



Family Terrorism - From Family Solidarity and Love to Violence and Hatred

Yanuardi Syukur

A lecturer of anthropology at Universitas Khairun, Indonesia, and a Researcher at the Center for Strategic Policy Studies (CSPS), Universitas Indonesia.

On 13 May 2018, a man, his wife, and their children detonated a suicide bomb in Surabaya, East Java, shocking the entire world. An entire family of six, including Dita Upriyanto (48), his wife Puji Kuswati (43), and their four children, committed this heinous murder. Later that same month, the family of Tri Murtiono (50), Tri Ernawati (43), and their three children carried out a second terrorist attack using two motorcycles at the entrance to the Surabaya police station.

In Medan, North Sumatra, there have also been instances of family terrorism, such as the bombing of the Medan police station by Rabbial Nasution, a young man who was born in 1995. The attack was organized and coordinated by his wife, Dewi Anggraini (age 23), who also spoke with terrorism suspects in Medan. She also considered carrying out a suicide bombing in Bali, a major tourist attraction in Indonesia.

On 15 July 2018, a husband and wife committed another act of family terrorism by throwing an explosive-filled pot bomb at the police station in Indramayu, West Java. The two perpetrators are associated with Jemaah Anshorut Daulah, an Indonesian terrorist organization that supports ISIS (JAD). The two attempted to enter the Indramayu police station while riding a motorcycle. Upon observing this, the police quickly shot the two offenders by way of warning. The two then turned to face the police station's exit gate, threw the explosives at the guard post, and made an attempt to flee until they were apprehended.

These cases show how terrorism has developed into family terrorism. Accordingly, researchers and analysts have been studying the causes and means of prevention of such terrorist acts. Family terrorism did not emerge overnight by a person or two, but rather developed into a family affair carried out by an entire family. Family terrorism needs to be studied extensively to identify the causes and find effective solutions.

Motives and Causes

Family terrorism occurs for several reasons and is driven by several motives, most importantly :

1. **Extremist Ideology:** A husband and wife from the JAD group carried out a bombing in Makassar in front of a church to express their contempt for Christianity. In Surabaya, Dita Upriyanto was concerned about leaving his family behind in a harsh, slanderous environment. He therefore thought that carrying out suicide bombings in groups is preferable in order for everyone to “get to heaven together as a family.” Dedy Tabrani’s 2022 research on the Surabaya bombing explains that the act was driven neither by political nor financial motives, but was rather “the best way to be martyred”. From that standpoint, Tabrani sees that terrorists do not only function as extremist religious symbols, but also easily condemn and attack other people outside their groups. Both cases cannot be addressed in isolation from the extremist ideologies of their perpetrators .
2. **Family Solidarity:** Family solidarity, though essentially a human trait, is defined in the context of terrorism as a willingness to live and die together. The father convicted in the Surabaya bombing case imagined himself living in an “Islamic State” in Syria under ISIS. He believed that if he and his family could not live together in a country governed by Islamic Shari’ah, they must live together in their homeland (Indonesia). Their hatred for the Indonesian government, which they believe does not implement Islamic Shari’ah, and Christianity, on the other hand, has driven them to commit suicide bombings in order to spend blissful eternity with the martyrs.
3. **To Promote Family Solidarity, Tasks in Terrorist Acts are Divided Among Family Members.** Dita Upriyanto, for example, was the driver of the car that targeted the Christian congregation. According to the police statement after their bodies were discovered, Dita dropped his wife Puji Kuswati and two daughters at the Diponegoro church with three bombs wrapped around their waists. Meanwhile, his two sons were riding two motorcycles to Santa Maria Catholic Church, carrying bombs. ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack via its news agency, Amaq News Agency.
4. **The Role Of Social Media in the Propagation of Extremism.** Dewi Anggraini, the wife of the Medan bombing perpetrator, was an active woman on social media.

She is known to have planned a suicide bombing in Bali, one of Indonesia's most popular tourist attractions.

5. **Women as Terrorist Planners and Men as Terrorist Executors**, as in the Medan bombing case, where Dewi Anggraini was the planner and her husband was the executor. This is especially intriguing given how often terrorism and violence were associated with men. In this case, however, planning was an important factor carried out by a woman. Dewi not only served as a terrorist planner, but she also maintained contact with other terrorist groups in Medan and elsewhere. In this case, Dewi's role appears to be more vital than her husband's.

The JAD terrorist group supports family terrorism in terms of planning and execution, including women and children. Their ideology differs from that of the Jamaah Islamiyah (JI) group, which was responsible for "the most heinous terrorist acts in Indonesian history." They carried out the Bali bombings in 2002, which resulted in 203 deaths and 209 casualties. JL, on the other hand, did not include women or children in the Bali bombing; only men were involved.

The difference in perspectives between JI and JAD is reflected in their attitudes towards women. JI views women as domestic warriors, whereas JAD sees women as battlefield warriors (i.e., they are directly involved in acts of terrorism and can even become terrorists themselves). JAD regards the involvement of women and children in terrorist acts as an honour. This is evident in a number of terrorist incidents, such as the attack by Abu Rara and his wife against Indonesian Defense Minister General Wiranto during a visit to Banten province

Family terrorism has become a widespread phenomenon in Indonesia, with extremist families believing that carrying out terrorist acts together is safer. They believe that family members love and trust one another, and they are willing to make sacrifices for one another. For terrorist organizations, families are regarded as a safe haven for defending ideologies and combating the other.

Preventing Family Terrorism

Family terrorism has spread in Indonesia like an obnoxious virus and has become an inspiration for terrorists in neighboring and faraway countries. Thus, proactive measures must be taken, most importantly:

1. **Promoting Religious Moderation:** This is the key to avoiding being misled by extreme right or extreme left ideologies. Every family must instill moderate thinking in order to stay within the bounds of propriety, decency, and the rule of law. Governments are not perfect, but as Muslims, we must respond peacefully and never resort to violence as entailed by Islam. Violence will only destroy the socio-cultural order that underpins all societies.
2. **Condemning Extremist Interpretations of Religious Texts** because they present a narrow indoctrination that leads to rejection and non-recognition of the other. Dedy Tabrani cites “violent scholars” who partially interpret religious texts in fragmentary and out-of-context ways. It is not sufficient to simply blame violent scholars. A dialogue between all different reform perspectives is required. Islam promotes peacekeeping, order, and reform. All scholars, religious leaders, and Muslim leaders must be committed to reform.
3. **Promoting cultural literacy and citizenship, and raising awareness of every citizen’s human rights and obligations for the protection of the nation and state.** We live in a state system governed by established rules. This requires an understanding of state rules, including citizens’ rights and obligations. We definitely live in a globalized world that requires us to understand, accept, and recognize different cultures in order to be good citizens.
4. **Encouraging the Families of Terrorists not to Follow in their Footsteps.** This approach is crucial for protecting terrorists’ families and preventing new terrorists from emerging from these families. According to research findings, terrorist families do not easily interact with other families. They continue to bear the social stigma attached to them. Terrorist families must be urged to return to a peaceful way of life as good citizens of the country, rather than resorting to violence as terrorists do.