rights and become a new study in Indonesia. Not only on their basic rights to obtain the education, health and protection from coercion, but also freedom of religious or belief related to religious doctrine. Meanwhile, most of the studies emphasize the topics among adults, children of ISIS and child psychology. Therefore, literatures related to freedom of religious or belief would enrich the academic perspective in responding and solving the problem.

In Indonesia, the cases of children who participate in terror bombing occurred several times. Their roles not only as a victim who are carried out by the parents but a fighter. During 2018, Indonesia experienced several terror attacks specifically in form of families called Surabaya attacks. Eight children were carried out by their parents to conduct bombing attack at Santa Maria Tak Bercela church, Wonocolo flats Sidoarjo and police headquarters of Surabaya (2018). But on the other side, there are some cases that show the self-decision of the children to join terrorist group nor actions as in the case of Hatf Saiful Rasul. Hatf was one of the Indonesian children who joined ISIS when he was 11 years old and died on the battlefield. He received indoctrination from his father Saiful Anam (a suspect of Poso bombing which was causing 23 people are dead and 40 people seriously injured) and religious lessons about *jihad* (struggle or some refers to war/holy war) and *mujahidin* (a man who is struggling or soldier) in his boarding school (Allard, 2017). These cases become interesting to study due to the process of indoctrination especially toward religious knowledge could influences their way of thinking and their freedom of religion or belief.

On this paper, the author is using qualitative method for data analysis. The primary data obtained from report and documents of non-government organizations, news agencies, government and international institutions. In addition, this writing also use interview with BRSAMPK (Balai Rehabilitasi Sosial Anak Memerlukan Pendampingan Khusus) Handayani Jakarta officer as the secondary data to emphasize the research context. Started by the process of indoctrination to Indonesian children and examining the phenomena based on UN Convention on The Rights of The Child and Indonesia constitution perspective. It will explain how children's rights are violated during the terror actions and the role of adults on their ideological transformation. In addition, this writing will also describe the effort of deradicalization program for former terrorist children.

## DISCUSSION

### The Process of Radical Indoctrination to Children

Terrorism in children is basically caused by radicalism which was indoctrinated through some levels. Alex P Schmid mentioned three main causes of radicalization which are bringing people into terrorism. Firstly, *micro-level, i.e., the individual level, involving e.g., identity problems, failed integration, feelings of alienation, marginalization, discrimination, relative deprivation, humiliation (direct or by proxy), stigmatization and rejection, often combined with moral outrage and feelings of (vicarious) revenge.* Secondly, *meso-level, i.e., the wider radical milieu – the supportive or even complicit social surround – which serves as a rallying point and is the ‘missing link’ with the terrorists’ broader constituency or reference group that is aggrieved and suffering injustices which, in turn, can radicalize parts of youth cohort and lead to one formation of terrorist organization.* Lastly, *macro-level, i.e., role of government and society at home and abroad, the radicalization of public opinion and party politics, tense majority – minority relationship, especially when it comes to foreign diasporas, and the role of socio economic opportunities for whole sectors of society which leads to mobilization and radicalization of the discontented, some of which might take the form of terrorism* (Schmid, 2013).

These three levels would associate with the opportunity and strategy of the terrorist group to recruit children. On the micro-level, radicalism could emerge and grow come based on children’s personal experience of war and violation. By the example some children of ISIS were born and raised in the camp. They perceive the bombing, abuse, and exploitation since they were young. Concurrently, other children were brought by their parents who joined ISIS. These children grew up radicalized, if their parents die, they were left alone in the middle of the war and some of them are being killed because of the attack (Alsaleh, 2019). While experiencing alienation and powerless in society, joining a powerful group will help them to protect themselves. Some of them joined the groups voluntarily but some are not. As reported by International Centre for Study of Radicalisation, ISIS abducted thousands of 6,800 children under 14 years old from orphanages, schools and family homes in Sinjar by 2014 and more than 800 children recorded have been kidnapped from Mosul. The boys were indoctrinated to join ISIS as a fighter but girls usually sexually assault to be the child brides. Furthermore, instead of indecisive circumstance, searching for identity also contribute as the major role of children involved in terrorism (Fataliyeva, 2016).

Children transformation phase to teenagers then adolescent makes them being curious about information from the internet, seeking for a suitable figure who could represent their identity and encourage to expand their circle in social life. On the psychosocial approach, the growth of the youth’s brain from 7 to 17 years old develops and creates low emotional self-control which influences their psychological instability. This is the process of absorbing information as much as possible and transition into adulthood (Ramakrishna, 2016). The emotional instability will lead them to gain new knowledge deeper with less filtration. In this condition, the terrorist groups launch their strategy to persuade children for joining their groups by using internet content ex. spreading Islamophobia, creating religious communities, and underground events. Ivan Armadi Hasugian, a seventeen years old boy who committed a suicide bombing at St. Yoseph Catholic Church Medan in August 2018, gained the information about Abu Bakr al Baghdadi through internet. Abu Bakr al Baghdadi is the ISIS leader and the story about him used by ISIS to attract people in cyberspace. Then, one of the people who get attracted was Ivan (Harahap & Irmayani, 2019). Ivan downloaded numerous paper that was written by militant groups from the internet and felt inspire toward the stories and Bhagdadi’s

figure as a leader. As reported by Tempo, Ivan usually spends a long time in the internet cafe before several times they receive a package that was believed as containing detonator equipment.

Parents also responsible for the transmission of knowledge, religious value, and ideology toward their children. Besides, their way of thinking and actions are placed as a role model. Extreme parents would reflect extreme ideology through daily activities, speaking, and attitude. Furthermore, most of the radical adults especially who are supporting caliphate come from middle-class families with proper education and income levels but their social and psychological transformation in responding to radical issues is influencing their life until they commit the radical actions (Veldhuis & Staun, 2009). But both consciously and unconsciously, their social and psychological problems would affiliate with ideology regeneration toward their children. Hatf Saiful Anwar could be the exemplary case of this issue. Based on the Reuters investigation, it has found that Hatf was raised in a radical extremist environment. When Hatf was a toddler, he lived in Pandajaya, Poso. Pandajaya is a village which well-known as the village of *mujahidin*. After the Poso bombing occurred and his father was arrested, he moved to several places with less guidance from their parents. Then, his father was put him into a pesantren namely Ibnu Mas'ud which has taught about how to be a fighter for the caliphate and helped him to join ISIS (Allard, 2017). Saiful also said that the pesantren is a place of "comrades who share our ideology". However, pesantren should be a place to cultivate religiosity and humanity (religious humanis) (Agustina, 2016) rather than violence not only among the student but also the religious teachers and leaders. During his study time, Hatf often visits his father in jail, and at the same time, his father indoctrinated him to be a little *mujahid*. After Hatf reportedly died in the war, Saiful wrote an electronic letter that was published online. He expresses his proud feeling of having a child who dedicated his life to be a young martyr and fight for his religion, Islam.

### **Human Rights, Children and Terror Actions**

Based on The Regulations of Ministry of Woman Empowerment and Child Protection No. 7, 2019 about the guidance for children protection from radicalism and terrorism (Peraturan Menteri Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak Republik Indonesia nomor 7 tahun 2009 tentang pedoman perlindungan anak dari radikalisme dan tindak pidana terorisme), children's involvement toward radicalism and terrorism classify into four categories: Child as a victim (*Anak Korban*): a child who is has not reached 18 years old yet and experience physical, mental, and economy because of terrorist action; Child as a suspect (*Anak Pelaku*): a child who is between 12 and 18 years old and commit for terrorist action; Child of the terror suspect (*Anak dari Pelaku*): a child of terrorist; Child as a witness (*Anak Saksi*): a child who is be able to give testimony about terrorist actions that have been been, heard and experienced by themselves

Based on Indonesian Constitution No. 35, 2014, child is someone whose below 18 years old yet (18 tahun) including child in the womb. Regardless of their positions in terror actions, children would still be considered as a victim of the terrorist web because their contribution toward the actions is a result of indoctrination from adult (Alsaleh, 2019; Mahyani, 2019; Octadela, 2019).

Related to the children's issues, some documents have already proclaimed the concern such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (particularly in articles 23 and 24), International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

(particularly in article 10), and the Geneva Declaration of The Rights of the Child of 1924. As a universal framework, in 1989, United Nations has adopted the Convention on The Rights of The Child that contains 54 Articles about fundamental rights, freedom for children including the protection and Indonesia ratified the Convention in 1990. It means Indonesia should ensure the fulfillment of the rights and send a report of implementation. Meanwhile, in the human rights perspective, the involvement of children in a terrorist attack is considered a violation. Starting from the indoctrination process, training for war, living in the camp until they are repatriated by the state, they experienced torture both physically and mentally (Jørgensen, 2019; Joshi & O'Donnell, 2003).

Referring to the UN Convention on The Rights of The Child, the writer would like to mention the violations of human rights among Indonesian children in obtaining several basic rights which consist of freedom to live, freedom of religion or belief, freedom to received education, health, and justice during the terror actions. It would also be linked with the Indonesian constitution which was created as a manifestation of the Convention.

### **Right to Live in Peace and Liberty**

As the basic rights, children should be ensured to live in peace and could achieve liberties over their development phase. UN Convention on The Rights of The Child in stated that children's freedom should be protected through the state parties. In article 2, it was mentioned that "*State parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that the child is protected against all forms of discrimination or punishment on the basis of the status, activities, expressed opinions, or beliefs of the child's parents, legal guardians, or family members*". It is also supported by article 6 which mentioned "*State Parties recognize that every child has the inherent right to life*". In the terrorism issue, children's freedom of life is limited because they have no authority to agree or disagree over terror actions that were done by their parents. Although this issue is intangible, the influence could be counted as a threat to children's life. This violation could be seen in the Surabaya bombing tragedies where the parents brought their children to the suicide bombing. The tragedies causing the children's death and injury.

In some cases, the children's position after joining the terrorist group causing children to live in fear. After being persuaded and joined with the group, they might find that it was less of their expectations. Along with that circumstance, it would be difficult for them to unleash from the ties (Fataliyeva, 2016). It would make them struggle to survive in an extremely violent life. A similar dilemma was also experienced by children who were brought by their parents to join the terrorist group. Instead of getting a better life, they should be witnessing a harsh attitude daily until it becomes normalized in their life (Shaw, 2003). The story of Faruk, Yusuf, and Nasa, Indonesian children who were brought by their families to Syria for joining ISIS and being left as orphanages (BBC, 2020) emphasizing the violations of children's right to get the protection from coercion. The Indonesian government has already mentioned this right on Indonesian Constitution No. 35, 2014 article 15a that violation is any actions that potentially cause physical, mental, sexual, and negligence suffering for children including threats to commit criminal actions. They deserve to received protection as mentioned in article 19 about surveillance from abuse and exploitation, 38 (3) and (4) about the prohibition of a child who has not attained fifteen years old into armed conflict and the state should protect the children who are affected by armed conflict.

### **Freedom of Religion or Belief**

Children's freedom of Religion or Belief has been guaranteed by the UN Convention on The Rights of The Child Protection article 14 and Indonesian Constitution No. 35, 2014 article 6 which stated about freedom of embracing and manifestation religion. But, on children and terrorism issues, the problem is on religious education which is usually used to mislead the religious teachings to be a strategy to indoctrinated children. While the constitution has already placed the responsibility of the religious learning process to formal education institutions and informal education by the parents but the process of radicalization would possibly happen. Furthermore, most of the radical adults especially in Western countries come from middle-class families with proper education and income levels but their social and psychological transformation in responding to religious radical issues is influencing their life until they commit the radical actions (Veldhuis & Staun, 2009). However, Indonesia also experienced the similar problem. These parents raise children who will be religious indoctrinated based on their thinking. Then, children possibly commit radical actions because on their maturity growth, they gain radical education and social environment (Vale, 2018; van der Heide & Geenen, 2017).

The violation of freedom of religion or belief toward terrorist children could be analyzed from the enforcement of misinterpret religious lesson. Children of terrorist are forced to obey mislead religious education as compatible as their "teacher's" teaching. This would give the children no choice to learn, express and manifest their religiosity rather than deviate religious teaching. It is not only experienced by the children of terrorist but also the children of ISIS and, particularly, child soldier. Positioned as a student, the exposure of war in the name of religion intensely would stimulate children's psychological morbidities into the creation of collective memory, hatred, truth claim and in a long time, it would emerge disruptive behavior (Shaw, 2003). They will normalize harsh attitude and sentence. In expression of religiosity, the children have limited knowledge and space that makes them express it based on the lesson they have received.

On his report, Heiner Bielefeldt stated: *"There can be situations in which the rights of the child must be safeguarded also against his or her parents. One example is the infliction of harmful practices, such as female genital mutilation or child marriage, sometimes carried out in the name of culture, tradition or religion"* (Bielefeldt, 2015) which means that children also has a right to be protected as right holders although it should against their parents. This would explain specifically parental advisory and its relations with radicalization. Parents should be able to provide religious neutrality in guiding children's religious freedom or belief without decreasing parent's authority on children's education. Regarding a short interview with one of social worker at BRSAMPK Handayani Jakarta, a government rehabilitation center for children, the 8 years old daughter of Surabaya's Polrestabes bombers confessed that she forced by her parents to watch ISIS's execution process videos every day before sleep. That daily routine was conducted since she was 5 years old. During the watching session, she was taught that ISIS only killed *kafir* (infidel) which consist of Christian, Densus 88 (Special Detachment 88 or Indonesia special operation team made by National Police for anti-terrorism), and civil servant. She was also only allowed to learn Islamic teachings with her parents, prohibited to draw, sing, and interact with friends. Instead of the freedom of religion or belief, her parents also violating children's freedom of expression as written in UN Convention on The Rights of The Child Protection article 15 about the permit for children to socialize with other children. In the end, after a long brainwash phase, the little girl's main goal is to be a *jihadist* and die like her parents.

### **Education and Health Service**

Through its newsletter, The Habibie Center wrote that in ISIS's Kamp of Hawl there are more than 73,000 ISIS members with around 49,000 children below 12 years old (Center, 2019). As a matter of fact, Indonesian children are also included in that number. The camp has limited access to clean sanitation, healthy housing, medicine, psychology rehabilitation, and school that causing the children to get diarrhea and malnutrition until they died. In the education issue, children learned limited subjects that were arranged by ISIS with a book full of weapons, bombs, and killing pictures. They also study Islamic value in the misleading meaning of *jihad* and mathematic with an inappropriate analogy which contains harsh content (Alsaleh, 2019). The pressure and limitation to gain proper education and health facilities considered as violating basic children's right that was mentioned in UN Convention on The Rights of The Child Protection article 24 about obtaining proper health services and article 28 about receiving the certain quality of education.

Living in the middle of the war with limited access to education and health service may cause a more difficult circumstance for children to survive. Children as caregivers need assistance to access psychological rehabilitation, reproductive health care service, and special educational program (Ni Aolain, 2019). These facilities are not only given during their life in camp but also after they return to their home country. For Indonesia, those are have already written in Indonesian Constitution No. 35, 2014 article 44 about the state's obligation to provide health assurance for children and article 48, 49, and 53 about education for Indonesian children.

### **A New Life for The Caliph**

Recorded by The Habibie Center DETEKSI Indonesia (Database Terorisme dan Kontra-Terrorism Indonesia), since 2017, the Indonesian government has repatriated 652 citizens who had joined with ISIS with half of them were women and children (Center, 2019). In the judicial process, children who involve or to be involved in terrorism need to be distinguished from adult (Octadela, 2019). The legal framework for this issue has already been written in Indonesian Constitution No. 5, 2018 article 16A which stated that "every person who is committing a terror attack by involving children, his/her punishment would be added 1/3 of his/her sentence". This constitution is expected to help children gain justice and prevent terror attacks which associates with children.

Most of the terrorist children experienced exile, stigmatization, and judgment from society after they return to their home countries or their rehabilitation time (Firmansyah, 2019). They assumed a new threat to security in the future. So, the deradicalization program focusing on disengagement and reintegration. One of the state strategy for fulfilling and protecting former terrorist children's rights as mentioned in The Regulations of Ministry of Woman Empowerment and Child Protection No. 7, 2019 about the guidance for children protection from radicalism and terrorism article 1 (19) about the aims of deradicalization and article 2 - 12 about the chain process of deradicalization for children, the Indonesian government has prepared social rehabilitation program. This social rehabilitation conducts for 9-10 months intensely. Ministry of Social Affairs through BRSAMPK Handayani Jakarta, a rehabilitation center for children under the Ministry of Social Affair cooperates with other government institutions which are having similar concern on this issue consist of The National Counter-Terrorism Agency (BNPT) for teaching nationalism value, Ministry of Religious Affairs for teaching religious value, local

government and Civil Society Organization both local and national scope to assess and prepare the reintegration process after the children finished their social rehabilitation program. This program consists of assessment, identification, guidance (pendampingan), cultivating national ideology and religious value, trauma healing, and social reintegration. The main aim of this program is to change children's way of thinking toward radicalism, nationalism, and religion. After they finished the program, they would be re-assessed to measure their radical thinking before the reintegration process.

A unique deradicalization strategy by using the education approach was also held by Al-Hidayah Islamic boarding school (Pesantren). The pesantren is located in Deli Serdang Medan, North Sumatra, and provides learning materials that combine nationalism values with Islamic values for former terrorist children (Gayatri & Kosasih, 2019). Al-Hidayah Pesantren founded by Khairul Ghazali who was a former terrorist, and most of the students are experiencing refusal from formal school after because their fathers are terrorists. While other students are left by their family who are dead or arrested because of terror actions. In the educational process, the Pesantren also involving former adult terrorists to share their experience as a bomber as a life learning for preventing youth terrorism in the future.

## CONCLUSION

Most studies about terrorism and deradicalization only focus on the combatant, refugee, and women but not the intangible victims such as children. Children are commonly receiving less consideration as the most vulnerable object of religious radicalism. This research found that the radicalism could grow among children through indoctrination from micro, meso and macro level. As a victim, children of terrorist and terrorist children's rights should be protected and preserved especially in freedom of religion or belief. They forced to learn about mislead religious knowledge, having limited space for expressing their religiosity and tortured both physically and mentally. Being called as the cubs of caliphate, they are unconsciously expected to commit horrible actions in the name of religion for achieving terrorist group's interest.

In the end, although the legal framework against child exploitation through terrorism has been established and numerous deradicalization strategies have been created, but the awareness toward this issue needs to be improved. Furthermore, this research is limited to the children, terrorism and human rights issues especially freedom of religion or belief, more comprehensive academic research in broader field requires to be conducted and explored.

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