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**No. 242**

**The *Forum Betawi Rempug* (FBR) of Jakarta:  
An Ethnic-Cultural Solidarity Movement  
in a Globalising Indonesia**

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## Abstract

Post-Suharto Indonesia has witnessed many significant changes to its socio-political landscape, with new political parties emerging and new socio-political demands being made by local actors that include NGOs and lobby groups. This paper looks at one of the local ethno-communitarian movements that have emerged over the past decade, the *Forum Betawi Rempug* (FBR), that aims to represent the interests of the Betawi people who inhabit the area in and around the capital Jakarta. The paper looks at how the FBR emerged as a local grassroots movement that champions the cause of the Betawi people, and what impact this may have on the relationship between local grassroots movements and the major political parties that are all based in the nation's capital. It contrasts the FBR to other, more sectarian, groups like the *Fron Pembela Islam* (FPI) that have been more exclusive in its appeal to Muslims only, noting that the FBR is a group that brings together Betawians of different religious backgrounds too. The paper also considers what the long-term impact of groups like the FBR will be, as they engage with the country's political parties in its attempt to gain support and leverage for its political demands.

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writings include: *Writings on the War on Terror* (Globalmedia Press, India, 2006), *From Majapahit to Putrajaya: Searching For Another Malaysia* (Silverfish Books, Kuala Lumpur, 2005), *Islam Progresif: Peluang, Tentangan dan Masa Depan di Asia Tenggara* (SAMHA, Jogjakarta, 2005), *Di San Zhi Yan Kan Ma Lai Xi Ya* (Sin Chew Jit Poh Press, Petaling Jaya, 2004), *The Other Malaysia: Writings on Malaysia's Subaltern History* (Silverfish Books, Kuala Lumpur, 2003); and *New Voices of Islam*, (International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World, Leiden, Netherlands, 2002).

# **The *Forum Betawi Rempug* (FBR) of Jakarta: An Ethnic-Cultural Solidarity Movement in a Globalising Indonesia**

## **I. Introduction: The Rise of Betawi Consciousness in Post-Suharto Indonesia and the development of the *Forum Betawi Rempug*.**

Post-Suharto Indonesia has witnessed the emergence of many new socio-political movements that have sedimented into the form of NGOs, Civil Society Organisations and even political parties. (Hefner, 1997, 2000; Sidel, 2006<sup>2</sup>) At present (2012) Indonesia is witnessing the rise of new political parties such as Gerindra (led by former General Prabowo), Hanura (led by former General Wiranto), *Nasional Demokrat*- Nasdem (led by Surya Paloh).

As Indonesia's political landscape continues to expand with new agents and actors taking to the political stage, so is its civil society expanding with new NGOs, CSOs, lobby groups and pressure groups. Some of these new NGOs and CSOs have exhibited very strong hyper-nationalist attachments, such as the *Laskar Merah Putih* (LMP) that was first led by Eddy Hartawan (d.2009) and which have taken to the streets on issues such as foreign interference in Indonesian affairs, etc. Others such as the *Fron Pembela Islam* (FPI) and the *Gerakan Pemuda Ka'aba* (GPK) have gained considerable media presence with their violent actions and their ability to set the agenda on religious issues through vocal lobbying and applying pressure on local authorities.

Though it is not certain how and where these developments will take Indonesia in the lead-up to the next Presidential elections (due in 2014), the fact remains that Indonesia's socio-political landscape is more crowded now than ever before. Though some of the new agents and actors are communal and exclusive in nature – the FPI, for instance, championing the cause of Sunni Muslims in particular and criticising non-Muslims – not all of these groups are antagonistic towards other communities,

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<sup>2</sup> Re: Hefner, Robert, and Patricia Horvatich (eds.), *Islam in an Era of Nation-States*, Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 1997; Hefner, Robert, *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000 and Sidel, John, *Riots, Pogroms, Jihad: Religious Violence in Indonesia*, Cornell University Press, Ithica and London, 2006.

minorities and/or foreigners. Nor do all of these new groups promote violence in the public domain.

This paper offers an account of the *Forum Betawi Rempug*, which is a Jakarta-based ethnic-cultural solidarity movement that campaigns for the political and economic rights of Betawi people of West Java. The FBR has been applying pressure upon many of the political parties of the country to recognise the plight of the Betawi people and to accept their demands for better representation at the local level, more access to jobs, housing and education, and it has called upon the people of Betawi to gather together under the banner of a mass movement that represents their interests at both a local and national level.

### **II.a. The origins of the *Forum Betawi Rempug*: Communal ethnic anxiety leading to mass mobilisation**

The name of the organisation *Forum Betawi Rempug* tells us something about the group and what it aims to be: The Betawi people have lived in the area that is currently occupied by the capital of Indonesia, Jakarta, for centuries. Long before the creation of present-day Indonesia, there existed the kingdom of Pajajaran in West Java. In 1522 the Portuguese governor of Malacca Alfonso de Albuquerque sent his emissary Hendrique Leme to meet the ruler of Sunda, to seek permission to set up a trading post in the port-city. This instrumental alliance was finally sealed on 21 August 1522 with the Luso-Sundanese Treaty of Sunda Kelapa. Heuken (2002) notes that the treaty was the first international document that records the name of Sunda Kelapa and mentions the names of its rulers and their functions.<sup>3</sup> The treaty provided the excuse for the Kingdom of Demak to intervene, leading to an attack that was led by Fatahillah, commander of the forces of Sultan Trenggana<sup>4</sup>, ruler of the Muslim kingdom of Demak.

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<sup>3</sup> *ibid*, pg. 80, f. 5. Heuken also notes that the signing of the Luso-Sundanese Treaty may well have sealed the fate of Sunda and the rest of the kingdom of Pajajaran as well, for it merely 'strengthened the intention of (the Muslim kingdom of) Demak and its allies to take Banten and put the screws on Sunda Kelapa'. *Ibid*, pg. 80, f. 4

<sup>4</sup> Sultan Trenggana was the son of Pate Rodin and was of mixed Javanese-Chinese descent. In 1504 he became the first independent ruler of Demak and due to his mixed ancestry was also known as Ki Mas Palembang. At that time Java had just come into contact with Islam and the Javanese kingdoms were being slowly converted to Islam thanks to the efforts of the nine *walis* or apostles who came from abroad.

Fatahillah was in fact of mixed Indian (Gujerati) and Arab ancestry. Following the Portuguese victory at Pasai in 1521 Fatahillah took to the seas and sailed to Mecca to study Islamic law. On his return to the archipelago he first stopped at Japara but finally ended up in Demak in the service of the Sultan. In Demak two thousand troops were put at Fatahillah's disposal and he was given the task of halting the Europeans' advance into Java. The only way this could be done was by taking Sunda Kelapa itself and neutralising the power of the kingdom of Pajajaran, which had offered itself as an ally to Portuguese economic and strategic interests. With the additional support of Cirebon, Fatahillah and his troops marched on Banten and then proceeded to take Sunda Kelapa. The campaign lasted from 1525 to 1526, but Fatahillah was ultimately triumphant and he was subsequently elevated to the status of ruler of Sunda Kelapa after his troops attacked the city in mid-November 1526. On 22 June 1527 he renamed the port-city of Sunda Kelapa '*Jayakarta*', meaning 'Complete Victory'. In the years to come Jayakarta would be re-named Jakarta; though it was – and remains – the home of the Betawi people.

The Betawi are an interesting community in Indonesia for two reasons: The first is that Betawi culture has, from the beginning, been a hybrid and eclectic one that shows traces of Javanese/Sunda, Arab, Indian and Chinese culture intermingling at all levels: aesthetic, linguistic as well as in the belief-system of the Betawi. Secondly, unlike Central and Eastern Javanese societies, Betawi society is less hierarchical or inclined towards anything resembling a caste system (compared to the Javanese or Balinese, for instance). Due to the fact that this was a culture that has always been exposed to external influences and mixed marriages, its complex nature has always been one of its defining elements.

During the period of extended Dutch colonial rule across the Dutch East Indies, Betawi was the centre of Dutch colonial power and Jakarta was called Batavia. Batavia developed to become one of the most cosmopolitan cities in the extended colony, with migrant communities from China, India, the Arab lands and other parts of the archipelago settling there, making it even more heterogeneous and complex. During the colonial era the Dutch were already wary of Betawi leaders who attempted to mobilise the people of Betawi: One of the more prominent among them was Husni

Thamrin, who set up the *Perkampungan Orang Betawi* in 1923, and who was seen as a potential threat to Dutch power in Batavia then.<sup>5</sup>

Following the end of colonial rule the newly created Indonesian republic retained Jakarta as the capital of the new independent republic. In the decades that followed, the pattern of rural to urban migration did not cease and this led to Jakarta becoming the great megalopolis that it is today.

Due in part to the central role played by Jakarta as the capital of the nation, the megacity has become the home to millions of Indonesians from all over the vast country. As a result of this, the leaders of the FBR claim that there are many Betawians who feel that they have been reduced to a minority in what was once their homeland. While other parts of Indonesia are able to celebrate their culture, history and even local languages (the province of Jogjakarta even has its own JogjaTV, for instance, in the Javanese language; as do the Balinese who have TV channels and publications in their own Balinese tongue), Betawians feel that their sense of identity and belonging have been compromised as a result of the arrival and settlement of millions of other Indonesians who have come to work and live in the capital. This then explains the meaning of the name of the organisation FBR, for the word '*Rempug*' also means '*to come together*' or '*to congregate*'. The *Forum Betawi Rempug* was set up with the primary aim of bringing together the people of Betawi and to give them a vehicle to articulate their demands; calling upon the government to give due respect and recognition to the people, language, culture and history of the Betawi region and all Betawians.

## **II.b. Genesis of the FBR: Ethnic marginalisation, provocation and response.**

**Commander of the FBR Betawi base, *Saya ingin masyarakat Betawi jadi jawara di kampungnya sendiri***. (I wish to see the people of Betawi stand as champions in their own home)<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Re: Solemanto, *Jejak Langkah Sang Kyai: Mengawal Republik dari Tanah Betawi*, Forum Betawi Rempug, Mukti Jaya Press, Jakarta, 2009. (pg. v.)

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in: Solemanto, *Jejak Langkah Sang Kyai: Mengawal Republik dari Tanah Betawi*, Forum Betawi Rempug, Mukti Jaya Press, Jakarta, 2009. (pg. ii)



## **Major-General Nachrowi Ramli 2009**

The *Forum Betawi Rempug* was formed on 29<sup>th</sup> July 2001 by Kyai A. Fadloli El Muhir and Kyai Lutfi Hakim.

Kyai Fadloli El Munir's background was an interesting one in many respects: Born in Jakarta in 1961, his own education was a mixture of both traditional religious schooling as well as in national schools. In 1987 he rose to become one of the leaders of the *Nahdatul Ulama's* Student Network (*Ikatan Pelajar Nahdatul Ulama*) in Jakarta, and for the next two decades he remained involved in religious activities, assuming the position of the head of the Jakarta wing of the *Majlis Muslimin Indonesia* (MMI) and the Head Imam of the *Gerakan Santri se-Indonesia* (GSI). In 1990 he founded the *Pondok Pesantren Yatim Ziyadatul Mubtadi'ien* in Cakung, East Jakarta, and by 1993 began to organise several religious discussion groups (*Majelis Taklim*) across the Greater Jakarta area. Prior to the formation of the FBR, Kyai Fadloli was also involved in the internal politics of Indonesia: Following the split within the *Partai Demokrat Indonesia* (PDI) which led to the formation of two parties (the *Partai Demokrat Indonesia-Perjuangan* PDI-P led by Megawati Sukarnoputri and the PDI-S led by Soejadi) Kyai Fadloli was invited to support the campaign of Megawati's PDI-P in Balikpapan, Kalimantan, which he did in May 1997.<sup>7</sup>

At its founding, the FBR had only twenty-five members, all of whom were known to the founder- leaders Kyai Fadloli El Muhir and Kyai Lutfi Hakim, and were of Betawi origin. Its main headquarters was (and remains) at the *Pondok Pesantren Yatim Ziyadatul Mubtadi'ien* which also serves as the secretariat of the missionary movement of the institution (*Sekretariat Himpunan Khotib dan Muballigh Pesantren Ziyadatul*). The movement was formed as a response to what the members felt was a growing existential threat to Betawi culture and identity. In the words of FBR leader Kyai Lutfi Hakim:

“The FBR is the result of an existential awareness (*kesedaran eksistensial*) among us from Betawi that if we did not organise ourselves into a mass movement, we might

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid, pp. 129-131.

end up marginalised and silenced altogether. We were worried, that with the influx of so many foreigners and so many other communities from Indonesia to West Java, we might become a minority in our own homeland.

*We did not want to become like the aborigines of Australia, who were the original inhabitants of Australia, but look at them now: Where are they? Are they in power? Do they control the economy? They are just unseen and unheard now.*

We Betawi people did not want to become marginalised like that. In the past this land of ours was passed down to us by the *waqaf* system, of land endowment. When Indonesia became independent we people of Betawi were part of the independence struggle. When Jakarta became the capital we did not revolt, we did not protest. But we had hoped that despite that we would not end up being side-lined in our own homeland. That is why we are mobilising now, and that is why the FBR is important as it gives the ordinary people of Betawi a collective voice and a means to register their demands and protests.”<sup>8</sup>

Contributing to this sense of collective anxiety was the growing culture of ethnic-based communitarian violence in Indonesia then, and the increasing level of violence in the capital. One of the events that energised the FBR was the attack on their founder-leader that took place on 15 July 2002, when Kyai Fadloli’s car was surrounded and attacked by a group of 30 men, said to be of Madurese origin. Kyai Fadloli’s car was surrounded by the men who were alleged to be members of one of the Madurese gangs operating in Jakarta then. While the car sustained considerable damage, Kyai Fadloli was not seriously hurt in any way. But FBR leaders we spoke to insisted that the intention of the Madurese gangsters was to kill their leader, and the event has since become one of the founding narratives of the FBR. At the main headquarters of the FBR the walls of the *Pesantren Ziyadatul Mubtadi’ien* are covered with graphic photos of Kyai Fadloli’s damaged car.

This event was taken as proof – by the FBR – that the people of Betawi were no longer safe in their own territory, and that the capital city of Jakarta had been overrun by migrants from Madura and other parts of Java. Reacting against what they

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<sup>8</sup> Interview with Kyai Lutfi Hakim, Pusat FBR Jakarta, *Pondok Pesantren Yatim Ziyadatul Mubtadi’ien*, Jalan Raya Penggilingan, Padaengan Cakung, Jakarta Timur. 14 February 2012.

regarded as a slow process of socio-economic and political marginalisation, the FBR called upon other Betawians to unite behind the FBR to reclaim Jakarta for the people of Betawi, and to put an end to the criminality and gangsterism which they associated with the other migrant communities. Greg Fealy (2008) also notes that in the aftermath of the attack on Kyai Fadloli he was seen by many of his followers as a powerful leader endowed with near-magical *kebal* (invulnerability) powers, and he henceforth fashioned himself as a *jawaran* (champion) figure among the Betawi folk of Jakarta, a sort of ‘Robin Hood’ figure.<sup>9</sup>

At the beginning the movement was meant to serve as a vehicle for the mobilisation of Betawians. The FBR defined Betawi identity in ethno-cultural terms, as Kyai Lutfi explained:

“Betawi is a *bangsa*, a nation; but unlike other nations the Betawi nation is a mixed one: It has Arab, Indian, Chinese, Javanese elements to it. But it has always been that way for us in Betawi, so we have always been a plural nation, a complex *bangsa*.”<sup>10</sup>

The first leader of the FBR Kyai A. Fadloli El Muhr commanded some respect as a religious scholar as well as community leader. Fealy (2008) notes that while Kyai Fadloli’s praxis of Islam was in conformity with the *Nahdatul Ulama’s* approach to Islam – and from which he himself emerged – the FBR’s program combined the three S’s of *Sholat* (prayer), *Silat* (martial arts) and *Sekolah* (the pesantren-based schooling system).<sup>11</sup> However at the beginning of the FBR’s development it was largely a voluntary movement with little financial support. In 2001, the FBR did not have a cadre-training system or any other means of ideological training for its members and recruits. Membership was only formalised later, when the FBR began to issue membership cards and to assemble a roster of its members.

From its inception the FBR has been reaching out to Betawians who live in the Greater Jakarta area, which covers the metropolis of Jakarta as well as Kerawang,

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<sup>9</sup> Greg Fealy, *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia*. Institute for Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS), National University of Singapore NUS, Singapore, 2008. (pp. 196-197.)

<sup>10</sup> Interview with Kyai Lutfi Hakim, Pusat FBR Jakarta, *Pondok Pesantren Yatim Ziyadatul Muhtadi’ien* 14 February 2012.

<sup>11</sup> Fealy, 2008, pg. 197.

Bogor, Tangerang and Bekasih. Unlike other urban-based networks such as the *Jaringan Islam Liberal* (JIL), the FBR was never an elite organisation and it did not seek to court urban middle-class intellectuals to its cause.<sup>12</sup>

Its main attraction to the Betawi recruits was its promotion of Betawi identity as something that was distinct and which deserved to be recognised and protected by the Indonesian state. Though most of its members are Betawi Muslims, the FBR chose as its logo the figure of the *Ondel-Ondel* – a pair of twin deities associated with traditional (pre-Islamic) forms of Betawi worship and belief. The *Ondel-Ondel* remains the main logo or symbol of the FBR until today, and is found on its emblem as well as the flags and uniforms of the members. For the FBR's leader Kyai Lutfi, this is proof of the claim that the FBR is not a religiously conservative movement, despite the fact that most of its members are Muslims. In his words:

“You can see that our group's emblem is the *Ondel-Ondel*. What is that? That is what the religious conservatives might call the ‘*Setan besar*’ (Great Satan), but that shows that we are not like the religious movements such as the *Fron Pembela Islam* (Islamic Defenders Front, FPI). Among our members today there are Muslims but also Christians and even Hindus. We do not discriminate in terms of their religious beliefs, as long as they are Betawi in terms of their culture and origin, and they are proud to be Betawians like us. Our movement transcends religious differences (*lintas-agama*) and we transcend doctrinal differences too (*lintas-Mahdzab*).”<sup>13</sup>

Aiming to be a grassroots movement, the FBR's main focus in terms of its recruitment are the underclasses of the Greater Jakarta region: From 2001, the FBR began reaching out to the poorer sections of Betawi society, recruiting members from low-paying jobs such as *ojek* (motorcycle taxi) drivers, *warung* sellers, parking lot attendants, and the urban unemployed. The FBR's appeal to these liminal lower class groups was that they should collectively come together to lobby the government in order to demand better education, work opportunities and housing for the original

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<sup>12</sup> Interview with Kyai Lutfi Hakim, Pusat FBR Jakarta, *Pondok Pesantren Yatim Ziyadatul Mubtadi'ien* 14 February 2012.

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Kyai Lutfi Hakim, Pusat FBR Jakarta, *Pondok Pesantren Yatim Ziyadatul Mubtadi'ien* 14 February 2012.

people of the Betawi area, who have been marginalised by the massive influx of other Indonesian settlers from the rest of the archipelago.

Entry into the FBR is done via a selection process and all new members are expected to take an oath of allegiance to the FBR (*bai'yat*) which forbids them from becoming members of any other Betawi organisation.<sup>14</sup> That the second article of the FBR's oath states that members have to be loyal to their leaders after God is indicative of the strong position held by the leadership of the FBR; which, since the time of Kyai Fadli, has been in the hands of charismatic religious personalities. Members are, however, permitted to join political parties of their choice and are permitted to join other social movements or organisations as long as those movements are not foregrounding Betawi concerns. Kyai Lutfi described the FBR as a 'hybrid movement' that combines both modern organisational practices and norms along with traditional teacher-student (*kyai-santri*) relations and bonds.

Developments across Indonesia in the mid-2000s proved to be beneficial to new movements like the FBR: Following the presidency of Megawati Sukarnoputri, Indonesia experienced the slow process of the decentralisation of power. From 2004 to 2005 the country witnessed the introduction of local elections through the Pilkada (*Pilihan Kepala Daerah*) system that allowed for the local election of governors,

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<sup>14</sup> There are nine articles and conditions in the FBR's oath of loyalty (*Baiat dan Janji Setia FBR*):

- a. *Taat pada Allah dan Rasulnya* (Faith and loyalty to God and the Prophet)
- b. *Taat dan patuh kepada Pimpinan FBR* (Loyalty to the leadership of the FBR)
- c. *Siap Memberantas Tempat-tempat Maksiat dan Orang-orang Dzolim* (To be ready to raid dens of vice and people who are unjust)
- d. *Berusaha untuk meninggalkan larangan Syaria seperti mabok kerana Minuman serta Obat terlarang, Berjudi, Berzina dan Narkoba.* (To strive against all transgressions against Shariah law, such as drunkenness due to alcohol or illegal substances, as well as Gambling, Adultery and Drug Abuse.)
- e. *Siap berkorban dengan ikhlas untuk membantu dan membela serta menolong anggota-anggota FBR sesama.* (To be ready to help, defend and assist other members of the FBR together.)
- f. *Siap memberi maaf jikalau berlaku salah fahaman antara anggota FBR.* (To be ready to forgive other members of the FBR in the event of misunderstandings.)
- g. *Siap berkerja sama dengan pemerintah, aparat keamanan, dan suku dan etnis lain selagi tidak bertentang dengan akidah dan sharia.* (To be prepared to work with the government, the state security forces, and other ethnic groups as long as it does not go against the principles of faith and religious law.)
- h. *Siap dicabut KTA FBR manakala melanggar sharia serta tidak mentaati kepimpinan FBR.* (To be prepared to be ejected from the FBR should the member do anything contrary to Islamic law or disobey the leadership of the FBR.)
- i. *Siap menghadiri kegiatan FBR serta mendapat persetujuan pemimpin FBR.* (To be prepared to attend all FBR functions and activities, and to be ready to accept the orders of the FBR leadership.)

mayors and *bupatis*. This development was followed by changes in the law that compelled parties to submit lists of candidates who would be selected through proportional representation. Further enhancing the power of local governments was the rise in the number of local laws (*Perda – Peraturan Daerah*) that allowed local authorities to introduce local laws that applied in cases of land procurement, business practices, land inheritance and moral policing in many parts of the country.<sup>15</sup> As a result of these combined factors, local politics grew in importance as political entrepreneurs came to realise that winning power at a local level was now an achievement that could bring substantial benefits and results to themselves and their supporters.

Over the past decade the FBR has managed to expand its membership widely. Working through local Betawi networks the FBR has managed to create more branches all over the Jakarta region. By 2008 the FBR claimed to have set up around 300 branches, with at least 50 in Central Jakarta, 60 in East Jakarta, 32 in North Jakarta, 25 in West Jakarta and 15 in South Jakarta. Combined with the other branches that were set up in Bekasi, Bogor, Tangerang and other parts of Greater Jakarta, the FBR claimed that more than 300 operational branches were set up; with a minimum required membership of 100 active members per branch. (Though the FBR also claimed that most branches had between 300 to 500 active FBR members.)<sup>16</sup> By 2008 prominent politicians such as Andi Anzhar Cakrawijaya (who was also one of the leaders of the *Partai Amanah Rakyat PAN*), confidently stated that the FBR would soon be able to field Kyai Fadloli as one of the candidates for the position of Governor of Jakarta.<sup>17</sup> The FBR now keeps a roster of all its members, and claims that its ranks have expanded beyond two million members today (in 2012).

Furthermore it has several command centres that operate across the Greater Jakarta region, with 6 in Jakarta alone (including the *Pondok Pesantren Yatim Ziyadatul*

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<sup>15</sup> The expansion of local-level directives and ‘moral laws’ continues until today. In June 2012 the local authorities of Tasik Malaya (in Western Java) announced the introduction of a new law that obliges all women – including tourists and non-Muslims – to cover their hair (though not their faces) in public, sparking yet another controversy in the national media and raising the question of whether Jakarta was able to control the local demands emanating from conservative elites in local centres of power.

<sup>16</sup> Re: Solemanto, *Jejak Langkah Sang Kyai: Mengawal Republik dari Tanah Betawi*, Forum Betawi Rempug, Mukti Jaya Press, Jakarta, 2009. (pgs. 194-195.)

<sup>17</sup> This pronouncement was made by Andi Anzhar Cakrawijaya at the FBR annual general meeting at the FBR headquarters in 2008. (re: Solemanto, 2009, pg. 195.)

*Mubtadi'ien*), 3 in Tangerang, 2 in Bekasi, 1 in Bogor and 1 in Kerawang. The main headquarters is based in South Jakarta and the FBR remains a largely centralised organisation with a pyramid-like command structure. All FBR members today are registered and all are given membership cards; though there is still no training programme for the movement's members. The FBR holds a Congress of the entire FBR membership every five years, where the members will elect their President.

### **II.c. The FBR in the social and media domains: Communal representation or aggressive communalism?**

While foregrounding the interests and demands of the Betawi people, the FBR has invariably met stiff resistance from other political as well as non-political movements and CSOs that operate in the Jakarta region.

According to the third article of the FBR's oath of loyalty all FBR members are expected to be prepared to '*siap memberantas tempat-tempat maksiat dan orang-orang dzolim* (To be ready to raid dens of vice and people who are unjust)'. This has led to several reported incidents of FBR members raiding places like bars and clubs, ostensibly in the name of moral policing. Such vigilantism, however, is not unique to the FBR as moral policing above and beyond the law of the state has become commonplace in some parts of Indonesia today, with groups like the *Fron Pembela Islam* taking the law into their own hands, and occasionally leading to violence and the destruction of private property. Violence in moral policing has also taken place elsewhere such as Surakarta, Aceh and Cirebon in recent times, as noted by the International Crisis Group (ICG).<sup>18</sup>

Over the past few years the FBR's members have clashed many times with other assertive and aggressive NGOs and lobby groups that are also active in the Jakarta region. In January 2012 the FBR clashed with members of the *Pemuda Pancasila* (PP) in Ciledug, South Tangerang.<sup>19</sup> The FBR has also clashed with other Betawi community organisations like the *Ikatan Keluarga Betawi* (IKB) in places like

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<sup>18</sup> Re: International Crisis Group report: *Indonesia: From Vigilantism to Terrorism in Cirebon*. ICG Briefing no. 132. Jakarta/Brussels, 26 January 2012.

<sup>19</sup> Re: *Ketua PP Akui Ormasnya Bentrok dengan FBR*, Viva News Metro, 2 January 2012.

Kebayoran Lama.<sup>20</sup> On several occasions the rank and file of the FBR (normally dressed in black robes) have clashed with the members of the *Fron Pembela Islam* (normally dressed in white robes) in the poorer quarters of Jakarta; thereby lending the impression that an intense urban ‘turf war’ was being waged between the members of both the FBR and FPI. Kyai Lutfi, however, insists that the FBR is not like the FPI as it is not Islamist by orientation and does not seek to promote Muslim interests exclusively:

“We (FBR) are not like them (FPI) because we accept all religious communities that are Betawi. Over the past few years, when there have been attacks on churches in West Java, we (FBR) have sent out our members to protect the churches during Christmas and Easter celebrations, to make sure that the Christians can worship in peace. Even during the celebration of *Karbala* among the Shias, we have sent out FBR members to protect Shias at their mosques in the Jakarta area; while other radical Islamist groups want to attack them (the Shias) and want them to be declared non-Muslim.”<sup>21</sup>

The only group that the FBR has publicly decried is the Ahmadi sect who have become the target of many other conservative Islamist movements like the FPI. Along with the FPI the FBR has also called upon the government of Indonesia to ban all Ahmadi activities in Indonesia and to have them declared non-Muslim.

The FBR however places Betawi interests before other concerns, and this may account for the pragmatic stand that they take on issues such as licences for alcohol-related industries and services. Unlike the more conservative Islamist groups in Indonesia today such as the FPI, that have called for the closure of alcohol-producing factories, while the FBR maintains that it is more important to protect the jobs and livelihood of Betawi workers in those factories. One of the senior leaders of the movement noted that:

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<sup>20</sup> Re: *Berkonvoi, Anggota FBR Diamankan*, Detiknews, 23 May 2007.

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Kyai Lutfi Hakim, Pusat FBR Jakarta, *Pondok Pesantren Yatim Ziyadatul Mubtadi'ien* 14 February 2012.



“They (the FPI) want to ban and close down the beer factories in the Jakarta area, because they say it is *haram* to produce alcohol in a Muslim country like Indonesia. But we (FBR) take a more pragmatic stand in the sense that we balance that with the need to ensure that poor Betawi people have jobs too. What will happen if we close all the beer factories? Who will take care of the unemployed workers? What do these groups want to do? Drive poor Betawi workers into unemployment, and reduce them to becoming parking lot attendants or beggars in their own homeland?”<sup>22</sup>

The pragmatic stance of the FBR is understandable when we take into account that its aim from the outset has been to protect the interests, culture and history of the Betawi people. This may also explain why the FBR, despite its religious credentials, has not engaged in any campaigns against popular culture and entertainment unlike other hardline groups such as the FPI or the *Hizb’ut Tahrir Indonesia* (HTI) that have called for the banning of popular music like *dangdut* and the closure of *dangdut* clubs and concert halls. On the contrary, in its effort to get closer to the Betawians, the FBR has actively supported popular culture like *dangdut* music at its own events (such as its assembly in 2008) and also forms of Betawi culture and popular entertainment like *gambang kromo* music.<sup>23</sup>

#### **II.d. The future development of the FBR: Maintaining the voice of the Betawi people in a multicultural Indonesia.**

Following the death of the founder-leader of the FBR, the movement has come under the leadership of Kyai Lutfi Hakim, who was elected as the *Ketua Umum* of the *Keluarga Besar* FBR. Among the other prominent leaders of the FBR command are men like Major General (rtd) H. Nachrowi Ramli. The main architect of the movement today (*Pembina FBR Pusat*) is Rony Bratawijaya; while the Parliamentarian H. Andi Anzhar Cakrawijaya (who also sits as a member of Commission III of the Parliament, DPR) now sits on the FBR’s board of advisors.

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<sup>22</sup> Interview with an FBR leader who insisted to remain anonymous, Pusat FBR Jakarta, 14 February 2012.

<sup>23</sup> At the FBR annual meeting that was held in December 2008 the organizers invited a number of Betawi artistes to perform both *dangdut* and *gambang kromo* music, on the grounds that these were popular forms of entertainment that reflected Betawi culture and history. Even the FBR’s leader Kyai Fadloli participated in the event, singing three *dangdut* songs including *Bunga Dahlia*, *Dua-Dua* and *Hilang Tak Berkesan*. (re: Solemanto, pp. 97-100.)

The presence of powerful and influential figures such as General H. Nachrowi Ramli, Rony Bratawijaya and H. Andi Anzhar Cakrawijaya signifies the extent to which the FBR has managed to gain for itself a standing in the public eye; and also suggests that politicians on the rise have come to recognise the FBR as an important vehicle for them to reach out to potential voters and to mobilise their constituents. This close networking between the FBR and politicians as well as political parties seems to be in tandem with the pace of populist democracy in Indonesia today, where new political parties work closely with mass-based popular movements like the *Laskar Merah-Putih*, along with the media. Having earned the trust and support of members of the Parliament who are now willing to sit in as advisors to the FBR, the movement may consider itself legitimate and under the protection of influential benefactors.

The FBR is likely to remain an active political player in West Java for the coming years, as its appeal to the lower classes and unemployed in the Greater Jakarta area seems to be growing. In and around the area where the main headquarters of *Pondok Pesantren Yatim Ziyadatul Mubtadi'ien* is located, we observed that most of the local residents were already converted to the FBR cause and that many houses, shops and streets were flying the flags and banners of the movement. The FBR also makes its presence felt in downtown Jakarta by sending its members to plaster FBR posters and to recruit new members regularly.

Several factors may accelerate or inhibit the growth and development of the FBR in the years to come:

- Firstly, the FBR has come under the attention of some of the more established political parties of Indonesia, such as the *Partai Amanah Rakyat* (PAN), whose leader Andi Anzhar Cakrawijaya also sits on the advisory board of the FBR. That a PAN leader should be found in the ranks of the FBR is not surprising, considering the fact that PAN's president Amein Rais has talked about how Indonesia should contemplate a federal model of government, which would be of some advantage to local political movements. Should the FBR continue to court the support of prominent politicians and political parties such as these, it may also lead to the FBR being seen as increasingly partisan in its political outlook and profile. (This, as we noted earlier,

was already the perception of some observers when Kyai Fadloli supported Megawati Sukarnoputri's PDI-P in their campaign in Balikpapan in 1997.) Despite the FBR's long standing association to the *Nahdatul Ulama* (thanks to the background of its founder Kyai Fadloli), the FBR's growing association with other parties and political movements may eventually lend it a more partisan demeanour, and compromise its claim as a representative of peoples' interests. It should, however, be noted that partisan leanings among NGOs and CSOs are hardly novel in Indonesia, and many of the political parties are known to have cultivated close working relations with non-party groups: The Islamic United Development Party (PPP) is known to be close to the more violent *Gerakan Pemuda Ka'aba* (GPK), for instance.

- Secondly, it ought to be noted that the FBR's broad appeal lies in part in its two inter-related claims: That of being a multi-religious movement that brings together Betawi Muslims and non-Muslims; and that of being a subaltern movement to speak for the lower classes among the Betawi people. By doing so the FBR presents itself as a movement that transcends both horizontal and vertical cleavages in Indonesian society. This however means that however the FBR chooses to expand its membership it will have to tap into a finite pool of Jakarta residents, as it remains a movement for communal-ethnic mobilisation. In the heavily contested region of Greater Jakarta where there are many other Betawi-based bodies such as the *Ikatan Keluarga Betawi* (IKB) and other groups like the *Pemuda Pancasila*, the *Laskar Merah Putih* and the *Fron Pembela Islam*, the FBR's expansion will necessarily lead to a contestation for support and followers; which accounts for the 'turf wars' that it has had to fight thus far. This may in turn raise the threat of urban conflict in a Jakarta that has already witnessed many scenes of violent riots, bombings and ethnic-racial conflict.
- Thirdly, should the FBR remain as a movement that champions the interests of the Betawians primarily, its potential appeal on the stage of national Indonesian politics will also be limited. At best, the FBR can hope to push for the nomination and election of one of its leaders as the next Governor of Jakarta; which would be a significant gain for the FBR who have claimed all along that the post of Governor has to go to a local Betawi. But even so, this means that the FBR will not ascend any

further up the hierarchy of Indonesia's national politics, and may end up being one of the local-based communitarian groups calling for local representation at a local level – a phenomenon that is also found in other parts of Indonesia today such as in North Sumatra and Sulawesi.<sup>24</sup>

Should the FBR develop its network of supporters to the extent that it will be able to contest for the post of Governor of Jakarta, it would have succeeded in its original ambition to give a voice to the people of Betawi and to reclaim the land of Betawi for the Betawi people. What effect this will have on the politics of the capital-city is an open question at this stage, as is the question of what impact this may have on Betawi relations with other communities in the Greater Jakarta region. It cannot be denied, however, that the emergence and subsequent rise of the FBR in Indonesia's already-overcrowded political landscape marks a further shift from the days of strong centralised government during the Suharto era; and in that respect the ascendancy of the FBR is reflective of the new era of post-Suharto politics in the country.

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<sup>24</sup> Re: Adam D. Tyson, *Decentralisation and Adat Revivalism in Indonesia: The Politics of Becoming Indigenous*, Routledge, London, 2010; and Gerald S. Maryanov, *Decentralisation in Indonesia as a Political Problem*, Cornell University Press, 1958; reprinted Equinox Publishing, Jakarta, 2009.

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