

Indonesia: The Dark Side of Jama'ah Ansharut Tauhid (JAT)

I. OVERVIEW

Jama'ah Ansharut Tauhid (JAT), led by Indonesia's best-known radical cleric Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, has been an enigma since its founding in 2008. An ostensibly above-ground organisation, it has embraced individuals with known ties to fugitive extremists. It has welcomed many members of the militant Jema'ah Islamiyah (JI) but clashed with the JI leadership over strategy and tactics. It preaches jihad against Islam's enemies but insists it stays within the law – though it rejects man-made laws as illegitimate. It is a mass membership organisation but wholly dependent on Ba'asyir, without whom it would quickly disintegrate. It has become an important element in the network of Indonesian jihadi groups but has been the target of harsh criticism from some erstwhile allies. Understanding JAT's nature, its many faces and the ideological rifts it has generated helps illuminate the weakness and divisions within the Indonesian jihadi movement today. It also highlights the ongoing but probably diminishing influence of Ba'asyir.

The dark side of JAT's activities came into the spotlight on 6 May 2010, when Indonesian police raided its Jakarta headquarters and charged three officials with raising funds for a militant training camp uncovered in Aceh in late February. On 12 May, police carried out a reconstruction of a meeting in South Jakarta involving two men now in custody known to have served as camp instructors and another, who wore a large name tag reading "Abu Bakar Ba'asyir". JAT's alleged involvement in fundraising and combat training immediately led to speculation that another arrest of 72-year-old Ba'asyir was imminent.

Even if he is arrested – for the third time since the first Bali bombs – the impact will be limited, both in terms of Indonesian extremism and the domestic political fallout. Ba'asyir has been a perpetual thorn in the side of successive governments since the early 1970s. He is very much the elder statesman of Indonesia's radical movement, but he is neither the driving force behind it now nor its leading ideologue, and he has numerous critics among fellow jihadis who cite his lack of strategic sense and poor management skills.

That said, Ba'asyir's celebrity status and an active religious outreach (*dakwah*) campaign have turned JAT into an organisation with a nationwide structure within two years of its founding. It recruits through mass rallies and smaller religious instruction sessions in which Ba'asyir and other JAT figures fulminate against democracy, advocate full application of Islamic law, and preach a militant interpretation of jihad. That public face gives "plausible deniability" to what appears to be covert support on the part of a small inner circle for the use of force. JAT cannot have it both ways: its attraction in the beginning was almost certainly the non-violent *dakwah* option it seemed to offer – militancy without the risks. Any established link to violence will lose its followers.

The truth is that the jihadi project has failed in Indonesia. The rifts and shifting alignments so evident now in the jihadi community are a reaction to that failure. There is no indication that violent extremism is gaining ground. Instead, as with JAT's formation, we are seeing the same old faces finding new packages for old goods. The far bigger challenge for Indonesia is to manage the aspirations of the thousands who join JAT rallies for its public message: that democracy is antithetical to Islam, that only an Islamic state can uphold the faith, and that Islamic law must be the source of all justice.

II. JAT: THE BEGINNINGS

JAT's origins lie in the rift that emerged between Abu Bakar Ba'asyir and fellow members of Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI) after his release from prison in 2006.¹

¹ For more on terrorist networks in Indonesia, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°189, *Indonesia: Jihadi Surprise in Aceh*, 20 April 2010; Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°95, *Indonesia: Noordin Top's Support Base*, 27 August 2009; Asia Briefing N°94, *Indonesia: The Hotel Bombings*, 24 July 2009; Asia Briefing N°92, *Indonesia: Radicalisation of the "Palembang Group"*, 20 May 2009; Asia Report N°147, *Indonesia: Jemaah Islamiyah's Publishing Industry*, 28 February 2008; Asia Report N°142, "Deradicalisation" and Indonesian Prisons, 19 November 2007; Asia Briefing N°63, *Indonesia: Jemaah Islamiyah's Current Status*, 3 May 2007; Asia Report N°114, *Terrorism in Indonesia: Noordin's Networks*, 5 May 2006; Asia Report N°92, *Recycling Mili-*

On 13 July 2008, Ba'asyir resigned as MMI *amir*, citing the un-Islamic nature of MMI's leadership structure.² An Islamic organisation, he said, had to be led by an *amir* with full authority. The *amir* could consult with others in an executive council, or *majelis syuro*, but ultimately, he made the decisions, popular or not, and every member of the organisation had to fall in line. MMI, he said, gave its leader only a symbolic role; real authority lay in a body called *Ahlul Halli wal Aqdi* (AWHA), where decisions were taken collectively.³ When he accused MMI leaders of using a secular structure, he said, they accused him of acting like a Shi'ite – in their view, like an autocrat.⁴

A. PROBLEMS WITH MMI

Since MMI's structure had remained unchanged since its founding in 2000, the question is why Ba'asyir took so long to decide it was unacceptable. In his resignation letter, he said he realised the problems at the outset and was reluctant to become the *amir*. He agreed only because he believed he could straighten out the weaknesses over time, but he was imprisoned after the first Bali bomb after only two years on the job. After his release in June 2006, he tried to implement a more Islamic structure but encountered resistance from certain MMI leaders and members. He therefore decided to step down, but would continue to work with MMI and others to implement Islamic law.⁵

Ba'asyir's lack of accountability, politically and financially, seems to have been part of the problem. Mohamed Thalib, one of the AHWA leaders, told the media that on 22 June 2008, he had sent a letter to fellow MMI leaders that accused Ba'asyir of claiming leadership for life and infallibility, like shi'a imams, without any need to answer to the broader community. Ba'asyir, Thalib said, also claimed the *amir*'s right to use organisational funds as he saw fit, and no one could question his decisions.⁶

tants in Indonesia: Darul Islam and the Australian Embassy Bombing, 22 February 2005; and Asia Report N°83, *Indonesia Backgrounder: Why Salafism and Terrorism Mostly Don't Mix*, 13 September 2004.

²<http://muslimdaily.net/new/berita/lokal/1369/ustadz-abu-bakar-ba%60asyir-mundur-dari-mmi>. His initial announcement was oral, followed four days later by a written letter that was posted on websites.

³*Ahlul Halli wal Aqdi* is an Arabic phrase referring to representatives of the Muslim community who are given authority by it to choose a caliph.

⁴"Ini Pembunuhan Karakter", *Gatra*, 7 August 2008.

⁵Resignation letter, dated 17 July 2008, as reproduced on www.dakta.com/berita/nasional/298/baasyir-mengundurkan-diri-dari-mmi.html.

⁶"Muhammad Thalib: Syiah, Ahmadiyah dan Komunis", *Gatra*, 13 August 2008. One issue arose in mid-2007 when an MMI member from Jakarta, Fauzan an-Anshari, started a "Ba'asyir for President" drive. Other MMI leaders saw this as a violation of MMI principles and wanted Fauzan expelled. Ba'asyir, who had

The problems were in fact of longer standing. In 2006 an internal rift had developed when some MMI members accused Halawi Makmun, head of MMI's Islamic law (*shari'a*) department and director of a small salafi *pesantren* in Cileungsi, Bogor, of being too quick to declare Muslims who did not fully apply Islamic law as apostates, through a process known as *takfir*. They also accused him of spreading *takfiri* thinking among MMI activists.⁷ Some in MMI reportedly wanted to place people in the government in the hopes of changing the system from within; Halawi rejected it outright. He also rejected MMI's lobbying the government on issues such as an anti-pornography law, on the grounds that a secular government was *thaghut* – anti-Islamic – by definition and MMI should be shunning all contact with it, not trying to influence it. According to the principle of loyalty and enmity (*al wala wal bara*), seeking assistance from *kafirs* was forbidden. Halawi was one of the first to follow Ba'asyir out of MMI.⁸

Then as Ba'asyir was about to be freed from prison in 2006, MMI leaders got into a dispute with his family about who would coordinate activities around the release. MMI proposed that he go immediately to Solo by plane and a convoy would then accompany him back to Ngruki. But a few days before the release, Ba'asyir's two sons, Abdul Rohim and Rasyid Ridho, decided to drive their father back to Solo from Jakarta, stopping to greet well-wishers along the way. MMI felt ill-served by the family's decision, even more so when it complained to Ba'asyir, and Ba'asyir sided with the family. Tensions continued between members of MMI's executive council and the family, especially with Abdul Rohim, who reportedly believed that MMI was seeking to exploit Ba'asyir's popularity for its own purposes.⁹

The Ba'asyir family decided to set up the Abu Bakar Ba'asyir Center in early 2008 and began spreading the word that Ba'asyir belonged to the *ummah* (community of the faithful), not to MMI. The ABB Center took over management of Ba'asyir's *dakwah* activities and separated itself from MMI. Some MMI members supported these actions, including Haris Amir Falah in Jakarta and

no intention of running for president of a secular political system that he had always rejected, nevertheless opposed sanctions for Fauzan. When MMI sacked Fauzan anyway, Ba'asyir felt his authority had been undermined. Responding to Ba'asyir's complaints, MMI's secretary-general retorted in the media that MMI did not recognise personality cults.

⁷*Takfir* literally means the process of declaring fellow Muslims infidel (*kafir*), and is used by many salafi jihadis to denounce Muslims who fail to uphold Islamic law or defend Muslims through jihad. Salafi jihadis are sometimes called *takfiris* because of their frequent resort to this practice.

⁸*Al wala wal bara* defines whom the Muslim faithful should consider an ally and whom an enemy.

⁹Crisis Group interview, Jakarta, 28 August 2008.

Moh. Achwan in East Java, both of whom later followed Ba'asyir into JAT. This made MMI executives angry; they accused the family of trying to destroy MMI and establish a personality cult around Ba'asyir.

From that point on, relations between Ba'asyir and MMI deteriorated. They grew worse after Ba'asyir criticised MMI's structure as secular and not in accordance with the tradition of the Prophet. In March 2008, MMI formed a "clarification team" (*tim tabayun*) to discuss the matter with Ba'asyir. They failed to heal the divide and Ba'asyir decided to leave MMI. Ten days after he delivered his resignation in July 2008, he set up a new organisation called Jama'ah Ansharut Tauhid.¹⁰

B. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF JAT

JAT was designed to "revitalise the Islamic movement in support of full victory for the struggle of the Indonesian faithful".¹¹ It was also designed to be open and above-ground, primarily to facilitate public outreach and education but also to ensure transparent management – perhaps an indirect response to Thalib's criticism of Ba'asyir's tenure as MMI *amir*.¹²

Even before JAT was formally inaugurated, it drew on three pools: Ba'asyir loyalists within MMI, such as Achwan, Haris Amir Falah and Hawali Makmun; close associates of Ba'asyir at al-Mukmin pesantren in Ngruki, Solo; and some but by no means all JI members.

The new organisation set up an office close to Ngruki and brought in several of its teachers (*ustadz*) and administrators: Afif Abdul Majid, who was to run JAT's day-to-day operations; Mustaqim Muzayyin, an Afghan veteran, Ngruki

ustadz and former MMI member; Wahyudin, Ngruki's director; and Ba'asyir's son, Abdul Rohim.

JAT was inaugurated at a packed ceremony in Bekasi, outside Jakarta on 17 September 2008 or 17 Ramadan 1429 according to the Islamic calendar – the anniversary of the Battle of Badr in 624, Islam's first major victory, when the Prophet's outnumbered forces in Medina defeated attackers from Mecca. Ba'asyir was the major attraction, but Afif Abdul Majid was the man in charge, calling each newly designated officer up to the stage for collective recitation of an oath, or *bai'at*, to uphold the goals of the organisation.

The leadership roster held a few surprises. In addition to representatives of the three recruiting pools mentioned above, two unexpected names appeared. One was Lutfi Haedaroh alias Ubeid, a young JI member who for the past five years had been known as an associate of Noordin M. Top, mastermind of major bombings in Jakarta in 2003 and 2004 (and subsequently in 2009) and in Bali in 2005. Ba'asyir seemed to have kept his distance from Noordin, though refused to criticise him; it was odd that he would be taking on Ubeid, just released from prison a year earlier, so publicly. It turned out that the two had grown close in Cipinang prison despite their 40-year age difference, and Ubeid saw Ba'asyir as a mentor. With his friend and fellow inmate Urwah, also released in 2007, Ubeid gave JAT direct links into the Noordin network.

The second surprise was Oman Rochman, alias Aman Abdurrachman (introduced as Abdurrachman at the ceremony) from a group called Jamaah Tauhid wal Jihad. One of the very few non-violent salafi scholars to cross over into the more extreme salafi jihadi ranks, Aman had been arrested after a group of his followers attended a bomb-making class that accidentally blew the roof off a house in Cimanggis, Depok, outside Jakarta in March 2004. No one from JI or MMI was involved; his followers were mostly young men attracted to his teachings when he was imam of the al-Sofwah salafi mosque in Jakarta. A prolific writer and translator before his arrest, he rocketed to fame in jihadi circles afterwards for his lectures, distributed in the form of cassettes, pamphlets and CDs, and his translations of the Jordanian Islamic scholar Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi. It was reportedly Aman's influence that had turned Halawi Makmun towards the *tafiri* approach that so alarmed his MMI colleagues in 2006.¹³

Aman was released from prison only two months before the JAT ceremony, but he had become so well-respected that his freedom was cause for celebration on jihadi websites. He and Ba'asyir would have had little occasion for contact before their respective arrests, and they were

¹⁰ JAT's founding date was 27 July 2008 in Solo. "Ba'asyir Tepis Jadi Donatur Aksi Terorisme", 15 May 2010, <http://forum-jihad.blogspot.com/2010/05/baasyir-tepis-jadi-donatur-aksi.html>.

¹¹ So read the banner raised at the formal inauguration of JAT in Bekasi on 18 September 2008, as can be seen in a video of the event taken by a participant and subsequently made available to Crisis Group. At the third MMI Congress a few weeks later, Thalib was chosen as the new *amir*, ensuring bad blood between MMI and JAT, even though one MMI leader, Abu Jibriel, continued to have close personal ties to Ba'asyir. Abu Jibriel, born Fihrudin, had lived in exile in Malaysia in the 1990s with the group around Ba'asyir and Sungkar. He was arrested by Malaysian authorities in 2001 and held under the Internal Security Act (ISA) until he was deported in 2004. He was tried and convicted of immigration violations and served five months in prison in Jakarta. After his release, he maintained a packed preaching schedule, mostly in well-to-do communities in the greater Jakarta area. He and Ba'asyir frequently appeared together as speakers at religious rallies.

¹² <http://ansharutauhid.com/publikasi/artikel/111-mengapa-perlu-jamaah-terbuka.html>.

¹³ Crisis Group interview, Jakarta, January 2009.

detained in different prisons. But Aman's willingness to take direction from Ba'asyir was a real coup for JAT – as long as it lasted.

It took only a few months for Aman to fall out with Ba'asyir and his sons. They reportedly considered him too hardline, too *takfiri*.¹⁴ Before he left, however, Aman had brought a wide following into JAT, not only outside Jakarta, where he ran a *pesantren*, but also in communities in East Kalimantan and Nusa Tenggara Barat provinces. In the former, his base was among former KOMPAK members who had helped raise money for the jihad in Poso, the central Sulawesi district where Christian-Muslim conflict had raged between 1998 and 2001; in the latter, it was in eastern Lombok and western Sumbawa, home to an old Darul Islam constituency.¹⁵

III. JAT'S IDEOLOGY

Like JI, JAT is rooted in the ideology of salafi jihadism, with the ultra-puritanism of the salafi *manhaj* or method combined with the political overlay of an emphasis on jihad. In a booklet distributed to members in late 2008, Ba'asyir focuses on the circumstances in which a Muslim legitimately can be declared apostate. He notes that JAT will not declare a Muslim to be a *kafir* even if he commits a sin such as adultery or drinking as long as he acknowledges that such behaviour is forbidden.¹⁶ If Muslim rulers do not apply Islamic law over the land they rule, then it becomes a *kafir* state and the rulers are *thaghut* (anti-Islamic). It does not necessarily follow that all inhabitants are *kafir* but in principle, Muslims should not be living there except if they have no choice.¹⁷ Apostates (*kafir murtad*) are worse than "original" *kafirs* such as Christians and Jews.

Islamic teachings, according to JAT, are the absolute, most modern and most scientific truth and will be so until the end of time. Anyone who believes otherwise is a deviant, including followers of secularism, pluralism, liberalism and all other ideologies under their banners such as nationalism, communism, socialism and democracy. These

are *kafir* teachings and their adherents must be expelled from Islam.¹⁸ Islam must be applied in full, not in part, and Islamic law must be the source of all justice. Anyone who decides a case based on law other than Islam is a *kafir*, oppressor and sinner.¹⁹

The war (against Islam's enemies) must continue until Judgment Day. An offensive jihad needs an imam but a defensive jihad does not, and it can be waged in different ways: through dissemination of knowledge, physical battle, donations of property and by the pen.²⁰

For their own good now and in the hereafter, Muslims are required to live under a caliphate that applies Islamic law. If three Muslims or more gather together, they must choose a leader. That leadership cannot be given to a *kafir*, and if a Muslim immerses himself in *kafir* affairs, then his leadership is nullified as is any obligation of Muslims to obey him. Muslims should arise and remove him if they can and take instead a just imam.²¹

In terms of jihad, JAT ulama cite Abdullah Azzam, Sayid Qutb and Abu Qotadah as references. In postings on one of the multiple JAT websites (www.ansharuttauhid.com), they maintain that waging war against Islam's enemies is the individual obligation (*fardhu 'ain*) of all Muslims given that most Muslim countries are under occupation by *kafir* forces. As long as Muslims are being killed and raped by the enemy, Muslims must consider jihad an obligation equivalent to prayer, fasting and giving alms to the poor.²²

They quote Sayid Qutb approvingly that Islam can only be truly understood in the context of struggle and jihad. Once jihad has become an individual obligation, says Qutb, then religion (*din*) cannot be understood on the basis of explanations of scholars who sit behind desks surrounded by books and journals but who themselves have not directly experienced war. A *mujtahid* (interpreter of Islam) must be a *mujahid* (warrior) and vice versa. Separating *dakwah* and jihad is as impossible as separating body and soul.²³

¹⁴ Crisis Group personal communication from Solo, April 2009.

¹⁵ A jihadi group called Mujahidin KOMPAK, more commonly known as KOMPAK, was established in 1999 to fight in Ambon, Maluku after communal conflict erupted there in January 1999. Initially funded by an Indonesian charity known as the Action Committee for Crisis Response (Komite Aksi Penanggulangan Akibat Krisis, KOMPAK) and trained by senior leaders of Jamaah Islamiyah, Mujahidin KOMPAK developed a separate identity under the leadership Abdullah Sunata, now detained.

¹⁶ Sariyah Da'wah wal I'lam, Jama'ah Ansharut Tauhid, "Aqidah & Manhaj Kami", Sukoharjo (undated).

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 24.

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 30.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 33.

²⁰ An offensive jihad is one to expand the boundaries of an Islamic state; a defensive jihad is in response to an attack by the enemy.

²¹ Ibid, p. 38.

²² Ust. Ibnul Jarrah, "Distorsi Husum Jihad", <http://ansharuttauhid.com/publikasi/artikel/129-distorsi-hukum-jihad.html>, undated.

²³ "Dakwah dan Jihad Jalan Perjuangan Thaifha Manshurah", [www.ansharuttauhid.com/publikasi/artikel/157-dakwah-dan-jihad-jalan-perjuangan-thaifah-manshurah.html](http://ansharuttauhid.com/publikasi/artikel/157-dakwah-dan-jihad-jalan-perjuangan-thaifah-manshurah.html).

There are two logical consequences of this ideology. One is that *i'dad* or military preparation becomes essential to the group. The second is that the near enemy – local officials who reject Islamic law – are as important as the far enemy – America, Israel and their allies.

IV. JAT STRUCTURE AND EXPANSION

JAT developed rapidly across Indonesia, aided by Ba'asyir's own peripatetic travels, with the costs underwritten by whoever hosted him. Some members complained that the focus was on quantity, not quality, and there was no effort to develop a selection process for members. Anyone who wanted to could join, making it a far cry from JI's more rigorous procedures.²⁴

The organisation is run out of a central office in Sukoharjo, not far from Ngruki.²⁵ Under Ba'asyir as *amir* is an executive council (*majelis syuro*), composed of Ba'asyir's close advisers, and an administrative office (*tanfiziyyah*), headed by Afif Abdul Majid.²⁶ Under the latter are five departments: finance (*baitul mal*); morality enforcement (*hisbah*); religious outreach and media (*dakwah wal i'lam*, sometimes abbreviated *dawlam*); education (*tarbiyyah*); and a secretariat (*katib*). The composition of the *majelis syuro* and *tanfiziyyah* have changed somewhat since the organisation was founded, as officials leave and are replaced.

JAT's status as an above-ground organisation entails much greater attention to the media, and its public relations effort is run out of Solo as well. It uses several internet and social networking sites; began publishing a monthly magazine in 2009; and makes use of www.muslimdaily.net, a site run by individuals close to the Ba'asyir family.²⁷ Videos produced by Muslim Daily TV are regularly posted on YouTube.

JAT also maintains a network of branch offices, divided into *wilayah* (covering those provinces like West, Central and East Java and Banten where JAT has a presence); *mudiriyyah* (districts); and *fi'ah* or cells. Some MMI branches went over to JAT wholesale, as in Samarinda, East Kalimantan, leading to the collapse of MMI there. Much of West Java, where MMI was rooted in Darul Islam communities rather than JI, also went over to JAT, bringing an eclectic group with them. Some were traditional leaders more rooted in local traditions than jihadism but looking for an organisation committed to implementing Islamic law.

JAT's focus has been overwhelmingly on *dakwah*, and in particular on sermons and lectures from Ba'asyir. The Bekasi *mudiriyyah*, for example, held regular monthly meetings (*liqo maftuh*) at which Ba'asyir was a frequent guest. JAT members also took part in demonstrations and protests, on everything from the execution of the Bali bombers to support for Gaza to calling for the dissolution of the counter-terrorism unit of the police, Detachment 88. All of the demonstrations were small; there is no evidence of widespread support anywhere for JAT activities, and by late 2009, some communities were refusing to have Ba'asyir speak for fear of encouraging extremism.²⁸ In June 2010, the local office of the Indonesian Ulama Council (Majelis Ulama Indonesia, MUI) in Serang, Banten, learning of a planned visit by Ba'asyir, sent him a letter asking him not to come to Serang or carry out any activities there for the foreseeable future, so that Banten province would not become a recruiting centre for radicalism and terrorism.²⁹

²⁴ In JI, recruits were only invited to join after a long indoctrination process, usually a year or longer, where individuals would pass through various stages of study. The process is outlined in Nasir Abas, *Membongkar Jemaah Islamiyah* (Jakarta, 2005), p. 99.

²⁵ The current address is Jalan Batik Keris No.88, Turi Baru, Cemani, Grogol, Sukoharjo. Its original address was Jl Cempaka 02A, Semenrono, Ngruki, Cemani, Grogol, Sukoharjo.

²⁶ The original *majelis syuro* in 2008 consisted of Afif Abdul Majid; Mustaqim Muzayyin; Wahyudin; Syaifudin alias Abu Fida; Haris Amir Falah; Oman Rochman alias Aman Abdurrachman; Lutfi Haedaroh alias Ubeid; Moh. Achwan; and Halawi Makmun. By 2010, Halawi, Haris and Oman were off, reportedly replaced by Umar Burhanuddin, Rasyid Ridho Ba'asyir (Ba'asyir's younger son); and Mustofa alias Abu Tholul.

²⁷ JAT's Facebook sites include Ansharut Tauhid Magz; Majalah Ansharuttauhid; Jama'ah Ansharut Tauhid; Ansharut Tauhid; GENERASI MUDA JAT. Its websites include www.ansharuttauhid.com and the blogs <http://majalahtauhid.wordpress.com>

and <http://jihaddandakwah.blogspot.com>. It prints a Friday bulletin called "Hati" and the magazine Ansharut Tauhid, now on its eleventh issue. Ba'asyir also has a Facebook site that notes the first profile of him posted on it was removed by the Facebook administrator.

²⁸ See "Kronologi upaya pencekalan dawah ust abu bakar baasyir di malang", www.ansharuttauhid.com/publikasi/pernyataan-sikap/158-kronologi-upaya-pencekalan-dawah-ust-abu-bakar-baasyir-di-malang.html, 29 September 2009.

²⁹ "MUI Kota Serang Larang Dakwah Ustadz Abu Bakar Ba'asyir", www.lintastanzhim.wordpress.com, 30 June 2010. In protest over the letter, a group from the hardline Forum Umat Islam (FUI) went to the central office of the Indonesian Ulama Council to complain. They were received by Cholil Ridwan, an MUI executive who gave them a sympathetic hearing and said he would ask for a clarification from Banten.

V. JAT'S DISPUTES WITH OTHER GROUPS

Ba'asyir and JAT have annoyed many different constituencies in the radical community, including JI, Darul Islam, the "purist" salafis and the *takfiri* salafis. Part of the problem is that JAT has never really had an identity apart from Ba'asyir, and he is too weak for many JI members, too political for the salafis, and too compromising for the *takfiris*. The Aceh training camp fiasco appears to have widened the rift between JI and JAT in particular, to the point that it is worth asking whether Ba'asyir still can be considered a JI member.

A. JAT AND JI

Among JI members, the reaction was mixed, and while some joined immediately, JI coordinators in different areas decided to canvass their members to determine the general sentiment and that took time. It also exposed some of the rifts within JI. Some of those who had been opposed to the establishment of MMI eight years earlier remained firmly against any effort to mix above-ground with clandestine activities, and joint membership of JI and JAT would do just that. Some had reservations about yet another organisation led by Ba'asyir. "He failed with JI, he failed with MMI, why would we want to join him again?" one JI member asked.³⁰ Some ex-prisoners saw membership in JAT as a way to rehabilitate themselves in the jihadi movement when the JI leadership was suspicious of their links to police.

Much of the Sumatra JI network was "JATified" (*di-JATkan*) within months of the new organisation's establishment. It appeared to offer the benefits of the old community without the risks that clandestine operations involved. For Ba'asyir and those around him, there was no difficulty being a member of both organisations, but the JI leadership, especially Abu Rusdan and Zuhroni alias Zarkasih or "Mbah" as he is more widely known, did not share that view. In their opinion, as relayed by a JI source, one could not take an oath to two organisations, because it would immediately raise the question of dual loyalties. Their message, therefore, was to stay out of JAT. Initially this was informal, an understanding that anyone in a leadership position in JI could not also hold office in JAT. But as time went on and JAT grew rapidly, JI leaders were adamant: if you join JAT, you leave JI and vice-versa.³¹

By mid-2009, before that decision had been taken, one JI member estimated that the number of JI "purists" who had decided to stay out of JAT was down to about 200. Jakarta JI members generally opted out, as did those in Poso. Many in Central and East Java joined, but save for the core group around Ba'asyir at Ngruki, many JI members in Solo kept their distance.

When the Aceh training camp was underway, Ba'asyir's protégé Ubeid helped make a video in which three speakers castigated JI for sitting around and doing nothing while others waged jihad. They suggested JI considered "jihad by the pen" sufficient, a reference to the many JI publishing houses that produce popular jihadi texts.

JI's response appeared in the May issue of *an-Najah*, a monthly bulletin on jihad owned by JI members. The cover story was headlined "This isn't cowardice, but strategy".³² The author argued that while it was indeed obligatory to fight against American crusaders and their puppet apostates (the Indonesian government), it was important to prepare properly for confronting a stronger enemy. Muslims should build up their strength, including by preparing the general public for war, and ensuring that their political mission can be achieved.³³ Abu Rusdan, in a separate text box, suggested that some who rush to battle are thinking more of themselves than of the *ummah*. He warned that it was still possible to fall in battle and go to hell, if one's reasons for taking part in jihad were not honest.³⁴

The magazine also featured interviews with both Ba'asyir and Abu Rusdan on the video in question. Their responses were slightly different. Ba'asyir stressed that the participants were not yet waging war, they were only training, but the police still attacked them; therefore it was logical for them to fight back. He said Islam was open to differences of opinion, if some people wanted to fight now, that was fine, if some people thought there was a need for greater preparation, that was fine too. The critical thing was to recognise that jihad was an individual obligation for all Muslims. The problem was that in Indonesia today, Muslim groups were not under a single commander. They were also living under idolatrous rulers. This had to change, and this was where *dakwah* was important, so that ordinary people understood the reasons for waging jihad. Asked for his advice toward the faithful, he stressed the importance of recognising differences of opinion on whether or not to fight now.³⁵

³⁰ Crisis Group interview, Jakarta, 11 November 2008.

³¹ Crisis Group interview, Jakarta, June 2010.

³² "Bukan Pengecut tapi Siasat", *An-Najah*, May 2010.

³³ *Ibid*, pp. 9-10.

³⁴ *Ibid*, p. 10.

³⁵ *Ibid*, p. 43.

Abu Rusdan said he understood that the criticisms of JI and him personally in the video stemmed from disappointment of those who loved him. Asked if he supported the operations (*amaliyah*) that the Aceh militants were engaged in, he said in principle he did, but it was more important for ordinary folk to understand they were living under an idolatrous government, and the only way to make them understand was through *dakwah*. When we have the requisite strength, then we wage war, not before. He urged the mujahidin in Aceh to value the activities of others who in fact were not just sitting around, but actively working to build capacity for jihad.³⁶

B. REFLEKSI JIHAD ACEH

A sharper exchange has taken place in print, between a critique of the Aceh venture called Reflections on the Aceh Jihad (*Refleksi Jihad Aceh*) that has appeared on many jihadi websites and a tart rejoinder, almost certainly from one of the groups represented in the alliance.³⁷

Interestingly, *Refleksi* was published as a supplement to the June issue of the JAT monthly magazine, *Majalah Ansharut Tauhid*, perhaps suggesting that after the fact, JAT wants to claim ownership of the criticism and distance itself from an operation in which it appears to have been very heavily invested, Ba'asyir's denials notwithstanding.

The content mirrors some of Abu Rusdan's arguments but was not written by him. After a long preamble, the author notes that there were good reasons for choosing Aceh.

Now that the spirit of resistance has died within GAM [the Acehese rebel movement], the way is open to cleansing the Acehese people's faith (*aqidah*) of ethnic sentiment and restoring it to a [true] Islamic faith. Jihad must be according to the path of Allah, not the path of GAM.³⁸

There were some fatal flaws as well, however.

But the mujahidin in Aceh could not accomplish this because the Acehese are still traumatised by violence and anything that smacks of guns. This trauma can only be treated with *dakwah*, that will cure the Acehese of their nationalism.³⁹

The choice of Aceh should have been studied more closely. Jihad needs a driver that can push the masses to join. If the driver isn't sufficiently strong, the people won't support it. This factor wasn't considered at all. They thought it would be enough to make obligatory jihad and the honour of a martyr's death the push factors. They never answered the question, who were they going to be fighting in Aceh? They never made clear who the enemy was, whereas they should have focused on the police. It's simple and easy for ordinary people to understand. The success of Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi in Iraq was possible because there was an extremely strong driver, the presence of brutal *kafir* troops. In Aceh they just used the words jihad, obligation, al-Qaeda and martyrdom. It was absurd in that location. How can jihad in the mountains survive if the people below don't support it with logistics and other means? Of course it will be easily overthrown.⁴⁰

These mujahidin belong to the school of thought that jihad is the end, not the means.⁴¹ In fact one can go further, they saw martyrdom as the end. Defeat or victory doesn't matter, sufficient capacity or not, doesn't matter. What matters is jihad.⁴²

The author then goes on to criticise the jihadis in Aceh for doing no introspection and always avoiding any examination of their own failures and weaknesses.

It would be as if an Indonesian football team lost to Brazil. If the Indonesians then blamed it all on the Brazilians instead of looking back at their own weaknesses, they just would be a laughing stock. But many Muslims are always blaming Detachment 88, the police or the government, regardless of who is president. If the mujahidin are so strong, why do they keep getting rolled up so easily by Detachment 88? What errors have they made that gets them killed so quickly?⁴³

In some ways, the author writes, the effort in Aceh was a success. It produced martyrs. It killed a few policemen, reversing the pattern of Detachment 88 always being the perpetrators and mujahidin the victims. It produced a great propaganda film, imitating the style of al-Qaeda. The only difference with al-Qaeda, he notes, is that those in it denigrated the policy (JI's) of giving priority to *dakwah* and social services.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ *Refleksi Jihad Aceh* first appeared on <http://elhakimi.wordpress.com> but was later widely picked up. The rejoinder, *Salah Kaprah Refleksi Jihad Aceh 2010* appeared on a blog <http://sjihad.wordpress.com>, that seems to have been set up for the purpose.

³⁸ *Refleksi Jihad Aceh*, part 1, <http://elhakimi.wordpress.com>.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ This is precisely the accusation that many involved in the Aceh training camp made about Noordin.

⁴² *Refleksi Jihad Aceh*, op. cit.

⁴³ Ibid, part 2.

But all of these factors shouldn't be the criteria used. Success should be measured by these factors: can the jihad continue? Is there support from the *ummah*? Can they weaken the enemy to the point of defeating him? If not, there is a serious need for more preparation. Abu Mus'ab as-Sury, in his writings on the Syrian jihad, has given us a model for evaluating a movement in his book *Dakwah Muqawamah*, published in Indonesian by Jazera Solo under the title Progress of the Jihad Movement (*Perjalanan Gerakan Jihad*).⁴⁴

Returning to the theme of how the mujahidin in Aceh saw jihad as the ultimate objective, the author reminds them that any jihad needs *dakwah*, mass media support, communications experts, technology experts and other human resources. How can a jihad take place, he asks, if the machine supplying its fighters – *pesantrens*, *madrasahs*, religious rallies and so on – is left behind? It is unimaginable, he writes, that all the Muslim faithful would support a jihad in Indonesia today.⁴⁵

Only if the reality were comparable to Iraq or Afghanistan, where a *kafir* enemy was attacking Muslims, would it be worthwhile to take up arms against the coloniser. Are people really going to give up their professions to join? The better strategy would be to work out a blueprint of who can contribute what over time to jihad in the path of Allah. No such plan has ever been drawn up that takes account of all different streams of Islam and different kinds of expertise. *Dakwah* institutes of all kinds must be protected. For example, the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) focuses on vice; LPPH on challenging deviant sects; FAKTA on Christian conversion of Muslims. All have a role to play.⁴⁶

Jihad is not a panacea; it's not an advertising slogan. You can't fight Shi'ites in Indonesia by threatening them with guns. They are cleverly infiltrating our towns and villages; the best way to fight them is with the book, not the sword. Indonesia, with its Muslim majority, needs preaching, not jihad, but not just any old preaching – *dakwah* that supports the way of jihad. If done right, the strength of the *ummah* can be used to uphold Islam when the right time comes. But people are in too much of a rush, they want to apply Islamic law like a magician.⁴⁷

Jihad must choose its cadres carefully. Every time it is undertaken here, it is followed by a wave of arrests. Beware of the people who are very enthusiastic about

calling for jihad but don't understand basic Islam principles ... Jihad must be seen as a war, not a battle. If we look at the Islamic *ummah*'s experiment in global jihad, we have had a high rate of battlefield victories but our political achievement is one big zero.⁴⁸

There is no East vs West or North vs South, the author writes. The war is infidels vs the faithful, and the mujahidin need to draw the *ummah* into its ranks. He concludes with an exhortation to continue the struggle.⁴⁹

Refleksi shows that not just in JI but in other parts of the jihadi community as well, there is impatience with the lack of strategy demonstrated by the organisations that took part in Aceh – of which JAT was one.

C. JAT AND DARUL ISLAM

JAT also reportedly has poor relations with the faction of Darul Islam loyal to Tahmid Rahmat Basuki, the son of the movement's late founder, Kartosoewirjo. According to one account, this is largely the result of an incident that took place in KW9, the Darul Islam area covering Jakarta and Banten.⁵⁰ KW9 is under the control of a Tahmid protégé named Mahfud Siddiq.

Around 2008-2009, Mahfud ordered all DI members there to collect *infaq* (contributions) to use for the treatment of Tahmid, who was ill. Within a month, thousands of DI members succeeded in raising a substantial amount of money – according to one source, more than Rp. 1 billion (\$100,000).⁵¹ But questions arose when Mahfud's own lifestyle seemed to suddenly change for the better, with new cars for himself and his children. A few DI leaders, suspicious that there had been misuse of funds, reportedly went to Tahmid to ask whether he had received assistance from KW9. He said no. When the DI leaders returned to confront Mahfud, they found themselves removed from

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ An angry and not very edifying rejoinder appeared on the internet in mid-June under a blog spot called Shoutul Jihad (Voice of Jihad) and headlined "The Wrong Approach of 'Reflections on the Aceh Jihad'" (<http://sjihad.wordpress.com/2010/06/09/salah-kaprah-refleksi-jihad-aceh-2010/>). It gives the impression of being hastily put together, misconstruing, perhaps deliberately, some points and rebutting others. Do you think we reject *dakwah*? Many in Aceh were well-known preachers. Do you think we aren't continuing the jihad just because some of us got locked up? Think again. Each argument has a Quranic citation, but overall it has none of the introspection called for by the *Refleksi* author.

⁵⁰ Crisis Group interview, Jakarta, June 2010. While Crisis Group was not able to independently confirm this account, the source has close ties to Darul Islam.

⁵¹ Crisis Group interview, Jakarta, June 2010.

⁴⁴ Ibid. Jazera Press is a JI-affiliated publishing house, run by Bambang Sukirno, a JI member.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid, part 3.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

their organisational positions. JAT was able to exploit the resentment of these leaders and recruit them into JAT. By one account, half the leadership of KW9 had gone over to JAT by 2009, and with them, their ability to raise funds. The DI leaders who stayed loyal to Mahfud accused JAT of having no ethics, taking advantage of their difficulties, and poaching their members.

Many of the funds for Aceh that went through Haris Amir Falah, Usman Hariyadi and Syarif Usman, according to this version of events, originated with DI loyalists. The result is bad blood between DI and JAT, even though many JAT members from West Java have DI backgrounds.

D. JAT AND THE "PURE" SALAFIS

One consequence of an open organisation is that ideological disputes can take place in public. For years, JI's most vociferous critics have been from within the non-violent, often Saudi-funded salafi community, that sees oath-taking as an unwarranted innovation (*bida'h*). They also see jihadi activities as too political and a diversion from religious pursuits, and particularly condemn any efforts to rebel against Muslim rulers, no matter how oppressive. Until 2009, the dispute between salafis and salafi jihadis was mostly confined to print.⁵² But the emergence of JAT led to a number of physical clashes between the two groups.

On 6 December 2009, a salafi group led by Ust. Zainal Abidin from Cileungsi, Bogor launched a new book called *Jihad Melawan Teroris (Jihad Against Terrorists)* at a Bekasi mosque. The book among other things took aim at Ba'asyir and his supporters. A group led by JAT member Halawi Makmun decided to attend the event to challenge the speaker. When Zainal Abidin referred to Ba'asyir by name, one of Halawi's men, who was not a JAT member, shouted epithets at him and rushed toward the front. Pandemonium broke out, especially after some in the audience reported that some of the troublemakers were carrying sharp weapons and firearms. Members of the organising committee managed to prevent any violence, and Halawi and his men departed.

JAT conducted its own investigation and concluded that the book launch was a provocative attempt to divide Muslims and goad JAT members into attacking the salafis. It issued a press release denying any institutional role in

disrupting the meeting and urging the salafi community not to let itself be used as the lackey of any group.⁵³ The episode not only underscored the hostility between the salafi community and more political organisations like JAT, JI and MMI, it also illustrated how much JAT continues to be identified with Ba'asyir.

E. JAT AND THE TAKFIRI SALAFIS

Halawi Makmun appears to have left the JAT executive committee sometime thereafter, but it may have had more to do with his hardline stance and his impatience with Ba'asyir – whom he deemed not hardline enough. Halawi, like Aman Abdurrachman with whom he is very close, is one of the few "pure" salafis who has crossed over into the more extremist camp.

Relations grew worse after JAT joined a demonstration on 10 June 2010 calling for the dissolution of Detachment 88 and the rehabilitation of Ba'asyir's good name. Shortly afterwards, Halawi reportedly sent around a text message saying JAT and Ba'asyir were becoming more and more *murji'ah*, a term of opprobrium usually levelled by the jihadis against their salafi critics. In Halawi's view, why was JAT asking a *kafir* state to rehabilitate Ba'asyir and why were they asking *thaghut* officials to dissolve a police unit? If the state by definition is illegitimate, one should not be asking anything from it. To do so was again to violate the principle of loyalty and enmity and to undermine commitment to the oneness of God. It was therefore setting those involved on the path to apostasy. Not surprisingly, JAT members were furious.⁵⁴

When Halawi left JAT, he reportedly took with him all of JAT-Brebes – his hometown in central Java. He is thus now neither JI, MMI nor presumably DI. But he and Aman represent a potential danger, if they can bring any more salafi clerics into their camp – particularly those with huge *pesantrens* in the West Java area. As the rift between the salafis and salafi jihadis demonstrates, it is unlikely there will be many takers, but it would only take one or two to cross over to change the dynamics of the jihadi movement yet again.

JAT thus is unpopular in radical circles from a number of different vantage points. It seems to be defined almost by what it is not – not clandestine like JI, not *takfiri* like

⁵² See for example Luqman Ba'abduh, *Mereka Adalah Teroris: Sebuah Tinjauan Syariat*, which constitutes a lengthy rebuttal from a salafi perspective to Imam Samudra's justification for the Bali bombings in his book *Aku Melawan Teroris (I Fight Terrorists)*. Ba'abduh's critique is continued on the website www.merekaadalahteroris.com.

⁵³ "Kronologis dan Penjelasan Sikap JAT Terhadap Insiden Masjid Amar makruf Nahi Mungkar", Bulak Kapal, Bekasi, 6 December 2009, <http://ansharuttauhid.com/publikasi/ Pernyataan-sikap/170-kronologis-dan-penjelasan-sikap-jat-terhadap-insiden-masjid-amar-makruf-nahi-mungkar-bulak-kapal-bekasi.html>.

⁵⁴ Crisis Group communication with a source close to JAT, Jakarta, June 2010.

Aman and Hawali, not “pure” salafi like Zainal Abidin – rather than what it is. The essence of the organisation remains elusive.

VI. JAT'S ROLE IN VIOLENCE

Ba'asyir and JAT have repeatedly stressed that they are involved only in legal activities and could not possibly be involved in terrorism, but from the beginning they have played very close to the edge.⁵⁵ Taking men known to have been previously involved in violence, like Ubeid and Aman Abdurrachman, on the *majelis syuro* was problematic. Moreover, just as Ba'asyir failed as JI leader to control the activities of members like Hambali and Mukhlas who planned bombing campaigns outside the established chain of command, he appears to have made no attempt to rein in JAT members who actively worked with Noordin or provided logistical support to his group.⁵⁶ Aris Susanto, arrested for helping Noordin in Temanggung, Central Java after the July 2009 bombings, had been inducted as a JAT member in May or June 2009.⁵⁷ Ubeid was actively involved in discussions with fugitive Bali bomber Dulmatin about plans for a regional jihadi training camp around the time he joined the JAT council.

As early as August 2008, there were rumours that JAT had an *askari sirri* or secret military wing and that the real name of the organisation was Jamaah Ansharut Tauhid *wal Jihad* – only the jihad agenda, like the military wing, was to be kept hidden.⁵⁸ One source said it was not so much that it had any intention of undertaking operations, like bombings, but that if the enemy obstructed outreach activities, one had to be prepared to fight back.⁵⁹ Until the Aceh camp was discovered, training was believed to be little more than basic martial arts and physical fitness, given in some areas on a monthly basis, and the military

wing little more than a security squad that could patrol meetings or provide bodyguards for Ba'asyir and others as necessary. Ba'asyir himself acknowledged that JAT had *laskars*, or militias, but claimed they were to fight social ills.⁶⁰

The training agenda may have been more serious, however. One clue comes from Ba'asyir's speech to the first MMI Congress in 2000, entitled “A System for Developing Mujahidin Cadres in Creating an Islamic Society”.⁶¹ Every *mujahid*, he said, should be able to both preach and wage war, and the institutions that can impart these skills are *pesantrens* and a mass Muslim organisation. Such an organisation must have a systematic training program for members to instill salafi doctrine and inculcate a love of jihad and martyrdom.⁶² To teach them about war (jihad) and battle (*qital*), a Muslim organisation should have its own training camp.⁶³

If JAT cadres until 2010 had only been able to benefit from makeshift training, the proposal for a more serious camp in Aceh would have been welcome – and very much in line with what Ba'asyir has been preaching for years. When the architects of that proposal turned to JAT for help with funding, it seems that senior JAT officials came through.⁶⁴

After the headquarters of JAT-Jakarta was raided on 6 May, police charged three senior JAT members with helping to finance the Aceh training. Haris Amir Falah, head of the Jakarta region, was accused of providing Rp.400 million (\$40,000); Hariyadi Usman, head of the *mudiriyah* in Bekasi, Rp.150 million (\$15,000); and Dr Syarif Usman, head of *mudiriyah* Pandeglang, Banten, Rp.200 million

⁵⁵ “Ba'asyir Tepis Mejadi Donatur Aksi Terorisme”, <http://forum-jihad.blogspot.com/2010/05/baasyir-tepis-jadi-donatur-aksi.html>.

⁵⁶ Riduan Isamudin alias Hambali was the first head of JI's Mantiqi I, the regional division covering Malaysia and Singapore. When he went into hiding in 2001, he was replaced by Aly Ghufron alias Mukhlas. Both men were committed to following al-Qaeda's 1998 fatwa urging attacks on America and its allies. Hambali was arrested in 2003 and is in the U.S. detention facility in Guantanamo. Mukhlas was one of three Bali bombers executed in November 2008. JAT defended the Bali bombers at the time of their execution and argued that the government had failed to prove who the real perpetrators behind the “micro-nuclear bomb” really were.

⁵⁷ “Aris Susanto alias Amin dituntut 10 tahun penjara”, 27 April 2010, www.kejari-jaksel.go.id/berita.php?news=101.

⁵⁸ Crisis Group interview, Jakarta, 28 August 2008.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ “Ba'asyir: JAT Memang Berjihad, Bukan Teroris”, Viva News, 15 May 2010.

⁶¹ Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, “Sistem Kaderisasi Mujahidin dalam Mewujudkan Masyarakat Islam”, in *Risalah Kongres Mujahidin dan Penegakan Syari'ah Islam* (Yogyakarta, 2000), pp. 79-90.

⁶² Ibid, p. 79. The program should include the following elements: knowing Allah; knowing the declaration of faith and what can nullify it; understanding the principle of loyalty and enmity (*al wala wal bara*); understanding the reality of anti-Islamic forces (*thaghut*); understanding different kinds of idolatry; knowing the main elements of religion (*din*); and knowing the laws of war and battle (*fiqhul jihad* and *fiqul qital*).

⁶³ Ibid, p. 89.

⁶⁴ See “Indonesian Police Close in on Abu Bakar Bashir because of Links to Aceh Terror Cell”, *South China Morning Post*, 18 June 2010. In assessing JAT's institutional role in the camp, it will be particularly important to know when Abu Tholut alias Mustafa, a highly experienced JI military trainer, joined the JAT executive council. Released from prison in 2007 after serving four years of a seven-year term, he was not one of its originally announced members. He appears to have been taken on board later, however, and his only added value would have been as military trainer.

(\$20,000). In a press conference, Indonesia's police chief claimed that in total, close to Rp.1 billion (\$100,000) was raised for the camp.⁶⁵ If the numbers are accurate, it would make the Aceh operation one of the most expensive ever conducted by an Indonesian jihadi group. (By comparison, JI raised \$35,000 for the first Bali bombing in 2002.)

In the reconstruction conducted by the police on 12 May at the JAT headquarters in Jakarta, Ubeid and Haris were brought into a meeting with a man wearing a sign around his neck reading "Abu Bakar Ba'asyir". Ba'asyir called the re-enactment "slander" and said the release of eleven other JAT members arrested on 6 May showed that his organisation had nothing to do with terrorism.⁶⁶ He said that if there were JAT members in Aceh, they were there in their own capacity and not as members of the organisation.⁶⁷ He also suggested, however, that he knew Ubeid only as a fellow inmate in prison, refusing to acknowledge that he had personally inducted him into the JAT executive council in 2008.

VII. THREE STRIKES?

If Ba'asyir is arrested for the third time since the first Bali bombing, the police will be under enormous pressure to produce hard evidence of criminal activities. The first two trials were poorly handled. When he was arrested on 18 October 2002, less than a week after the Bali bombing, Ba'asyir was charged with rebellion, in the sense of physical attack against the government (*makar*, often erroneously translated as "treason") for a plot to kill then-Vice-President Megawati Sukarnoputri; heading JI; masterminding the 2000 Christmas Eve bombings; and immigration violations. The court ruled on 3 October 2003 that the prosecutors had not demonstrated that he was involved in any plot against Megawati. No one saw him inducted as head of JI, so this too was unproven. No one in court had shown that he endorsed the Christmas Eve bombings. The judges let one charge of rebellion stand because Ba'asyir had been shown to send Indonesians for military training to Afghanistan, the Philippines and Ambon. The immigration violations were also deemed valid, and Ba'asyir was sentenced to four years in prison. The rebellion charge was dismissed on appeal, and the sentence reduced first to three years, then to eighteen months.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ "Ba'asyir: Tak Ada Itu Sumbangan Rp.400 Juta", VivaNews, 15 May 2010.

⁶⁶ "Ustad Ba'asyir: Rekonstruksi di Markas JAT Jakarta itu Fitnah", muslimdaily.net, 15 May 2010.

⁶⁷ "Puluhan ulama minta klarifikasi dari Ba'asyir", tempointeraktif.com, 8 May 2010.

⁶⁸ "Ba'asyir: Ini Vonis Zhalim", Suara Merdeka, 3 September 2003.

Charging Ba'asyir with rebellion in the first place was probably a mistake, but prosecutors at the time were inexperienced in preparing cases against individuals who may have endorsed, aided or abetted a crime but who themselves were not directly involved in violence. Witnesses who had testified in their interrogation depositions to Ba'asyir's role in JI retracted their statements in court; the most damning evidence from a Singaporean JI member, testifying by video-conferencing, was rejected by the judges after defence counsel argued that it was impossible to know the conditions under which he was speaking.

The second trial, if anything, was worse. While Ba'asyir was still in detention, the August 2003 Marriott bombing took place, and the Indonesian government was under huge pressure to keep Ba'asyir locked up. On 30 April 2004, the day he was to be released, a large crowd gathered outside Cipinang Prison and a riot broke out when it was announced that he had been re-arrested on terrorism charges. Since in the meantime, the Constitutional Court had ruled that the January 2003 terrorism law could not be applied retroactively, Ba'asyir was charged with having helped incite the Marriott bombing by giving a speech in April 2000 to the graduating class of the JI military training centre in Mindanao at which several of those involved in the Marriott bombing were present. He was also charged with violating Article 183 in the Criminal Code – conspiracy to cause an explosion which endangers others or results in death – in relation to the first Bali bombing. The sole evidence for this was the testimony of one witness who did not appear in court, who reportedly overheard Ba'asyir say to Amrozi regarding plans for Bali, "It's up to you, you know the conditions in the field".⁶⁹ This was interpreted as a green light.

In the end, the terrorism charges were thrown out and Ba'asyir was convicted of the criminal charge on the thinnest of grounds. He was sentenced to two and a half years in prison and was released to cheering throngs of MMI and other supporters on 14 June 2006. He instantly became a celebrity, wooed by Islamist political parties and much sought after as a speaker.

Conditions four years later in some ways are very different. After repeated terrorist attacks, not least the July 2009 hotel bombings in central Jakarta, the Indonesian public is less willing to give men like Ba'asyir the benefit of the doubt. George W. Bush is no longer in office and the belief, once widespread, that the Indonesian police have no real evidence and only make arrests at the behest of the U.S. and Australia, has lost its currency. Ba'asyir's support for the executed Bali bombers and for those killed after the hotel bombings have made many Indonesians wary.

⁶⁹ "Ba'asyir divonis dua tahun enam bulan", *Tempo*, 3 March 2005.

Two factors could affect public reaction to a new arrest. First, Ba'asyir still commands surprising respect in some political circles. As recently as 29 April 2010, Taufik Kiemas, head of the People's Consultative Assembly (Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat), together with a parliamentary delegation, paid Ba'asyir a highly publicised visit at his *pesantren* in Ngruki. For Ba'asyir's purposes, it was perfect publicity. One member of the delegation told the press:

Ustad Ba'asyir doesn't agree with the use of violence. This shows that accusations that al-Mukmin *pesantren* in Ngruki and Ba'asyir are linked to terrorists are not true, because an institution like the MPR would never visit a charismatic man like this if he were accused of terrorism.⁷⁰

The visit seems to have been a misguided effort by Kiemas, who is also Megawati's husband, to show that he was so committed to national institutions and democracy that he was willing to bring the message even into a stronghold of opposition to them. But overall, Ba'asyir was the clear winner. It is precisely this willingness to receive *thaghut* visitors that earns the ire of clerics like Halawi Makmun.

Second, the almost daily revelations of corruption within the police will probably lead some commentators to suggest that a new arrest is only a tactic to divert public attention away from scandal. The charge is unfounded, but the corruption is real, and needs to be addressed if community trust in the police is to be improved.

If the police are scrupulously careful about how they treat the elderly cleric, however, any backlash should be manageable.

VIII. CONCLUSION

The story of JAT's emergence and its current state of bickering with just about everyone is indicative of the rifts within the Indonesian jihadi community more generally. It is a weak and divided movement, and there is no indication that it is growing. It nevertheless will undoubtedly regroup and produce another hit squad, somewhere, somehow, that causes casualties and generates a new wave of arrests but without posing any danger to Indonesian stability.

The bigger danger may be in the wider support that jihadi-influenced *dakwah*, as opposed to jihadi attacks, enjoys. The reference in *Refleksi Jihad Aceh* to building alliances with groups such as FPI and FAKTA is instructive. If jihadis see these advocacy groups as useful partners, the lines between violent and non-violent organisations could become more blurred than they are already.

The jihadi movement's capacity to adapt, regenerate and learn lessons, sometimes the wrong ones, from the past, has been a constant theme of the last ten years. Contrary to the assumptions of *Refleksi*'s author, the movement evaluates what happened every time an operation fails or members of the group are caught, and there is clearly debate going on right now about where the movement should be headed, who should lead it, and what its agenda should be.

Refleksi was absolutely right, however, in pointing to the importance of the "mujahid-producing machine" of Islamic schools and outreach activities. The few dozen problem schools in Indonesia are a tiny fraction of what is generally a well-respected system of Islamic education. But as Crisis Group has repeatedly noted, these schools, their teachers and their alumni networks facilitate recruitment and not infrequently provide shelter to fugitives from the law. Until the government finds an effective way of addressing them, the saga of terrorism in Indonesia will continue.

Jakarta/Brussels, 6 July 2010

⁷⁰ "Taufik Kiemas tukar Pikiran dengan Abu Bakar Ba'asyir", www.muslimdaily.net, 30 April 2010.

APPENDIX A

MAP OF INDONESIA



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