

No. 167

**The Internet in Indonesia:
Development and Impact of Radical Websites**

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Singapore

10 October 2008

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ABSTRACT

The Internet has become a crucial part of modern society's life due to its ability to facilitate communication and structure contemporary society. Indonesia has not been left out of this global phenomenon. The Internet came to Indonesia in 1983 and its usage has continued to expand ever since, especially within institutions of learning and in the government sector. However, the impact of certain activities such as cyber terrorism must then be examined in perspective, given the vast expanse of Indonesia as an archipelago and the resulting difficulties in linking the entire country to the Internet. This paper seeks to trace the development of the Internet in Indonesia and examine the resulting impact on the reach of the radical Bahasa Indonesia Islamic websites in the Indonesian Archipelago and beyond. It also highlights some characteristics of the radical websites, which serves to distinguish them from radical websites from elsewhere such as the Middle East.

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The Internet in Indonesia: Development and Impact of Radical Websites

Introduction

This paper examines the development of the Internet in Indonesia as well as the trends and observations regarding its usage. It is important to situate the monitoring of websites in the societal context of Internet usage in Indonesia. By doing so, it becomes a simpler task to understand the manner in which ideas placed online are conceptualized, the people that may be behind these ideas and from there, provide an educated hypothesis of what they may be planning.

The Internet is increasingly becoming a vital medium of communication on an individual and a societal level. This has resulted in an increasingly IT-savvy younger generation, some of whom also have the intention of committing terror. Saudi researcher Khaled al-Faram estimated that there are currently 5600 websites that disseminate Al-Qaeda-influenced ideology around the world, and that the number is increasing by 900 every year.¹ Noordin M Top, a Jemaah Islamiyyah (JI) leader who orchestrated several major bombings in Indonesia, was believed to have ordered the creation of a website with content on the best ways to attack foreigners in addition to the favoured places to attack foreigners in Jakarta. The arrest of Abdul Basheer s/o Abdul Kader in Singapore is also a good example. Abdul Basheer was a former law lecturer who aspired to join mujahidin fighters in Afghanistan after being influenced by extremist ideas from the Internet,² thus demonstrating the potential of the Internet as a tool for propaganda and recruitment. The examples above are all instances of the phenomenon of cyber terrorism. The U.S. National Conference for State Legislatures defines cyber terrorism as the usage of information technology by groups and individuals intending to commit acts of terror to further their agenda.³

Websites are like “texts” to researchers attempting to study them, akin to archival documents, literary texts and the like that tell historians what life was like and what people

¹ “Researcher: Al-Qaeda-linked Websites Number 5,600”, *ZDNet News*, 4 December 2007, retrieved on 28 May 2008 from http://news.zdnet.com/2100-9588_22-6221362.html.

² Ministry of Home Affairs Press Release: Further Detentions, Releases and Issuance of Restriction Orders under the Internal Security Act, “Detention of Self-Radicalized Singaporean”, 8 June 2007, retrieved on 1 February 2008 from <http://app.sprinter.gov.sg/data/pr/20070608981.htm>.

³ National Conference for State Legislatures, “Cyber-Terrorism”, retrieved on 21 January 2008 from <http://www.ncsl.org/programs/lis/cip/cyberterrorism.htm>.

were thinking of at a certain point in time. Monitoring extremist websites allows the understanding of two important points. The first is the development of the organizations responsible for managing the websites. The second is to allow researchers to understand the activities conducted by the groups or individuals and what these may mean for the organization, individual or the society around them. In addition, monitoring websites allows readers to identify the ideology held by the groups or individuals responsible for creating them and the message they communicate to followers in order to win supporters.

Brief history of the Internet in Indonesia

The Internet in Indonesia was first connected by Joseph Luhukay in 1983 in the Department of Computer Science in the University of Indonesia in Jakarta.⁴ The university was linked to the UU Net in the U.S.⁵ Luhukay currently holds the position of the President Director of Lippo Bank and is also a member of the Indonesian National Committee on Good Corporate Governance.⁶

The next milestone in the history of Internet usage in Indonesia took place in 1994, when government bodies and ISPs obtained permanent Internet connections.⁷ In the same year, the first commercial ISP, PT Indo Internet—also known as the PT Indonet—was formed.⁸ Early users of the Internet comprised non-commercial researchers and hobby groups.⁹ This was soon to change.

Two years later, another milestone in the development of the Internet in Indonesia took place. In 1996, Indonesia's first Internet café, commonly termed *warnet*,¹⁰ was established.¹¹ Merlyna Lim, an Assistant Professor at Arizona State University School of Justice and Social Inquiry who has written extensively about socio-political conditions in Indonesia and their relationship with the Internet, spoke about the importance of

⁴ Apster, Issue 21 (Feb 2007), "The Internet in Indonesia", p. 1.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ The Asian Bankers Summit 2005, retrieved on 24 January 2008 from <http://www.asianbankerforums.com/summit2005/speaker.asp>.

⁷ Apster, "The Internet in Indonesia", p. 2.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ The term *warnet* was derived from "warung Internet". *Warung* is the term for traditional roadside cafes selling food and drinks as well as an assortment of snacks.

¹¹ Apster, "The Internet in Indonesia", p. 2.

understanding the *warnets* if one wishes to understand the impact of the Internet in Indonesia.¹²

The quarterly newsletter of the Asia Pacific Network Information Center put the current figure of *warnet* in Indonesia at approximately 1500.¹³ These cybercafés are estimated to provide 60 to 70 per cent of the total Internet access in Indonesia, a very considerable proportion. Given that *warnets* serve such a high percentage of Internet users, it is quite plausible that some of the creators of the Bahasa Indonesia radical Islamic websites, as well as their readers, can be users of these *warnets*. It is thus crucial to develop an understanding of *warnets* in order to understand the Indonesian radical Islamic websites.

After 1998, companies started offering bigger Internet cafes with more sophisticated computers.¹⁴ Schools as well as university-based networks began to take over the established Internet cafes,¹⁵ thus the beginning of increased institutionalization of Internet usage. People presently use the Internet in offices, universities and *pesantrens*, the Islamic schools. Amid this development, *warnets* continue to exist and is still an important aspect of the information technology scene in Indonesia, as they provide Internet access to people who are unable to afford their own computers and the subscription fee.

The necessity of the Internet cannot be underestimated. On 7 April 2008, the International Centre for Islam and Pluralism launched an Open Distance E-Learning Pesantren programme with the Ford Foundation.¹⁶ This programme promised to provide aids, such as computers, to e-learning to eight *pesantrens* across Java.¹⁷ This showed that the increasing need for the Internet in the Archipelago and that international collaboration is increasingly put in place in order to bring about more sophisticated access to the Internet in institutes of learning.

¹² Merlyna Lim, in an interview with Lenore Lyons, "Social History of the Internet and its Uses in Indonesia with Merlyna Lim", *M/C Dialogue*, retrieved on 3 June 2007 from <http://dialogue.media-culture.org.au/node/20/print>.

¹³ Apster, "The Internet in Indonesia", p. 2.

¹⁴ Merlyna Lim, "Social History of the Internet and Its Uses".

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ "Ketika Internet Masuk Pesantren", *Koran Tempo*, 28 April 2008.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

Challenges to Internet linkage across Indonesia

The work of providing Internet access to the whole of Indonesia is still plagued with problems of long distances and access to populations in remote areas and mountainous terrain.¹⁸ The most recent statistic on the number of Internet users in Indonesia revealed a mere 10 per cent of the entire population.¹⁹ The map of Indonesia shows a country that consists of more than 17 000 islands. The distance between any two islands is considerable. Even within an island, cities can be some distance apart. Therefore, providing Internet accessibility in remote and lesser-populated areas is a significant challenge in Indonesia.

The Minister of Communication and Informatics, Muhamad Nuh, recently set a target of 2011 as a year where Internet will become accessible to all the villages in Indonesia.²⁰ Approximately 38 000 villages across Indonesia currently need access to the telephone line and the Internet.²¹ This shows that access to Internet across the Archipelago is still lacking but the Indonesian government has taken serious note of the issue.

Trend of Internet usage in Indonesia

Several pertinent issues arise due to the existence of radical Islamic websites. These include the person responsible for their creation and maintenance, their viewers' profile, the intentions of these viewers and how they plan to implement the ideas they obtained from the websites. These issues are definitely becoming more pressing in view of the 2005 statistics taken from the Asia Pacific Network Information Center. The number of Internet subscribers and users in Indonesia has increased astronomically since 1998²²: the number of Internet subscribers has increased 11-fold and the number of Internet users has increased more than 31-fold. The Head of the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association says that the number of Internet users in Indonesia is currently pegged at 25 million, which is an increase of 5 million since 2006.²³ While it has yet to displace the more "traditional" form of mass

¹⁸ Apster, "The Internet in Indonesia", p. 2.

¹⁹ Indonesia Matters, "Internet Users Statistics", 16 January 2008, <http://www.indonesiamatters.com/1568/internet-usage/> (accessed on 18 January 2008).

²⁰ "Tahun 2011, Internet Masuk Desa", *Koran Tempo*, 16 May 2008.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Apster, "The Internet in Indonesia", p. 2.

²³ Indonesia Matters, "Internet Users Statistics".

media in conveying information such as the television and newspapers, the exponential increase shows that, with each year, it is becoming an increasingly crucial tool for work, study and access to information.

Understanding the general profile of Internet users in Indonesia is also important before attempting to understand Bahasa Indonesia extremist websites. Based on her research, Merlyna Lim sees the typical Internet user in Indonesia as a young individual, typically based in urban areas where the Internet is more likely to be easily accessible. This is especially true in the abovementioned institutions of learning and offices.²⁴

In response to my query as to whether it is possible for radical Islamic websites to be created via *warnets*, Merlyna Lim explained that the scenario is possible, but improbable. For the most part, radical Islamic websites are believed to be created outside *warnets* for a number of reasons. Firstly, the organisations are normally well-organised and possess good support structure. Many of their websites are likely to be created with the help of webmasters who work either in their office or at home. In addition, the creation of a website is an intensive and difficult task, which is difficult to accomplish within the limited time frame imposed by the *warnets*. Highly sophisticated websites are even more unlikely to be created in the *warnets*, due to the amount of time needed to create such a website.

According to Lim, radical websites are unlikely to be created using the *warnet*. However, she explained that the creating of blogs, mailing lists and forums is a different matter and could possibly be created using a *warnet*. This is due to the comparatively lesser amount of labour and technical expertise that is required. Therefore, it is possible for members or even sympathizers of the radical Islamic groups to create blogs, mailing lists or forums using a *warnet*. They are also unlikely to be stopped by the *warnet* owners. Creating and viewing a website are not illegal acts by any standard, especially in post-Suharto Indonesia, where citizens are guaranteed the freedom of expression and speech by its constitution. Also, there is no clear line between a jihadi or Islamic website, and thus a casual onlooker is unlikely to know the difference with a cursory glance. Hence, creating an extremist website in a *warnet* is likely to go unnoticed or unchecked. To compound this problem, some *warnets* have just one computer per booth, which affords the user absolute privacy. Owners of the *warnets* usually do not monitor their customer's activities on the computers due to the difficulty in monitoring the large number of computers within a single

²⁴ Merlyna Lim, "Social History of the Internet and Its Uses".

warnet. A small *warnet* can contain an average of 5 to 10 computers while a large one can have up to 50 computers within its premises.

Merlyna Lim also noted that a high percentage of Internet users tend to be male.²⁵ This corresponds with the content of the Indonesian extremist websites, which, for most part, appear to be written by men for male audience. However, the contents of the radical websites show that there appears to be an increasing number of female users, which fits Lim's observation that there are more women who uses the Internet now.²⁶ Articles—such as an article posted on a personal blog calling for women to support their husbands' involvement as *mujahidins*—attempting to persuade Muslim women to be involved in jihad have been observed recently.²⁷ Some radical websites, like Arrahmah Media, have dedicated a section of the website for female audience.²⁸ Unlike Middle Eastern radical websites, the Bahasa Indonesia website postings to-date appear to still confine Muslim women to a “passive logistical role”²⁹ in supporting jihad. Most of the postings exhort women to play the roles of good Muslim wives and reject the values that the West is supposedly selling, such as independence and the idea of being career women.³⁰ Little is known about the women's role in terror operations but five women had been arrested for smuggling explosive materials from Malaysia into Indonesia in 2006.³¹ The fact that women in extremist organisation were given the job of maintaining internal lines of communication and providing logistical support to terrorist operations while the men carry out the attacks reflects the supporting role that Bahasa Indonesia radical websites advocate for Muslim women. The increase in the number of articles targeted at female readers thus reflects, most possibly, greater number of female audience for the Bahasa Indonesia extremist websites, and also the values that the radical organizations and personnel behind the articles wish to convey to the readers. The content of

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ “Kenikmatan Kemuliaan Yang Paling Besar”, *Tarbiyah wa Tasfiyyah blog*, 9 October 2008, retrieved on 24 January 2008 from <http://abahzacky.wordpress.com/2007/10/09/kenikmatan-kemuliaan-yang-paling-besar/>.

²⁸ See Arrahmah Media website at <http://www.arahmah.com/>

²⁹ Magnus Ranstorp and Graeme P. Herd, “Approaches to Countering Terrorism and CIST”, in Anne Aldis and Graeme P. Herd (Eds.), *The Ideological War on Terror: Worldwide Strategies for Counter-Terrorism* (pp. 3–20), London and New York: Routledge, 2007, p. 9.

³⁰ See the Al Muhajirun website, “Mengembalikan Citra Wanita”, 21 April 2008, retrieved on 23 April 2008 from http://almuhajirun.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=253&Itemid=33.

³¹ Farish A. Noor, “Women in the Service of the Jundullah: The Case of Women Supporters of the Jama'ah Islamiyah of Indonesia”, Paper for the Workshop on “Female Suicide Bombers and Europe” organized by the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), Arundel House, London, 12 March 2007, p. 13.

the articles also reflect the values that members of radical organisations convey to the female members.

Some observations about extremist Bahasa Indonesia websites

The radical Bahasa Indonesia websites possess their own unique characteristics. Firstly, the extremist websites are concerned about matters outside Indonesia. They are created in response to what is perceived as injustice committed against Muslim communities in other countries, for instance the Arab-Israeli conflict in the Middle East, as well as current events in Pakistan and also in Chechnya. Other examples are groups such as the Indonesian Committee for the Palestinian Solidarity, also known as KISPA, which are formed to support the Palestinian cause.³² Websites such as the Palestinian Information Center also update readers on the current situation in the Middle East.³³ Increasingly, the content of the websites is focusing on the situation of Muslims in countries not previously noted and where perceived persecution of Muslims takes place. Examples of such areas are the Maldives and Southern Thailand. Postings that draw attention towards the perceived injustice against Muslims in other parts of the world encourage sentiments of moral outrage. These perceptions provide the basis for the post-911 jihadi movement and are a source of radical sentiments in general.³⁴

To cite an example, the Arrahmah Media website posted in November 2007 reported the declaration of the Islamic State of Caucasus by the Amir of the Chechen mujahidin, Dokka Umarov.³⁵ The declaration was found on other extremist websites as well. This showed the widespread concern among Indonesia hard-liners about issues taking place in

³² "Tentang KISPA", *Indonesian Committee for Palestinian Solidarity website*, retrieved on 25 January 2008 from <http://www.kispa.org/index.php/view/about>. The KISPA is chaired by Ferry Nur and is made up of the following groups that made the Palestinian cause their utmost concern: Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), Azikra, Darutarbiyah and Anti Zionist and American Movement (GAZA).

³³ Palestinian Information Center, retrieved on 25 January 2008 from <http://www.infopalestina.com/ms/default.aspx>. The Palestinian Information Center called itself an independent organisation. It established its first website in Arabic on 1 December 1997 and followed up with Turkish, Urdu, Malay, French and Russian websites. It stated its aim as correcting the Western-biased news reports of the current condition in Palestine.

³⁴ Marc Sageman, "Ask the Author: Marc Sageman", *Foreign Policy*, April 2008, retrieved on 22 September 2008 from http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=4195.

³⁵ M. Fachry, "Daulah Islam Kaukasus dan Masa Depan Jihad Chechnya", *Arrahmah Media website*, 25 November 2007, retrieved on 14 January 2008 from <http://www.arahmah.com/blog/daulah-islam-kaukasus-dan-masa-depan-jihad-chechnya/>.

Chechnya. The Arrahmah Media website itself is a radical website that is believed to be managed by the son of one of the important leaders of Jema'ah Islamiyah, Abu Jibril.

Around May 2008, some members of the radical forums also expressed the desire to know more about the situation in Southern Thailand. Khattab Media Publication issued an interview it conducted with a certain Sheikh Abu Ubaidah, a Malaysian who had left for Pattani to conduct jihad.³⁶ The interview shed light on the current situation in Thailand, claiming that Pattani has been oppressed under the Thai government that adheres to Buddhism and is a puppet of the U.S.³⁷ Thus, fighting the Thai troops is akin to fighting the U.S. itself.³⁸ Abu Ubaidah identified Malaysia and Indonesia as places where jihad is much needed; however, priority should be given to Pattani as the suffering that its Muslim community is undergoing is more intense than that in the other two countries.³⁹ He also revealed that the *mujahidins* in Pattani come from many parts of the world and that the situation there is one of an uprising by the religious community, not a nationalistic one.⁴⁰

Merlyna Lim, in her research of a comparative study of Indonesian and Iranian blogs, found that although the websites help to bring down global barriers and create a new form of global narrative very quickly, a “local contextualization of global discourses” ultimately takes place.⁴¹ An example is how the extremist websites took up the issue of commemoration of the first *intifadhah* by some Middle Eastern websites. The *intifadhah* is an Arabic word that literally means to awaken and shake off. The term is used to refer to the Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation of their territories from 1987 to 1993, a significant milestone in the history of Arab-Israeli relationship.

In December 2007, the Indonesian Committee for the Palestinian Solidarity (KISPA) organized two activities to commemorate the first *intifadhah*.⁴² In addition, it stated in this solidarity campaign that the aim was to cultivate the spirit of *intifadhah* among Indonesian undergraduates. While it is not certain what was actually spoken during the event itself, the element of bringing what was originally a foreign (that is, Palestinian) concept to Indonesia

³⁶ “Topic: Interview with the Mujahidin of Pattani Darussalam”, *Al Muhajirun website*, 13 May 2008, retrieved on 14 May 2008 from

http://www.almuhajirun.com/index.php?option=com_fireboard&Itemid=61&func=view&id=242&catid=4.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Merlyna Lim, in an interview with Lenore Lyons, “Social History of the Internet and its Uses”.

⁴² Sekjen Kiswa Akan Hadiri Peringatan Intifadhah di UI Depok, *KISPA website*, retrieved on 23 January 2008 from <http://www.kiswa.org/index.php/view/berita/datetimes/2007-12-06+11%3A13%3A27>.

could be seen from the event advertisement. The Palestinian aim of shaking off Israeli occupation was interpreted as breaking free from something else in Indonesia, possibly the shaking off of secular rule.

Complementary relationship between websites

Hanna Rogan described radical websites as operating relatively independent of one another but “many sites are inter-related in the sense that they frequently redistribute and circulate the same material.”⁴³ There is an observed link between different extremist websites propounding similar beliefs. This is presumably done to achieve some form of ideological affinity with other websites, both local and foreign websites. Similar files or videos are often found on different websites. Some members of the websites, for instance, share information on how to conduct hacking via online forums. Observations of two websites, Al Muhajirun and Al Ghuroba, highlight the example of links between extremist websites.

Al Muhajirun is the name of a disbanded terrorist group from the United Kingdom. Al Ghuroba represents Al Muhajirun's offshoot group after it was disbanded. Al Ghuroba was later also banned by the U.K. government in 2006 but continued to operate under the new name of Ahlus Sunnah wal Jama'ah,⁴⁴ basically through a password-protected forum manned by the former spokesman of Al Muhajirun and subsequently Al Ghuroba, Anjem Choudary.⁴⁵ The forum can only be accessed via an introduction by existing members. It reportedly consists of recordings of Osama bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri as well as the founder of the Al Muhajirun sect, Omar Bakri Mohammed. It is not certain if the Indonesian Al Muhajirun website is run by an official Indonesian branch, especially since the U.K. group had been disbanded by its founder in 2004. The Al Ghuroba cell in Indonesia, however, was noted to have been introduced by students who had been to Karachi, Pakistan and were members of that cell. The students were namely Gun Gun Rusmawan and Abdul Rohim.

Regarding the websites, however, it is uncertain whether the two websites are based in the U.K. or in Indonesia. The Al Ghuroba blog owner listed his location as Qandahar,

⁴³ Hanna Rogan, “Jihadism Online – A Study of how Al-Qaida and Radical Islamist Groups Use the Internet for Terrorist Purposes”, FFI/RAPPORT 2006/00915, p. 8.

⁴⁴ Abul Taher, “Veil Teacher was Obeying a Fatwa”, *The Sunday Times*, 29 October 2006, retrieved on 18 January 2008 from <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2087-2426770,00.html>.

⁴⁵ Abul Taher, “UK Preacher in Secret Web Call for Jihad”, *The Sunday Times*, 14 January 2008, retrieved on 18 January 2008 from <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2087-2546266,00.html>.

Afghanistan. However, this must be viewed with caution as placing oneself as being in a different country is common in forums and blogs, even among non-radical Islamic websites. The language used in the blog is, without a doubt, Bahasa Indonesia and the blogger's familiarity with the updated situation in Indonesia cannot be matched by someone who lives outside the Archipelago. Nevertheless, there does appear to be a very close linkage between the Indonesian Al Muhajirun website and the Al Ghuroba website and this relationship appears to mirror the relationship of the two actual organizations, one of which is the offshoot of the other. Postings found on the Al Muhajirun website are often featured on the Al Ghuroba website as well. In addition, Al Ghuroba often helps Al Muhajirun advertise its activities. For instance, in December 2007, Al Ghuroba featured the special edition of Al Muhajirun's magazine, encouraging its readers to buy them.⁴⁶ Both are open websites that can be accessed by anyone with an Internet connection. Unlike its alleged U.K. counterpart, the Indonesian Al Ghuroba website is a blog hosted by Blogspot. Even so, their close relationship seems too much of a coincidence to be dismissed and is therefore an example of close linkages between websites which results in the sharing of information between extremist websites.

Yet another example of sharing and links between the websites was the uploaded file of the Bali bombers, currently awaiting execution, on the Al Firdaus website.⁴⁷ The same letter written by Amrozi, Mukhlas and Imam Samudera could also be found in the Al Ghuroba website.⁴⁸ By sharing files such as these written by convicted terror perpetrators essentially negates the geographical and spatial boundaries, as readers from other parts of the world are able to access, read and possibly become influenced by the radical statements.

Sources of funding

As Hanna Rogan observed, overt calls for financial support by the extremist websites are not

⁴⁶ "Al Muhajirun Edisi Eksklusif...Segera Terbit!!", *Al Ghuroba-Followers of Ahlus Sunnah wal Jamaah*, 30 November 2007, retrieved on 21 January 2008 from <http://gurobabersatu.blogspot.com/2007/11/al-muhajirun-edisi-eksklusifsegera.html>.

⁴⁷ Megag36, "Risalah Taklimat Tiga Serangkai", *Forum Jihad Al Firdaus*, 30 September 2007, retrieved on 14 January 2008 from <http://www/alfirdaus.org/>.

⁴⁸ "Risalah Taklimat", *Al Ghuroba-Followers of Ahlus Sunnah wal Jamaah*, 2 October 2007, retrieved on 14 January 2008 from <http://gurobabersatu.blogspot.com/2007/10/risalah-taklimat.html>.

common⁴⁹ and this is the case for Bahasa Indonesia websites as well. However, the content of some websites provide readers with a good guess as to the sources of funding either for the websites themselves, or the organizations behind them.

For instance, there is an advertisement by an Australian server company on the Al Firdaus website. At some point in time, the website featured an advertisement by a humanitarian organization called Direct Relief and it invited the criticism of one member of the forum because it called for aid for the victims of Hurricane Katrina in the U.S.⁵⁰ The phenomenon shows that these companies may be unwittingly supporting extremist websites and these companies come from the very countries that are in the forefront of the fight against terror.

Another way of sourcing for funding is through direct calls for donation, however, this is not common on Bahasa Indonesia radical websites. Although Rogan stated that bank account numbers are not usually posted on the extremist websites, KISPA has done so for the purpose of urging readers to donate to the Palestinian cause as part of their *infaq* (tithe) obligation.⁵¹ More commonly done, especially among the websites that are manned by radical organizations, is to sell items online. Part of the funds from the sale, presumably, contributes towards the maintenance of the websites. For example, the Palestinian Information Center website sold writing books printed with the photographs of Palestinian martyrs Syaikh Ahmed Yassin, Abdul Aziz Rantisi and Yahya Ayyasy on its cover.⁵² Costing Rp. 2000 a book, the website stated that it would direct 10 per cent of its proceeds to the Palestinian cause.⁵³ The sale of merchandise such as the notebook is one of the sources of financial supply for the organization. By featuring martyrs on the cover of the notebook, the Palestinian Information Center was also drawing the attention of Muslims all over the world—particularly those who can be reached through an Indonesian language website—to the struggle for the return of the Palestinian state. The Palestinian Information Center also raises

⁴⁹ Rogan, “Jihadism Online”, p. 31.

⁵⁰ “Iklan Orang Mendukung Kafir Mohon Dihilangkan”, *Forum Jihad Al Firdaus*, retrieved on 25 January 2008 from <http://www.alfirdaus.org/>.

⁵¹ See the KISPA website at <http://www.kispa.org/index.php/view/infaq>.

⁵² “Here: Notebook with Cover of Palestinian Fighters Syaikh Yassin, Rantisi and Yahya Ayyasy”, *Palestinian Information Center website*, 21 August 2007, retrieved on 21 August 2007 from <http://www.palestine-info.com/ms/default.aspx>.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

funds by selling books. In December 2007, it advertised the sale of a book entitled *Independent Palestine or Third Intifadhah*.⁵⁴

Materials online: Bomb manuals

The Bahasa Indonesia websites are still in the stage of propounding ideological radicalism rather than being a medium of instruction for carrying out violence. Unlike the Arabic language radical websites, jihadist training manuals do not flourish on the Bahasa Indonesia websites at this stage. However, in early 2008, detailed bomb and firearms manuals were found on Al Muhajirun and Arrahmah Media websites. All were apparently posted by the same person, with multiple memberships in the different forums. The justification for using weapons was provided, saying that Prophet Muhammad had replied, “Arrow.” (*aromyu*) when asked what “strength” (*alquwwah*) meant to him.⁵⁵ Thereby, the person who posted the manuals told forum readers that, in the modern context, this would refer to the usage of rocket and bombs.⁵⁶ Members of the forums had shown enthusiasm in downloading the websites and, possibly, even putting the contents of the manuals into practice. In fact, the posting of the bomb manuals appeared to have sparked off a series of discussions about the usage of weapons in defending oppressed Muslims around the world.⁵⁷ The manuals themselves were more comprehensive than the ones previously found on Imam Samudra’s website, with detailed explanation on how to assemble different types as well as different components of bombs. Explanations, however, were patchy in some areas, such as with regards to the storage, assembly and deployment of the resulting chemicals and bombs. Safety instructions, for instance, were lacking in the case of the making of nitroglycerin. Even though nitroglycerin is a very unstable explosive, there is no instruction on safety measures. There is also no instruction on how to store the resulting nitroglycerin. The lack of safety instructions certainly poses grave danger to readers who attempt to produce the chemicals and bombs and reflects a lack of technical expertise on the part of the writer. Bomb

⁵⁴ See the advertisement for “Independent Palestine or Third Intifadhah”, *Palestinian Information Center website*, 15 December 2007, retrieved on 16 December 2007 from <http://www.infopalestina.com/ms/default.aspx>.

⁵⁵ “Topic: Knowledge on Instruments in I’dad Madhy”, *Al Muhajirun*, retrieved on 11 February 2008 from http://www.almuhajirun.com/index.php?option=com_fireboard&Itemid=61&func=view&id=200&catid=4.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Read the discussion found on Al Muhajirun and Arrahmah Media forums.

making is a specific technical skill possessed by only a few. The content of the bomb manuals shows that it is still not possible to gain complete knowledge of technical skills such as bomb making online. However, the creation of the manuals and the amount of interest they generate in the websites show that Bahasa Indonesia radical websites are moving in the direction of their Middle East counterparts, with more content that aim to help readers carry out violence in real life.

Materials online: Hacking manuals

Prior to the progression to highly violent materials such as bomb-making manuals, the Bahasa Indonesia extremist websites had been filled with detailed instructions on cyber terrorism such as hacking. The Forum Jihad Al Firdaus website dedicates an entire section to the purpose of jihad through the Internet. Some members of the Al Firdaus forum actively share their IT knowledge about hacking and defacing websites that they deem to be detrimental to Islam.⁵⁸ They even share knowledge about how to go about searching for possible websites to learn how to hack into google.com without being detected by the administrators.⁵⁹ Hacking appears to be the "worst" form of violence that most of the Bahasa Indonesia websites featured prior to the discovery of the bomb manuals. In the case of Al Firdaus website, the administrator specifically stated that the hacking is to be done as part of jihad using the Internet. They had also dedicated an entire section of the forum for the purpose of sharing information and knowledge on hacking.⁶⁰ However, there are websites that have been proven to be linked to terror convicts in carrying out their aims. Examples include anshar.net which is believed to be created under the orders of Noordin M Top.⁶¹ However, to date, cyber terrorism, particularly attacks to debilitate the information system, has not been the main objective of most—if not all—other Bahasa Indonesia extremist

⁵⁸ "Situs Buat Latihan Nge Hack!" *Forum Jihad Al Firdaus*, 05 July 2007, retrieved on 24 January 2008 from <http://www.alfirdaus.org/>.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ See the section "Hacking dan Jihad Elektronik" in <http://www.alfirdaus.org/>.

⁶¹ <http://www.anshar.net> was created by a student of Semarang University, Moh. Agung Prabowo alias Kalingga alias Max Fiderman alias Ahmad alias Kalingga alias Bebek-bebekan in 2005. The creation of the website is suspected to be under the direction of Noordin M Top through Abdul Aziz alias Ja'far alias Qital, a suspected leader of the East Java *wakalah* of Jema'ah Islamiyah. The website contained information on foreigners' favourite places in Jakarta, information on escape routes for potential attackers as well as instruction on making bombs. It also once carried the will of Mukhlas, one of the Bali bomb convicts who are currently awaiting execution. The website has been shut down by authorities.

websites. Any form of attack would have been counter-productive to the radical community's own objective of using the Internet as a medium of information sharing as well as publicity. Therefore, Forum Jihad Al Firdaus is thus far the only Bahasa Indonesia radical website that encourages the practice of hacking as performing jihad. Its operation has by and large ceased since early 2008, showing the incompatibility between hacking and using the Internet as medium of furthering the radicals' cause.

Cyber terrorism: Exhortation of a real-life terrorist

The Indonesian police, for now, largely focuses violent websites such as anshar.net and less so on many other websites that may not post violent manuals but may have the potential to radicalize its readers. The case of Imam Samudera, one of the Bali bomb planners currently awaiting his death sentence, showed the increasing possibility of cyber terrorism in Indonesia. After his arrest, Samudera published an autobiography of his life and motivation for the Bali bombing in the prison cell.⁶² His autobiography also included a section on computer hacking.⁶³ Samudera encouraged fellow Muslim radicals to attack U.S. computers and raise funds for global jihad by committing credit card fraud, or "carding".⁶⁴ Samudera also arranged for a laptop to be smuggled into his prison cell so that he could, it was alleged, chat with accomplices who helped to pull off the second Bali bombing.⁶⁵ The case of Imam Samudera highlights the increasing possibility of using information technology in any sort of operations in the world and, unfortunately, this includes terrorist operations.

Websites as medium of propaganda

However for the most part, the Bahasa Indonesia extremist websites are still mainly utilized

⁶² Imam Samudera's book is entitled *Aku Melawan Teroris* (I Versus Terrorists). It is readily available in major bookstores in Indonesia. An effort to counter Samudera's justifications for the bombings had been conducted by Ustadz Muhammad Haniff bin Hassan in his book, *Unlicensed to Kill: Countering Imam Samudera's Justification for the Bali Bombing*.

⁶³ Alan Sipress, "An Indonesian's Prison Memoir Takes Holy War into Cyberspace", *Washington Post Foreign Service*, 14 December 2004, retrieved on 18 January 2008 from <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A62095-2004Dec13.html>.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

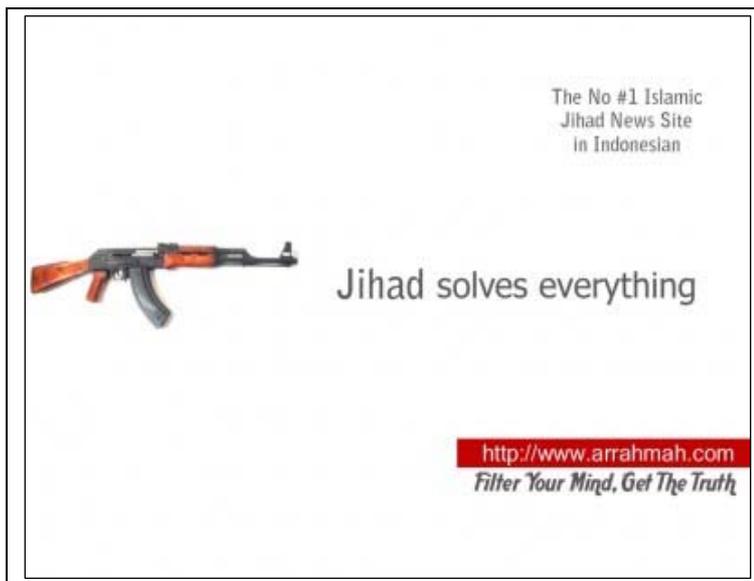
⁶⁵ Robert Raffaele, "Indonesian Police Charge Two Suspects with Cyber-Terrorism", *Global security.org*, 23 August 2006, retrieved on 09 January 2008 from <http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/library/news/2006/08/sec-06823-voa01.htm>.

as a means of propaganda dissemination. The websites commonly utilize images, computer wallpapers, videos and persuasive rhetoric to convey the sufferings of fellow Muslims around the world. More importantly, the websites also suggest to its readers the preferred solution to the problem. The images below are computer wallpapers created by Arrahmah Media, the website managed by Abu Jibril's son. They are made available for downloading by readers. The pictures contain images of the AK 47 machine guns used by the *mujahidins* in Afghanistan.



Source: Arrahmah Media website <http://www.arahmah.com/>

Another computer wallpaper bears a simple but powerful statement: "Jihad solves everything".



Source: Arrahmah Media website <http://www.arahmah.com/>

Marc Sageman observed that “the mass nature of the Internet communication encourages sound bites and other reductionist answers to difficult questions. Drawn to their logical conclusion, these views encourage extreme, abstract, but simplistic solutions, without regard to the reality and complexity of life.”⁶⁶ Portrayals of violence in pictorial form like the above encourage just such simplistic solutions to the problems of the Muslim world.

Other means of propaganda are in the written content of the websites. Many of the contents of the Bahasa Indonesia websites, like the radical websites elsewhere, thrive on conspiracy theories or simply negative portrayals of the West and other perceived enemies. The example of a post on the Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia’s website in November 2007 highlights this. The Hizbut Tahrir published a long list of political developments around the world and in Indonesia that took place in the months of September and October 2007.⁶⁷ On each news item, Hizbut Tahrir added its own comments. The translation of the news item and the comment added by HTI goes as follows: “The FBI has opened up vacancies for agents in the areas of linguistics and is looking for special agents from the Muslim community including those who are fluent in Bahasa Indonesia” (Jawa Pos, 3/9). The HTI commented: “This is an implementation of Bush’s strategy as outlined in his speech on March 2006 of using Muslim

⁶⁶ Marc Sageman, “Understanding Terror Networks” (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), p. 162.

⁶⁷ “Komentar Politik September-Oktober 2007”, *Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia website*, 19 November 2007, <http://www.hizbut-tahrir.or.id/index.php/2007/11/19/komentar-politik-september-oktober-2007/> (accessed on 26 November 2007).

community to fight Muslims. They are not happy to see the nation with majority Muslims of Indonesia becoming strong.”

The readers of the HTI website who posted their comments on the news expressed shock and anger at the U.S. One reader wrote: “The religious community will become more intelligent if they are diligent in reading the political information with the angle of Islam!”⁶⁸ Thus, it can be seen that some of the readers may be swayed by the arguments put forth by the extremist websites. However, this is certainly just one example. Not all online propaganda elicits similarly sympathetic responses. For instance, the Bali bombers’ statement of purpose on the Al Firdaus website did not manage to attract much attention as compared to other postings on jihad, as seen from the number of views it had in comparison to the others.

Websites: Medium of publicity

In addition, websites also make for a good form of medium to advertise, especially for activities conducted by the organizations themselves. For instance, the Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia regularly posts advertisements calling for participants for the activities it conducts online. Last year's International Caliphate Conference was widely publicized by its official website.⁶⁹ However, the reach of websites alone to achieve participation is limited in a country like Indonesia. As mentioned in the previous section, Internet users only amount to 10 per cent of the Indonesian population. Thus, there is a need to couple advertisement with more "traditional" forms of media such as newspapers, radio and television to reach a greater audience. For instance, the HTI organized parades in various cities in Indonesia simultaneously. These parades are a good form of advertisement for people who may not have access to technology such as the Internet to find out about the Caliphate conference. Some websites such as the Al Muhajirun website also utilize the virtual space to advertise for its magazine.⁷⁰ As mentioned previously, the special edition of the Al Muhajirun magazine was advertised on other websites as well.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ “International Caliphate Conference”, *Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia website*, 27 May 2007, retrieved on 27 May 2007 from <http://www.hizbut-tahrir.or.id/index.php/2007/05/27/undangan-kki/#more-76>.

⁷⁰ “Majalah”, *Al Muhajirun-Pengikut Ahlus Sunnah wal Jamaah*, http://www.almuhajirun.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=blogcategory&id=33&Itemid=53.

Audience

Another question raised in the course of looking at the extremist websites is the identity and places of origin of its audience. A search online found the following statistics. Figure 1 shows that readers from Indonesia make up the bulk of the readers of the Hizbut Tahrir website, making up 93 per cent of its audience.

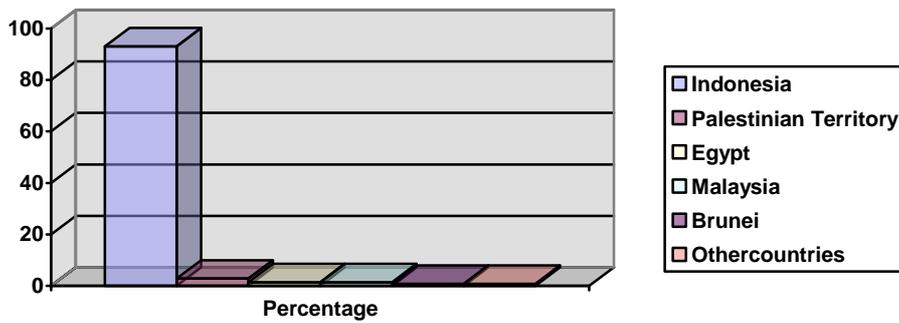


Figure 1: Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia website readers.

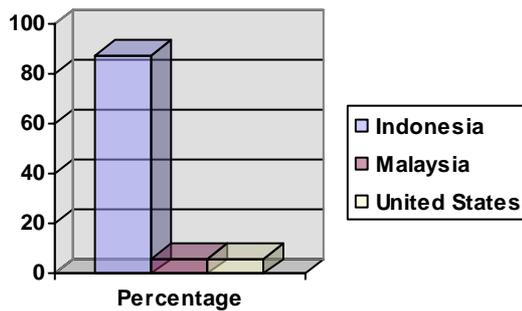


Figure 2: Al Muhajirun website readers.

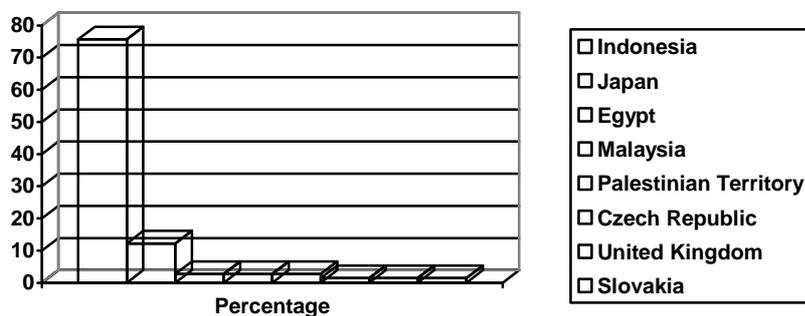


Figure 3 Palestinian Information Center website readers

The statistics proved that a majority of the audience of the hard-line Bahasa Indonesia

websites comes from within Indonesia. The other countries noted on the graph share a common trait: The audience in these countries understand Bahasa Indonesia. It is thus possible that the factor of a similar language contributed to the second highest number of readers but this is not consistent. It is highly possible that language contributes to the phenomenon as Bahasa Indonesia is a language that is not as widely understood outside of the region as, say, Arabic.

The reach of these websites is predominantly international. However, it is difficult to quantify the statistics. For instance, visitors from the Czech Republic and Japan are among the readers of the websites. It is unclear if the visitors have a genuine interest in reading Bahasa Indonesia extremist websites, or if they are simply random visitors. However, one thing for certain is the presence of a significant number of people reading the websites in other parts of the world. Thus, the danger of radicalization is not confined to Indonesia or the countries within the Southeast Asian region but rather far beyond the region to relatively distant areas such as Europe.

However, it is also important not to exaggerate the impact of the online extremist message in Indonesia. As mentioned, the number of Internet users in Indonesia may be growing but it is still very low to date. This “implies the difficulty of jihadism online to reach the masses” in the country.⁷¹

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper examines the history and some trends of Internet usage in Indonesia and their consequential implications on website monitoring. Some interesting trends in the Indonesian extremist websites were also highlighted. To date, most of the Indonesian hard-line websites act more as a medium for propaganda on extremist ideologies. However, a more violent stance in the websites was observed in the beginning of 2008 with the posting of the bomb manuals on some websites. Even so, many of its participants are likely to be more concerned with practical concerns rather than the desire to engage in acts of terrorism, given the current socio-economic conditions. Thus, they may express extremist-tinged statements online but may be disinclined to actively participate in jihad in real life. Therefore, hard-line proclamations and agreement with these ideas online and even the provision of materials to

⁷¹ Rogan, “Jihadism Online”, p. 32.

commit violence need not necessarily translate into action. In addition, the “tipping point” towards radicalization differs between individuals; thus, the Internet is not the only medium with the potential to radicalize readers. Furthermore, considering the challenges in linking up the entire Archipelago to the Internet, the percentage of overall Internet users in Indonesia is still far too small for ideas placed online to be of much impact in influencing the general population. However, given the astounding increase of Internet users and subscribers in Indonesia as well as around the world in the past decade, the situation may well be different in the next couple of years.

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Forum Jihad Al Firdaus (<http://www.alfirdaus.org/>)

Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (<http://www.hizbut-tahrir.or.id/>)

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