
FPCI Virtual Roundtable Discussion
Keeping Up the Fight Against Terrorism during the COVID-19 Crisis
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Indonesia

- **Comr. Gen. Boy Rafli Amar**
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- **Dr. Noor Huda Ismail**
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Philippines

- **Dr. Rommel C. Banlaoi**
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United States

- **Dr. Joshua A. Geltzer**
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Australia

- **Leanne Close**
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Moderator:

- **Andini Effendi**
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Host:

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DISCUSSION**Andini Effendi:**

- I will start with the general situation. What are the trends, if we are talking about terrorism nowadays? Because there are reports that indicate that most national governments are preoccupied with COVID-19. This could open a crack that might endanger national security. We have also heard it here in Indonesia. Noor Huda, I would like to start with you. What are your thoughts on this?

Dr. Noor Huda Ismail:

- Now we are seeing the threat of existing Indonesian foreign fighters who might make connections with other fighters all over the world and the possibility of these people coming back.
- Are we ready as a nation? At the moment, everyone is struggling and, locally, now we have a problem with recidivisms. At least since the first Bali bombing in 2002, we are seeing at least 10% cases of recidivists. If we fail in dealing with this, it might bring problems globally as some of these recidivists eventually travel to Syria, the Philippines, and also some of them are now trying to go to Afghanistan. Therefore, this is the issue that we could not deal with alone-- it requires regional and global cooperation.

Andini Effendi:

- Do you see any new trends in terms of what kind of new forms of terrorism are emerging in the era of COVID-19?

Dr. Joshua A. Geltzer:

- I think, from a U.S. perspective, the threat of far-right terrorism, like supremacist terrorism and white nationalist terrorism, is already something of a growing concern in the U.S.
- The numbers for the past couple of years have been higher for lethality's caused by far-right terrorism on U.S. soil than jihadists or other more traditional international forms of terrorism.
- I think COVID-19 has accelerated that concern because of the extent to which people are – by design – retreating, spending more time alone – or at least spending less time with anything beyond their immediate family – spending more time online, more time consuming propaganda recruitment materials and, at times, conspiracies that are deliberately perpetrated by groups seeking to recruit and radicalize. It is this, that I worry, is going to accelerate the already dangerous trend of the threat posed by far-right terrorism in the United States.

Andini Effendi:

- It is interesting that you label them as terrorists.

Dr. Joshua A. Geltzer:

- We do, and how to talk about it has become part of the conversation here in the U.S. as well, because those of us who see politically motivated violence- that is a rough paraphrase of the U.S. code's statutory definition of terrorism- we see it no matter the motivating ideology. Whether it is ISIS pointing to its motivating ideology or whether it is a neo-Nazi group pointing to its motivating ideology. However, the tools, at least under US law, for how to prosecute cases involving them and how to designate groups, are very different. I think we are having the

conversation here in the U.S. about whether we are situated properly, with the right legal authority, with the right policies, to deal with this emerging form.

Andini Effendi:

- Rommel, what other examples have you encountered in your work?

Dr. Rommel C. Banlaoi:

- In the Philippines the current trend right now is the rise of suicide terrorism. It was viewed before that suicide terrorism was not possible in the predominantly Christian country with the majority of Muslims population being secular rather than religious.
- Three years after the Marawi siege we have witnessed at least five major suicide bombing attacks and one failed suicide bombing attack.
- If you are familiar with the recent news about encounters between the police and the military, the military was trying to prevent female suicide terrorists, and one of those is in fact an Indonesian female suicide bomber.
- That is what is happening in the Philippines – the rise of suicide terrorism – and the COVID-19 pandemic in fact provided the pro-ISIS terrorist groups in the Philippines the opportunities to intensify their propaganda and recruitment activities. Especially now that the pandemic is making it difficult for the Bangsamoro government to deliver because of economic difficulties and they are taking advantage of those economic difficulties to recruit more fighters. Not only through ideological recruitment but also through material inducements promising them money if they want to fight in the name of Allah.
- In their narrative, they are being recruited not as mercenaries but as soldiers of Allah. As soldiers of Allah, they are doing it not for themselves but doing it higher than themselves. That is the kind of narrative that they are propagating, and this kind of narrative is being spread on social media, especially right now when all people are using social media to connect with each other.

Andini Effendi:

- Leanne, we are in a crisis and people's financial means are no longer strong from the way it was before the pandemic. Without government assistance and humanitarian aid especially in conflict zones, do you think that this vacuum will leave people more vulnerable in terms of radicalization efforts?

Leanne Close:

- Yes, certainly. We have seen some recent examples. I think terrorist organized crime and ISIS for example, there are allegations where Italian authorities seized about fourteen tons of illegal drugs about a week ago. They are saying it was used and developed by operatives in ISIL, in Iraq and Syria, to fund

terrorist activities. The humanitarian aid issue is the stopping of certain funds being diverted in those regions.

- However, what we see is that there is an increase in planning and ability through online. Technology and social media still are an issue. From an Australian perspective, similar issues to those outlined by Joshua, are also a concern to us in Australia. The different nationalistic right-wing narratives that are starting to take hold--certainly accelerated by COVID-19--has put a different emphasis on racism and on cultural discourse online.
- Thankfully, we have not seen that move to violence necessarily in Australia; but with the impact of COVID-19 on the economy, on individuals, we are certainly concerned that this could be a threat to Australia and internationally going forward.

Andini Effendi:

- There is this narrative, when we are talking about COVID-19, that some people in Indonesia believe that the coronavirus is part of a weapon of terrorism. Some experts call it bioterrorism.
- First of all is it real that this is bioterrorism? Will you label it as bioterrorism? Is this a growing trend?

Dr. Noor Huda Ismail:

- I do not think we can label it as bioterrorism, or even think out loud that the terrorists might use the term. I have been following this discussion among the terrorists, especially among ISIS. There is no single narrative among the group. Some of them call it this is a punishment from God. Secondly, they will say that this is the time to carry out an attack while the secular government is struggling.
- We are seeing this also in Indonesia. ISIS central openly released a fatwa in their virtual caliphate suggesting its followers to carry out an attack at this very moment.

Dr. Joshua A. Geltzer:

- To echo that, this moment presents the dangerous potential for storytelling. We have no reason at this point, from either the intelligence community here in the United States or others in other countries, to believe that this was created by anything other than nature. Yet the pandemic is so dramatic and so horrific in its effects that it yields itself to storytelling.
- In essence that is what recruitment and radicalization is. It is a form of storytelling, and there are big lies, big pieces of disinformation you tell such as conjuring it as being an intentional weapon without any apparent basis or there are smaller half-truth.
- What we see in the United States are groups of various ideological stripes talking about, or alleging, that the governments – federal, state and city

governments – are exploiting the moment, are overreaching in their response and it is becoming something of a rallying cry. At times it may be part of a political discourse, but at times that rallying cry trends towards a call to violence. Thus, when something is dramatic – as this pandemic is unfolding – it allows those who want to make dramatic claims something to latch onto.

Dr. Rommel C. Banlaoi:

- I have a reason to believe that terrorist groups worldwide, including ISIS and al-Qaeda, can weaponize COVID-19 pandemic. If you look at the narrative they are sharing via social media, they are describing coronavirus as a weapon.
- If you are a Muslim, if you are in jihad and want to continue your jihad amidst the pandemic, they are encouraging those Muslims infected by COVID-19 to infect others. These are the kinds of social media stories being circulated now around chat groups that we are monitoring.
- I have reasons to believe that pro-ISIS groups can use the COVID-19 pandemic as a weapon for bioterrorism.

Leanne Close:

- We have various groups using the narrative around COVID-19 to try and engender people to come to their cause.
- I think disinformation is really the key here and it is extremely hard to stop conspiracy theories; we have seen violence around 5G towers in Australia, or protest actions and other things of that nature. So, people are using it to their own ends. Some people are believing the disinformation as well so the more that we can get our accurate facts and information to people the better.
- The spread of those sorts of things through social media is just so epidemic, in many respects, that it is difficult to counter that narrative.

Andini Effendi:

- Noor Huda, how do you think the reintegration efforts will change, or may perhaps not change, under the current COVID-19 pandemic?

Dr. Noor Huda Ismail:

- I think that is a very tough question to answer because COVID-19 itself is still very short and we have not really measured it. However, based on my years of experience helping individuals who used to be involved in terrorism to come back to society; it requires a number of stages. It is hard for me to imagine that only using online – because of social distancing – will be hard for governments to come up with offline intervention. I think the integration will pose a number of challenges.
- Even before COVID-19, here in Indonesia, we were struggling with this issue of our integration. There are cases of success, but in terms of numbers itself, it

is very low. Less than 10 per cent compared to other criminal cases such as drugs for instance, which is almost more than 50 percent. However, 10 percent of cases out of 900 is quite a lot. To carry out a terrorist attack you do not need big numbers of people and this is a challenge.

- Therefore, in the past three years, I have been embarking to directly engage in local communities to prepare them, so they can accept anyone who is a released terrorist and is trying to come back to start a new life – as well as possible returnees coming from the Middle East. This is not easy.

Andini Effendi:

- Are you saying that because of the pandemic, the strategy will be more personalized?

Dr. Noor Huda Ismail:

- I think so. I think the best strategy is always personalized because in this very issue there is no doctrine that one-size-fits-all. Thus, every approach should be very different. Those who are involved in Marawi and Syria should be different and those who are involved in local conflict should be different because the narrative as to why they joined is also different. Different trajectories should come up with different approaches to social integration as well. Those who are being radicalized in conflict or those who are being radicalized only through social media, each require a tailor-made approach.

Andini Effendi:

- Rommel, we know that the Philippines has been very strict with the quarantine during this pandemic. Do you think this pandemic has been affecting the Philippines' ability to attend the counterterrorism issues? Specifically, in relation to terrorist groups in the Philippines such as Abu Sayyaf, Bangsamoro, Jemaah Islamiyah and New People's Army and other associated groups.

Dr. Rommel C. Banlaoi:

- Yes, the COVID-19 pandemic is, in fact, affecting the ability of the law enforcement authorities to respond to terrorist threats because they are divided over implementing the quarantine measures and, at the same time, continuing their counterterrorism operations.
- We have a big problem in the Philippines because we are faced with two major insurgency problems. We have insurgency problems emanating from the communist front and from the Muslim front, or as some would call it the Moro Front.
- The Muslim insurgency is very complicated because there are various operating groups associated with the ISIS, groups not associated with the ISIS and, groups now helping the Philippine government in peace building. I am

talking about the Moro Islamic Liberation front which is now taking the lead in the Moro government in the Moro National Liberation Front.

- We are still advocating for federalism in Mindanao but if you talk about pro-ISIS groups, they have not stopped their terrorist operations during the pandemic. In fact, they took advantage of the pandemic to mount terrorist attacks. For example, last April they attacked military detachments that killed around eleven soldiers and fourteen others because they were not doing quarantine measures.
- Based on our monitoring of violent incidents in Mindanao, since the COVID pandemic, we have monitored more than 150 violent incidents coming not only from the Abu Sayyaf group but also from the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters.
- The Bangsamoro Freedom Fighters are also very complicated because we are facing three major groups and two of these groups are associated with ISIS. Close to Bangsamoro Islamic freedom fighters operating in Central Mindanao, if you go further east, you see the New People Army also continuing their military activities. When the United Nations called for a ceasefire, the Communist Party of the Philippines ordered the New People's Army to follow the ceasefire initiative of the United Nations, but they are still continuing their violent activities.
- If you talk about the Abu Sayyaf group, they recently kidnapped another foreign national in a boat; and they continue kidnapping operations in the waters of Sabah and Tawi-Tawi.
- Supporting all these terrorist groups in the Philippines are foreign terrorist groups, predominantly Indonesians and Malaysians. You can see Indonesians continuing to travel to Mindanao, and Malaysians will normally operate in Sabah. Not only foreign terrorist fighters from Indonesia and Malaysia but also from the Middle East, from the Arab world, we have Egyptians and Somalis.
- Their continuous entry to the Philippines which is complicating the nature of the terrorist threat in the Philippines and the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the nature of this threat – prompting our government to pass an anti-terrorism law as an urgent measure.

Andini Effendi:

- Rommel, I would like to ask you. I remember that President Duterte was very tough on terrorism. What is the current effort now with the situation? Does he still have this strong measure against terrorism in the Philippines? How does this work on the group with the current pandemic?

Dr. Rommel C. Banlaoi:

- The current administration is now pursuing tougher legal measures against terrorism by passing the new anti-terrorism law 2020 that provides greater

power for law enforcement authorities to counter not only acts of terrorism, but also acts prior to terrorism like inciting, facilitating, recruiting, training, and financing of terrorism.

- It strengthens the counter legal measure of the Philippine government with the enactment of this law but at the same time, President Duterte ordered the military to focus and intensify its military operations against the Abu Sayyaf group and against pro-ISIS groups operating in Mindanao.
- Moreover, right now the Philippine government includes the New People's Army in the list of terrorist groups that require military operation focus. President Duterte has also ordered the Philippine National Police to intensify their law enforcement operations, particularly in the area of intelligence gathering.
- Thus, if we talk about the role of the military and police in counterterrorism – if the government wants 'search and destroy' operations then the military will be mobilized to conduct airstrikes or face-to-face battle against terrorist groups, but when the Philippine government wants terrorist personalities put in jail then they will mobilize the power of the police to issue warrants of arrest in order to put this terrorist to justice.
- The Philippine government is also pursuing non-military and non-police measures through the enactment of the formation of the National Action Plan to prevent and counter violent extremism. Even the Anti-Terrorism Law of 2020 requires the implementation of preventing and countering violent extremism because of the recognition in that the problem of terrorism in the Philippines is a complex problem that requires comprehensive solution.
- The explanation of the Philippine government is that the anti-terrorism law is only strengthening the legal measure against terrorist groups. It requires other measure in order to really address the underlying conditions that makes terrorism in the Philippines. These underlying conditions are political, economic, social, cultural, religious and even take into account personal considerations.

Andini Effendi:

- You stated in an article in *Politico*, "How the Coronavirus is Reshaping Terrorists' Attack Plans" that the virus can provoke threats in new ways. Could you explain what threats you think have been emerging globally as a result of the pandemic?

Dr. Joshua A. Geltzer:

- The comment I made reflected on the fact that there was already a sense of deliberate cultivation of distrust of government in the face of a very unusual set of circumstances and demands or requirements by the government.
- You saw in the early days of the response to the pandemic, here in the United States, an attempted attack on a hospital ship. Somehow what we normally think of as aid to those suffering in a medical emergency was contorted through

a worldview that is deliberately being propagated by extremists into some sort of threat. Something to which the response should be violence. We also saw an attempted hospital attack virtually on the other side of the country.

- It is not in any one geography and thankfully those who try to stop those things kept those incidents from becoming full-blown attacks with casualties. However, we saw even then, that there was a moment where you could push on this notion of distrust, you could try to spark a violent response and even if most of your intended audience would not respond to it, some tiny portion would.
- As someone said earlier, it only takes one or a handful of folks to at least attempt a terrorist attack and, in some cases, succeed. Those are the kind of circumstances that I think are worth worrying about as this pandemic continues.

Andini Effendi:

- Do you think that war on terrorism has been a *passe* and now terrorists are using narratives as their new weapons for their fight?

Dr. Joshua A. Geltzer:

- I think narratives are built into these national security problems at every stage. In some ways, mobilizing forces for a world war, at least here in the United States, was about a narrative; a sense of what we are fighting against and what we are fighting for. Certainly, terrorism of the 9/11 and the immediate post 9/11 variety, that had a narrative to it. Osama Bin Laden had a very particular narrative. It was not that he thought of attack like 9/11 on its own could galvanize the support or bring about the change he wanted instead he had to situate those attacks within a narrative and of course, counter-terrorism at least when it is done well, has its own narrative of what it stands for.
- But I do think the current moment yields itself to battling narratives in an extreme form, almost on steroids, so to speak. Because narratives can fly around so fast. This is a digital age, there is something different happening in the way that state actors, non-state actors, some combination of them, can take essentially narratives or little pieces that add up to narratives, about what government is or is not doing, what individuals are doing or not doing, and how people should respond to a moment they are dissatisfied with and make that spread across national boundaries very quickly with at least as many intended audience members receiving it and believing it. There is a way in which narratives spread now that is different and I think governments are having a hard time responding to.

Andini Effendi:

- The 2020 edition of ASPI's Counterterrorism yearbook considers three emerging themes that are matters of concern in the current security environment— namely, the demise of the Islamic State (IS) 'caliphate' and what that means globally and regionally for Australia, the increased threat from right-wing extremism, and the role of technology in propagating violent extremist ideologies.
- Do you think that these three elements have changed in the context of COVID-19 has it become less, equally threatening or even more so? Why is that?

Leanne Close:

- The threat of Islamist extremists is still there, it is probably changed and has not had time to flourish because terrorist, just like the rest of us, have been in isolation. There is obviously a much diminished group in Iraq and Syria supporting the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and the Caliphate but there are still thousands of people there that are still fighting, there are a lot of people in custody throughout the region. I think the COVID-19 impact for that, from an Australian perspective, means that they just could not come back to Australia at the moment. But that does not mean that planning or gathering more financial support or thinking of different ways to commit acts of violence and terrorism are not occurring.
- The second point in relation to right wing terrorism, as Joshua said earlier, that has been growing for a number of years, it has always been there. Technology has absolutely accelerated and had a big impact in groups being able to contact each other and build their narratives. I think it has also been impacted by the global financial crisis that coincided with the rise of the internet. That and the ability for people to communicate across the globe has seen much more partisan politics and much greater divide. We did not really have much of a discourse about the left and the right wing in Australia but that is something that certainly gained a lot of prominence in recent times. Furthermore, the impact of COVID-19 on that has been quite profound because I think the economic hardships create a feeling of them being hard-done by. That is where those fringe groups or extremist groups come into their own where they start to build their own narrative about why they are being unfairly treated by a member with race or cultural issues or whatever ideology they may espouse. We are certainly seeing an increase in that.

Andini Effendi:

- This is a question from Kebart Licayan from Miriam College. Given the current pandemic situation and given the limited resources of the government, what is the best approach of the government to solve the problem? Additionally, what

are the safeguards that the government are not going to use counter-terrorism strategies beyond its purpose?

Dr. Noor Huda Ismail:

- In terms of narrative, when we talk about terrorism and ISIS, there are other issues that we need to look at now on how the group hijack this narrative for their purposes. I am talking about misinformation, and digital literacy. These are the things that I think the government should emphasize more during this pandemic. Apparently, COVID-19 has impacted the way we live including the way we trust our government and the way we trust and use information through social media. We are seeing the spread of misguided information and this is exactly what the group has been hoping so far, undermining the government.
- If you look at the issue especially in Indonesia, we tend to label them as an Islamic terrorist but in fact some of the people are clueless about Islam, some of them even do not know how to read the Quran, but they join the group because they provide basic services for them like education or even health for example. Not to mention the presence of a charismatic individual within the group that tells them the narrative. I think the government should rethink our narrative on this very issue especially during this pandemic.

Andini Effendi:

- Is there any government in this world who basically won the war on narratives especially if it is related to terrorism?

Leanne Close:

- No, I do not think that there is at all. Going back to the question, I do not think it is just the government either. The government plays a key role but it is about how the government agencies work with the private sector, community groups and how that community builds trust and respect for each other. Having the broad community supporting government approaches and helping government agencies to work with each other in community to try to change people's views, disengage people from certain behaviors will help with the de-radicalization processes, education, access to employment for people. That is what I think will change and reduce the incidence of terrorism in individual countries but it takes a lot of time and it requires good leadership and coordination which where I think government should take the lead.

Dr. Rommel C. Banlaoi:

- The COVID-19 pandemic is providing both challenges and opportunities for counterterrorism law enforcement. The major challenge is that the pandemic is now being used by terrorist groups in the Philippines as a rallying issue to recruit more members and to intensify their propaganda activities, particularly in social

media. Because of the economic impact due to the pandemic, it exacerbates the economic underlying conditions that provide fertile ground for terrorist groups. However, at the same time there are opportunities. Because of the lockdown, it can limit the movement of these terrorist groups and the quarantine measure can be used to intensify law enforcement operations against terrorist groups. Another opportunity is the passing of the anti-terrorism law which aims to address many other issues that were not addressed by the previous law. For example, in the new law there is the creation of Anti-Terrorism Council with additional membership from the Department of Information and Communication. The main purpose of the department is to address the operations of terrorist groups in social media because if they could not move and recruit members physically, they must have done it through social media. The new anti-terrorism law aims to address that particular problem. However, unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic is creating more fertile ground for these terrorist groups to recruit more members and intensify the propaganda activity.

Dr. Joshua A. Geltzer:

- Before the pandemic, there was already a big debate in the U.S about the future of counterterrorism looked like in a world that seemed to have additional and increasingly important national security challenges. The first national security strategy of the Trump Administration seemed to diminish at least a bit the focus on counterterrorism. Certainly, the first defense strategy of this administration issued under then Defense Secretary Mattis really put great power competition front and center and seemed quite deliberately to put counterterrorism in a more constrained or at least less resource-intensive place. But how to do that, was already a subject of discussion and debate but there are not necessarily great answers here in the U.S.
- I think this pandemic has only accelerated the need to figure out what that means because at every point since 9/11, the desire to less focus on counterterrorism less has been raised. Essentially as the threat of terrorism has dragged the U.S. government back, that desire to focus less on has been tampered by harsh reality, the most prominent being the explosion of ISIS, the territory it held, and the threat it posed even as the administration at that time was trying to wind down counterterrorism involvement.
- What it means to deal with great power competition, what it means to deal with other challenges like climate change, and now to add to that, the salience of this pandemic. But also I hope the lesson for the next pandemic, which may not wait a hundred years to come along, I think that will add to the sense that there need to be answers what sustainable counterterrorism looks like in a U.S. government approach that does not make counterterrorism the leading aspect of national security work.

Dr. Dino Patti Djalal:

- One of the things that we at FPCI are worried about is a trend where terrorists instead of attacking random places they are attacking certain religious members in their house of worship. For example, churches were bombed in Surabaya, mosque shootings in Christchurch, New Zealand. I think this is a continuing problem and it may get worse. On how to deal with it, we believe that there is a sea of inherited bigotry among the Abrahamic religions; Christianity, Islam, Judaism. Even in democratic countries, at the grassroots, there are still some frictions between the Abrahamic religions and this is happening in Indonesia as well.
- What we do in FPCI is we are trying to address the problems at the grassroots level because we noticed that the interfaith process is undergoing fatigue. There are so many interfaith processes where they go for a one-day conference, talk to the converted and the next day, things do not change at the grassroots. What we are trying to do is that we have been trying to get a number of religious leaders at the grassroots who have followers and who have some degree of bigotry towards the other religion to live in each other communities for three weeks. The results have been miraculous, we had one Imam who professed that he hated Jews because that was how he has been taught by his family. The moment he went to the US and he lived in a house of an American rabbi, all his hatred and stereotypes were erased to the point where he became friends with the American rabbi.
- There are a lot of ways by which we can make a new narrative and attack the inherited bigotry. Once the inherited bigotry is erased in the grassroots level, I think the condition will change and there will be less space for radicalism.

Comr. Gen. Boy Rafli Amar:

- In terms of statistics, in comparison to last year's data on the apprehension of terrorist suspects (of around 300 in 2019 alone), up to July this year, Densus 88 had only apprehended around 100 terrorist suspects. However, the activities of terrorist or terrorist groups remain significant. Thereby, the government must remain vigilant.
- The question is why is terrorism still active during the pandemic in Indonesia?
- My answers are first, the COVID-19 is used as a fundamental tool for propaganda by terrorist groups or extremist groups. Second, having people locked at home and indoors, and staying on-line provides the window of opportunities for extremists to recruit including by inciting terrorist acts, to a certain extent to incite hate-crimes against ethnic minorities. Third, the misuse purposes, including terrorist financing. The pandemic provides these opportunities for terrorist or terrorist groups to exploit.

- What is BNPT doing? BNPT is bequeath through Law Number 5/2018 to coordinate efforts in the prevention of terrorism. Prevention is an obligation for the State to implement, and its implementation must uphold human rights and the precautionary principle. The work of BNPT in prevention focuses on three key areas namely, national preparedness, counter radicalization, de-radicalization. As the new Head of BNPT, as part of my 100-day tenure program-- BNPT is working around the clock to formulate various BNPT regulations as mandated through Governmental Regulation Number 77/2019 on Terrorism Prevention, among others respectively, on counter radicalization, national preparedness, de-radicalization, and protection of law enforcement from acts of terrorism.
- As part of enhancing BNPT's counter-radicalization effort, community engagement programs are underway, such as engaging with ulama(s) (Islamic scholars) – in which BNPT will soon launch the "Ulama Task Force". They are our "weapons" to engage distorted propaganda, and ill-justified religious dogmas.
- We are also engaging with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and the media focusing on maintaining and sustaining dissemination of peaceful messages, through on-line and off-line platforms. Moreover, the need to socialize the principles of Pancasila on a massive scale becomes ever more relevant.
- In complementing these efforts, BNPT is working towards establishing an online streaming TV. The aim of this program is to disseminate counter-narratives on-line by promoting values of tolerance and moderation, including "religious moderation" (moderasi beragama), as well as partake in the national resilience program of promoting Indonesia's state philosophy of "*Pancasila*" and "*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*" (Unity in Diversity).
- In engaging with the Youth, BNPT together with the Ministry of Youth and Sports on the occasion of the Youth National Day (Sumpah Pemuda) on 28 October 2020 – is planning to launch a Declaration on National Preparedness in the Prevention of Terrorism (Deklarasi Kesiapsiagaan Nasional). Due to the fact, that Youth are our frontline activists in the prevention of terrorism, including as means for further empowerment.
- As a matter of priority as well, BNPT is putting efforts to adopt the draft National Action Plan on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (RANPE) through a Presidential Regulation. At the moment it is at the stage of harmonization. This document would provide the road-map as a whole of government and whole of society approach in mitigating grievance and drivers of violent extremism leading to terrorism. This document could also serve to mitigate the long-term risk associated with terrorism during and after the Covid-19 pandemic.

Andini Effendi:

- Question from Glenn Wijaya from Christian Teo and Partners Law Firm. Is there any budget cut in respect of counter terrorism budget in view of the dire need to prioritize available funds to fight against COVID-19?

Comr. Gen. Boy Rafli Amar:

- Our budget got cut but no problem we are still moving with the current budget account. Because of the pandemic, a lot of BNPT's program could not be established on the field, we could not make large crowd gatherings. Therefore, most of our programs are through social media for example, we establish the BNPT news channel based on the internet.

Dr. Joshua A. Geltzer:

- I think of it as more of resource reallocation in part because, for better or for worse, the U.S. does not budget for counterterrorism *per se*, they budget for difference sorts of tools and post 9/11, a lot of those tools have been directed at counterterrorism but I think the basic premise is the same, which is you have decisions to reduce the U.S. troop presence in Syria, in Afghanistan, both under the current president, and as you mentioned, to reduce presence in Africa as well. Ultimately, the idea of reducing a U.S. troop presence abroad has an appeal because we all want to keep service members and their families at home if possible and keep them safe. We want to free up resources for a whole bunch of other things. But the question is: does the threat allow it?
- It is a bit hard to see exactly where the gains have been in some of the terrorism hotspots in Africa, the Middle East, and elsewhere, that would make it possible to at least dramatically a U.S. presence. It is not just about the military, often we talked about the military, but it is about the intelligence that in some ways can be more critical because it can tell us whether there is a threat, materializing a particular threat of a particular attack. Both intelligence and the military can enable a diplomatic presence in parts of the world where otherwise would not be safe or possible.
- Yes, I think we are on a trajectory towards scaling down what U.S. counterterrorism presence abroad looks like but how we get there still requires a lot of assessment where the threat is going.

Andini Effendi:

- This is a question from Osvaldo from Merauke. Is there a chance for online terrorism recruitment by using terrorism indoctrination, taking advantage of "governments failure and/or conspiracy theories" how will governments screen this online or handle this? Compared to suicide bombing, where there will be lack of victims, how will cyberterrorism will be handled by the government in this time of "social distancing"?

Leanne Close:

- The radicalization of people online has been occurring prior to COVID-19 and it has been one of the main and effective strategies when ISIL was forming and wanting to build the Caliphate in encourage people to either go to Syria or Iraq to fight with them or to encourage people to commit acts of violence and terrorism in their home countries. Private social media companies try to self-regulate as much as they can or they could always do more.

Andini Effendi:

- Question from Naya asking Mas Huda. What would be your suggestion to make sure that the contextual and case-by-case approach would be efficient in Indonesian counterterrorism strategy? This considering that Indonesian officials still have differing views and practices on the matter, like for example in the issue of repatriation.

Dr. Noor Huda Ismail

- Captive audience and narrative due to COVID-19 makes terrorist groups go to social media to push the narratives.
- The group also manages to provide alternative services to the members. The reason why we often see rejuvenation of individuals joining terrorist forces is because some of them join not merely of the ideology but also the attraction of the services that the group might give to them. So understanding the challenge of ideology is one thing, but we also need their existing social network that gives them community meaning and purpose in their life. This challenge will be difficult for any state in the world, so therefore engaging at the grassroots level is of importance, which is what Pak Dino has said.
- If we can come up with a flexible, tailor-made approach in a specific area, the Indonesian government can work much more efficiently rather than following a rigid approach. It is not a problem with the BNPT but it's about the existing bureaucratic system that we have to fulfill.
- Focusing in Central Java: we have 150 released terrorists, and 223 incarcerated. If we can work on this and understand their connection into the local community to help the Indonesian government for integration, we will be seeing a different picture of a possible threat in the future because there is some kind of ownership within community. What we are seeing now is the lack of ownership of the community, because they say this is a government issue, this is the western way to critique Islam, etc.

Andini Effendi:

- Question from Georgetown University and this is for Josh, what kinds of new forms of terrorism have been amplified during the pandemic within the context

of the U.S., and how has the U.S. counterterrorism strategy changed during COVID-19?

Dr. Joshua A. Geltzer:

- I think we are seeing new manifestations of the vehicular forms of attacks. We saw this back in Nice, France, as ISIS-related. We saw it in Charlottesville as a white supremacist took the life of one person and injured many others, and now we are seeing it in incidents that range from the ideologically driven to the more emotive incidents.
- But given the gatherings we are seeing in the U.S., many with a push for social justice and to try to address problems like racism here. In a sense, these numbers of people present, unfortunately, targets of opportunity, and we have seen incidents like that.
- That is a tactic we can trace from actual Palestinian-Israeli times to ISIS to white supremacists, and now to the current moment. As these gatherings I suspect continue, I hope that those who are charged with protecting Americans here are trying to figure out ways to get in front of this. Because, it might be an old tactic but it seems to be taking on new life unfortunately right now.

Andini Effendi:

- From China Policy Group, reports have said that the antipathy directed to everything symbolically linked to China, be it Chinese companies operating in Indonesia or Chinese-Indonesian communities is spreading amongst radical groups during the outbreak. What is the strategy of BNPT to combat this? Is there an antipathy towards China after this pandemic?

Dr. Rommel C. Banlaoi

- Antipathy towards China has not developed yet into violent activities, however, there has been a low trust rating in the Philippines towards China and there is strong anti-China sentiment amongst Filipinos.
- But in Mindanao, Chinese are the target of terrorists to kidnap, most of these are Malaysian Chinese, because they are assumed to be rich for ransom. In general, sentiments of the Filipino people against the Chinese have not reiterated yet into violence.
- But there are some of those who want to boycott Chinese products due to issues in the West Philippine Sea.

Andini Effendi:

- We have to move forward, so in terms of how we can move on in terms of this counterterrorism effort. We are talking about global leadership, which critiques have said, the U.S. has been absent in that and has been taken over by other countries including countries like China. How can we build an effective and well-coordinated international cooperation? It feels like many countries are on their own with COVID-19. How can we move on with this issue?

Dr. Joshua A. Geltzer:

- I do think that global cooperation on counterterrorism is essential because terrorist groups do not respect state borders and state boundaries. They operate across borders and if one is to get ahead of them, that is going to require cooperation that also transcends state borders.
- I think some are disappointed with the direction counterterrorism has gone in the U.S. under President Trump. It seems a step backwards on that front rather than a step forward. You see this rather extraordinary coalition that was assembled to roll back ISIS from the territory it once held in Iraq and Syria, and under the current administration, the U.S. has essentially unilaterally stood down much of the effort that was going down there.
- It is hard to ask others to step up when you are stepping down. Similarly, after the terrible Christchurch attack and the role that the internet played in the almost immediate dissemination and continued dissemination thereafter of the horrors of that attack. You had this call by countries, all with different legal regimes, but asking tech companies to step up and do more.
- The United States was absent from that, and I think that absence looms large. With regards to the role of the United States in counterterrorism, from where I stand, I think we all could do it better if we are doing it in a collaborative way. We are hoping to see the U.S in the future go back to being a more constructive cooperation partner.

Leanne Close

- The relations between Indonesia and Australia have been strong and will continue to be strong, we have had good bilateral relations, however multilateral relations have been strained during the pandemic, understandably, but I think that will repair and strengthen against terrorism because that also our common spirit on wanting to combat and learn from each other.

Dr. Rommel C. Banlaoi

- I think we want the U.S. and China to lead the world, not only unilaterally but also in unity. We don't want the two to be divided, because if the two are divided, the world will be divided and choose between the two major powers.

- In the area of counterterrorism, we are seeing different models on U.S. and China when it comes to countering terrorism and we would want for the two to get along to share their respective practices to lead the world in the battle against terrorism and we think the U.S. to continue assistance to the Philippines in counterterrorism, in fact that is the major consideration, President Duterte suspend the termination the agreement because we want to continue assistance from the U.S. to build our capabilities to fight terrorism.

Dr. Noor Huda Ismail

- I think this is no doubt that this is need to have an International Relations around cooperation because the very nature of terrorism itself is transnational. Even though the attacks are local, at least the political imagination is global. For example, what happens in Syria might affect Indonesia.
- I think we need to strengthen the international structure and the U.S has been demonstrating leadership before Trump, though enormous resources and I think we need to continue to do that.

Comr. Gen. Boy Rafli Amar:

- I think we are pretty happy meeting with the United Nations Global Counterterrorism and Strategy, and international relations especially with some countries who are combatting terrorism like Indonesia, the U.S., Australia, they also invite us to a meeting and have discussed a lot and we plan to make an MoU in capacity building, intelligent, information, and some plan, this means to accommodate all the foreigner who are concern with Indonesia who are institution on counterterrorism from the UN or other countries

Dr. Rommel C. Banlaoi:

- We have to be reminded we have UN Global Counterterrorism and Strategy and we have to sustain the implementation of that strategy worldwide and we have the UN Global Counterterrorism Committee in charge to build capacity to this counterterrorism, but what I observe is that the United Nation is promoting largely on building capabilities on central government.
- So I think it is time to build capabilities also, we have to the role of the civil society organization and also the role of local government authorities so we need to harness the potential of this stakeholders in order to be in the frontline so we should not only focus our attention of building capabilities on central governments and also capabilities of civil society organization to promote and uphold the community based approach to counterterrorism and at the same time to strengthen the capabilities of our local government authorities to deliver services to conflicted areas.

Leanne Close:

- I think a good example of a global cooperation on counterterrorism has been the task force and the outcome they are achieving in countering terrorism and money laundering; I think that is a good model going forward with countries should focus on supporting the UN.
- In terms of cooperation, individuals could hold ourselves to account, sharing information, services, practices and learning from that. We need to have the latest shift within our own country and organization into taking that forward into the future.

Dr. Joshua A. Geltzer:

- As this conversation indicates by just where all of us are in the world, it is inherently a global problem on terrorism. Peace that is global is digital peace is the tech platform that is being exploited, not by most users but by some percentage of users that are trying to do some bad things on global platforms. A part of it is that they find it hard to understand what some governments want and others want to deal with different legal regimes, but that is why I was disappointed that the U.S. sat out on this issue.

Dr. Noor Huda Ismail:

- What I really hope is we can speak upon the reason on why we fail rather than how we are succeeding. Success itself in one country doesn't mean that it is also applicable in another country. Understanding a certain context is very critical.
- In the role of government and technology companies especially communication companies like YouTube, Facebook, we are often obsessed with the negative approach, whereby the time when we take down the content, we often ignore the positive approach. We need to engage in the narrative of these people because taking down alone won't solve the root cause of this problem. We need to also discuss on the material grievances that actually fuel the very reason for the radicalization

CLOSING

The moderator, Andini Effendi closed the virtual roundtable discussion and thanked all the speakers and the audience for participating.