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Deradicalising Deportees: Vacuum in Coordination?

By Chaula R. Anindya

Synopsis

The absence of coordination among stakeholders in Indonesia to handle the influx of deportees is creating a vacuum calling out to be plugged. Otherwise the deportees might encounter obstacles to reintegrate into the society.

Commentary

HUNDREDS OF Indonesians who sought to migrate to Syria to join militant Islamist groups, but did not manage to enter Syria, were arrested when they were about to cross the borders between Syria and Turkey. There were also migrant workers in Singapore, Malaysia, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan, and South Korea who were exposed to radical ideology while abroad and were deported for their alleged intention to join extremist groups.

Under the existing Indonesian law on terrorism, the security apparatus could not apprehend the deportees unless they are involved in terrorist networks, such as funding and recruitment. Once the security apparatus ascertain their involvement, deportees will be sent to the National Police Mobile Brigade Headquarters (Mako Brimob). Those who are merely supporters are sent to the Ministry of Social Affairs' (Kemensos) shelters in East Jakarta to undergo a one-month rehabilitation programme.

Rehabilitation Programme

In 2017, Kemensos' shelters hosted 226 deportees; 176 in the Centre for Social Rehabilitation for Children Against Law (Panti Sosial Marsudi Putra or PSMP Handayani) and 50 in the Protection House and Trauma Centre (RPTC). As the majority of deportees are women and children, the authorities decided to send them

to PSMP Handayani. Adults without children are sent to RPTC which is a shelter for victims of violence and trafficking.

During the rehabilitation programme, there are sessions by the National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT), Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag), the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI), and former jihadists. The sessions with BNPT and TNI emphasise the archipelagic outlook (*wawasan kebangsaan*), while Kemenag and former jihadis approach the deportees from the religious dimension. Aside from these sessions, there are also social workers at the shelters who assist in the daily activities and provide a rehabilitation programme for the deportees.

The programme only lasts for one month for each group of deportees. The short duration is the consequence of a shortage of financial resources to accommodate the deportees. PSMP and RPTC's main mandate is not providing rehabilitation programme for the deportees.

There is no specific budget allocation for the deportees and sometimes the shelters need to ask for additional funding from other directorates in Kemensos.

Missing Coordination

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) play important roles in the repatriation and reintegration programmes. C-SAVE, a consortium of experienced CSOs in countering-violent extremism, helps coordinating CSOs to assist with the repatriation and reintegration of the deportees.

CSOs together with social workers accompany the deportees back to their hometown. They assist the reintegration programmes for the deportees by identifying their needs and develop their skills to start small business enterprises.

According to CSOs, the National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT) is rarely seen during the repatriation and reintegration process. BNPT only provides minimal support during the rehabilitation programme, such as providing basic daily needs of the deportees and speakers for the sessions, as well as attending the sessions.

On the other hand, a representative of BNPT said that they actually have a programme for the deportees once they are back in their hometown. They tend to avoid introducing themselves as a part of BNPT while visiting the deportees because the deportees often decline to meet government officials. In 2017, BNPT had visited 150 deportees in their respective hometowns.

These statements show a lack of transparency and coordination among relevant agencies. The deportees often received several visits from various stakeholders that have similar offers and provide repetitive discussions, which create obstacles to their reintegration process into the society.

First, the local community might grow suspicious of their status because they keep receiving visits from different institutions. The local community initially did not know their status as deportees because the repatriation was done quietly to avoid

stigmatisation. Second, the deportees might be reluctant to cooperate because of tiresome and repetitive discussions.

Urgent Need for BNPT's Coordinating Role

Deradicalisation is not an instant process and a one-month rehabilitation programme is barely sufficient. The reintegration process is the key step that should help deradicalise deportees or at least, lead to their disengagement from radical thought. There is an urgent need for comprehensive regulations to handle the deportees and avoid redundancies among relevant agencies during the reintegration process.

C-SAVE has initiated the formulation of a comprehensive and integrated Standard Operational Procedures (SOP) to handle deportees. They invite relevant agencies, such as the CSOs, Kemensos, and BNPT to discuss the SOP draft. C-SAVE has been working together with Kemensos' legal bureau to propose a Presidential Regulation (Perpres) as a legal basis for this SOP.

BNPT should have been the Agency responsible for formulating the SOP, yet they do not have sufficient bargaining power to coordinate other ministries because BNPT existed merely based on Perpres. The lawmakers are currently deliberating the amendment of the anti-terrorism law where one of the points seek to leverage BNPT's position that will be equal to ministries.

There is an urgent need for BNPT's coordinating role because there must be a government institution that puts forward the initiatives and consolidates relevant stakeholders. For instance, CSOs might be experienced in reintegration programme, but they also need assistance from the local government through the instruction of Ministry of Home Affairs (Kemendagri) to provide the basic daily needs, such as identification cards.

Scholars underline that deradicalisation is not only about distancing one from radical ideologies, but also reintegrating them into the non-radical environment. Therefore, there should be a degree of trust from deportees to the government as a part of reintegration into society.

Trust will emerge when they are satisfied with the programme. Should they be disappointed, the radical groups could take advantage of such opportunities to recruit the deportees by exploiting the narratives of government's failures to provide a better and more convenient life for deportees.

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