

**AFTER AHOK: THE ISLAMIST  
AGENDA IN INDONESIA**

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## I. INTRODUCTION

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The success of the Islamist alliance that brought down the Jakarta governor in 2016 raised concerns that religious conservatives were gaining ground in Indonesia to the detriment of pluralism and civil rights. The alliance quickly broke up, revealing major differences in the long-term goals and short-term political interests of its leaders as well as deep personal rivalries among them. The break-up, however, does not mean that the so-called 212 Movement, named after the rally on 2 December 2016 that proved to be the biggest political demonstration in Indonesian history, can be dismissed as a one-off event of little lasting significance. It is true that it will be difficult for the Islamists to find an issue as susceptible to mass mobilisation as the alleged blasphemy of Gov Basuki Purnama Tjahaja, better known as Ahok. But each component part of the alliance used the 212 movement to advance its own distinct agenda. The agendas are different and sometimes contradictory but the overall impact has been to increase the perceived need of mainstream politicians to appeal to conservative constituencies and thus help advance Islamist goals.

The two most important components of the 212 Movement were the Salafi-inspired activists and the conservative traditionalists. They have little in common theologically or strategically, though their political interests sometimes coincide. The Salafi-inspired activists, led by Bachtiar Nasir, have the most clearly articulated long-term objectives: a greater public role for ulama, shari'a-inspired public policies, Muslim majority rule and Muslim control of the economy. They are careful to stay within accepted political bounds, and avoid calling for formal application of Islamic law or an Islamic state. Strongly influenced by the so-called Sahwa movement from the early 1990s in Saudi Arabia, a fusion of Muslim Brotherhood activism and Salafi-wahabi religious tenets, they aim to transform state and society from the bottom up along more puritan lines. Their instruments of choice are not political parties but educational institutions, religious outreach (*dakwah*) groups, the media and civil society through which they hope to shape public opinion. Bachtiar Nasir has been able to translate his role in the 212 Movement into significantly increased influence, as measured in part by his media profile, the numbers attending his religious programs, and the number of national political figures trying to court him.

The conservative traditionalists, represented by Islamic Defenders Front (Front Pembela Islam, FPI), are closer to the mainstream Nahdlatul Ulama, from which many of their members come. They have a mass base and mobilisation capacity that the Salafis lack, enabling them to build tactical alliances for short-term mutual benefit with political candidates, despite FPI's reputation for thuggery. FPI leader Habib Rizieq Shihab used the anti-Ahok campaign to catapult himself into a position of unprecedented political prominence and seemed on the verge of becoming an important broker for the 2019 elections.<sup>1</sup> But he also alienated his long-term allies in the police. In April 2017, he fled to Saudi Arabia to avoid arrest on pornography charges, abruptly halting his move into formal politics. His absence as the presidential campaign moves into high gear may keep FPI's influence limited.

A concerted government campaign to discredit the Islamists and their own disunity suggest that Indonesia is not going to make any sudden lurch to the right. At the same time, the 212 Movement arguably changed Indonesian politics by showing how potent the religious card can be if the issue at hand is framed as defending Islam from attack by non-Muslims. Then the formula is clear: instructions go out to the faithful through social media and Friday sermons; Jakarta is brought to a standstill through mass demonstrations; and the government capitulates.

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1 For a detailed analysis of the Islamist mobilisation and FPI's role in particular, see Marcus Mietzner, Burhanuddin Muhtadi and Rizka Halida, "Entrepreneurs of Grievance: Drivers and Effects of Indonesia's Islamist Mobilisation," forthcoming article.

The formula is unlikely to work against President Joko “Jokowi” Widodo in 2019, but it is now out there for other politicians to try. Its success against Ahok at the very least has produced a realisation among conservative politicians and Islamist activists that their tactical interests may converge.

This report examines the organisational components of the 212 movement: how they came together, what they want in terms of political and social change and why they broke up. It is based on extensive interviews with leaders, supporters and opponents of the 212 Movement, analysis of documents produced by its members, and Indonesian media sources.

## II. THE 212 MOVEMENT IN BRIEF

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The 212 Movement has its origins in Islamist opposition to Ahok, an ethnic Chinese Christian, from holding elected office in Jakarta, a Muslim majority city. Jokowi and Ahok were elected governor and deputy governor of Jakarta respectively in 2012 for a five-year term. They made a good team, with Jokowi as the Javanese man of the people, hobnobbing in markets, and Ahok, a businessman, as the no-nonsense administrator, cleaning up dead wood in the bureaucracy and often lashing out at poor performers with a notoriously harsh tongue. When Jokowi was elected president in 2014, Ahok automatically succeeded to the governorship to fill out the remaining three years of Jokowi’s term, but Islamist organisations were deeply unhappy, arguing that only a Muslim could govern other Muslims. Their opposition intensified when Ahok decided to stand for governor in 2017. He was backed by the same party that had backed Jokowi for the presidency, the Indonesian Democratic Struggle Party (PDIP). One of his opponents was Anies Baswedan, a former university rector and Jokowi’s first Minister of Education, backed by Gerindra, the party whose boss, Prabowo Subianto, had lost the presidency to Jokowi in 2014. Prabowo had a long history of working with Islamist groups. Another, representing Partai Demokrat, was Agus Yudhoyono, the son of Jokowi’s predecessor, Susilo Bambang Yudoyhono, running in his first-ever political contest.

On 27 September 2016, as the campaign was moving into high gear, Ahok made a speech to a group of civil servants in which he told them not to be fooled by people using a Qur’anic verse, Surat al-Maidah 51, to suggest that they would go to hell if they voted for him; they should vote their conscience.<sup>2</sup> On 6 October, a slightly doctored video of the speech was systematically disseminated over social media, and over a dozen organisations reported the governor to the police for blasphemy. On 11 October, the Indonesian Ulama Council (Majelis Ulama Indonesia, MUI) issued a ruling that Ahok’s words had indeed been blasphemous. Shortly thereafter an alliance called the National Movement to Defend the MUI Fatwa (Gerakan Nasional Pengawal Fatwa-MUI, GNPF-MUI) was born, with Rizieq leading the advisory council and Bachtiar as head. It organised a series of ever larger demonstrations called Action to Defend Islam (Aksi Bela Islam) demanding that Ahok be arrested. The first was on 14 October and drew a few thousand. The second was on 4 November, with possibly 300,000 protestors and rumors of financing by Ahok’s political rivals. The police, hoping to deflate the movement and avert violence, declared Ahok a suspect. But the Islamists and their political backers saw the opportunity for ensuring Ahok’s downfall, and announced a third rally for 2 December (212). Some 750,000 activists brought the capital to a standstill, and the government announced that Ahok’s trial would begin immediately.

Ahok went on trial as preparations for the election got underway. He came out highest in the first round, edging out the Gerindra slate by 43 to 40 per cent but short of the 51 per cent

2 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8hAZzCV7l3U>

needed to avoid a run-off. As he and Anies Baswedan faced off in a second round, the Islamist coalition now known as the 212 Movement went into high gear, telling Jakarta residents through Friday sermons, social media and other means that it was their obligation to vote for a Muslim candidate. On 19 April 2017, Anies Baswedan won the second round with almost 58 per cent of the vote against Ahok's 42 per cent. On 9 May, Ahok was convicted of blasphemy and sentenced to two years in prison.

The 212 Movement that had engineered the protests against him was a tactical alliance of several Islamist groups:

- The Salafi-modernist network led by Bachtiar Nasir in Jakarta and Zaitun Rasmin of the Makassar-based Wahdah Islamiyah.<sup>3</sup> Both are very much rooted in the educated middle class; both want the further Islamisation of Indonesian state and society through grassroots activism outside the formal political system, with an emphasis on education and media. They do not call directly for formal application of Islamic law or the creation of an Islamic State.<sup>4</sup>
- FPI, led by Habib Rizieq Shihab, a charismatic preacher of Hadrami (Yemeni) descent and other traditionalist clerics. It began as an organisation that drew on the urban poor but has gradually expanded its social base. Its importance to the movement lies in its ability to mobilise huge numbers of people and keep them fairly disciplined (perhaps thanks to close ties to the security forces). Its leaders have called for the restoration of a constitutional clause that would oblige Indonesian Muslims to obey Islamic law, but it is generally more focused on alliances with politicians and members of security forces to achieve short-term goals and material reward. It has little in common theologically with the salafi-modernist network.
- Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI), the Indonesian branch of a transnational organisation committed to the restoration of the caliphate (but deeply opposed to the ISIS version). It was officially banned in 2017 for having an ideology in violation of Pancasila, the five principles on which the Indonesian state is based. An elitist organisation with a strong presence on university campuses, it is committed to the infiltration of government and security forces so that Islamic governance can be achieved from within.
- Forum Umat Islam, a coalition led by Muhammad al-Khatthath, a former HTI leader. Al-Khatthath provided the creative energy for much of the movement and replaced Bachtiar Nasir as head of one of its key bodies, the GNPf-MUI, in March 2018. He does not have a membership base to mobilise but it is he who comes up with names, slogans and actions that can keep activists motivated.
- Urban-based *zikir* "councils" (*majelis zikir*), a form of Sufi order affiliated with charismatic preachers and sometimes with politicians seeking to boost their image with a pious middle-class constituency.

3 Both modernists and Salafis call for the return to Qur'an and Sunnah as the basis of Islamic law and for purification of the faith from folk traditions and what they consider groundless innovations (*bid'ah*) such as tomb visitation. However, while modernists, best represented in Indonesia by the Muhammadiyah organisation, emphasise a forward-looking Islamic vision and a rationalist approach to religious texts, salafis idealise the "pure" Islam as practiced by the first two or three generations of Muslims (*salaf al-salih*). They are also much more literal in their interpretation of scripture.

4 In early 2000s, some Wahdah Islamiyah members in Sulawesi joined a local shari'a advocacy group called the Preparatory Committee for the Upholding Islamic Law (Komite Persiapan Penegakan Syariat Islam, KPPSI), which later changed its name to the Committee for the Struggle of Upholding Islamic Law. Wahdah as an organisation, however, emphasises on *dakwah* and education rather than political advocacy to raise public awareness about shari'a.

Understanding the different interests of these components and how they came together is critical to understanding the role that Islamists will play in the 2019 presidential elections and beyond.

### III. THE SALAFI-MODERNIST NETWORK OF BACHTIAR NASIR

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Bachtiar Nasir emerged from the 212 Movement as the face of sophisticated Islamist activism in Indonesia. His worldview is a hybrid of modernist Muhammadiyah and salafi activist (*haraki*), to which he was exposed while studying in Saudi Arabia.<sup>5</sup> He is more tolerant of practical politics than many Salafis, seeing democratic political participation as a necessary evil to achieve Islamist goals. He and his supporters envision a gradual Islamisation process in Indonesia, similar to what his role model, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, accomplished in Turkey. They are not working toward a theocracy or transnational caliphate but rather a state that upholds Islamic law:

Islam accepts democracy but the question is, does democracy accept Islam? We're the majority, therefore according to democratic principles, we should be the ones who determine the law.<sup>6</sup>

The statement suggests that Bachtiar sees democracy only in terms of majoritarian rule as a means to achieve Islamist control. While rejecting violence (and strongly rejecting ISIS), he is sympathetic to jihadi extremists who fight against Muslim persecution, and sees their activism as preferable to the do-nothing stance of the leadership of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah, Indonesia's two mammoth Muslim social organisations. Indeed, he sees himself as bridge between the hardliners who feel underrepresented in existing religious institutions and the Muslim establishment, and in defining himself as moderate, he has tried to move the definition of moderation to the right.

#### A. *The Saudi and Sahwa influence*

Bachtiar's thinking was shaped by his background. Born in Jakarta on 26 June 1967 to parents from Bone (South Sulawesi), Bachtiar grew up in the traditionalist coastal village of Luar Batang, North Jakarta, where his father worked as a fisherman.<sup>7</sup> His parents sent him to study

5 Some scholars argue for dividing salafis into three groups: purist, *haraki* (non-violent activist) and jihadi (violent extremist). Both *haraki* and purists view democracy as un-Islamic, but the latter believe a Muslim ruler must be obeyed as long as he does not renounce his Islamic faith, even if democratically elected. Harakis hold that obedience to the government is conditional upon whether it governs according to God's law (*tauhid hakimiyah*). If not, then religious scholars (*ulama*) have an obligation to criticise it in a peaceful manner. Like members of the Muslim Brotherhood (the quintessential *haraki* organisation), salafi harakis view Islam as an all-encompassing religion that governs social and political as well as spiritual aspects of life. Purist salafis often refer to the harakis pejoratively as "Sururi", after Muhammad Surur bin Nayif Zayn al-Abidin, a Brotherhood member who moved to Saudi Arabia in 1965 and adopted Wahhabi theology while retaining Brotherhood ideals of change through non-violent mobilisation. Wahabism is a strand of Salafism inspired by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, the 18th century Arab cleric who cooperated with Muhammad bin Saud, Saudi state founder. Zoltan Pall, *Lebanese Salafis between the Gulf and Europe*, (Amsterdam, 2013), pp. 25-27.

6 IPAC interview with Bachtiar Nasir, Jakarta, 10 August 2017.

7 In early 2016, Luar Batang was one of the coastal villages evicted by the Ahok government for a port development project. Bachtiar and FPI assisted in organising local resistance against the forced eviction.

at Pesantren Gontor, in Ponorogo, East Java, one of Indonesia's best-known Islamic schools.<sup>8</sup> Gontor's modernist outlook helped steer Bachtiar toward Muhammadiyah, though he did not formally join the organisation until much later.<sup>9</sup>

After finishing his studies in 1988, he went to his family's old home in Bone to memorise the Qur'an at a local school, where his mentor was Lanre Said, the ex-military commander of Darul Islam, the insurgency active in South Sulawesi in the 1950s that sought to establish an Islamic State.<sup>10</sup> Upon completing his studies, Bachtiar was accepted into the Islamic University of Medina (IUM) to study shari'a from 1990 to 1994.

He arrived in Saudi Arabia at a time of high tension. The first Gulf War (1990-1991) had caused huge friction within the elite, with the official ulama establishment insisting on unwavering loyalty to the government, while others, deeply opposed to the presence of U.S. military forces in the Gulf, joined Sahwa, a peaceful Islamist resistance movement. The ulama behind Sahwa, mostly local sympathisers of the Muslim Brotherhood and *salafi haraki*, saw the U.S. presence as proof that the Saudi kingdom was totally dependent on an infidel force, which in fact had long corrupted the government by installing secularist, American-educated elites.<sup>11</sup> They saw the war itself as part of a U.S. grand design to conquer the Gulf. Sahwa activists used the opportunity to galvanise popular support for broader political and social reform, including by demanding a bigger role for independent ulama in governance to prevent Western infiltration.<sup>12</sup> The impact of the Sahwa movement reached far beyond Saudi Arabia, dividing Salafi communities elsewhere, including in Indonesia.<sup>13</sup>

Sahwa shaped Bachtiar's worldview in several ways. He became convinced that a global secularist conspiracy was intent on destroying Islam, and he saw the broadening of clergy's role into social and political affairs as the only antidote.<sup>14</sup> He also saw the disunity that the Gulf War debate created even among his fellow Indonesian students at the University of Medina, and he and his circle of friends became committed to the idea of forging Islamic unity. One of his friends there was Zaitun Rasmin, a student from Makassar, Sulawesi who had co-founded a *dakwah* movement that later become the mass organisation, Wahdah Islamiyah.

8 Established in 1926, Pesantren Modern Darussalam, better known as Gontor, was one of the first pesantrens to introduce a modern curriculum with an emphasis on Arabic and English skills to prepare students to face globalisation. Gontor holds a principle of political independence, although it was historically close to Masyumi, the modernist-dominated Islamist party (1945-1960) which metamorphosed into the conservative religious outreach organisation, Dewan Dakwah Islam Indonesia in 1962. See Martin Van Bruinessen, "Divergent paths from Gontor: Muslim educational reform and the travails of pluralism in Indonesia", in Freek L. Bakker and Jan Sihar Aritonang (eds.), *On the Edge of Many Worlds* [Festschrift Karel A. Steenbrink], (Zoetermeer, 2006), pp. 152-162.

9 Bachtiar was recruited to Muhammadiyah National Board in 2010, under the leadership of Din Syamsudin, a fellow Gontor alumnus.

10 For more on Darul Islam, see Solahudin (Dave McRae, trans.), *The Roots of Terrorism in Indonesia: From Darul Islam to Jema'ah Islamiyah*, (Singapore, 2013).

11 Support for the Brotherhood developed in Saudi Arabia in the 1950s-1960s after Egyptian and Syrian members moved there, fleeing repression in Nasser's Egypt and the Ba'athist-dominated Syria. Many taught at Saudi schools and universities and had a major impact on Saudi youth. Stéphane Lacroix (George Holoch, trans.), *Awakening Islam*, (Cambridge, 2011), p. 40.

12 Joas Wagemakers, *A Quietist Jihadi: The Ideology and Influence of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi*, (Cambridge, 2012), pp. 102-103.

13 Noorhaidi Hasan, "Ambivalent Doctrines and Conflicts in the Salafi Movement," in Roel Meijer. Ed. *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*, (New York, 2009), pp. 169-188.

14 For a sample of his lecture that contains points on global conspiracy, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H6U9AtaPY5o>

## B. *Social Transformation in Indonesia*

After returning from Medina in 1994, Bachtiar briefly entered the corporate world but quickly went back to teaching.<sup>15</sup> He began by leading religious discussions (*pengajian*) at his neighbourhood in East Jakarta in 2001, and by 2009 was able to establish his own Islamic centre, Ar-Rahman Qur'anic Learning (AQL) in South Jakarta. AQL Islamic Centre became known for an approach to religious teaching known as “contemplating the Qur'an” (*tadabbur al-Qur'an*). Unlike traditional Qur'anic exegesis (*tafsir*), which Bachtiar and other conservatives saw as having been tainted by liberals and orientalists, *tadabbur* aimed at social transformation. In 2013, Bachtiar invited the prominent Sahwa scholar Nasir bin Sulaiman al-Umar, head of the international *tadabbur* movement, to Jakarta to launch the Indonesian branch. Board members included Bachtiar, Zaitun Rasmin, and celebrity preacher Ust. Yusuf Mansyur.<sup>16</sup>

Bachtiar gives *tadabbur* lectures at Masjid Pondok Indah and AQL Centre in Tebet three times a week, with hundreds of urban, middle class participants in each. These men and women are increasingly reluctant to identify as NU or Muhammadiyah but instead see themselves as part of a cosmopolitan global community of the faithful (*ummah*). To accommodate them, AQL Centre offers a wide range of programs for Muslim families, from regular *pengajian*; fee-based short courses on topics such as Islamic parenting and youth leadership; and a pilgrimage travel agency. Its professionally run charity program hosts a gala fund-raising dinner and auction each year that is especially popular. In addition, AQL has an affiliated Islamic boarding school with 500 students and a newly established Qur'an institute in Bogor, West Java. The 1,500 loyal members of AQL do not include the hundreds of thousands who follow Bachtiar on social media. As of early 2018, he had over 350,000 followers on Facebook, 573,000 on Instagram and 141,000 on Twitter.<sup>17</sup>

Bachtiar's online popularity is the result of a deliberate *dakwah* strategy to use media as a weapon in the war of ideas between Islam and the West (*ghazw al-fikr*). Preachers, he once told a group of students, “must have an infiltrator mindset” and get into mainstream TV and social media as to influence young people.<sup>18</sup> He began by uploading short videos on AQL and other Islamic websites. In 2011, he launched his television career as a coach for an American Idol-like contest on Indonesian television to find the most popular preacher (*da'i*). In 2012, he inspired a television producer to create Indonesia's first children's Qur'an memorisation contest on television and then became one of the judges. The first season of the show aired in Ramadhan 2013 and was watched by over 40 million people.<sup>19</sup>

## C. *Unifying Modernists and Salafis through MIUMI*

Bachtiar's interest in uniting different streams of Islamists was one of the objectives behind the creation on 28 February 2012 of the Indonesian Council of Young Intellectuals and Ulama (Majelis Intelektual dan Ulama Muda Indonesia, MIUMI).

15 When his own business collapsed at the time of the Asian financial crisis, a Chinese electronic company tried to recruit him as country director in Doha, Qatar. The company invited him to Chengdu, China to negotiate the contract, but he was shocked when the Chinese, not knowing that he was an ustadz, brought him to some vulgar entertainment places. IPAC interview, 7 November 2017.

16 “Lembaga Tadabbur al-Qur'an Indonesia Diresmikan di Istiqlal”, poskotanews.com, 4 June 2013.

17 As a comparison, Muhammadiyah only has 37,000 and NU 183,500,000 Instagram followers, although both organisations have much larger grassroots followings.

18 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bdtQk\\_IYDcw&t=741s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bdtQk_IYDcw&t=741s)

19 “Erwin Amirul: Teamwork adalah Kunci Keberhasilan ‘Hafidz Indonesia’”, kompasiana.com, 30 July 2013.

Bachtiar and fellow founder Zaitun Rasmin wanted to create an alternative to the existing Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI).<sup>20</sup> MIUMI aimed to become “the foremost formal Islamic leadership authority in the implementation of Islamic values”; to promote research-based fatwa rulings; and to be a unifying platform for intellectuals from across the Islamic spectrum.<sup>21</sup> Fahmi Salim, a MIUMI member from Muhammadiyah, noted that MIUMI was not intended to be a mass membership social organisation (*organisasi masyarakat, ormas*) but a think-tank to promote *dakwah* grounded in contextual knowledge of politics, economy and history.<sup>22</sup> He said it was specifically targeting the Muslim middle class in the hope that “the Islamisation concepts promoted by MIUMI could be applied by talented professionals”.<sup>23</sup>

With over a dozen branches in Java, Sumatra, and Sulawesi, MIUMI’s membership consists of four overlapping streams: Gontor alumni, Wahdah Islamiyah, Saudi alumni and a mix of conservative young scholars from the modernist organisation Persatuan Islam (PERSIS); Muhammadiyah; Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia (DDII); and to a much lesser extent, NU. Together these components have the potential to command a vast grassroots network.<sup>24</sup> Gontor, for example, not only has 20 satellite schools and a vast alumni association, but each local alumni group has its own WhatsApp group. The anti-Ahok campaign prompted Gontor’s leaders to jump into practical politics for the first time. In an unprecedented move, Gontor encouraged its alumni to join in the anti-Ahok rallies and allowed all its voting-age Jakartan students to go home to vote – for the Muslim candidate.<sup>25</sup> One Gontor activist claims that 90 per cent of the alumni supported the 212 Movement.<sup>26</sup> The Bekasi branch of the alumni association gave out free food during the protests and the Aceh branch sent representatives to Jakarta.<sup>27</sup>

#### D. Unifying Conservatives and Jihadis through Humanitarian Aid

If MIUMI brought salafis and modernists together, Bachtiar’s humanitarian aid efforts moved him closer to the non-ISIS extremists. Charity and humanitarian relief have always been a big part of AQL. Bachtiar had established Spirit of Aqsa on 25 July 2010 as AQL’s humanitarian wing, and he and his team regularly went to Gaza to deliver aid and preach.

When the Syria conflict erupted, Bachtiar, like many in the salafi and salafi jihadi community, saw it as the beginning of the final battle at the end of time (*al-malhamah al-kubra*) foretold in Islamic prophecies.<sup>28</sup> He joined forces with other Islamic relief groups that shared this view, including the Hilal Ahmar Society of Indonesia (HASI), a humanitarian group with strong links to Jemaah Islamiyah.<sup>29</sup> On 16 October 2012 HASI organised a seminar at DDII’s headquarters to consolidate Syria-related charities, attended by several non-violent extremist groups, Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI) among them. They agreed to establish a coordinating body for

20 They saw MUI as often undermined by liberal intellectuals, and believed that people no longer respected its fatwas. “MIUMI, Asa Menegakkan Fatwa”, suara-islam.com, 29 February 2012.

21 “Visi Misi Majelis Intelektual dan Ulama Muda Indonesia”, 26 May 2015.

22 This was another concept drawn from the Sahwa movement which stressed the importance of understanding the current state of affairs and local context (*fiqh waqi*).

23 “Fahmi Salim: MIUMI Tidak Menjadi Ormas”, suara-islam.com, 12 March 2012.

24 Gontor alone has 20 satellite pesantrens (with almost 25,000 students and staff) and 283 affiliated schools established by its alumni, as well as an extensive alumni association with branches in 85 districts and 10 countries where tens of thousands of alumni gather regularly. “Yusuf Mansyur Muliakan Kiai dan Alumni Gontor”, hidayatullah.com, 23 January 2016.

25 “Pesantren Gontor Izinkan Santri Asal DKI Jakarta Pulang Sukseskan Pilkada”, hidayatullah.com, 10 February 2017.

26 IPAC interview with Lutfi Fathullah, co-founder of Majelis Pelayan Jakarta, 3 November 2017.

27 “IKPM Bekasi Ambil Peran Bagikan Logistik Saat Aksi 212.” tribunnews.com. 3 December 2016.

28 IPAC, “Indonesians and the Syrian Conflict”, IPAC Report No. 6, 30 January 2014. Available at [http://file.understandingconflict.org/file/2014/01/IPAC\\_Indonesians\\_the\\_Syrian\\_Conflict.pdf](http://file.understandingconflict.org/file/2014/01/IPAC_Indonesians_the_Syrian_Conflict.pdf)

29 IPAC. 2017. “The Re-emergence of Jemaah Islamiyah.” IPAC Report No. 36. 20 April. Available on [http://file.understandingconflict.org/file/2017/04/IPAC\\_Report\\_36.pdf](http://file.understandingconflict.org/file/2017/04/IPAC_Report_36.pdf).

humanitarian fundraising for Syria and Bachtiar soon became its head.<sup>30</sup>

These fundraising programs had strong anti-Shi'a overtones. Farid Okbah, a founding member of MIUMI and leading anti-Shi'a ideologue, was a frequent discussant, and he and Bachtiar portrayed the conflict as a Sunni massacre at the hands of a Shi'a tyrant.<sup>31</sup> Bachtiar, however, encouraged financial jihad (*jihad bil mal*) rather than direct participation and argued that there were ten Qur'anic verses prioritising financial jihad over armed struggle and only one suggesting the other way around.<sup>32</sup> After Abu Bakar al-Baghdadi declared in late June 2014 that ISIS had established a new caliphate, MIUMI issued a rejoinder on 14 August 2014, arguing that the so-called caliphate had not been established through a truly Islamic mechanism (*shura* and *ahl al-hall wa al-'aqd*) and that in fact, it was a Western conspiracy to destroy the image of caliphate by representing it as brutal and violent.<sup>33</sup> Among the signatories of the MIUMI statement were former JI amir Abu Rusydan and Abdul Rahim Ba'asyir, the son of Abu Bakar Ba'asyir.

#### IV. FRONT PEMBELA ISLAM (FPI)

FPI had little in common theologically with Bachtiar's network.<sup>34</sup> FPI leaders are very much traditionalist, closer to NU than to Salafis. Many traditional practices that are rejected by Salafi-modernists, such as the celebration of the Prophet's Birthday (Maulid), are enthusiastically carried out by FPI. Rizieq had often criticised Salafi-Wahhabis in his speeches; he even called them "morons" for equating traditionalist Muslims with Shi'a just because both express veneration of Prophet Muhammad and his descendants.<sup>35</sup> The anti-Ahok campaign papered over the differences but it was always an uncomfortable alliance.

30 The name of the coordinating body was Forum Indonesia Peduli Suriah (FIPS). "Terbentuk, Forum Indonesia Peduli Suriah", *salam-online.com*, 16 October 2012.

31 The sectarian narrative echoed the views of Nasir al-Umar, the Sahwa scholar and Bachtiar's *tadabbur* mentor, who stated in early 2011 that "what was happening [in Syria] was nothing but a religious war (*harb 'aqadiyya*) between Sunnis and Nusayri [i.e. Alawite] regime whose strongest allies are Shiites and Jews". Stephane Lacroix, "Saudi Islamists and the Arab Spring", Kuwait Programme on Development, Governance and Globalisation in the Gulf States No. 36, (London, 2014). Available on <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/56725/>.

32 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nqicDIYWpUo&lc=Ughaiwklu64bk3gCoAEC>

33 The statement cited fatwas against ISIS from two organisations in which Bachtiar was active, the International Union of Muslim Scholars, chaired by Yusuf al-Qaradawi, and the Muslim Ulama Association (Rabitah Ulama al-Muslimin) chaired by Nasir al-Umar. "Ini Sikap MIUMI Terkait Deklarasi Khilafah oleh ISIS.", *arrahmah.com*, 14 August 2014.

34 FPI, like most Indonesian Muslims, follows the traditionalist Ash'arite theological school, named after its ninth century pioneer Abu Hasan al-Ash'ari, that combines scriptural text and philosophical reasoning. By contrast, modern Salafism's creed is derived from Ibnu Taimiyah, a late 13<sup>th</sup> century critic of reason and advocate of absolute reliance on divine texts. These differences affect how the two groups see relations between the government and the people. Salafis take a literalist interpretation of God's physical attributes mentioned in the Qur'an (e.g. God's hand, God sits on the Throne), which Ash'arites interpret metaphorically. Salafis also define faith (*iman*) as both conviction and real action. Politically, it means that a ruler who speaks of belief in God but engages in "deviant" practices which could range from mysticism to secularism, is in fact un-Islamic and therefore open to criticism and challenge (although salafis disagree over the method). The accommodationist Ash'arites define faith primarily as conviction and strongly oppose *takfir* (excommunication), arguing that even people who have committed major sins should still be considered Muslims. As such, Ash'arites condemn rebellion against legitimate leaders even when they have sinned. (See Jeffrey R. Halverson, *Theology and Creed in Sunni Islam*, (New York, 2010), pp. 39-40; 77). FPI justifies its vigilante attacks on gambling and prostitution centres as an attempt to assist the government in combating social ills; indeed, it has often done so in close coordination with the police. While Salafis seek to transform Muslim society according to the supposedly more correct Salafi doctrines, FPI tries to preserve local long-embraced traditionalist beliefs, hence the attack on so-called deviant and foreign Islamic sects such as Ahmadiyah in West Java and Salafi groups in Aceh. FPI has joined Nahdlatul Ulama in refuting Salafi clerics who condemn Ash'arites as heretical for their use of reason to interpret divine scriptures. (See Rizieq's refutation of Salafi Ustadz Yusuf Baisa: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DZdjU2H6hpA>). In its activism, however, FPI prefers working with non-belligerent Salafi figures rather than NU leaders who lack Islamic zeal. (IPAC interview with FPI sympathisers and official, November 2017 and February 2018).

35 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qX5dkA4-fK0>. Rizieq himself has been accused by some Salafis of being Shi'a.

They also had a different class basis. While Bachtiar's network was rooted in the urban professional middle class, FPI brought in the urban poor, many of whom had good reasons for disliking Ahok.<sup>36</sup> Best known for its attacks on religious minorities and anti-vice raids, FPI played a critical role in the 212 Movement in getting masses out on the streets. Rizieq Shihab, who had already begun to be taken seriously as a political player, was now a potential kingmaker.<sup>37</sup> The high point may have been on the night of the Jakarta governor elections, when Anies Baswedan, backed by Prabowo Subianto, was declared the winner and Prabowo publicly thanked FPI leader Rizieq at the national Istiqlal Mosque. Without FPI's role in the rallies and in the mosques, Anies might not have won.

Then, however, as part of a broader move against the 212 leaders, police brought criminal charges against Rizieq in connection with an alleged sex scandal.<sup>38</sup> Rizieq fled to Saudi Arabia and the organisation was temporarily left rudderless. It remains unclear as of this writing when or under what circumstances Rizieq will return and thus what impact his organisation will have as the anti-Jokowi campaign moves into high gear.

### A. FPI Background

FPI was founded on 17 August 1998, in the tumultuous months following the collapse of Suharto's 32-year rule. Led by Rizieq Shihab and some 20 like-minded Jakarta ulama, it had close links to the security forces from the beginning, with senior military and police officers in attendance at its founding ceremony. It quickly became part of the army-backed civilian militia known as Pam Swakarsa (Voluntary Security Guards), formed to counter pro-reform demonstrators in late 1998.<sup>39</sup>

Its early years were focused on raids on entertainment centres in close coordination with the police, from whom it got both logistical and financial support.<sup>40</sup> It gradually became more independent but still was on call as needed to provide security for demonstrations, trials or police operations. Over time, as Islamist civil society organisations grew in political confidence, FPI joined various local forums and fronts to mobilise demonstrators to demand government action, on everything from removing statues deemed offensive to Islam, to banning the Ahmadiyah sect, to closing "unauthorised" churches, to stopping a Lady Gaga concert. While the FPI became notorious for its thuggery and vandalism, it was also frequently involved in humanitarian efforts, most notably in Aceh after the devastating 2004 tsunami when its members performed a major service in helping to remove and bury bodies. In Jakarta, its members were the first to come to the aid of villagers forcibly evicted by Ahok for a controversial land reclamation project.

Until the 212 movement, the police saw FPI as more friend than foe, despite occasional clashes during demonstrations, and its services were particularly valued in the fight against terrorism.

36 Ian Wilson, "Making Enemies Out of Friends." Newmandala.org, 3 November 2016. But FPI also had strong supporters in the educated middle class. See Mietzner, Muhtadi and Halida, op.cit., p.15.

37 Marcus Mietzner and Burhanuddin Muhtadi. "Explaining the 2016 Islamist Mobilisation in Indonesia: Religious Intolerance, Militant Groups and the Politics of Accommodation", forthcoming.

38 Screenshots of Rizieq's purported WhatsApp sex chats, including an exchange of nude images with a woman who was not his wife, were leaked to the Internet. Also circulated was an audio recording of the woman's phone conversation with her female friend (who turned out to be the wife of FPI's former head Muchsin Alatas), revealing in great detail her relationship with Rizieq, including their sex chats and his empty promises to marry her. "Ini Rekaman Curhat Firza Husein tentang Rizieq pada Kak Ema", liputan6.com, 17 May 2017.

39 Ian Wilson, "Continuity and Change: The changing contours of organised violence in post-New Order Indonesia", *Critical Asian Studies*, 2006, Vol. 38, No. 2, pp. 265 - 297. Some of its founders intended FPI to be the youth wing of PPP, but after PPP established its own paramilitary wing, FPI "remodelled itself to become a street-level anti-vice movement". Verena Beittinger-Lee, (*Un*) *Civil Society and Political Change in Indonesia: A Contested Arena*, (London, 2009).

40 Ian Wilson, "As Long as It's Halal': Islamic Preman in Jakarta", in Greg Fealy and Virginia Hooker (eds.), *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia*, (Singapore, 2008), pp. 192-210.

In 2006, police sent Rizieq on a lecture tour of Poso, hoping that he could persuade local Muslim youth to focus on battling vice rather than Christians. In 2016, police used FPI to help evict pro-ISIS extremists from a mosque in Banten. The mass anti-Ahok rallies, however, changed the relationship. FPI was no longer a mere civilian auxiliary paid to keep a crowd in order; together with its 212 allies, it was now setting the agenda – the arrest and prosecution of Ahok – and forcing the police to comply. That shift set the stage for the police moves against Rizieq.

### B. Mass Base

No one knows how many members FPI actually has. Its leaders claim between seven and fifteen million across the country.<sup>41</sup> A more realistic figure from 2014 was around 200,000 but the organisation surely grew with the anti-Ahok campaign.<sup>42</sup>

FPI's ulama have received less attention than its thugs. They are drawn from three networks:

- Ba'alawi ustadz of Hadrami origin who often assume the title of *sayyid* or *habib* (plural, *habaib*), signifying descent from the Prophet Muhammad.
- former students of the late Sheik Muhammad Alawi al-Maliki, one of the most prominent Saudi Sufi ulama; and
- graduates of conservative NU pesantrens in East Java who share FPI's concern of safeguarding *ahlus sunnah wal jamaah* (Aswaja), the traditionalist Sunni doctrine.<sup>43</sup>

Many in the above groups look askance at FPI tactics but nevertheless have been willing to cooperate in defence of morality and orthodoxy.

FPI initially did not have many followers among the Ba'alawi community. Rizieq's recruits were mostly younger, lesser-known *sayyids* trying to make a name for themselves. The more senior *sayyids* reportedly doubted Rizieq's credentials for he was never formally educated in Ba'alawi-run schools.<sup>44</sup> Even among the Jakarta *habaib*, Rizieq was not very popular until a common interest in pressing the government to ban the Ahmadiyah sect brought them together around 2006. In 2010, Habib Abdurrahman Al-Habsyi of the Kwitang Islamic Centre, a well-known centre of Tariqah Alawiyyah (the Ba'alawi Sufi path), signalled his reconciliation with Rizieq by inviting him to a prestigious Maulid celebration. A similar reconciliation took place with Majelis Rasulullah, another popular Tariqah Alawiyyah association that had originally distanced itself

41 In October 2013, FPI's Deputy Secretary General Awid Masyhuri claimed that FPI had 15 million members in eighteen provinces. A year later, FPI Chairman Muchsin Alatas gave a figure of 7 million members. "15 Juta Anggota FPI Siap Kerja Sama dengan Kepala Daerah", Kompas.com, 25 October 2013; "Muchsin Alatas: Jumlah Kami Sudah 7 Juta", cnnindonesia.com, 8 October 2014.

42 Ian Wilson, "Resisting Democracy: Front Pembela Islam and Indonesia's 2014 Elections." *ISEAS Perspective*, 24 February 2014. Available on [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/282002745\\_Resisting\\_Democracy\\_Front\\_Pembela\\_Islam\\_and\\_Indonesia%27s\\_2014\\_Elections](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/282002745_Resisting_Democracy_Front_Pembela_Islam_and_Indonesia%27s_2014_Elections).

43 Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah (often shortened in Indonesia as Aswaja) refers to the followers of the Prophet's tradition and collective. All Sunni groups claim to be Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah because of a hadith that says that Muslims will be divided into different groups and all will go astray except one: the true followers of ahlussunnah wal jama'ah. NU's Aswaja specifically refers to the practice or knowledge of Islam as derived from the jurisprudence of four schools of thought (*madzhab*) namely Shaf'i, Hanbali, Hanafi, and Maliki, although in reality most NU people follow the Shafi'i school. In terms of creed, it adheres to the teachings of Abu Hasan al-Asy'ari (Ash'ariya) and Abu Mansur al-Maturidi (Maturidiyya); and in terms of Sufism and ethics, it follows Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali and Al-Juwaini Al-Baghdadi.

44 Chaider S. Bamualim, "Islamic Militancy and Resentment against Hadhramis in Post-Suharto Indonesia: A Case Study of Habib Rizieq Syihab and His Islamic Defenders Front," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 2011, Volume 31, Number 2, pp. 267-281.

from FPI because of its vigilantism.<sup>45</sup>

A shared respect for Sheik Muhammad Alawi al-Maliki brought FPI supporters together with Nahdlatul Ulama in East Java, the latter's traditional stronghold. Two well-known leaders of NU's conservative "Straight Path" faction (Garis Lurus), Ust. Luthfi Bashori from Malang and Habib Abdurrahman bin Husain Bahlega Assegaf from Pasuruan, studied in Saudi Arabia around the same time as Rizieq and attended al-Maliki's school in Mecca.<sup>46</sup> Luthfi, dubbed the "Grand Imam" of NU Garis Lurus, is the advisor of FPI-East Java, while Habib Abdurrahman is the imam.

Al-Maliki's teachings on the need to preserve the purity of orthodox Sunni doctrine from "deviant" schools of thought have led some ultra-conservatives to invoke his name in their passionate opposition to Wahhabism, secularism and Shi'ism.<sup>47</sup> These include several NU teachers associated with the venerable Pesantren Sidogiri in Pasuruan, who now are associated with Rizieq: Idrus Romli (a MIUMI member), Jurjiz Muzammil (head of FPI-Sumenep), and Sarifuddin Surur (leader of an FPI affiliate in Pamekasan).

Thus while the progressives of NU have frequently clashed with FPI, the latter's points of convergence with NU's hardline wing are many.

### C. FPI's Political Goals

FPI's slogan is "NKRI Bersyariah" or formal application of Islamic law within the unitary Indonesian republic. It is committed to the restoration of the "Jakarta charter" that would oblige Indonesian Muslims to obey Islamic law.<sup>48</sup> Rizieq argues in his academic thesis that democracy violates Pancasila, which he says is based on *musyawarah* (deliberation-based consensus building). He also believes that Indonesia's democracy has gone too far in terms of freedom of religion, over-liberalisation of economy and decline of cultural values. In practice, however, FPI has no problem participating in democracy to achieve short-term goals. It deploys tactics ranging from high-level political lobbying to intimidation and vigilantism to get results.<sup>49</sup>

FPI has repeatedly formed alliances with political parties and candidates. In the 2009 presidential campaign, FPI supported Jusuf Kalla and his running mate Gen. Wiranto on the grounds that they had agreed to support a five-point program that included eradicating deviant

45 Majelis Rasulullah's founder Habib Munzir al-Musawa had publicly expressed his disagreement with Rizieq. When a student asked him about why habaib like himself were unwilling to unite with Rizieq's group, he answered: "If what you mean by uniting is justifying the opinion of vigilantism (*main hakim sendiri*), then it needs to be corrected." After Habib Munzir's death in September 2013, Majelis Rasulullah was led by his brother, Habib Nabil al-Musawa, a long-time PKS politician. The new leadership and Ahok's ban on *pengajian* events at the National Monument, where Majelis Rasulullah used to hold its flagship program, explained its political turn. "Pandangan Habib Munzdir al-Musawa mengenai FPI." [pustakamuhibbin.blogspot.co.id](http://pustakamuhibbin.blogspot.co.id), 12 May 2014; Ahmad Syarif Syechbubakr, "Meet the Habibs: the Yemen Connection in Jakarta Politics", [indonesiaatmelbourne.unimelb.edu.au](http://indonesiaatmelbourne.unimelb.edu.au), 14 December 2017.

46 Rizieq was studying in Riyadh but he said he used to regularly visit Sheikh al-Maliki, reportedly because he was afraid of being corrupted by Wahhabi teachings at his university. Rizieq initially wanted to move to Sheik al-Maliki's school but the Sheik reassured him that his faith was strong enough to resist Wahhabism. Ibnu Umar Junior, *Habib Rizieq Shihab: Singa Allah dari Negeri Timur*, (Jakarta, 2017), p. 58.

47 One example of an ultra-conservative student of al-Maliki's is KH Najih bin Maimoen Zubair who wrote the book *Membongkar Kedok Liberal dalam Tubuh NU*. In May 2010, the alumni of al-Maliki school in Indonesia formally established the Hay'ah as-Shofwah al-Malikiyyah association, whose board includes KH Ali Karrar, a senior Madurese kiai who helped instigate anti-Shi'a violence in 2011, has been involved in FPI activities, and facilitated the travel of hundreds of Madurese to take part in Aksi Bela Islam. For more on Ali Karrar, see IPAC, "The anti-Shi'a Movement in Indonesia". Report No. 27, 27 April 2016. available on [http://file.understandingconflict.org/file/2016/04/IPAC\\_Report\\_27.pdf](http://file.understandingconflict.org/file/2016/04/IPAC_Report_27.pdf).

48 FPI claims that Indonesia had started out as an Islamic state, as shari'a was initially included in Pancasila, though it was later dropped in the final version of the 1945 Constitution. Al-Habib Muhammad Rizieq Husein Syihab, *Pengaruh pancasila terhadap penerapan syariah Islam di Indonesia*, Masters thesis, Universiti Malaya, 2012, p. 2.

49 IPAC interview with FPI official, Jakarta, 28 February 2018.

sects and implementing shari'a in full.<sup>50</sup> In the 2012 Jakarta gubernatorial race, FPI supported the incumbents but only half-heartedly until it became clear that they could be beaten by Jokowi and Ahok. Only then did FPI release a fatwa prohibiting Muslims from voting for non-Muslim candidates.<sup>51</sup>

Rizieq argues that in the absence of an ideal Muslim candidate, the Islamic jurisprudence principle of “the lesser of two evils” (*akhaffu al-dhararain*) must be applied.<sup>52</sup> In the 2014 presidential race between Jokowi and Prabowo Subianto, for example, Prabowo was not seen as ideal for two reasons. His party, Gerindra, had sponsored the Jokowi-Ahok ticket in the first place, and Prabowo's brother and financier, Hashim Djojohadikusumo, was a Christian who was critical of FPI. On the other hand, Gerindra had stated in its manifesto that it would safeguard the purity of Islam, a code phrase for abolishing “heretical” sects. The most important criterion, Rizieq argued, was to choose someone whom the West and the secularists disliked most – and that was Prabowo. The same rationale will likely lead to FPI's backing for Prabowo, if he runs, or other Gerindra candidates in 2019. On 21 March 2018, Gerindra's Deputy Secretary General met with Rizieq in Mecca to ask his blessing for Prabowo.<sup>53</sup> Rizieq stated that while he has yet to support Prabowo, he would support a Gerindra coalition with PKS and two other Islamic parties.<sup>54</sup>

## V. OTHER COMPONENTS OF THE 212 MOVEMENT

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Most of the other Islamist components of the 212 Movement were rooted solidly in the Muslim middle class, with goals ranging from the short-term political goal of imprisoning Ahok to the utopian aims of Hizbut Tahrir.

### A. *Wahdah Islamiyah*

Of the other Islamist components in 212, Wahdah Islamiyah is one of the most important. Headquartered in Jakarta, it has branches in 126 cities across Indonesia's 34 provinces and as of early 2018, it operated over 200 schools – and was steadily expanding.<sup>55</sup> It also boasts an extensive social service program, often in cooperation with government agencies. A Salafi organisation with a Makassar base, Wahdah's outlook is very similar to Bachtiar Nasir's, not surprisingly given the close ties between Bachtiar and Zaitun going back to their student days. It is relatively inclusive and has tried to adapt its Salafi practices to the local context, rejecting Arab-style robes and turbans, for example, in favour of *batik* and *peci*, the fez worn by Indonesian Muslim men.

Wahdah's origins date back to 1988 when a group of Muhammadiyah students at Hasanuddin University in Makassar splintered as Muhammadiyah capitulated to a Soeharto policy requiring all organisations to accept the state ideology as their only ideological basis. Many Islamic organisations were outraged. The students in Makassar founded the Fathul Mu'in Foundation, initially modeled after the Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>56</sup> It later incorporated more Salafi doctrines as its founding members returned from studies in the Middle East in mid-1990s. Having gained

50 Michael Buehler, *The Politics of Shari'a Law: Islamist Activists and the State in Democratizing Indonesia*, (Cambridge, 2016), p. 147.

51 Ken Miichi, “The Role of Religion and Ethnicity in Jakarta's 2012 Gubernatorial Election”, *Journal Of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 2016, Vol. 33, No. 1, pp. 55-83.

52 “Wawancara Bersama Habib Rizieq Terkait Pilpres 2014”, *kabarnet.in*, 23 June 2014.

53 “Rizieq Syihab Dukung Prabowo Maju Capres 2019”, *cnnindonesia.com*, 22 March 2018.

54 “Rizieq Syihab Tak Pernah Menyebut Dukung Prabowo Subianto”, *cnnindonesia.com*, 29 March 2018.

55 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oLbXxP5oM1Y>. See also Chris Chaplin, “Islam and Citizenship”, *insideindonesia.org*, 8 August 2017.

56 Chris Chaplin, “Global Salafi Activism and Indonesian Islam”, *newmandala.org*, 29 July 2016.

a substantial following among university and high school students, the foundation changed its name to Wahdah Islamiyah (Islamic Unity) to make it sound more universal. It became a full-fledged national mass organisation (*ormas*) in 2002.

Like Bachtiar's network, Wahdah Islamiyah believes in non-violent social transformation from below, through education and *dakwah*. Its past links to extremist groups were in the very specific context of the communal conflict in Poso, especially after 2000, when some of its former members joined a militia called Laskar Jundullah.<sup>57</sup> Unlike the purist Salafis, Wahdah has always encouraged its members to vote in elections to prevent secularists from winning.<sup>58</sup> While Zaitun himself had been involved in anti-Ahok political movements since 2015, Wahdah Islamiyah only joined the movement as an organisation following the blasphemy accusation.<sup>59</sup> The Makassar chapter of Wahdah was apparently wary of getting too involved in national politics and focused its efforts, including organising anti-Ahok protests, on Makassar. It was the Jakarta headquarters and Yogyakarta chapter that were mostly responsible for the 212 mobilisation, and they incurred criticism from others in the organisation as a result.<sup>60</sup>

One consequence of the 212 movement was Wahdah's decision that it needed to formulate clearer guidance for members regarding political matters. In early 2018, it created an "electoral research unit" to assess and recommend political candidates to support in each election.<sup>61</sup>

### B. Forum Umat Islam (FUI)

Muhammad Gatot Saptono alias Muhammad al-Khaththath (the Arabised version of "Gatot") has been a leading figure among Islamist activists for more than a decade. FUI, his organisation, started out as a coalition of 30 Islamic organisations, with FPI and Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) constituting its largest components.<sup>62</sup> Khaththath was expelled from HTI in 2008, however, and FUI shrunk thereafter to a much smaller group that often piggybacks on FPI and constitutes a vehicle for Khaththath's own political lobbying.<sup>63</sup> Khaththath acts as the brains for FPI's brawn, providing the creative inspiration and strategy that FPI lacks. It was he, for example, who came up with the concept of "NKRI Bersyar'iah" but it only took off after Rizieq and another radical

57 According to Wahdah, the individuals in question were no longer members by the time they joined Laskar Jundullah. For Wahdah's clarification, see Wakhid Sugiyarto, "Al Wahdah Al Islamiyah: Radikalisme dan Komitmen Kebangsaan", *Jurnal Harmoni Kemenag*, January-April 2013. Available on <https://jurnalharmoni.kemenag.go.id/index.php/harmoni/article/download/196/165>

58 Chaplin, *op. cit.*

59 In 2015, Zaitun supported the candidacy of Adhyaksa Dault, the former Minister of Youth and Sport, though Adhyaksa could not get any political parties to support his nomination. In early 2016, Zaitun and Bachtiar formed a new political platform whose sole purpose was to defeat Ahok (see Section V. B below).

60 "Wahdah Islamiyah Nyatakan Siap dalam Demo Ahok 4 November, Ini Tuntutannya", *tribunnews.com*, 1 November 2016; IPAC interview with Chris Chaplin, London, 19 January 2018.

61 "Ketua Tim Kajian Elektoral Wahdah Islamiyah Hadiahkan Puisi untuk Agus AN", *fajar.co.id*, 1 March 2018.

62 Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) is a non-violent pro-caliphate advocacy group affiliated to the global Hizb ut-Tahrir (literally Party of Liberation) organisation. Established in 1982 as an Indonesian chapter of the transnational Hizbut Tahrir movement, HTI grew from a campus *dakwah* group to a national *ormas* with branches in all 33 provinces and 300 out of 415 districts in Indonesia. For more on HTI, see Mohamed Nawab Mohamed Osman, "Reviving the Caliphate: Hizbut Tahrir and Its Mobilisation Strategy in Indonesia". *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 2010, Vol. 22 No. 40, pp. 601-622.

63 Khaththath was sacked from HTI partly because he was involved in the Monas Incident of 1 June 2008, where an Islamist mob clashed with pro-Ahmadiyah demonstrators and injured some human rights activists, hence violating HTI's non-violent principle. Most of his followers had remained in HTI; one former HTI member said that Khaththath only managed to take two members of HTI with him when he left.

cleric, Abu Jibril, formally endorsed it at an FPI ceremony in 2012.<sup>64</sup> He is not popular with some in FPI who see him as an outsider who is neither Betawi nor a traditionalist scholar, even though he came from an NU background. One ustadz close to Rizieq said Khaththath was not as important as he made himself out to be:

He is like fried garlic; it's tiny but always wants to be on top of every dish.<sup>65</sup>

Far from shunning participation in a democratic political system, he tried in 2014 to run as a legislative candidate for the Crescent and Star Party (Partai Bulan Bintang, PBB), a small Islamist party. To boost his profile, in January 2014 he set up the Forum for Shari'a Candidates (Forum Caleg Syariah, FCS) with the blessing of Rizieq, who told his followers to choose from FCS' shortlisted candidates.<sup>66</sup> In the end, Khaththath lost, but he continued to act as FPI's outreach to politicians.

In late January 2018, Khaththath and one FPI member replaced Bachtiar Nasir as the executive leaders of GNPf on Rizieq's instructions. The friction was chiefly triggered by the rivalry between Khaththath and Rizieq on one side and Bachtiar on the other as well as their disagreement over which candidates to support. On 12 March, Rizieq's camp publicly criticised Bachtiar's leadership style as being "centralistic" and a "one-man show", unilaterally ousted him and changed the GNPf leadership system to a "collective collegial" one, with board members taking turns as chairman and secretary-general.<sup>67</sup>

### C. The Zikir Groups

Several well-known *zikir* groups also took part in the campaign to bring down Ahok. Sufi orders (*tarekat*) have a long history in Indonesia's rural traditionalist communities. But the resurgence of a mega-*zikir* (*zikir akbar*) movement in the post-Suharto era has been an urban phenomenon with high media exposure, often led by educated intellectuals who replace the "other-worldly" mysticism of traditional Sufism with personal piety to cope with modern life.<sup>68</sup> Many politicians have taken advantage of existing *majelis zikir* to portray themselves as devout; some have even created their own groups. Many of these gatherings have become vehicles for sustaining Islamist activism through the elections in 2019.

One of the most significant is Majelis Zikir az-Zikra, run by the media-savvy preacher, Ust Arifin Ilham. Thousands of participants attend its monthly gathering at Masjid Az-Zikra, Sentul, Bogor. Az-Zikra runs an exclusively Islamic residential complex in Bogor with 152 families (568 people) living under shari'a regulations.

Arifin, once a modernist, came to Sufism after a near-death accident in 1997. His Islamist tone has become more apparent over the years. Close to hardline figures such as Rizieq, Ba'asyir and MMI leader Abu Jibril, he blames the West for spreading materialism and secularism in

64 Khaththath reportedly came up with the idea before he left HTI. He created it as a watered-down version of HTI's vision of a caliphate, believing that the idea of a caliphate was too foreign and confrontational for most Indonesians to accept, since it seemed to challenge democracy and the nation state. Realising that he was not influential enough to promote the term, he asked Rizieq and another radical cleric, Abu Jibril to co-lead the NKRI Bersyariah movement. It was formally declared on the 14<sup>th</sup> anniversary of FPI in September 2012. Fahlesa Munabari, "Reconciling Sharia with "Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia": The Ideology and Framing Strategies of the Indonesian Forum of Islamic Society (FUI)", *International Area Studies Review*, 2017, Vol 20, Issue 3, pp. 242 – 263.

65 IPAC interview with a prominent Betawi NU ustadz, Jakarta, November 2017.

66 "Habib Rizieq: Dukung Caleg Syariah Menangkan Islam 2014", *suara-islam.com*, 21 February 2014.

67 "Di Mekkah, Rizieq Bantah Isu Perpecahan GNPf", *cnnindonesia.com*, 12 March 2018; IPAC phone interview with Ansufri Sambo, 12 March 2018.

68 Julia Day Howell, "Revitalised Sufism and the New Piety Movements in Islamic Southeast Asia", in Bryan S. Turner and Oscar Salemink (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Religions in Asia*, (Abingdon, 2015), pp 276 – 292.

Muslim countries and offers *zikir* as an antidote. In August 2015, Arifin, Rizieq, and Abu Jibril – along with MIUMI and various Betawi Muslim groups – tested their combined mobilisation power in Parade Tauhid Jakarta, which saw over 100,000 people carrying Islamic banners in what was an early test of anti-Ahok strength.<sup>69</sup> Then in January 2016, az-Zikra held a mass gathering for Sunni unity at the huge Istiqlal Mosque with the Saudi cleric, Muhammad al-Arifi, a Sahwa sympathiser who exhorted Muslims to fight in Syria, as keynote speaker.<sup>70</sup>

Another major *zikir* movement that mobilised against Ahok was Majelis Zikir Nurussalam, founded before the 2004 presidential election to help Yudhoyono burnish his religious credentials. It set up branches in all provinces and most municipalities, often headed by senior retired army officers or other former officials, and by 2011, its leader claimed to have seven million members, though it was unclear how he arrived at that figure.<sup>71</sup> Yudhoyono was later accused of using Nurussalam to help mobilise demonstrators for the 4 November 2016 rally in order to help his son's candidacy; he vehemently denied the allegations.<sup>72</sup>

## VI. HOW THEY JOINED FORCES IN THE ANTI-AHOK CAMPAIGN

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All of these different components came together in two Islamist blocs, one called the Jakarta People's Movement (Gerakan Masyarakat Jakarta, GMJ) driven by FPI and other Betawi-Muslim groups and the other called Majelis Pelayan Jakarta (MPJ), initiated by Bachtiar Nasir's network. Members of both groups had opposed Jokowi and Ahok since the Jakarta gubernatorial election in 2012. They had also supported Prabowo in his race against Jokowi in the highly polarised 2014 election.

### A. *The Jakarta People's Movement (Gerakan Masyarakat Jakarta)*

On 22 July 2014, the Indonesian General Election Commission officially pronounced Jokowi and Jusuf Kalla the new president and vice president. Prabowo's loss was a blow to the Islamists, not least because it meant that Ahok would replace Jokowi as governor. Ahok was seen not only as a Christian but as a symbol of Chinese encroachment into politics, expanding what Islamists regarded as the overwhelming domination of Chinese in the business sector.

On 24 September 2014, one week before Jokowi officially resigned from the governorship, FPI mobilised hundreds of people in its first "Reject Ahok as Governor" demonstration in front of the Jakarta city council.<sup>73</sup> An anti-Ahok protest the same week by a huge urban gang organisation called Betawi Brotherhood Forum (Forum Betawi Rempug, FBR) led the two to join forces.

69 Parade Tauhid was first conducted by various Islamist militias in Solo as a reaction to a big Christian rally in April 2015 in which 1,200 people, each carrying a massive cross, marching around the city. Parade Tauhid was then replicated in Jakarta and other cities as a Muslim show of force. The Jakarta march was especially significant to show Muslims' resistance to the Christian-Chinese governor perceived as trying to seize control of Indonesia through Jakarta. "Ketua MUI Serukan Umat Islam dan Warga Betawi Berjihad Gantikan Gubernur Kafir AHok!", panjimas.com, 17 August 2015.

70 The gathering was called "Tabligh Akbar Ahlussunnah Indonesia Bersatu". Also invited as speakers were Bachtiar Nasir, Yusuf Baisa (another Indonesian Salafi haraki figure), and Abdul Rasyid Abdullah Syafi'i, a Betawi ulama who would work closely with FPI in the anti-Ahok movement.

71 Ken Miichi, "Democratization and 'Failure' of Islamic Parties in Indonesia," in Ken Miichi, O. Farouk (eds.), *Southeast Asian Muslims in the Era of Globalization*, (London, 2015), pp. 127-144. See also Nedy Sugianto, "Peran Majelis Dzikir SBY Nurussalam dalam Mendukung Pemerintahan Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono". Undergraduate thesis, Institut Agama Islam Negeri Wali Songo, 2013.

72 In 2014, Nurussalam leader Utun Tarunadjaja attended the inaugural event of the Jakarta People's Movement, and the picture of Habib Abdurrahman Al-Habsyi Kwitang, Nurussalam's highest spiritual leader, appeared in all the movement's flyers. In addition, Ahok's lawyer claimed to have a record of Yudhoyono's phone conversation with MUI chairman Makruf Amin in which he ordered the fatwa. "SBY Benarkan Menelepon Ma'ruf Amin, Bicarakan Agus-Sylvi", tempo.co, 1 February 2017.

73 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fasV1sETnXk>

The official merger into Gerakan Masyarakat Jakarta Tolak Ahok (shortened as GMJ) was announced on 14 October 2014 by FPI, FBR and other Betawi groups. GMJ's stated goal was to bring Ahok down through constitutional means.<sup>74</sup> It began organising monthly protests, and other groups of political activists gradually joined in.<sup>75</sup>

Ahok at the time had an approval rating hovering at around 60 per cent; many saw him as having the toughness needed to run the city.<sup>76</sup> They were impressed by his blunt style in managing bureaucratic reform, his handling of the city's notorious traffic congestion, and reclaiming the city's public space by uprooting street vendors and slum dwellers.

But many Jakarta ulama were angered by other policies such as banning certain mass Muslim activities from taking place in the streets such as *pengajian*; *takbiran* (the chanting of *takbir* or "God is great" on the eve of the Idul Fitri holiday); and the ritual slaughter of animals (*qurban*) on the Muslim feast of sacrifice (Idul Adha), all of which were staples of Jakartan traditional Muslim life. FPI's Rizieq deftly manipulated that anger. Working with a major Betawi kiai, Abdul Rasyid Abdullah Syafi'i, he convened the first Ulama and Habaib Conference on 22 October 2015 to discuss the upcoming election. Taking part were some of the most influential Betawi ulama in the greater Jakarta area who collectively control hundreds – if not thousands – of *majelis taklim* and Islamic schools.<sup>77</sup> They agreed among other things to use Friday sermons for a "massive" campaign about the obligation of all Muslims to vote for a Muslim leader.<sup>78</sup> These campaigns later would prove highly effective in mobilising voters.

#### *B. Council of Jakarta Assistants (Majelis Pelayan Jakarta)*

MPJ, inaugurated on 10 June 2016 at Masjid Al-Azhar Jakarta, was a MIUMI effort to put together a coalition to support an Islamic candidate for the Jakarta election.<sup>79</sup> Its top council was led by four figures: Bachtiar Nasir; Zaitun Rasmin; Didin Hafidhudin, a former PKS politician; and Lutfi Fathullah, an NU-Jakarta figure and Gontor graduate.

Rizieq apparently felt offended that Bachtiar and his colleagues did not consult him before setting up MPJ but they joined forces anyway. On 19 July, MPJ and GMJ held a joint press conference at the Sunda Kelapa Mosque in central Jakarta announcing that they would work together to ensure a Muslim governor. On 18 September, the two coalitions plus HTI, which had just mounted its own anti-Ahok rally on 4 September, held a *tabligh akbar* at the Istiqlal Mosque attended by thousands. The meeting produced the Istiqlal Manifesto (Risalah Istiqlal) that called on all political parties outside the PDIP-led coalition backing Ahok to agree on just one Muslim slate. The organisations then merged into a new group called the Guardians of the Istiqlal Manifesto (Pengawal Risalah Istiqlal or Perisai for short).

The next move was to approach the two major parties that were still undecided about their candidates: Gerindra and Partai Demokrat. After an unsuccessful effort on the part of Bachtiar Nasir, al-Khaththath, FPI's Shobri Lubis, and HTI's Ismail Yusanto to persuade Yudhoyono to

74 "Allahu Akbar!! Ulama Betawi Kumpul Bentuk Gerakan Masyarakat Jakarta", panjimas.com, 14 October 2014.

75 The groups included some ex-members of the short-lived Partai Persatuan Demokrasi Kebangsaan (PPDK) and Progress 98, a secular-nationalist group that emerged in 2014 as Prabowo backers.

76 "Kepuasan Masyarakat terhadap Kepemimpinan Ahok Meningkatkan", tempo.co, 12 December 2015.

77 The ulama included KH Mahfudz Asirun, the supreme council chairman (*rois syuriah*) of NU-Jakarta and other NU kiais from Forum Ulama dan Habaib Betawi (FUHAB), a loose network of clerics who control hundreds of majelis taklim, pesantrens and mosques in Greater Jakarta area.

78 "Muzakarah Ulama dan Habaib untuk Jakarta Bersyariah", suara-islam.com, 23 November 2015.

79 Before the 2014 presidential vote, Bachtiar and then MUI chairman Din Syamsudin had tried and failed to put together an Islamic party coalition to promote a candidate to rival Jokowi. This episode added to his disappointment of Islamist parties and triggered his decision to temporarily get involved in practical politics. "Koalisi Partai Islam Bertekad Gabungkan Poros Tengah", antaranews.com, 17 April 2014.

partner with Gerindra, Partai Demokrat registered Yudhoyono's eldest son, Agus, while Gerindra and PKS officially registered Anies Baswedan. MPJ and GMJ initially told their followers to choose either candidate, although they were more inclined to the Gerindra slate.<sup>80</sup>

As the campaign season officially started, Ahok's opponents were waiting for him to make a controversial remark that they could spin to their advantage. The opportunity came on 27 September 2016 when Ahok made the speech in Pulau Seribu referring to Surat al-Maidah, which sparked the huge rallies and deeply shook the Jokowi government.

## VII. THE GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

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The Jokowi government was blindsided by the size of the 212 rally. Officials had underestimated the size of the crowds that would turn up, but well understood its political impact once they did -- particularly when Anies Baswedan won the governorship by a landslide in the April 2017 election. If the government did not manage to undercut the movement that the Islamists and their political backers had set in motion, it could become a destabilising force, with the capital rendered impassable and the government held hostage to whatever the masses would demand next. It could also weaken Jokowi's chances for a second term, despite his popularity, if the same kind of campaign could be mounted against him in 2019.

It was clear that he needed to bolster his support in the conservative Muslim community. That meant, most immediately, sacrificing Ahok. On 9 May 2017, a Jakarta court sentenced Ahok to two years' imprisonment, taking the immediate rationale for further mobilising off the table. The government then began to look for ways to undermine the leaders of the movement while accommodating some of their concerns.<sup>81</sup> It chose to move against the leaders and partially succeeded. But the tactical alliance against Ahok of Bachtiar's Salafi harakis and Rizieq's traditionalists was always strained, and eventually it weakened more from its own internal contradictions than from government intervention.

### A. "Criminalisation" of Ulama

The police moved to bring charges against some of those involved in the 212 rally. One result was the sharp deterioration of the Islamists' relationship with the police. FPI in particular increasingly identified the police as the enemy and the military as their friend.<sup>82</sup>

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80 Islamist leaders personally felt more welcome by Prabowo's camp than Yudhoyono's because the latter was seen as preferring Muslim moderates to hardliners. Prabowo, on the other hand, always made sure to invite MPJ and FPI figures to Gerindra meetings. During the campaign season, Gerindra's political consultant Eep Saefulloh had come to MPJ headquarters to formulate strategies at least five times, Anies three times, Sandiaga six times. SBY only visited MPJ once, although SBY's biographer and former party cadre, Usamah Hisyam, has developed close ties to al-Khaththath and allegedly became the connector between both sides. IPAC interviews with MPJ members, November-December 2017.

81 See Mietzner et al, *op.cit.*, for discussion of how the Jokowi government used the combination of accommodation and repression in its response to 212.

82 FPI was now seen as not only endangering Jokowi government but also the police as an institution. The heightening tension between FPI and the police started on 12 January 2017 when Rizieq went to the West Java police department for questioning regarding a report filed by Megawati's sister, Sukmawati, about Rizieq's alleged defamation of Sukarno and Pancasila in an old sermon that was uploaded on to YouTube. Thousands of FPI militias escorted Rizieq outside the West Java police office. An anti-FPI mob from Gerakan Masyarakat Bawah Indonesia (GMBI) also gathered there, and the two groups clashed. On 19 January, FPI held a massive protest at the national police headquarters in Jakarta demanding the removal of West Jakarta police chief, Anton Charliyan who turned out to be GMBI leader. Then FPI also asked the national police commander to remove Jakarta police chief Iriawan whom FPI blamed for provoking the clash between FPI and HMI during the November 2016 rally. See "Kapolri Tidak Akan Temui Massa FPI yang Demo Mabes Polri Besok", *tribunnews*. con, 15 January 2017.

First to be detained were eleven secular activists, charged with treason for allegedly trying to divert the 212 protestors to occupy the parliament. One was Firza Husein, head of the Suharto's family-linked Cendana Family Solidarity Foundation (Yayasan Solidaritas Keluarga Cendana). On 28 January 2017, documents emerged online, suggesting that Rizieq and Firza were having an affair. After FPI opponents filed a criminal report against the two, who denied any relationship, police opened an investigation into Rizieq on pornography charges, and in late April 2017, Rizieq and his entire family left for Saudi Arabia, ostensibly to make for *umrah* pilgrimage (sometimes called the "little haj"). They stayed on in self-imposed exile.

Then in June, Bachtiar was investigated for terrorist financing and money laundering, but neither allegation held up to scrutiny.<sup>83</sup> As Rizieq and Bachtiar were being investigated, Khaththath took over as the lead organiser of yet another rally on 31 March 2017, known as Aksi 313, to demand Ahok's immediate arrest. But the FUI head was arrested in his hotel room a few hours before the rally started for attempted rebellion (*makar*). Police cited documents found in Khaththath's car that allegedly outlined an elaborate plot to topple Jokowi after Ahok had been brought down.<sup>84</sup> He was detained on 1 April and was released on 12 July.<sup>85</sup> For Hizbut Tahrir, the government had a different solution: a total organisational ban. What it produced instead was a broadly worded law that nowhere mentions Hizbut Tahrir by name and seems to resurrect the language of old Soeharto-era tools to punish dissent.

### B. The Ban on Hizbut Tahrir

On 8 May 2017, a day before the Ahok verdict was handed down, Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal and Security Affairs Wiranto announced a government decision to ban HTI. The government subsequently proposed an emergency decree on mass organisations (known by its Indonesian acronym as PERPPU Ormas) that would give the minister of law and human rights the authority to disband any organisation it deems opposed to Pancasila and the Indonesian republic.<sup>86</sup> The decree was subsequently adopted into law on 24 October 2017.

Indonesian police and intelligence agencies had long been concerned about the rapid expansion of HTI and its alleged infiltration of the military and government.<sup>87</sup> But HTI had secured formal registration as a mass organisation without difficulty in 2014. What had changed? Clearly its participation in the anti-Ahok rallies, where HTI had brought in thousands of well-disciplined members from across the country, waving HTI's black flags. One organisation that was horrified by the sight was Nahdlatul Ulama, which had seen HTI systematically encroach on its East

83 The television channel Euronews broadcast a video in late January 2017 showing boxes of aid from Indonesian Humanitarian Relief (IHR) in a storage facility operated by Jaish al-Islam, a predominantly salafi rebel group. For the video, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7MqimVeey-0>. Bachtiar had helped establish IHR in June 2016. The group strongly denied any link to terrorism and said that all its aid was channelled through the Turkish relief organisation IHH. Then in February, Bachtiar was questioned about diverting funds amounting to Rp 6 billion (\$ 420,000) raised by GNPF for the rallies. It turned out that he had used the bank account of another charitable foundation owned by a MIUMI member to receive donations for GNPF, which was a breach of the Social Organisation Law but did not necessarily constitute money laundering. In addition, all the money trail pointed to individuals around Bachtiar but not Bachtiar himself. "Kapalri Sebut Ketua Yayasan Keadilan untuk Semua Jadi Tersangka", *kompas.com*, 22 February 2017.

84 "Polisi Kumpulkan Bukti Dokumen Dugaan Kasus Makar", *antaranews.com*, 3 April 2017.

85 "Polisi Tangguhkan Penahanan Tersangka Makar Al-Khaththath", *cnnindonesia.com*, 12 July 2017.

86 PERPPU Ormas is the Indonesian acronym for "Regulation in Lieu of Legislation on Mass Organisations". A PERPPU is in effect a decree that the President may issue in emergency circumstances but to become law, it must be endorsed by the national parliament within its next sitting period. For a discuss of this decree, see Usman Hamid and Liam Gammon, "Jokowi Forges Tool for Repression", *newmandala.org*, 13 July 2017.

87 A leaked military intelligence report from 2010 warned of the danger it posed; the former head of the State Intelligence Unit (BIN) and NU figure As'ad Ali claimed in May 2017 that he had a list of names of civil servants, military and police officers and retired officials who sympathised with HTI. Coki Lubis, "Saat HTI Pikat Mantan Prajurit", *metrotvnews.com*, 22 May 2017.

Java stronghold.<sup>88</sup> NU wanted HTI banned. In issuing the decree, Jokowi could strengthen his support from NU and at the same time take a stand in defence of Indonesian nationalism. With NU and Muhammadiyah strongly behind the HTI ban, the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI) on 30 October announced its support.<sup>89</sup>

As of this writing, HTI was pursuing a legal challenge against the new law and was continuing its *dakwah* activities as usual, minus the banners.<sup>90</sup>

## VIII. COLLAPSE OF 212 UNITY

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Three factors contributed to the Islamist friction: old fights over religious and theological practices, personal rivalries and pragmatic choices over candidate selection. Most importantly, Rizieq's move to Saudi Arabia weakened FPI. No one else in the organisation could come close in terms of charisma, and efforts to try and portray Rizieq as an Indonesian Khomeini, forced into exile by a repressive government, have also not gained much traction. Rizieq's declining status gave way to Bachtiar's rising stardom, leading to bitter competition between the two. His departure also fractured the 212 coalition. Rizieq's traditionalist supporters never fully trusted Bachtiar Nasir because of his Salafi background, and some Betawi ulama suggested he was just using them to pursue his own goals.<sup>91</sup> In Rizieq's absence, that mistrust deepened. It is Bachtiar Nasir's camp that could be much more significant in the long term: it has succeeded in leveraging the 212 legacy to expand its support base beyond the salafi constituency, and by keeping a safe distance from practical politics after Aksi Bela Islam was over, it has been able to portray itself as the true champion of Islam.

### A. FPI Squabbles

Even before Rizieq went into exile, the FPI leadership began to be pulled into different factions as different ulama vied for recognition and found rival political backers. The squabbling grew worse after Rizieq's departure, though all came together for a massive show of force in the "212

88 HTI recruiters not only target NU lay members but also kiais and female ulama in East Java by repeatedly coming to their houses to convince them to join. In early 2016 HTI even tried to hold its national congress in Jombang, the birthplace of NU, but it met massive resistance and eventually had to cancel the event. ("Batalkan Mukhtar, Hizbut Tahrir Jombang Hindari Konflik", tempo.co, 1 May 2016). In April 2017, Ansor, working with local police and various civil society groups, mobilised mass demonstrations to ban and halt HTI events in Makassar, Semarang, Surabaya, Bandung, and Kupang; anti-HTI protests were staged by student groups in other places as well. ("Deretan Aksi Bubarkan HTI di Indonesia", kumparan.com, 8 May 2017).

89 The Jokowi government used the opportunity to straighten out its previously strained relationship with MUI over government funding by giving a new position to MUI Chairman Ma'ruf Amin in the new Presidential Taskforce for Pancasila Education (Unit Kerja Presiden Pembinaan Ideologi Pancasila) inaugurated on 27 June 2017. Jokowi also founded a new majelis zikir called Hubbul Wathan (Love of the Motherland) to be led by Ma'ruf Amin and his conservative NU colleagues.

90 Police spokesperson Irjen Setyo Wasisto has interpreted the Perppu as outlawing HTI symbols and mass demonstrations, not necessarily its *dakwah* activities, especially if they are held on HTI premises. Most of HTI's schools such as STEI Hamfara in Yogyakarta do not bear the organisation's name and are therefore barely affected by the law. Similarly, HTI ustadz can give lectures at various state schools, institutions and private companies without identifying themselves as such. As of early 2018, HTI's weekly newsletters were still being circulated in East Java and other areas with a new title. "HTI Dibubarkan, Ini Kegiatan yang Masih Diperbolehkan Oleh Polisi", detik.com, 20 July 2017.

91 IPAC interview with a renowned Betawi ustadz, Jakarta, November 2017. A story was spread among Betawian 212 sympathisers that Bachtiar had prevented a senior Betawi ulama from meeting with Jusuf Kalla during the 4 November protest and taken the opportunity for himself and Zaitun. Their suspicion increased when Bachtiar, Zaitun and the remaining GNPf board were invited to meet with Jokowi on 28 July 2017 and purportedly secured some concessions, including the much-needed license for Bachtiar Nasir's newly established university. Jokowi also told the GNPf representatives that as part of his ummah-oriented economic program, he was going to redistribute 12.7 million hectares of land currently used by private companies to various pesantrens. "Makna Politik GNPf Bertemu Jokowi", republik.co.id, 26 June 2017.

Reunion’ gathering on 2 December 2017.<sup>92</sup>

After Rizieq’s departure, several figures from GMJ and FPI competed to have his ear and to be his second in command. One of the first splits came over Presidium 212, a group set up in April 2017 to mobilise volunteers to “safeguard” the Jakarta election. The Presidium included both FPI and non-FPI elements.<sup>93</sup> It was led by two non-FPI Prabowo supporters: Habib Umar al-Hamid, a Hadrami businessman and former GMJ leader and Ansufri Sambo, the former “spiritual teacher” of Prabowo and an aspiring politician.<sup>94</sup> Sambo had the idea for a Tamasya al-Maidah (Al-Maidah Festival) that would bring 100,000 alumni to Jakarta as election monitoring volunteers. It failed when, a day before the election, the police and Election Monitoring Agency (Bawaslu) issued a joint decree to prohibit all forms of mass mobilisation that could intimidate voters.<sup>95</sup> He then alienated many of the FPI ulama when in July 2017, he organised a “long march” to the National Human Rights Commission to support ethnic Chinese media mogul and politician Hary Tanoe – who had very little to do with Muslim goals or concerns.<sup>96</sup> At that point, Rizieq stepped in, sacked Sambo and replaced him with FPI spokesman Slamet Ma’arif. The Presidium was now more purely FPI, though some outsiders, like al-Khaththath, were still involved.

Later on, the Presidium was divided over which candidates to support and whether the ulama should express their support publicly or through behind-the-scenes lobbying. As 2018 regional elections approached, the Presidium intended to “copy paste” the success in bringing down Ahok to other areas by working with Gerindra, PKS, and PAN in support of Muslim candidates.<sup>97</sup> The first test case was in East Java, where the Presidium was trying to help one gubernatorial hopeful, La Nyalla Mahmud Mattalitti, win Gerindra backing. Khaththath had facilitated La Nyalla’s meeting with Prabowo in November 2017 and continued to lobby on his behalf. In January 2018, Gerindra made the shocking decision to support not La Nyalla but PDIP’s candidates in East Java. Embittered, Khaththath held a joint press conference with La Nyalla, in which he condemned Gerindra’s betrayal and said the ulama had never given Gerindra “a blank cheque”.<sup>98</sup> He also claimed that in fact, Rizieq had specifically asked in September 2017, when Khaththath met him in Mecca, that in exchange for ulama support, Gerindra support the Presidium’s chosen candidates in East Java and four other regions – all of which Gerindra rejected.<sup>99</sup> La Nyalla claimed that Gerindra dropped him because he failed to pay a “political

92 The Reunion, attended by some 30,000 people, was controlled by Rizieq’s confidantes, namely Misbahul Anam (FPI co-founder), Slamet Ma’arif (FPI spokesperson), and Khaththath. Bachtiar Nasir and Zaitun Rasmin received little attention. The former arrived at the venue very late and had little opportunity to speak. In contrast, both men dominated the Action to Defend Palestine rally held two weeks later on 17 December 2017 with the support of MUI. Zaitun served as deputy chair of MUI’s foreign relations committee.

93 The non-FPI elements include the Indonesian Martyrs Forum (Forum Syuhada Indonesia, FSI), the group that sought to conduct a sweeping of illegal Chinese workers; and former activists of the Indonesian Islamic Student Movement (Gerakan Pemuda Islam Indonesia, GPII). GPII was historically affiliated with Masyumi party, but since Reformasi era its activists have been involved in various parties such as PBB and PPP. “Forum Syuhada Indonesia Akan Sweeping WNA Ilegal, Terutama WN Cina”, *rmol.co*, 16 December 2016.

94 “Profil Ustadz Sambo, “Guru Spiritual” Prabowo: Jalan Panhang Menuju Kursi Presiden”, *lipi.go.id*, 9 August 2017. Umar al-Hamid was involved in GMJ. Prior to that, he led a pro-Prabowo organisation called Nation-Loving Generation (Generasi Cinta Negeri or Gentari) that organised various campaign roadshows for Prabowo during the 2014 election. Sambo tried vainly to run as independent presidential candidate in 2014.

95 This was an indication that the police were prepared to take a much tougher stance on Islamist rallies when they had the legal tools to do so.

96 Hary Tanoe was reported to the Human Rights Commission for alleged rights abuse as one of his media companies laid off some 300 workers in 2017. Sambo organised the Action to Defend Hari Tanoe, saying that the accusation against Tanoe was fabricated by Ahok’s political backers because Tanoe’s party had supported Anies-Sandi in the Jakarta election. “Alumni 212: Kafir yang Didzalimi Kami Bela”, *cnnindonesia.com*, 14 July 2017.

97 “Pernyataan Lengkap Al-Khaththath Soal La Nyalla dan Semangat 212”, *detik.com*. 12 January 2018.

98 *Ibid.*

99 *Ibid.*

dowry” of Rp 40 billion (\$ 2.92 million).<sup>100</sup>

The La Nyalla case is a good example of how practical politics drew Islamists in different directions. On the one hand, Rizieq reprimanded Khaththath for his poor handling of the La Nyalla case because the failure to secure Gerindra backing caused FPI deep embarrassment; the FPI leadership also criticised Khaththath for making the case public as it could strengthen rumours of FPI’s political transactions with candidates. On the other hand, Rizieq decided to keep working with Gerindra, PKS, and PAN and called on his supporters to not vote for “parties that had supported the religious blasphemer and the social organisations decree.”<sup>101</sup> The long-term game was still to bring down Jokowi and an FPI-Gerindra partnership was essential.

West Java was a very different case. FPI and other Islamist groups wanted current West Java Vice Governor Dedy Mizwar, known for his piety and commitment to Islam, as the gubernatorial candidate. They had planned to adopt some elements of anti-Ahok campaign by framing Dedy Mizwar’s two rivals as anti-Islam: Purwakarta mayor Dedi Mulyadi, a known champion of minority rights and Sundanese culture; and Bandung mayor Ridwan Kamil whom the Islamists accused of supporting Meikarta, the mega property development project funded by Chinese investors. Posters denigrating Ridwan as a diehard Ahok supporter and Dedi Mulyadi as Christian defender were circulated among 212 alumni social media groups.<sup>102</sup> Dedy Mizwar seemed to get closer to PKS in October 2017. In November, he was courting Bachtiar Nasir and other Islamist leaders for endorsement, though also looking for support from the big secular parties.

On 27 December 2017, however, after he reportedly signed a political agreement with Partai Demokrat agreeing to support its presidential candidate in 2019 without knowing who that candidate would be, PKS and PAN withdrew support; so did FPI.<sup>103</sup> Dedy Mizwar eventually partnered with Rizieq’s enemy, the liberal Dedi Mulyadi. Ridwan Kamil chose Tasikmalaya mayor Uu Ruzhanul Ulum, who had strong Islamic credentials and had sent medical volunteers to Aksi Bela Islam rallies.<sup>104</sup> These mixed slates completely undercut FPI’s efforts to pit Islamist candidates against those who could be portrayed as anti-Islam. FPI then shifted support to the Gerindra candidate with no mass base and little chance of winning, retired army general Sudrajat. FPI and the Presidium got their fallback candidate to commit to Islamist-friendly policies in writing, though the negotiation was done covertly to avoid public embarrassment if it failed.<sup>105</sup>

Meanwhile, the Habib Umar faction of the Presidium decided it was better to be practical than overly principled. The important goal was not the formal application of shari’ah; it was simply to ensure that only Muslims governed Muslims. In East Java, for example, it was clear that the Presidium would only succeed in its goals if it had the support of the Nahdlatul Ulama-dominated party, PKB, so it was important not to alienate it, even though in Jakarta, its members had supported Ahok. One member said:

We initially wanted to test how obedient those parties were to the ulama, turned out

100 “Geger Mahar Miliaran Loyalis La Nyalla Mundur dari Gerindra”, detik.com, 15 January 2018.

101 IPAC interview with an official of FPI headquarters, Jakarta, 28 February 2018.

102 “Ridwan Kamil Protes Dicitut Dalam Meme Ahok”, detik.com, 13 October 2016.

103 “Ini Alasan PKS Tarik Dukungan ke Deddy Mizwar dan Bergabung dengan Gerindra”, tribunnews.com, 29 December 2017.

104 Uu Ruzhanul Ulum is also related to Pesantren Miftahul Huda whose students famously walked from Ciamis to Jakarta to join Aksi Bela Islam protests.

105 IPAC interview with FPI official, 28 February 2018. Before shifting its support from Dedy Mizwar to the Gerindra candidate, FPI apparently asked the latter to sign a 17-point contract. The point included rejecting the Meikarta project, a \$1-billion industrial project developed by Lippo Group in partnership with Chinese and Japanese investors. “Indonesia’s Lippo Group to Build \$21-billion Industrial Centre Near Jakarta”, reuters.com, 5 May 2017.

they disobeyed. Ultimately it taught us that there's no black and white in politics...but often only grey.<sup>106</sup>

He said he and his associates in the Presidium wanted Muslims to be given their “proportional place...so if 90 per cent of the people are Muslims then they must control 90 per cent of government offices”. Their policies must also bring material and moral benefits to the Muslim majority.<sup>107</sup> FPI purists criticised Habib Umar's faction as opportunistic, siding with whoever could give them more benefits.<sup>108</sup>

In January 2018 the purists, led by Slamet Ma'arif, took over the Presidium from Habib Umar and unilaterally changed its name to the Brotherhood of 212 Alumni (Persaudaraan Alumni 212). They accused the deposed Presidium leaders of disobeying Rizieq's commands, for example by organising separate events at the same time as FPI ones.<sup>109</sup> Meanwhile Presidium members criticised Slamet for his lack of transparency in financial matters and insisted that Rizieq had chosen the wrong confidantes.<sup>110</sup> Slamet responded that the Presidium had been dissolved on Rizieq's order and that Rizieq had entrusted him (Slamet), along with FPI co-founder and Rizieq's close friend Misbahul Anam, to establish the new alumni organisation.<sup>111</sup>

Meanwhile Ansufri Sambo set up yet another faction called Garda 212 with an explicit goal to become a political broker in the 2019 legislative elections by selecting Muslim candidates and then promoting them to Gerindra, PAN, PKS and PBB as having Islamist endorsement.

### *B. Khaththath and Gerakan Indonesia Sholat Subuh (GISS)*

Kaththath, as usual, had his own agenda. He established a new alliance, Indonesian Movement for Dawn Prayers (Gerakan Indonesia Sholat Subuh, GISS) when he was released from detention in July 2017. According to GISS's founder, the aim was to create a mosque network to support Islamist political candidates and cultivate future leaders using dawn prayers as the mechanism for mobilising the pious.<sup>112</sup> In each member mosque, GISS would form a Laskar Masjid or mosque militia that would go around knocking on doors, getting people up for prayers and monitoring their mosque attendance.<sup>113</sup>

His partner in this enterprise was Usamah Hisyam, Yudhoyono's biographer and a former Partai Demokrat politician who in early 2018 was heading Partai Muslimin Indonesia (Parmusi), the former political party-turned-social organisation.<sup>114</sup> Usamah and others had provided the guarantees necessary to secure al-Khaththath's release from detention.

Khaththath used FPI's nineteenth anniversary on 19 August 2017 to launch GISS and made use of FPI networks in Madura, Kalimantan, and other parts of Indonesia to organise local branches.<sup>115</sup> As usual, he made sure to draw in prominent politicians. Prabowo and Amien Rais attended the inaugural ceremony in Yogyakarta in November 2017; La Nyalla came from

106 IPAC interview with the spokesman of Presidium 212, 15 February 2018.

107 IPAC interview with members of Presidium 212, 15 February 2018.

108 IPAC interview with FPI official, 28 February 2018.

109 Ibid.

110 IPAC interviews with members of Forum Syuhada Indonesia and Presidium Alumni 212, February 2018.

111 “Ketua Persaudaraan Alumni 212 Bantah Ada Perpecahan”, [cnnindonesia.com](http://cnnindonesia.com), 30 January 2018.

112 “GISS Lahirkan Pemimpin dari Masjid”, [suara-islam.com](http://suara-islam.com), 25 September 2017.

113 “Gerakan Sholat Subuh Berjamaah Dideklarasikan”, [jejakrekam.com](http://jejakrekam.com), 11 October 2017.

114 Parmusi was one of the Islamic parties that Soeharto merged into PPP in 1973 though after Reformasi, it chose to remain as a mass organisation rather than establishing its own political party. Parmusi cadres have been involved in various parties outside PPP.

115 “Al-Khaththath Deklarasikan Gerakan Salat Subuh di Milad FPI”, [cnnindonesia.com](http://cnnindonesia.com), 19 August 2017.

Surabaya.<sup>116</sup> In Cirebon, Dede Hermawan, the Gerindra mayoral candidate, volunteered to become GISS' Cirebon branch leader and organise the first GISS event in Cirebon in December.<sup>117</sup> On Christmas Day 2017, GISS organised dawn prayers in Bogor attended by Prabowo; Sudrajat and Syaikh, Gerindra's slate for the West Java governor's race; and Bogor mayor Bima Arya, who was running for re-election. Like many Khatthath-organised events, these rallies were an effort to tell politicians "You need us: what's your best offer?"

### C. *Bachtiar Nasir and the Salafi-inspired Networks*

Bachtiar Nasir, Zaitun Rasmin and many 212 alumni in their networks had bigger goals than prosecuting Ahok or backing particular political candidates. They wanted to make Muslims the dominant force in all walks of life, including the economic sector. Their code phrase was "income inequality" designating both the problem they wanted to address and implying the ethnic Chinese were the source of the problem. Bachtiar Nasir stated in May 2017 that his priority was to address the wide economic gap between *pribumi* (native Indonesians) and ethnic Chinese who make up around 1.2 per cent of the population but control two-thirds of Indonesia's private economy.<sup>118</sup>

The Chinese vs. *pribumi* narrative will likely be used against Jokowi, who has actively sought Chinese investments to fund his ambitious infrastructure projects. Jokowi met with China's leader Xi Jinping five times in the first two years of his presidency, strengthening rumours in the hardline community, totally unfounded, about his coming from a communist Chinese family.<sup>119</sup> As of 2018, China became the No. 2 foreign investor in Indonesia, after Singapore, with an increased presence of Chinese companies in various sectors from infrastructure to mining and plantations.<sup>120</sup> This development has sparked fear-mongering, not just of economic dependency but about the potential of Chinese workers to become a new fifth column, spreading Communism.<sup>121</sup> In December 2016, a hoax about the arrival of 10 million Chinese workers went viral; and the Indonesian Martyrs Forum (Forum Syuhada Indonesia), an element within Presidium 212, announced a plan to conduct a "sweeping of illegal Chinese workers".<sup>122</sup> The police swiftly investigated the source of the hoax, and the ministry of law and human rights refuted it by giving its own data of 31,000 registered Chinese workers, all reportedly with temporary work permits.<sup>123</sup> Nevertheless, the hoax triggered a move by Islamist leaders to create a new *pribumi* economic movement.

The idea of turning the anti-Ahok masses into a collective economic force (*ekonomi berjamaah*) so that Muslims would buy only from Muslim businesses emerged even before the 2 December 2016 rally. The concept had several components. One was a cooperative that would help members increase their incomes. On 20 January 2017, Bachtiar and Zaitun launched Kooperasi Shari'a 212 (KS212) with the famous Chinese Muslim convert-turned-Islamic economy expert Syafi'i Antonio as the director.

Some 18,000 people signed up in the first few months, eager to be part of the new initiative. Most were interested in the retail franchise called "212 Mart", a chain of minimarkets that required each shop to be co-owned by at least 100 Muslim investors. As of March 2018, the new

116 "La Nyalla Subuh Berjamaah Bareng Prabowo dan Amien Rais", *beritajatim.com*, 13 November 2017.

117 "Amin Rais, Cagub Sudrajat, dan Jamaah GSB Kumpul di At-Taqwa Centre", *rmoljabar.com*, 25 December 2017.

118 "Exclusive: Indonesian Islamist Leader Says Ethnic Chinese is Next Target", *reuters.com*, 12 May 2017.

119 For a sample of the hoax, see "Ridwan Saidi: Bapaknya Jokowi Bernama Oey Hong Liong", *voa-islam.com*, 20 May 2014.

120 "China Becomes Indonesia's No. 2 Investor with Infrastructure Drive", *Nikkei Asian Review*, 1 February 2018.

121 Rudi Agung, "Impor Pekerja Cina, Komunisme, dan Ancaman Kerapuhan Sosial", *republika.co.id*, 19 July 2016.

122 "Forum Syuhada Indonesia Akan Sweeping WNA Ilegal, Terutama WN Cina", *rmol.co*, 16 December 2016.

123 "Menkum HAM: berita Tenaga Kerja China Hoax", *rappler.com*, 29 December 2016.

franchise had 100 branches, with some 80 per cent located in Greater Jakarta area, and the rest spread out in Sumatra, Sulawesi, Kalimantan, and Batam.<sup>124</sup> The number is tiny compared to the 14,000 shops of popular minimarket chain Indomaret, but KS212 is hoping to Islamise and the entire production and distribution system of its retail operations.<sup>125</sup>

Not all alumni are supportive of the new economic activities; some doubt the professionalism of KS212.<sup>126</sup> Others prefer to keep their business affairs separate from their religio-political activism. One woman involved in the 212 Reunion rally (2 December 2017) admitted that despite her strong support for the cause, she would still put her money in a property development operated by the Lippo Group, condemned by 212 ulama as one of the “nine dragons” controlling Indonesian economy.<sup>127</sup>

KS212 leaders are keen to play a part in electoral politics and use the KS212 website and social media to praise mayors, governors or candidates who invest in their new branches.<sup>128</sup> K212 has thus become another way that political candidates can secure Islamist approval.

#### D. MIUMI 2.0

While Bachtiar Nasir was supportive of KS212, he focused more of his efforts after the defeat of Ahok on strengthening his institutional base, especially MIUMI. The ulama group as of early 2018 was focused on political advocacy, especially on policies related to gender and morality. It was also expanding its religious outreach (*dakwah*), using the broad themes of “Islamic Unity” and “Islamic Leadership and the Revival of Islamic Civilisation”.

Before the 212 rally, MIUMI used to have only one national meeting and a few local seminars each year; its headquarter office was mostly empty, with its members communicating via WhatsApp every now and then. Its 2014 fatwa condemning gender equality as un-Islamic had attracted little attention. But after Bachtiar was catapulted to fame through the Aksi Bela Islam, everything changed. He became flooded with invitations to various *tabligh akbar* around the archipelago and capitalised on his new status to raise MIUMI's profile and bring in prominent ustadzs from his network. In his efforts to promote Islamic unity, Bachtiar has been positioning himself as inclusive, attending Maulid events that he once would have condemned as idolatrous and chanting prayers with traditionalist congregations.

Bachtiar through AQL, and MIUMI more generally, are particularly serious about youth caderisation. Their dream is to mould a new generation of young people into pious, capable Muslim leaders who can compete in future elections and hold strategic positions in the

124 “100 Gerai 212 Mart dalam 10 Bulan (Video Sesi Foto)”, [koperasisyariah212.co.id](http://koperasisyariah212.co.id), 2 March 2018.

125 “Keren! 212 Mart Al Amanah Tidak Menjual Fanta dan Coca Cola”, [koperasisyariah212.co.id](http://koperasisyariah212.co.id), 24 January 2018.

126 One of the issues was the disputed ownership of KS212. Muslim entrepreneur and Gerindra cadre Eka Gumilar claimed that he was the rightful leader of the cooperative for he was the first to raise the idea to Rizieq and GNPf leadership before the 2 December rally. He managed to gather over 1,000 people in first preparatory meeting for the cooperative on 17 December 2016 and presented the progress at a GNPf seminar on “Economic Revolution” on 21 December. He claimed that despite his efforts, GNPf leaders handed over the leadership to their own friend, Syafi'i Antonio. (<https://chirpstory.com/li/343538>). There was also a dispute between KS212 and ustadz-cum-business guru Valentino Dinsi. Before KS212 was inaugurated, Valentino had tried to monetise the movement by invoking the 212 name in his retail business. In March 2017, Syafi'i Antonio attended the launching of one of Valentino's new shops, but as of May 2017, KS212 clarified on its website that Valentino's retail was not linked to KS212 and that only the latter had the right to use 212 brand. Valentino was included in the early KS212 board but as of early 2018, his name had been removed.

127 IPAC interview with a participant of 212 Reunion, Jakarta, 2 December 2017. The nine dragons refer to the nine Chinese-Indonesian tycoons who purportedly tried to control the government by sponsoring candidates like Ahok and Jokowi. These were: Sofyan Wanandi, Tahir, Rusdi Kirana, Jacob Soetoyo, James Riyadi, Anthony Salim, Tommy Winata, Edward Soeryadjaya, and Robert Budi Hartono. “Baca: Ini Konglomerat Hitam Sembilan Naga Pendukung Ahok”, nusantarakini.com, 26 November 2016.

128 Sri Sugiarti, “Gubernur Banten Resmikan 212 Mart Tirtayasa Tangerang V”, [koperasisyariah212.co.id](http://koperasisyariah212.co.id), 19 February 2018.

government. Islamic leadership training has thus become a flagship program of AQL.<sup>129</sup>

MIUMI also keeps up its role as policy pressure group, lobbying among other things for the adoption of provisions in the new penal code to criminalise adultery and homosexuality acts. Its members hold public seminars and meet with parliamentarians to influence the drafting process. Unlike the Presidium, MIUMI has not plunged into electoral politics other than giving a general advice to its members about Muslim obligation to choose Muslim candidates. Bachtiar has thus far declined to endorse particular candidates and instead suggested the formation of a *shura* (consultation) council in each region to assess which candidates should be recommended to the faithful. The principle that Muslims should only choose Muslim candidates will of course apply.

## IX. CONCLUSION

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The 212 Movement was successful in bringing down Ahok because its target was a non-Muslim; his actions were portrayed as an assault on Islam; and ulama across Jakarta told voters that it was their obligation to vote for the Muslim candidate. It will be harder to use the same tactics against Jokowi in 2019. The president is Muslim, he is popular, he has the support of Nahdlatul Ulama and he has brought MUI to his side.

At the same time, the mobilising power of Islamist networks was on display for all to see and that power is likely to grow as the number of their schools and *dakwah* venues increases. In this regard, Bachtiar Nasir and Zaitun Rasmin may be more important in the long run than Rizieq and al-Khaththath because they are working to change norms and values through education. They have a very clear agenda to “Islamise” Indonesian state and society from the grassroots. This is a longer term process than bringing down a candidate here or there. The potential consequences include greater involvement of the state in deciding issues of morality and orthodoxy and greater reliance on ulama for policy advice. In the case of the anti-Ahok campaign, the Salafi harakis joined fellow Muslims in the streets, but with their focus on schools and media, they do not have to turn out for rallies to get their message heard.

The FPI has been weakened by Rizieq’s long absence and any potential he might have had for being a king-maker – or even a bupati-maker – has all but disappeared. The Islamic unity that Bachtiar Nasir so strived for has also largely evaporated, with salafi-traditionalist differences deepening. In February 2018, a video was circulated on YouTube featuring Ja’far Umar Thalib, a prominent salafi cleric, mocking Rizieq and other traditionalists who had led Aksi Bela Islam as deviant “liars” who created an illusion of Islamic unity and used it to promote anti-Salafism.<sup>130</sup> Other *habaib* including Rizieq’s son-in-law countered by making anti-Wahhabi remarks on- and offline. The war of words could hurt efforts to keep the 212 alliance alive.

The 212 movement was important because it proved that bringing the capital to a halt with mass demonstrations can force short-term policy change, but it is hard to see any other issue having the power to spark such concerted outrage. At the same time, Bachtiar Nasir’s determination to force the notion of “moderation” to the right seems to have partially succeeded, in part as Jokowi realises that to win, he needs to reach out to voters who are much more religiously conservative than he is. How to recognise that constituency’s concerns without capitulating to its most strident voices or trampling on minority rights may be the biggest challenge for Indonesia in the years ahead.

129 Besides the existing AQL education centres, two other institutions could aid MIUMI’s youth caderisation efforts: an Islamic tuition school franchise being developed by AQL and an ulama caderisation program for Gontor University graduates managed by Dr Hamid Fahmi Zarkasyi.

130 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WIZyhrjNyzA>

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