

# From Villain to Hero: The Role of Disengaged Terrorists in Social Reintegration Initiatives

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## Abstract

Convicted terrorists released from prison often experience social stigma, exclusion, and difficulties reintegrating into society. Authorities have identified the utility of using formerly convicted and released terrorists or disengaged terrorists as an intermediary to help and support terrorist inmates as they go through social reintegration processes. This article explores their role as an intermediary who advocates for fair treatment and rights for their fellow ex-inmates, assisting families and helping them undergo the reintegration process. This research involved interviews with members of three foundations: Yayasan Persadani, Hubbul Wathon Indonesia 19, and DeBintal. By analysing the narrative of the participants, this study found that social reintegration efforts led by disengaged terrorists fostered a sense of social belonging and connectedness among ex-inmates. In addition, these foundations offer valuable assistance to terrorist inmates while ensuring community safety. They serve as a reliable support system during times of need and act as a communication bridge between them and the government. This framework positions these foundations as integral components in addressing concerns about the effectiveness of government-led integration initiatives. The approach adopted by these foundations has positive effects on preventing the re-engagement of released inmates with extremist networks. Despite the need to measure the effectiveness of these initiatives comprehensively, efforts made by these foundations provide potential for societal resilience against terrorism.

## Keywords

advocacy; disengaged terrorists; former terrorist inmates; Indonesia; social reintegration; terrorism

## 1. Introduction

Indonesia is a country where ethnic and religious violence takes place, from separatist movements to religious rivalry, which includes violence, extremism, or terrorism (Davidson, 2008; Sidel, 2006; van Klinken, 2007). Individuals convicted of these acts, particularly terrorism, are regarded as terrorists based on Indonesia's 2003 and 2018 counter-terrorism laws. The 2018 law, Article 1(2), defines terrorism as any act that uses "violence or threat of violence to create a widespread atmosphere of terror or fear, resulting in mass casualties and/or causing destruction or damage to vital strategic objects, the environment, public facilities, or an international facility" (Pemerintah Pusat, 2018). Referring to the broad definition of terrorism above, the rates of arrest and imprisonment for individuals who commit terrorism offenses are high and persistent in Indonesia. The head of the National Counter Terrorism Agency (Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Terorisme [BNPT]), Boy Rafli Amar, confirmed that the total number of terrorist prisoners in Indonesia is 1,031 in 2022 with a further 1,362 individuals who were released from prison from 2015–2021 (Fadjarudin, 2022). Some 370 terrorist suspects were arrested by Detachment 88 (Detasemen Khusus 88, or Densus 88) of the Indonesian National Police in 2021 ("Throughout 2021," 2021). The number was higher compared to the previous year, in which 232 terrorist suspects were arrested. In 2019, 275 people were detained for eight terrorism cases, and 396 from 19 terrorism cases in 2018 ("257 orang dicap," 2019).

The government has responded by issuing several regulations to counter terrorism. One of these is the President Regulation No 7/2021 on National Action Plan for the Prevention and Combating of Violent Extremism That Leads to Terrorism (*Rencana Aksi Nasional Pencegahan dan Penanggulangan Ekstremisme Berbasis Kekerasan Yang Mengarah Pada Terorisme*). This action plan contains 130 coordinated programs on preventing and tackling terrorism, which various ministries and institutions implement, along with community participation. Several government institutions, such as the BNPT, the Densus 88, and the Directorate General of Corrections (Direktorat Jenderal Pemasyarakatan), are involved in deradicalisation programs. To date, hundreds of terrorist inmates have been deradicalised, and their allegiance to the Republic of Indonesia marks the program's success and compliance with the law (Maulana et al., 2022).

The recidivism cases are only 11.39% out of 825 cases between 2002 and 2020 (Institute for Policy Analysis and Conflict, 2020, p. 3). Generally speaking, a relatively low rate is not of great concern for BNPT. Nevertheless, observers have questioned the effectiveness of Indonesia's prison rehabilitation program in preventing inmates from continuing their patronage of old networks (Osman, 2014). Observers are particularly sceptical about its efficacy due to several reasons, such as the absence of coordination between stakeholders (Anindya, 2018), excess prison capacity and a lack of competence among prison officers in deradicalisation efforts (Widya, 2020), prison corruption (Schulze, 2008), and inside prison radicalisation (Suratman, 2017). To address these concerns, the government involves individuals outside the government institutions to be their deradicalisation partners, including foundations established by several former convicted and released terrorists (hereafter, I refer to them as disengaged terrorists; Wildan, 2022). Since 2020, some disengaged terrorists have formed foundations as their responses to the need for actual participation in the reintegration initiatives and their active contribution to society. Their involvement in this program is considered effective in helping and supporting their fellow inmates' re-engagement in the community (Widya et al., 2020).

Meanwhile, the government has claimed a success rate of 95% for their prison deradicalisation efforts (Dajani, 2016). However, this success rate is not based on calculating recidivism cases, but on the number of those

who attended the deradicalisation program and declared their oath of loyalty to the Indonesian state (Ilham, 2022). In fact, the program is voluntary, yet numerous inmates show little interest in participating. Moreover, the emphasis lies heavily on fostering allegiance to the Indonesian state rather than equipping detainees, both during their incarceration and post-release, with fresh objectives, employable skills, or avenues for new connections (Institute for Policy Analysis and Conflict, 2020). Most detainees who attended the program were disengaged based on their own decisions. Thus, the programs are largely ineffective. Publicised claims of success have overlooked the role of these foundations in the deradicalisation program, which according to some former inmates assisted them through the reintegration process.

Even though studies on the reintegration of these individuals are essential in both academic research and terrorism prevention projects, the process of social reintegration of these people remains under-studied. Therefore, this article asks: How do former convicted terrorists contribute to and support the social reintegration process for individuals released from prison? And, as part of their concerns toward the government's reintegration program effectiveness, in what ways can their contribution and support prevent extremist networks from approaching and discouraging individuals from returning to terrorism? This article presents an empirical study involving 12 members of the three foundations, namely Yayasan Persadani, Hubbul Wathon Indonesia 19 (HWI-19), and DeBintal, to understand various factors influencing the efforts of these organisations in the social reintegration of their fellow former inmates, and their experiences of rebranding their image from previously known as a villain (terrorist) to a hero of social reintegration.

The present study suggests that providing opportunities for disengaged terrorists who were previously involved in terrorism to contribute to the social reintegration process of their fellow inmates can be a response to concerns about the effectiveness of deradicalisation programs run by the government. Under the membership of the foundations, they can form meaningful connections with one another, which the government cannot facilitate. These social connections play a crucial role in fostering a sense of belonging and acceptance, greatly benefiting their transition to civilian life after prison. The foundations involved in this process play two roles. Firstly, they serve as a support system for their fellow ex-inmates, aiding their reintegration. The assistance they provide not only supports the individuals but also helps convince the community that these individuals can make valuable contributions. Secondly, these foundations can serve as a communication bridge between former inmates, society, and the government, facilitating communication where there is a lack of effective communication and prevailing prejudices among them.

The next section of this article reviews the literature on social reintegration within the context of terrorism offenses and the deradicalisation program conducted in Indonesia. It also explains the method and covers a brief background on these foundations. The last two sections explain and discuss the findings and conclusions.

## **2. Social Reintegration in a Deradicalisation Program by Disengaged Terrorists**

Several studies have discussed the social reintegration of released inmates re-entering society who were jailed for sexual offenses (McAlinden, 2010), mental illness (Dalgaard et al., 2022), and drug addiction (Maruna et al., 2013), and the likelihood of ex-inmates reoffending. Findings have suggested that comprehensive intervention through various stakeholders' collaboration is critical to lowering the possibility of recidivism. The partnership involves multiple agencies, the inmate's family, and community-based organisations (Griffiths et al., 2007,

p. 1). Engaging these various stakeholders can address the complex challenges ex-inmates face and provide the support and resources necessary for their successful reintegration into society.

The social reintegration of former combatants is one aspect of the disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration process (Munive & Stepputat, 2015; Özerdem, 2002; Steenken, 2017). Özerdem (2012) argues that an inclusive approach to social reintegration is the most effective model for ex-combatant reintegration by focusing on three dimensions, namely “family and community,” “sustainable employment,” and “civic responsibilities” (Özerdem, 2012, p. 53). This model emphasises the role of the community by implementing the concept of “community-based reintegration,” where communities with former combatants act as active agents in the planning and implementation of reintegration programs (Özerdem, 2012, p. 61). However, this concept is more suitable for application in war-to-peace scenarios, where community acceptance is more pronounced than counter-terrorism strategy (Horgan & Braddock, 2010; Van Der Heide & Geenen, 2017). Although some former terrorists were combatants in the Syrian war, the nature of their involvement is considered a violation of Indonesian law. From the context above, social reintegration can be defined as a strategy or a critical aspect of post-release programs that aim to assist individuals in their smooth transition back into society and prevent them from returning to unlawful activities. Further, social reintegration as an ideal intends to move past simple, quantifiable measurements of success.

Previous studies have largely overlooked the role of disengaged terrorists who actively serve as intermediaries between their fellow ex-inmates and the broader community (Anindya, 2018; Gitaningrum & Ahnaf, 2021; Horgan et al., 2020; Mubaraq et al., 2022; Sumpter et al., 2021). In previous research on deradicalisation strategies, the involvement of disengaged terrorist prisoners in these initiatives has been seen as significant. They are considered a credible voice to their fellow terrorist inmates who are struggling to return to their after-prison life (Nasution et al., 2021), a key factor in the program’s success (Wildan, 2022), and instrumental in forming new peace communities (Widya et al., 2020). Moreover, the reintegration process should be tailored to the individual’s needs, focusing on equipping them with the capabilities to become agents of positive change (Macfarlane, 2023).

However, what is missing from the literature is the perspective and role of disengaged terrorists who can offer firsthand insights into transitioning from ex-terrorists to making meaningful, non-violent contributions to society. Their role in optimising the involvement of various stakeholders, including ex-prisoners, family members, the community, and others, in the social reintegration process has received limited attention in prior studies. This study explores how these foundations have transformed the lives of former inmates facing social reintegration challenges, promoting their engagement. Understanding the social inclusion experiences of former convicted terrorists is crucial for shaping future social interventions to support their networks and social relationships.

### 3. The Deradicalisation Program in Indonesia

Since 2010, the BNPT has been responsible for the deradicalisation program in Indonesia. Densus 88, through its special unit, Identification and Socialisation (Identifikasi dan Sosialisasi, or Idensos), joined the responsibility in 2016. Following the Bali bombing in 2002 and 2005, the program shifted its focus to counter extremist Islamic ideologies, which primarily operates in prisons (Suarda, 2020), offering discussions on Islam with moderate religious preachers, psychological consultations, and entrepreneurship training (Chernov

Hwang, 2017; Febrica, 2010). In conducting these activities, the BNPT and Densus 88 collaborated with the Correctional Bureau (Lembaga Pemasyarakatan) to facilitate the program. The program invited preachers and officials to initiate dialogue and open discussions with the prisoners about radical views of Islam. The program aims to influence radicals through dialogue with like-minded individuals and to change the perception that government officials are inherently anti-Islamic by displaying genuine care and building trust (Schulze, 2008).

However, not all programs have been effective. Success rates vary from prison to prison, with some successfully facilitating the program while others were less so. Issues that hindered success included corruption and inadequate communication among stakeholders. Inviting moderate Islamic preachers to discuss Islam with radicalised prisoners proved counterproductive, as it often led to rejection. The rejection is often fuelled by famous, or infamous, Islamic preachers, like Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, who publicly advocate for an Islamic state and Islamic law (shariah), and warn people not to blindly follow the government, even when they are in prison (Franklin, 2008). Additionally, early deradicalisation program arrangements were poorly structured, with terrorist prisoners mixed with other inmates, fostering the transmission of radical views and hindering deradicalisation efforts (Sumpter, 2017).

In 2018, through the Ministry of Law and Human Rights Regulation, the government created a prison classification to maximise prison management. The category comprises super maximum-security (one man, one cell principal), maximum-security, medium-security, and minimum-security prisons (Maulana et al., 2022). This classification is not only intended for terrorism cases but also for other crimes involving high-risk inmates. Due to this classification, individuals with high-level extremism can be housed in a super-maximum-security prison. The rehabilitation process for these inmates uses an individualised approach by engaging religious preachers and experts (Salas & Anwar, 2021; Yuliyanto et al., 2021). For other classifications, the program uses a communal approach, where the religious experts gather all inmates in one room to preach or engage in dialogue (Salas & Anwar, 2021). Apart from ideological rehabilitation, the Correctional Bureau also provides training in life skills for inmates, such as welding, livestock farming, agriculture, and more. The deradicalisation program includes this training within the prison, preparing individual inmates for reintegration upon release (Syauqillah & Hanita, 2021).

While the government remains focused on implementing the deradicalisation program within prisons, it also continues the program after terrorism inmates are released from prison as part of the social reintegration programs. This program is carried out through skill development and entrepreneurship training, aiming to empower them economically and foster self-sufficiency. Many former inmates receive financial assistance to start a business as part of the mentoring and monitoring process. This assistance is provided on an individual basis, tailored to their own needs. Unfortunately, this approach is considered ineffective because success cannot be guaranteed, as not all former inmates choose to start a business. Starting a business requires thorough preparation, including searching for a location, determining the type of business, identifying the target market, assessing potential competitors, and acquiring business knowledge. Additionally, the lack of skills these former inmates possess that are relevant to the available job fields is another significant obstacle they face (Samsono & Sholehah, 2022; Sumpter et al., 2021). Further, the government's lack of evaluation and monitoring also contributes to the short-lived nature of such programs.

Initiatives from a group of disengaged terrorists who have established a foundation have emerged to address these gaps, including the government's inadequacy in evaluation and monitoring. With the full resources

provided by the government and the intention to support their fellow ex-inmates, the foundation has become a partner of the government in facilitating social reintegration and assisting in implementing the deradicalisation program inside and outside prisons. They collaborate with the Correctional Bureau by conducting visits to prisons to engage in dialogue with terrorist prisoners and preach on religious moderation. What distinguishes the program offered by the foundation is the involvement of preachers, who are former inmates with a historical background in terrorist activities. Additionally, the economic support provided by the foundation creates job opportunities, fosters skills appropriate to available fields, and, most importantly, cultivates a sense of brotherhood reminiscent of their previous networks. This support facilitates their reintegration into society, allowing them to resume their roles as productive members. Thus, focusing on ideological transformation becomes a prerequisite for being open and interacting with the community. However, equipping them with skills, opportunities, and, most importantly, a suitable support system is even more important to facilitate the reintegration process into the community.

#### 4. Method

This study aims to explore and understand the role of the three foundations, namely Yayasan Putra Persadani, Yayasan HWI-19, and Yayasan DeBintal, in advocating for inmates during imprisonment, assisting the families, helping terrorist inmates through the process of rehabilitation, and reintegrating them into the society. I conducted interviews with 12 disengaged terrorists who were members of these three foundations. I interviewed the participants online and in face-to-face meetings. I successfully interviewed two members of Yayasan Putra Persadani online while I was still in Canberra in November 2021. I continued interviewing the other two members by traveling to Semarang, Central Java, where the Yayasan Persadani is located, in early January 2022. On 15 January 2022, I was invited by Yayasan HWI-19 to deliver a speech to the wives of mostly ex-terrorist inmates. I used that opportunity to make an appointment to interview four organisation members on 22–23 January 2022. Finally, I interviewed the four members of DeBintal through Zoom meetings on 4–5 February as Covid-19 cases spread in Indonesia and government restrictions limited travel for everyone. Participants were asked questions related to the motivations that prompted their decision to join the foundation, their experiences with the foundation, and how they managed to sustain their roles within the foundation and tried to support their fellow ex-inmates in reintegrating socially. To maintain anonymity and confidentiality, this study utilises initials to represent the interviewed respondent.

#### 5. Profile of the Foundations

Currently, more than 13 foundations or organisations in Indonesia perform similar roles in social reintegration. Among these 13, the oldest foundation is Gema Salam, which was formed in 2018 in Solo, Central Java, under the supervision of BNPT. The number of foundations then increased significantly after Densus 88, through Idensos, joined the handling of deradicalisation programs. Consequently, the primary sources of funding came from BNPT and Idensos (Densus 88). Although BNPT was primarily responsible for handling rehabilitation and all deradicalisation processes, Densus's involvement in this initiative was unavoidable, creating overlapping roles and responsibilities. The strategy offered by Densus was different and, somehow, preferable among the ex-inmates. The strategy of direct assistance to foundations is one of the reasons why foundations under Densus are more numerous than those under BNPT. Moreover, the issue of disappointment spread out and was felt among the ex-inmates, contributing to the decreased number of foundations under BNPT. The peak of

disappointment toward BNPT occurred in 2021 when 51 former inmates filed and signed a petition to disband BNPT (Pembela NKRI, 2021). The petition contains the inadequacy of BNPT's performance in overseeing the deradicalisation program, encompassing allegations of program success erroneously attributed to BNPT, when in fact they stem from the efforts of Densus 88. However, the petition failed to gain significant traction within the community, particularly the government, due to the ongoing importance of BNPT's role in national security efforts.

Apart from this disappointment, the selection of these foundations is based on the representations of their funding source. Yayasan Putra Persaudaraan Anak Negeri (Persadani) receives financial support mainly from BNPT, with minor contributions from the local police department in Central Java and other donations from the community. The other two are funded by Densus 88, with HWI-19 supervised directly under the head of Densus and DeBintal under Idensos. The nature of the supervision remains unclear, whether due to the close personal relationship of the prominent figure of the foundation with the government institutions or genuinely part of the government reintegration program. Along with the changing strategy of the government toward the deradicalisation program, the involvement of these foundations became an asset and meaningful partnership for the government in the initiatives. Additionally, the benefit of this partnership is evident in the streamlined recruitment process of inmates into these foundations. The easy access given by the authorities benefited the foundations in recruiting potential members since the beginning of the program by approaching them through providing dialogue done by the foundations, fulfilling their needs related to family matters, and providing options for employment. The sub-sections below summarise the brief profile of the selected foundations.

### **5.1. Yayasan Putra Persaudaraan Anak Negeri (Persadani)**

Founded on 20 February 2020, Yayasan Putra Persadani or Persaudaraan Anak Negeri (The Unity of the Children of the National Foundation) pioneered the social reintegration of terrorist inmates. Some of the members of Persadani were former members of Gema Salam in Solo, Central Java, who separated due to disappointment with the foundation management. Since its declaration, Putra Persadani started reaching out to ex-terrorist inmates by regularly visiting them in prison and becoming an informal courier for the inmates' families who wanted to send food and daily necessities. On 2 March 2020, the Ministry of Law and Human Rights granted the organisation formal status. Under the leadership of Machmudi Hariono, a disengaged terrorist who went to the Philippines to engage in holy war (*jihadi*) from 2000–2002, the organisation now has approximately 33 members spread over the North Coast Road of Java (Jalur Pantai Utara). The foundation actively provides services for picking up released inmates from prison, accompanying families to visit their relatives in prison, bringing essential items and basic necessities for inmates, and assisting village officials and neighbours where the released inmates reside.

### **5.2. Yayasan HWI-19**

Founded on 23 November 2019, Yayasan HWI-19, or Hubbul Wathon Indonesia 19, was established by disengaged terrorist inmates as an organisation providing economic support for their members. The adviser, Haris Amir Falah, and the leader of the organisation, Hendi Suhartono, are the main figures of the organisation. They established PT DenS or PT Modern Sentul, located on 35 ha of land lent by the Sentul City company in Sentul, West Java. The key figure behind the formation of this company was the head of Densus 88, Marthinus Hukom, who successfully lobbied a big company, like Sentul City, to lend some of

their lands to the organisation for 20 years. Since the agreement began in 2019, over 5 ha have been used for business. The company owns several industries, such as agriculture, farming, and agrotourism, namely Leuwi Pangaduan, which brings the most profit to the organisation, approximately three billion rupiah (A\$300,000) per year. The organisation has 22 members around Bogor, West Java, but only 10 oversee daily business activities.

### 5.3. Yayasan DeBintal

Yayasan DeBintal, also known as Yayasan Dekat Bintang dan Langit (Close to the Star and Sky Foundation), was established and managed by disengaged terrorists residing in Jakarta, Bekasi, Depok, and Tangerang. The organisation was founded in February 2021 and inaugurated by Idensos of Densus 88. Like the two previous organisations, the organisation's primary purpose is to help former terrorist inmates integrate socially and economically independently by managing a quail farm and selling quail eggs. Yayasan DeBintal uses social media like YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram under "debintal\_media" to promote their activities to the mostly younger, tech-savvy generation. Yayasan DeBintal is managed by eight people and led by a former Jamaah Ansharud Daulah member. The organisation has 25 members who actively run programs, including economic empowerment, literacy support, bureaucracy support, and social support.

## 6. Findings and Discussion

### 6.1. What Does a Loyalty Pledge to the Indonesian State Mean to the Inmates?

Before discussing the findings, it is helpful to examine how former terrorist inmates view pledging allegiance to the state that they previously considered idolatrous (*taghut*). During the pledge, the terrorist inmates must declare an oath (*ikrar*) indicating their loyalty to the state political ideology of Pancasila (the Five Principles) as Indonesian citizens. Each participant concludes the oath by kissing the flag and singing the Indonesian national anthem. Historically, under the New Order government of Soeharto, riots occurred accompanying the implementation of Pancasila as the sole political ideology of Indonesia in 1982. All social-political organisations and institutions were forced to accept Pancasila over Islam, or other principles as their organisational ideology (Morfit, 1981; Prawiranegara, 1984). The two largest Islamic groups in Indonesia, namely the traditionalist Nahdlatul Ulama and the reformist-modernist Muhammadiyah, were among the Muslim organisations that accepted Pancasila as the organisational ideology. Although they have not been fully involved in the deradicalisation program (Arifah, 2018), both have since become organisations that preach peaceful forms of Islam and accept the Pancasila state model, which allows for accommodating religion in state affairs (Franklin, 2020).

From the point of view of terrorist inmates, pledging allegiance to the Indonesian state is something they must avoid. The first consequence is that they will cancel their oath (*bai'at*) to the network leader and nullify their faith or *nawaqidul iman*. Those who do this will be considered apostates (*murtad*). Those who took the oath have shifted their loyalty from the network to the *taghut* state and will be labelled as infidels (*kafir*). Therefore, their blood and all their belongings are considered lawful (*halal*) to be shed. Apart from that, being in the community (*jama'ah*) is essential in Islam; they also believe that those who remain within the *jama'ah* will receive assistance from God. God's guidance helps them to stay in Islamic consciousness, brotherhood, commitment, and dedication and achieve the objectives of the Islamic faith.



The second consequence of recognising Pancasila as the state-sole ideology is that it creates an internal division within their former networks, not to mention the friendship and collegiality among the network members. While being in the *jama'ah* is fundamental, the reality that their people and brothers have terminated their membership and opposed them ideologically can severely affect the safety of disengaged individuals. Some receive death threats from other loyal members and are labeled as traitors and disloyal individuals (Chalmers, 2017, p. 342). The feeling of being monitored and watched is also common among the released inmates. Due to this, many of them moved from their previous residences in search of safety.

Despite the government's perspective on the significance of the "Ikhar NKRI" in marking the culmination of the deradicalisation program, the pledge often fails to truly reflect the genuine intention of the inmates to be loyal to the Indonesian state. This discrepancy arises from several factors. Firstly, the voluntary nature of the deradicalisation program attendance among inmates diminishes the mandatory aspect of the pledge. Sermons or dialogues with terrorist inmates are often conducted casually and without strict enforcement. Secondly, many inmates opt for personal reflection on their past misdeeds, facilitated by reading books provided by Densus and engaging in discussions among themselves. Rather than the formal pledge, this self-examination process seems to hold more significance for the inmates. Thirdly, rumours circulate within the prison environment, suggesting that agreeing to the pledge could lead to conditional release from incarceration. These rumours further blur the true motivation behind the pledges made by the inmates, casting doubt on the authenticity and sincerity of their allegiance to the Indonesian state. This doubt and scepticism toward the ceremonial pledge provoked former terrorist inmates to submit the petition against BNPT. Some members of these foundations were among those who signed the petition. According to them, all transformations in the mindset observed among former inmates are attributable to the endeavours of the roaming proselytising (*safari da'wah*) team of the Densus 88, rather than those of the BNPT. Despite this setback, it underscored growing dissatisfaction and calls for reform within Indonesia's deradicalisation and rehabilitation framework.

## 6.2. Rebuilding Lives After Release

Many former inmates experienced social and economic uncertainty when facing life after prison (Western et al., 2015). Being released from prison is not about resuming the life that has been postponed for some years. Rather, it is transitioning from being socially excluded to being self-included in the family and community (Visher & Travis, 2003). For most former terrorist inmates, the first step of social reintegration is rebuilding family relationships. Almost all former inmates experienced difficulties in this process. This research found that some prisoners decided to re-pledge their allegiance to the state of Indonesia while their family members, especially their wives, remained loyal to the terrorist network. Their allegiance created problems in their personal lives.

One respondent told me:

One of our members experienced a tough situation when he pledged his loyalty to Indonesia. His wife, who lived in the area where the majority are ISIS supporters, received a request from the network demanding her separation from her husband. According to the network doctrine, the husband's allegiance aborts their marriage agreement. In other words, the husband has automatically divorced the wife. Due to this, the wife may marry another man without necessarily

waiting for the period of waiting (*iddah*) to complete or without permission from the husband. (HD, 22 January 2022)

The interview above indicates that those who state their loyalty to Indonesia are considered apostates (*murtad*) by disengaging from their network. Consequently, a marriage can become invalid, in accordance with their Islamic understanding. This situation is further compounded in some cases when the divorced wife is married off by the head of the network (*amir*).

Such instances of divorce and shunning, which former inmates are aware of, are common if they state their support for the Pancasila state. In these situations, the organisation becomes the mediator between the former inmate and his family. Communication between household members is vital to avoid family dysfunction through separation. In addition, finding a place to stay is another important step to successful social integration. Often, former prisoners move to different communities away from where they originated (Simes, 2019; Warner, 2015). Obtaining income is another prerequisite to reintegrating and connecting with mainstream society and the state.

The next step that is also challenging in the reintegration process is returning their social life to the community. The transition has not always been successful. A respondent from Semarang, for example, experienced loneliness and exclusion. He told me:

After being released from prison, my only wish was to return to my family in Semarang. My psychological condition was unstable. When I was released from prison and was home for two days, no one from my extended family or neighbours visited me. I was aware that they were probably scared and worried about my presence. The next day, someone with a motorcycle visited me. Apparently, he was one of the leaders of a terrorist network in Lamongan, East Java. His visit was extraordinary. He offered me financial security and asked me to return to the network. He gave me two weeks to think about it. (MH, 16 November 2021)

From the above interview, it is evident that newly released individuals experience social, economic, and psychological instability. These factors can lead to alienation from family and community, and cause income security, which marginalise former prisoners from mainstream society with limited access to opportunities. In terms of livelihood, one of the most reliable jobs is often being a motorcycle taxi driver or working in construction. However, the average earnings of these jobs are extremely low. Ex-prisoners, despite being employed, were often unable to fulfill their basic needs, especially when they had a family to care for. Such vulnerability made released prisoners easy targets by former terrorism connections to coerce them into returning to old networks. Indeed, terrorist networks are aware of ex-inmates social and economic difficulties in returning to mainstream society. Consequently, their former networks make offers, including food, basic needs, and housing, to create a sense of inclusion and security. For example, a member of DeBintal foundation told me that radical networks usually have significant financial support from their members and supporters, which enables them to maintain their influence inside and outside the prison.

Members of all foundations are aware of the threat posed by comparatively well-funded terrorist organisations. Therefore, the foundations created an economic assistance program to provide inmates with employment opportunities. The foundations believe that fulfilling basic needs is a precondition for disengagement from

the network. The HWI-19, for instance, started their financial and economic assistance program by opening an agrotourism project, namely Leuwi Pangaduan, and a livestock farming business, which has included cows, ducks, and fish. They believe that financial empowerment can enhance family and social security.

Having a criminal history creates difficulties in securing a job, as some employers may interpret it as a sign of unreliability and unsuitability (Harding et al., 2014, p. 5). Consequently, employment opportunities are key to addressing economic and social independence challenges. To enhance the skills and employability of these ex-inmates, the foundations provide training programs that cover various areas, such as farming, animal breeding, and managerial skills, designed to support their work in the foundation itself. Additionally, the foundation arranges for experts and business professionals to impart knowledge to these individuals, further empowering them with valuable skills and insights.

In addition, community support is undeniably crucial in aiding individuals who have been through incarceration, providing them with a sense of belonging and resources for reintegration (Cherney, 2021; Smith, 2021). The community plays a role in the supervisory process. Although not formalised, their involvement is integrated into the formal social monitoring conducted by Correctional Agency officials, where released inmates under probation and parole must regularly report to the Correctional Agency office. This monitoring aims to facilitate engagement and reduce recidivism by overseeing former inmates' employment status and activities. Throughout this process, the agency collaborates with the local village authorities where the released inmates reside.

However, in a practical sense, supervision does not involve the community. The released prisoners are usually in contact with people they feel comfortable with, or those with a similar background in terrorism offenses. In this regard, the significance of support from the foundations cannot be understated. Their support holds unique credibility, as it comes from individuals who have experienced the same challenges, from opposing the government to accepting its program. This shared understanding fosters a deeper level of trust and empathy, enabling the foundations to offer invaluable guidance and resources that address the specific needs of those transitioning from prison to society.

### **6.3. Support From Within**

The credibility of people who shared similar experiences of imprisonment due to their involvement in terrorism has been commendable because of its honest and personal nature (Nasution et al., 2021; Wildan, 2022). Their firsthand insights into ideological transformation and ways of coping with life after prison offer invaluable contributions to providing other former terrorist inmates with a support system. The comprehensive support provided to inmates begins from the initial court trial process until release from prison. The support includes prison visits with the inmates' families, picking up released inmates and marriage matchmakers, assisting with identity cards, health and medicine issues, as well as providing employment-related training and helping to find a job.

The nature of the membership is voluntary, which creates "no guarantee" that they will join and remain members of the foundations. Nevertheless, assisting terrorist prisoners aims to give inmates the understanding that there are other entities, like the foundation, capable of providing support and care outside terrorist networks. In this regard, the foundations have become places where former inmates can

develop new skills and friendships they have never had previously. Upon the former inmates' agreement to join the foundation, they are asked to attend regular meetings and training sessions to acquire the necessary job skills required for operating the foundation's business. Members are encouraged to run the foundation's business independently. While joining a foundation is relatively simple, ensuring that former inmates remain in the foundation long-term is much more difficult. Like many other voluntary-based organisations, members choose to leave and establish their own businesses. Differences in opinion and perceptions often influence their decision to leave, particularly in management practices, including concerns that a foundation may lack autonomy due to its affiliation with the government.

Some foundations offer other types of support, including owning or renting guest houses (*rumah singgah*) where wives and families of the inmates can visit and stay temporarily. I had the opportunity to visit the guest house managed by DeBintal in Bekasi, West Java. DeBintal has rented the house since 2021 to provide a place for families of inmates who wish to visit their relatives in prison. The guest house also serves as a venue for social gatherings and Islamic discussions, as well as a basecamp for the foundation management. According to one of the members of DeBintal, the objective of the *rumah singgah* is to provide real support for potential inmates who are targeted for recruitment to the foundation, demonstrating the seriousness of the foundation to both potential members and radical networks. One respondent said to me:

If we compare our *rumah singgah* to the one owned by the radical network, ours pales in comparison. The financial support they receive from the network is substantial and continuous, resulting in facilities and support for families far superior to ours. This enables them to persuade inmates and their families to remain loyal to the network. However, having this *rumah singgah* is a step forward for us, at least demonstrating our seriousness to potential members. (HF, 4 February 2022)

DeBintal admitted that their income from the foundation's business is inadequate to cover all expenses. They still need to solicit individual donations and send personalised messages to donors through WhatsApp. HWI-19 appears to be more independent in terms of its financial situation. The personal connection between the advisor of the foundation and the head of the Densus seems to be one of the factors contributing to this privileged situation. This connection has facilitated access to resources and support, which DeBintal may not have had otherwise. As a result, HWI-19 faces fewer financial challenges and can sustain its operations without relying heavily on donations or external funding.

Although close connections with the government might not occur in every foundation, the foundation's becoming a partner of the government in the reintegration process highlights the importance of DeBintal's role. This role is crucial in addressing the coordination problems between the government, former terrorist inmates, and the community, a concern that has been emphasised by some scholars (Abubakar, 2016; Braddock, 2014). The primary goal is to foster communication, understanding, and cooperation among these three stakeholders, facilitating a balanced approach to rehabilitation, reintegration, and community safety. For instance, the foundations will accompany the released terrorist inmates to their home village or another location where they will stay after prison. The foundations will communicate with the head of the village to provide basic information about the released inmates and to foster an understanding of how to integrate them socially. This method ensures cohesive knowledge among all stakeholders. Additionally, the community benefits from a sense of security, knowing that the foundation becomes a designated avenue to address any concerns or issues that may arise.

In addition to fostering connections among stakeholders, the foundations also take on responsibilities related to the legal process. This is particularly evident in its function as a bail guarantor for prisoners upon their release on parole. According to the Regulation of the Minister of Law and Human Rights of the Republic of Indonesia No. 18/2019, the guarantors have responsibilities: first, ensuring inmates do not engage in unlawful activities and, second, assisting in guiding and supervising inmates during their participation in the assimilation program (Kementerian Hukum dan HAM, 2019). While the expectation is that family members of the released prisoners would step in as guarantors, a complex situation arises in cases where family members, especially spouses, refuse to be bail guarantors due to ideological differences. This ideological divide becomes the prevailing cause behind such refusals, highlighting the intricate socio-political landscape within these bail arrangements.

In general, the foundations' multifaceted role aligns with its purpose to address the limited social networks of many former terrorist inmates beyond their terrorist affiliations. Believing that being part of a network is paramount, the foundations were meant to be formed as a social network that can provide them with a sense of sacredness (Atran & Sheikh, 2015, p. 3), secrecy, and efficiency (Will et al., 2010, p. 228). This is similar to what was previously offered by radical networks, all while aiding the government's efforts to rehabilitate released inmates. While the supervision of released inmates is the responsibility of the BNPT or Densus 88, comprehensive intervention to limit the risk of former terrorists returning to their old networks can be achieved by involving these foundations in the program.

## 7. Conclusion

This article found that the three foundations, namely Persadani, HWI-19, and DeBintal, which disengaged terrorist inmates lead, have proven effective in building a sense of social belonging and connectedness among other former terrorist inmates in Indonesia. The accessibility to financial support given by the government to these foundations creates a distinctive capital for them to support fellow ex-inmates. Through this approach, the foundations provide former inmates with comprehensive support for employment opportunities, such as business skills training, legal and social assistance, and family support. The combination of accessibility to the government's financial support and the foundations' commitment is likely to be the most effective in supporting the successful reintegration of individuals with a history of terrorism offenses. This combination addresses multiple aspects of individuals' needs—economic, social, and psychological. This provides a comprehensive approach that maximises the chances of long-term success to reduce the risk of recidivism.

This article echoes social integration literature, highlighting effective interventions involving former terrorists as credible voices. Optimising the role of these people helps to change the image of a terrorist from that of a villain to that of a hero on a redemptive journey. This shift in perspective is pivotal not only for the reintegration of these individuals but also for challenging deep-rooted stereotypes and misconceptions about the belief that individual terrorists are impossible to transform ideologically and socially. Most have undergone deep introspection, critical thinking, and a willingness to examine and potentially revise deeply held beliefs. Their transformation result goes well beyond disengagement. The reassessment and re-evaluation of their ethical values and beliefs lead them to a deeper understanding of their authentic selves, aligning with new beliefs and social frameworks. This transformation also signifies individuals having agency over their terrorist network and factors influencing their previous choices.

Nevertheless, despite the comprehensive role of foundations in the social reintegration program, a notable institutional rivalry between BNPT and Densus 88 reveals to be the unseen dynamics within Indonesia's counter-terrorism landscape. This rivalry, often obscured from public view, stems from a complex interplay of jurisdictional disputes and competition for resources and influence. Within this competitive environment, efforts to eradicate terrorism can become imbalanced, as the agencies' priorities and strategies may differ. Consequently, negative impacts emerge, such as overlapping roles and responsibilities, which can undermine the effectiveness and sustainability of counter-terrorism initiatives. Moreover, the agencies' financial support might create reliance on commercial ventures and economic dependencies. This reliance on government funding sources raises questions about the financial independence of some foundations and the neutrality of the government, as it creates potential conflicts of interest that could compromise their counter-terrorism efforts. Thus, while these agencies work tirelessly to combat terrorism, the unseen dynamics of institutional rivalry and financial dependencies underscore the need for greater transparency, coordination, and accountability within Indonesia's counter-terrorism framework.

In conclusion, the efforts of foundations like Persadani, HWI-19, and DeBintal are commendable in facilitating the reintegration of former terrorists into society. Despite the challenges posed by reliance on government funding and institutional rivalries, there is an opportunity for positive transformation. With a commitment to transparency, coordination, and accountability, these obstacles can be overcome, ensuring that counter-terrorism efforts done by those foundations remain effective and sustainable. Moreover, the remarkable journey of disengaged terrorists who have embraced ideological changes underscores the potential for profound societal impact. By harnessing their experiences and fostering a culture of inclusivity, Indonesia can be more resilient against the threat of terrorism.

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The author declares no conflict of interests.

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