

# JakartaGlobe

## The Enemy Within: Islamic Extremists And Their Dreams of a New Caliphate

Truth that is not organized can be defeated by evil that is. So goes an old Sufi saying.

Moderate Muslims in Indonesia are working to get organized for a war with hard-liners who are misinterpreting the Koran as a political ideology that is driving the direction of Islam across the world.

With around 200 million Muslims, the world's most populous nation of adherents to the faith is a tempting prize for proponents of a new caliphate, and the hard-liners are busy infiltrating mosques, communities, business, the bureaucracy and government here.

The latest initiative to fight this hard-line push is backed by the country's two major Muslim organizations, the traditionalist Nadhlatul Ulama and the modernist Muhammadiyah. Together, they command the allegiance of an estimated 70 million people.

It should be no surprise that former President Abdurrahman Wahid, who was once chairman of the NU, is leading the drive. Also lined up are Ahmad Syafii Maarif of Muhammadiyah and, perhaps most important of all, KH A. Mustafa Bisri of the NU, two leading names among Muslims here and abroad.

They are backing the LibForAll Foundation, the brainchild of former US telecoms whiz kid C. Holland Taylor, in rolling out books, television programs and, unapologetically, even a Holocaust Conference with the Simon Wiesenthal Center's Museum of Tolerance that attracted worldwide attention.

Taylor got out of a career in which he was credited with pushing deregulation of the global telecom business and into the culture and religion of Java and Islam in general. He believes a two-year research program conducted by LibForAll in Indonesia has unearthed a massive conspiracy driven by Salafist groups such as Saudi Arabia's Wahabis, the Muslim Brotherhood and Hizbut Tahrir.

He says petrodollars are flowing into the country and being used together with funds raised locally in an attempt to hijack Indonesia's innately tolerant Islam.

"You're looking at a virulent ideology which uses the symbols of Islam in order to attract support and also to intimidate into silence their opponents," Taylor says.

"The superficiality of the use of symbols and the aggressiveness of the ideology facilitates obtaining cooperation from opportunistic political parties and politicians who find it easier to go along with the extremists rather than stand in their way and be accused of being anti-Islam themselves. This is particularly effective in a democratic era."

Taylor argues that those who believe the hard-liners cannot succeed in transforming Indonesia into an Islamic state only need to look at Germany's pre-Nazi Weimar Republic, a democratic government overthrown by terror and intimidation in service to a hard-line minority.

Solo in Central Java Province has already fallen to the hard-liners, much as Germany fell to the Nazis. There, the faculty of Muhammadiyah University is dominated by active members of the Prosperous Justice Party, or PKS, and Hizbut Tahrir.

While Muhammadiyah issued a decree in 2006 closing its doors to PKS members following the publication of an expose on the hard-liners' tactics written by Muhammadiyah deputy chairman Haeder Nashir, Taylor says the decree came too late for Solo.

"They cannot implement the Muhammadiyah decree effectively banning the PKS from using its facilities because they wouldn't have a university left," he says.

Two years of field research was conducted by LibForAll in 17 provinces, recording interviews with 591 mainly extremist leaders and unearthing a distinct agenda to establish a narrow-minded concept of Shariah law, Taylor says. "What we found was that the extremists universally had the agenda of imposing their understanding of Shariah on the Indonesian public and destroying Pancasila."

The results of the research have been published in "The Illusion of the Islamic State: The Expansion of the Transnational Islamic Movement in Indonesia." The book is in Indonesian but will be issued at a later date in English.

Many of those interviewed were simultaneously members of a radical organization and a mainstream group. While they belonged to 58 separate hard-line groups, 75 percent were also members of Muhammadiyah, a sign that it has been deeply penetrated by the radicals.

LibForAll also argues that the hard-line movement has been working steadily toward its goal for decades. Beginning with the Tarbiyah movement of Islamic study groups in universities, it has now blossomed into a range of organizations, from the violent to the peaceful.

These organizations include PKS, with its deep links in the Muslim Brotherhood movement. Others, including the Crescent Star Party, or PBB, are of older lineage, springing from the legacy of the Islamist Masyumi Party of the Sukarno era.

The release of social shackles with the end of Suharto's New Order allowed the various groups within the hard-line movement to flourish. Taylor warns that their success has been so dramatic that Muhammadiyah is at risk of total collapse.

"If this is allowed to continue apace, Muhammadiyah may cease to exist as it has been; it may continue to exist but it will be controlled by the PKS," Taylor says.

"Not only that, Muhammadiyah as a pillar of Indonesian society, upholding Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution and the unitary state of Indonesia, is likely to crash and at that point Pancasila can disappear and the Indonesian nation state can disappear, all as a consequence of PKS infiltration of Muhammadiyah."

Taylor argues that it is a matter of public record that people associated with the Wahabi movement and the Muslim Brotherhood are in positions of power.

He sees a conspiracy of loosely related groups, from JI through the Islamic Defenders Front, or FPI, and from Hizbut Tahrir to PKS and the quasi-governmental Indonesian Council of Ulema, or MUI.

"The government has good relations with parties including the PKS and the PBB. It is a matter of public record that there are people associated with Saudi Arabia and the Muslim Brotherhood who are a part of this administration," Taylor says.

His campaign hopes to make others in the government aware of the danger.

Hodri Ariev, a young NU leader from Jember in East Java Province who helped expel hard-liners from his own community, points to the new governor of West Nusa Tenggara, M. Zainul Majdi, as potentially a hard-line infiltrator into what is supposed to be a moderate religious organization.

Zainul recently ruled to reject the resettlement of Ahmadiyah refugees and is pushing for a complete ban on the sect in his province, which would become only the second after South Sumatra to do so.

As part of LibForAll's drive, a television series featuring international examples of moderate Islam is expected to be screened nationally and copies will be distributed to religious schools across the country. Different versions will also be produced for distribution in other Muslim societies to expand the work of LibForAll.

Sadanand Dhume, Asia Society Fellow and author of the recently published "My Friend the Fanatic: Travels with an Indonesian Islamist," agrees that there is a major threat to Indonesia's mainstream moderate Islam.

"While Indonesia remains the most liberal and tolerant Muslim culture in the world, the past 30 years have witnessed the rise of a determined and well-organized radical movement that ultimately seeks to organize both society and the state according to Islamic Shariah law," he says.

"Whether the country's pluralistic and nonconfrontational Islam will prevail, or whether radical forces such as the PKS will acquire a greater voice in politics and public life, will be the single biggest determinant of Indonesia's future," he says.

Can Indonesia's moderate Islam withstand the push from the hard-liners?

NU's Hodri Ariev believes the only way forward is to fight back. "There needs to be the creation of a network between members of the younger generation of Muslims, especially with those who are strongly oriented to spiritual understanding so that they cannot be influenced by the hard-liners," he says. "This is a generation of Muslims who are not narrow-minded, who understand Islam as a path and not as a goal." Keith Loveard is a Jakarta-based writer and political analyst.