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# Understanding Violent Religious Behavior in Indonesia: From the Concept to the Prevention\*

Dana Riksa Buana,<sup>1</sup> Oleg Valeryevich Lukyanov<sup>2</sup>

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#### Abstract

One of the social issues that are developing rapidly in Indonesia today is violent religious behavior. Several terms are used to describe such behavior as fundamentalism, radicalism, extremism, or terrorism. The government and the authorities are trying to prevent and eradicate this problem, but it will not be effective if the four concepts above are still used ambiguously by the mass media and scientific journals. Therefore, this article will explain these constructs elaborately so that the eradication of violent religious behavior can be done accurately. The method for this research uses a normative juridical method that examines references or secondary data as a basis for the analysis by searching the literature relating to the problem under study. The results and discussion of the research explain that extremism and radicalism are the seeds of the birth of criminal acts of terrorism, while fundamentalism is how an individual feels belonging to a religion and thus considers that his belief is the most right faith and ready to defend it. Besides, this paper will also analyze what factors are the causes of extreme religious actions, as well as how to handle them psychologically (internally) and interventions from government and society (external).

Keywords: Violent Religious Behavior; Fundamentalism; Religious Identity, Spirituality

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#### Memahami Perilaku Agama yang Keras di Indonesia: Dari Konsep hingga Pencegahan

#### Abstrak

Salah satu masalah sosial yang berkembang pesat di Indonesia saat ini adalah perilaku agama yang penuh kekerasan. Beberapa istilah digunakan untuk menggambarkan perilaku seperti fundamentalisme, radikalisme, ekstremisme, atau terorisme. Pemerintah dan pihak berwenang berusaha mencegah dan memberantas masalah ini, tetapi itu tidak akan efektif jika keempat konsep di atas masih digunakan secara ambigu oleh media massa dan jurnal ilmiah. Oleh karena itu, artikel ini akan menjelaskan konstruksi tersebut secara rumit sehingga pemberantasan perilaku keagamaan yang keras dapat dilakukan secara akurat. Metode penelitian ini menggunakan metode vuridis normatif vang meneliti referensi atau data sekunder sebagai dasar analisis dengan mencari literatur yang berkaitan dengan masalah yang diteliti. Hasil dan diskusi penelitian menjelaskan bahwa ekstremisme dan radikalisme adalah benih kelahiran tindak pidana terorisme, sementara fundamentalisme adalah bagaimana seorang individu merasa menjadi bagian dari sebuah agama dan dengan demikian mencerminkan bahwa keyakinannya adalah kevakinan yang paling benar dan siap untuk mempertahankan Itu. Selain itu, makalah ini juga akan menganalisis faktor-faktor apa yang menjadi penyebab tindakan keagamaan yang ekstrem, serta bagaimana menanganinya secara psikologis (internal) dan intervensi dari pemerintah dan masyarakat (eksternal).

Kata kunci: Perilaku Agama yang Penuh Kekerasan; Fundamentalisme; Identitas Agama, Spiritualitas

#### Понимание насильственного религиозного поведения в Индонезии: от концепции к предотвращению

#### Аннотация

Одной из социальных проблем, которая быстро развивается в Индонезии в настоящее время, является насильственное религиозное поведение. Несколько терминов используются для описания такого поведения: фундаментализм. радикализм, экстремизм или терроризм. Правительство и органы власти пытаются предотвратить и искоренить эту проблему. Однако, попытка не будет эффективной, если четыре вышеуказанные концепции все ещё будут двусмысленно использоваться средствами массовой информации и научными журналами. Таким образом, эта статья подробно объяснит эти конструкции, так что искоренение насильственного религиозного поведения может быть сделано в точности. Метод данного исследования является нормативным юридическим, который рассматривает ссылки или вторичные данные в качестве основы для анализа путем поиска литературы, относящейся к изучаемой проблеме. Результаты и обсуждение исследования объясняют, что экстремизм и радикализм являются семенами рождения преступных террористических актов, в то время как фундаментализм - это то, как человек чувствует принадлежность к религии и, таким образом, считает что его вера является самой правильной и готов защищать её. Кроме того, в этой статье будет проанализировано, какие факторы являются причинами экстремальных религиозных действий, а также как справиться с ними психологически (внутренне) и с помощью вмешательства со стороны правительства и общества (внешне).

Ключевые слова: насильственного религиозного, Индонезии

#### Introduction

According to The Pew Research Center 2015 (Religion and Public Life), Indonesia is most populous Muslim majority country in the earth with a population reaching 253 million (almost 90 % of the total population), even though Indonesia is not a country based on Islamic law, like Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, or other Muslim majority countries. Indonesia has its state philosophy where the first moral principle believes in God (not only for Islam but also, Hindu, Catholic, Christian, and Buddha). Islamic societies in Indonesia still hold the values and worship of Islamic religion in their daily lives (commonly called "sharia"), but they also respect and tolerate other religious people, it proves that Muslims in Indonesia highly uphold diversity (Mydans, 2007).

The situation is likely to fade when we see the latest case that occurred in Indonesia. This circumstance is because of the issue that is developing massively and significantly is about radicalism. Many mass media discuss the problem and its threatening to the security and integrity of Indonesia, even the President of the Republic of Indonesia (Joko Widodo) has repeatedly conveyed the danger of radicalism in public, to make plans to counter radicalism (CNN Indonesia, 2019). Radicalism is considered as the seed of an act of terrorism or in psychology known as violent religious behavior.

Even so, the main problem for the government to overcome radicalism must begin with the concept and precise definition of radicalism first. Inaccurate and incorrect understanding of radicalism has biased effects on society. Moreover, so far, radicalism has often been identified with Islam. By making a clear definition of radicalism, the government can find effective ways to eradicate it.

Based on the phenomenon, this paper will discuss the concept of radicalism in more detail and will compare it with other similar ideas so that the classification of religious thought movements in Indonesia will be obtained. With the clear concept of radicalism and other related purposes, the government and stakeholders can quickly identify religious actions that can undermine national integrity and stability without the need to judge those who obey in upholding their religious teachings, especially Islam (e.g., black forehead, long beard, pants above the ankle). Then this article will describe the causes of extreme movements and solutions that can be applied in overcoming violent religious behavior.

# Understanding Religious Violent Behavior (Fundamentalism, Radicalism, Extremism, and Terrorism)

#### Radicalism, Extremism, and Terrorism

The terms radicalism, fundamentalism, extremism, and terrorism are often used ambiguously in the mass media and scientific journals in explaining the concept of violent religious behavior, even though the four terms have a different concept explanation (often not clearly seen). For this circumstance, bias often occurs in identifying someone who has a distorted religious thought. The bias condition that happens can make the government can wrongly anticipate the root causes of the emergence of extreme religious movements and can cause religious violence to continue to grow in Indonesia. Especially if it is wrong to arrest someone who actually does not have a deviant theological understanding.

The concept of radicalism itself is a mental process in a person or group that adopts religious, social, political, or extreme aspirations to achieve specific goals by justifying the use of indiscriminate violence (Wilner & Dubouloz, 2010, p. 38). Other definitions explain Radicalism is an ideology or school that wants drastic change or social and political renewal through violence. The essence of radicalism is the concept of the attitude of the soul in carrying change. When saw from a religious point of view, it can be interpreted as a religious thought that refers to a fundamental theological foundation with a very high religious fanaticism, so that not infrequently adherents of that thought will use violence to people of different views to actualize the religious idea held and believed to forcefully accepted (Yunus, 2017, p. 80).

For the concept of extremism similar to the idea of radicalism, these two concepts can be used as synonyms. Extremism, in politics, means belonging to the groups of the radical left, extreme left or extreme right. Extremism is also a term used to describe a doctrine or attitude, both political and religious, in calling for action by all means to achieve its goals. Extremism is excessive in religion, precisely applying belief rigidly and severely to the limits of reasonableness (Yunus, 2017, p. 82). With the explanation of the definition of radicalism and extremism, both are embryos of the birth of terrorism.

Terrorism, according to Law Number 15 of 2003 concerning Eradication of the Criminal Acts of Terrorism, Chapter I General Provisions, Article 1 paragraph 1, are all acts that fulfill the elements of criminal acts following the provisions in this Law. Regarding what actions are categorized as Terrorism Crimes, it is regulated in the provisions in Chapter III (Criminal Acts), Articles 6, 7, that every person is convicted of committing a Terrorism Act, if:

- 1. Intentionally using violence or threat of violence creates an atmosphere of terror or fear of people widely or causes mass casualties, by depriving people of liberty or eliminating the lives and property of others or causing damage or destruction to vital strategic objects or the environment or public facilities or international facilities (Article 6).
- 2. Intentionally using violence or threats of violence intended to cause an atmosphere of terror or fear of people in a widespread or cause mass victims, by depriving people of liberty or eliminating the lives and property of others or causing damage or destruction to vital objects strategic or environmental or public facilities or international facilities (Article 7).

And someone is also considered to have committed the Criminal Act of Terrorism, based on the provisions of articles 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 of Law Number 15 of 2003 concerning the Eradication of the Criminal Acts of Terrorism. Of the many definitions put forward by many parties, which characterize a Criminal Act of Terrorism are:

- 1. There is a plan to carry out these actions.
- 2. A particular group performs it.
- 3. They are using violence.
- 4. They are taking victims from civil society, to intimidate the government.
- 5. It is done to achieve the fulfillment of specific objectives of the perpetrators, which can be in the form of social, political, or religious motives.

After understanding the definition of the concept of Violent Religious Behavior, the indicators must also be known to be identified by someone who is exposed to a deviant religious belief. Alex P. Schmid (2014) in his research, explained the indicators of extremism movement, including:

- 1. This movement tends to place itself outside the mainstream or reject the real world, political, and social order.
- 2. Trying to overthrow the political order to rebuild what they consider the natural order in society, whether this is based on race, class, creed, ethnic superiority.

- 3. Have an ideology program and an action plan aimed at achieving political or communal power.
- 4. Refuse or disrupt the conception of the legal order of a democratic society; use the political space provided by the democratic system to advance their goals in taking political power.
- 5. Reject the international declaration of human rights and show their non-compliance and do not recognize the rights of others.
- 6. Refuse diversity and pluralism and even promote a monolithic cultural system, for example, the world view of the Islamic State.
- 7. Reject the principles of democracy based on popular sovereignty.
- 8. Refuse equality in general, especially for women and minorities.
- 9. Using the philosophy of all means (ends justify means) in achieving goals.
- 10. Reject democratic principles based on popular sovereignty.
- 11. They have ideas that cannot be changed and are closed to the truth they believe in; even they are willing to die to defend it.

Besides, the National Counterterrorism Agency (Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Terorisme, 2016, p. 1) explains the characteristics that can be recognized from radical attitudes and views. 1) intolerant (do not want to respect the opinions and beliefs of others), 2) fanatic (always feels right himself; think others are wrong), 3) exclusive (distinguish themselves from Muslims in general) and 4) revolutionary (tend to use methods violence to achieve goals).

#### Fundamentalism

After knowing the concepts of radicalism, extremism, and terrorism, on the other hand, other things need to be understood more deeply that religious people must have a strong bond with the religion they hold and become a part of themselves and their lives. Then it would be very natural if someone would defend his faith as himself. The author sees this religious behavior as a concept of fundamentalism.

Fundamentalism assumes that modernity can create uncertainty for human life (people feel they have little control over what happens to them and cannot predict what will happen in the future), and secularism has directly opposed the beliefs, values, and religious norms that they believe (Herriot, 2007, p. 13). Putra (Putra & Sukabdi, 2014, p. 584) explained that a fundamentalist does not necessarily support acts of violence and terrorism because many of them put forward peace and tolerance. This condition is also supported by research from Rohmatika & Hakiki (Rohmatika & Hakiki, 2018, p. 19), which explains that fanaticism in religion is not a big deal if it is based on human values and avoids extremism.

The concepts of religious behavior that have been explained above are expected to reinforce the boundaries of religious thought that can bring violence and vandalism to ideas that indeed want to restore religion to its natural position to be a personal guide to safety and peace and to be a blessing for nature and humanity. The next section will discuss how religion, which should be a source of kindness and guidance on truth, can be a source of violence and destruction.

#### **Causative Factors of Violent Religious Behavior**

#### **Religious Identity**

Identity, in general, is an individual's way of understanding himself in maintaining stability in a changing world; capacity to find meaning through commitment, value, and purpose; and the ability to recognize self-potential based on past, present and future (O.V, 2008), whereas religious concepts or religiosity in psychology are explained as behaviors and beliefs associated with organized religious institutions (Good, 2011). So that religious identity can be defined, "how a person or group understands, experiences, forms, and is formed by the psychological, social, political, and devotional facets of religious belonging or affiliation" (Jackson, 2010).

Religious identity offers a sacred worldview, continued group membership, and absolute truth for its followers. Consequently, religious identity can help people to be confident in the uncertain world, reduce feelings of uncertainty, increase self-esteem, and offers strong social support (Ysseldyk, Matheson, & Anisman, 2010: 61; Hogg, Adelman, & Blagg, 2010: 72). According to Uncertainty-Identity Theory, uncertainty is uncertain feelings about self and the world where they live. As a result, someone can be stressed and experience anxiety, feel helpless, and cannot control his world (Hogg, Adelman, & Blagg, 2010: 73).

For more detail, the feeling of uncertainty comes up because of the need of thinking about ourselves, who are we, how we behave, who is other people,

how they behave, and how is our existence and this nature. The best way to reduce feelings of uncertainty is self-identified with a group, especially the entitative group. A person who identifies himself to particular religious' groups can obtain a sense of stability because religion offers continued group membership, gives absolute truth, satisfies the need for belonging (Hogg, Adelman, & Blagg, 2010: 72). Paradoxically, besides being able to overcome a feeling of uncertainty, religious identity can also lead to extremism in consequence of religious zeal in overcoming personal insecurity (McGregor, 2004: 182). To better understand why religious identity can lead to violent religious behavior, we will discuss it further.

#### **Religiosity and Spirituality**

When discussing religiosity, the term spirituality will always accompany. Sometimes religious and spiritual are considered the same concept to explain the divine self of a person even though both have different conceptual definitions (Halıcı Kurtulan & Karaırmak, 2016, p. 178). Both religiosity and spirituality are very difficult to find a precise definition, but in general, religiosity relates to the human experience as a transcendent being expressed through community or social organization, while spirituality, on the other hand, is related to personal relationships with God or the universe. Piedmont et al. (2009: 162) argue religiosity connotes institutions and doctrines, which is more objective while spirituality indicates a more subjective personal experience. More specifically, it can be explained that religiosity is based on a system of values and rituals organized through religious institutions, while spirituality itself is more than religiosity, we can have spiritual feelings but not religious feelings (Russinova & Cash, 2007: 271). Zinnbauer et al. (1997: 549) describe in their research that there are people who feel themselves to be a spiritualist but not religious. It can be said that religiosity cannot be separated from institutions, while spirituality can.

More about spirituality, through existential meanings, spirituality is how someone views his life as having coherence and purpose, but also obtaining personal experience through the power that he believes to be a pervading, underlying or transcendent life (Mascaro & Rosen, 2006, p. 168), and as a search for the Holy One as a non-material aspect of religiosity (Good, 2011, p. 103). Halici Kurtulan & Karairmak (Halici Kurtulan & Karairmak, 2016, p. 184) explain that when a person experiences an existential crisis, the need for spirituality will increase. Spirituality itself helps calm and discover the meaning of life for diagnosed cancer patients (Hounsgaard & Hvidt, 2013) because humans will find happiness when they can understand the meaning of life (Harari, 2015).

If the differences in the concepts of religiosity and spirituality are related to the real situation in Indonesian Muslims, then the contrast of the two terms will be seen. Many Indonesian Muslims obey religious teachings (dogma), live according to the demands of the Islamic scriptures (Alguran), pray regularly, and do good deeds. Those behaviors describe a strong religiosity but do not guarantee that someone can avoid an existential crisis and find the meaning of life, because of many Indonesian Muslim feel emptiness and crisis. Those circumstances can also be aggravated if someone suffers from a significant loss. It can be explained that religiosity is a dogmatic belief where a person takes for granted the truth taught by religion (embracing Islam because parents did and take it for granted that Islam is the absolute truth), believes in something supernatural (such as heaven, hell, merit, sin, angels, demons) even though they do not experience it in a real way, and not open-minded to accept the possibility of truth that comes from other religions, sciences or thought. In contrast to religiosity, spirituality is where a person has found the meaning of his life, feeling connected with great power in nature, experiencing life is a miracle, feeling there is a higher dimension of third dimension and immaterial, can understand the essence of truth from orders and prohibitions in dogma, as well as the meaning of death.

Therefore, people who are exposed to radicalism or extremism are religious but lose the essence of religion itself, namely spirituality. Judging from the concept of cognition can be assessed that a spiritualist will have critical thinking that is different from a religious person who is not spiritualist.

#### Well-being and aggressivity

The result had been found by a survey of the World Happiness Report 2018 argues that Indonesia and many Muslim countries in the World have a low level of happiness. The results of the happiness level study are based on six key factors that contribute to human well-being, which is income, healthy life expectancy, social support, freedom to make life choices, trust, and generosity (Sachs, Layard, & Helliwell, 2018).

According to the psychological approach, happiness is often associated with well-being. Well-being is a condition where individuals have a positive attitude towards themselves and others, can make their own decisions and regulate their behavior, can create and regulate environments that are compatible with their needs, have a purpose in life and make their lives more meaningful, and strive to explore and develop themselves (Hefferon & Boniwell, 2011).

The results of the low level of happiness, according to that research, can cause someone to act aggressively. If someone has a high level of joy, then he will be able to meet the situational demands and succeed in dealing with the pressures of life, conversely, someone with a low level of happiness, usually less successful in meeting the needs of life and often experience social or emotional disorders that lead to aggressive behavior, extreme to violent behavior.

Violence has been considered as an effective way out of problems that are usually done by people who have low levels of happiness. Someone will get used to doing anarchic things. This circumstance is, of course, bad behavior that is detrimental to others. The phenomenon that has recently occurred and heard from various media is about the problem of the tendency of aggressive behavior caused by lack of well-being; individuals are less happy because of poor relationships in the environment; or the absence of social acceptance in society, so that it results in aggressive behavior. For example, a demonstration with actions damaging public facilities, or acts of crime in the name of religion to get justification for the behavior carried out.

A common trigger for aggression caused by the absence of well-being is when a person experiences a condition of disappointment, which is often seen as an expression of anger. Feeling angry continues to desire to take it out in one particular form on a specific object. Anger is a statement of feelings that are often accompanied by conflict or frustration. When individuals do not get happiness in their lives, individuals will feel disappointed and angry, then feelings of anger will develop into a behavior called aggressive behavior. Sometimes this aggressive behavior is covered by the guise of religion to justify what has been done. Though consciously or not, the behavior is only to vent the anger that is within. In short, well-being is negatively correlated with aggressiveness, according to several studies that have been conducted (Rosyidin, 2016).

#### Summary Causative Factors of Violent Religious Behavior

From the explanation of the psychological perspective above, it can be concluded what factors influence a person to act extreme. First, the social identity of religion can make individuals belong to their faith so that they can take extreme actions if their religion is disturbed. Second, cultural factors that are strongly associated with shallow religious understanding, narrow and lexical interpretation of the holy book (literal). For example, they don't want to think critically and find out the essence of a phenomenon or event. Third, religion is only as a justification and guise of violent behavior over personal disappointment from his life or himself.

In addition to internal factors (psychology), external factors also cannot be ignored because these two factors will be interrelated. The first external factor is domestic factors, such as poverty, injustice, or feeling disappointed with the government. Next is the international factor, namely the influence of the foreign environment that provides the driving force for the growth of religious sentiments such as global injustice, arrogant foreign policy, and modern imperialism of the superpower (Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Terorisme, 2016, p. 1). Radical attitudes and thoughts are motivated by various factors above, often make a person choose to join terrorism actions and networks.

#### **Prevention of Violent Religious Behavior**

In order to overcome Violent Religious Behavior, several forms of psychological intervention can be carried out. The first thing is the concept of intervention related to locus of control. Locus of control refers to how individual beliefs to control past and current events that might be happened from inside or outside the individual. Locus of control tends to what extent individuals correlate real-life personal event against itself (internal factor) or other people (external factor) (Goddard, 2012, p. 75).

According to Koenig & Al Shohaib (Koenig & Al Shohaib, 2014, p. 181) described that individuals with an internal locus of control tend to have good mental health compared to an individual with an external locus of control. The Individual can be considered to have an internal locus of control if individuals can accept that everything that occurs in their life is caused by themselves. The Individual with an internal locus of control has positive thoughts about life as something predictable and behave appropriately (Mearns, 2009). The conclusion drawn from the theory individual with an internal locus of control will have good mental health. Mental health itself is closely related to wellbeing, if one's mental health is terrible, well-being will be harmful, and this condition can result in aggressive actions that lead to violent behavior. Therefore, the first intervention that can be done is to improve one's internal

locus of control. Interventions that can be carried out are assertive training techniques or counseling, both of which are based on the Islamic handbook of the Qur'an and Hadith. Furthermore, it can use the application of positive psychology in improving the quality of life, such as education and social welfare.

For cognitive intervention, this will correlate with spiritual concepts. It should be noted that a religious person needs to be taught not to be dogmatic towards the teachings of his religion, they must think critically and not necessarily take for granted the teachings of the religious leaders. They need to develop an understanding of religion that is based on their own experience and can see the sacred scriptures contextually, not just textually. For this reason, spirituality can develop side by side with religiosity. In addition to internal psychological handling, external handling through the government must also be carried out. For this prevention to work effectively, it must also be known how individual stages can be exposed to radicalism and make them terrorists.

According to Milla, Putra, & Umam (Milla, Putra, & Umam, 2019), there are four stages of the pathway to terrorism. Firs stage is pre-radicalization. This refers to life situations, such as the environment and life events, which make a person vulnerable to radical ideas and tend to join extremist groups. Specifically, in the Indonesian context, this stage is realized in the form of education and internalization of values at home and at school that facilitates a specific understanding of Islamic teachings. The second stage is called selfidentification; this concept is when an individual begins to identify themselves to a social group that is an extremist group. In the third stage, commitment is needed, and intensive indoctrination is carried out. This time, an individual not only produces their ideas to become a true Muslim (extremist) but continuously accepts group norms and values from group leaders. The last stage is called jihad ideologization, and in this phase, someone will be involved in terrorist attacks and justify violent religious behavior.

If we want to prevent violent religious behavior or even acts of terrorism, the first stage plays the most crucial role; therefore, the government can realize a prevention program based on that first phase. What can be done is to provide teaching programs in schools about the essence of religious teachings based on love, affection, and humanity, so that spirituality will develop. The government can work together with related religious institutions to be able to classify religious leaders (preacher) who have been exposed to extremism that has led to terrorism. This article has explained the significant differences from the concepts of fundamentalism, radicalism, extremism, and terrorism so that the government or the community does not necessarily judge religious leaders (clerical) who are strict in defending religion as an extremist or terrorist.

#### Conclusion

Extremism and radicalism are the seeds of the birth of criminal acts of terrorism, while fundamentalism is how an individual feels belonging to a religion and thus considers that his belief is the most right faith and ready to defend it. They argue that violence is not merely a way out to protect religion but instead promotes tolerance and peace. With this classification, the government can tackle terrorism accurately.

It is essential to know how violent religious behavior can evolve, so the causal factors must be studied. From the perspective of psychology, the first factor is religious identity as a social identity. Religion, as a social identity, has become an integral part of the religious people so that every aspect of faith is the way of life. The consequence of this social identity is that religious adherents can act extremely if their religion is disturbed or have a sense that their religion is the most correct and must be believed by everyone no matter what.

The next factor is the concept of religiosity and spirituality. Those who only have religiosity without spirituality can be exposed to extremist movements. The characteristics that can be observed are those who claim to be religious but do not understand the fundamental essence of the most profound meaning of their religion (because they do not want to know more profoundly or have had enough of the teachings given in general); not to criticize what has been taught by clerical; do not interpret deeply the verses in the scriptures, or do not like to contemplate to find meaning from life. Besides, the reduced level of a person's well-being can also lead to aggressive behavior that ultimately leads to violent religious behavior.

To be able to prevent violent religious behavior, psychological interventions that can be carried out are assertive training techniques or counseling, and the application of positive psychology in improving the quality of life. Apart from the psychological side, the external aspect that can be handled by the government is by providing teaching programs in schools about the essence of religious teachings based on love, affection, and humanity, so that the spirituality of religious adherents can develop. Besides, the government can cooperate with national religious institutions to be able to classify religious leaders (also clerical and preacher) who have been exposed to extremism that has led to terrorism.

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