



Prevention of Violent Extremism and Online Space

- Interviews of Savic Ali (NUOnline, Islami.co), Rosyid Nurul Hakim (Ruangobrol.id), and Akil Yunus (IMAN Research)
- Member Highlights: ARK and Patani Forum
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Topic Background



Online space has been an essential platform for preventing violent extremism, but it has become even more crucial in light of Covid-19 living conditions.

Violent extremist groups have used online narratives to paint a picture of their beliefs and organizations as the best option, and through their efforts have successfully contacted many people. P/CVE organizations have sought to counter this through education, the promotion

of digital literacy and counter-narratives. However, P/CVE efforts can't just stop online, they also must move into the community to make one-on-one connections with individuals. We are encouraged to see many members of SEAN-CSO taking part in both online and offline P/CVE efforts, and have compiled this Newsletter to update you with more information on this topic.



Profiles

Savic Ali

Savic Ali is the director of two Islamic websites: NU Online and Islami.co. For a number of years, he has been tackling online religious extremism. He is also a member of Gusdurian Network and has continuously worked to create bridges between religious communities. We were fortunate to be able to interview him for our July newsletter.

According to Alexa Research, NU online is the number one Islamic online media outlet. It is such a significant achievement for NU Online because previously the majority of people were reading Islamic media from ultra-conservative sources, such as Wahabism, or Salafism.



Now, it seems that people have shifted to NU Online and Islami.co. Ali had thought it was difficult to shift this battle as he assumed that other sites might have a more reliable backup and donors to continue producing ultra-conservative narratives. So with this achievement, he is glad that now there is a shift, he is proud that the battle map has changed so that his websites have become the reference of Islamic media in Indonesia for people to understand Islam online.

Savic Ali has classified Islamic media into 4 different areas: Ultra-conservative, Political, Commercial, and Multicultural, the details can be seen below.




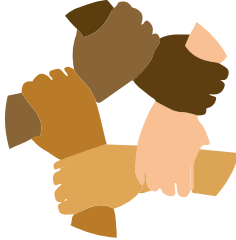
1. Ultra-conservative	2. Political Islam	3. Commercial	4. Multicultural
			
<p>I think the first is now stagnant, not really growing- they are associated with sufism, wahhabism and Saudi Arabia oriented: those who are not at peace with democracy, art and music life.</p>	<p>They are also stagnant, their viewers are getting lower, in the past they had a high amount of viewers while the moderate Islam media was on the lower side. They used to have loud voices because of the political polarization during the Jakarta Governance Election.</p>	<p>Neutral Islamic websites use their platform to show controversies and receive more traffic/funding. They are still at the top, but not growing.</p>	<p>NU Online, Islami.co and Bincang Syariah are now at the front line to influence society. They are voices proclaiming a message to accept democracy and coexistence with plurality</p>

Table: Wahid Foundation Documentation

According to Ali, Islamic media right now provides a broader perspective about Islam. In the past, moderate figures formed a passive silent majority, but now there are many moderate figures on YouTube like Gus Baha, Quraish Shihab, and many people are following their content. They are becoming reference figures in learning Islam.

In addition, intolerance has also decreased on online platforms. For example, on Twitter, there are now fewer accounts that promote hate speech and intolerant narratives. There are still anonymous accounts, but they are more interested in political Islam than hate and intolerance narratives. They are not representing fanatic Muslims and puritan groups. So, in general, Ali thinks the expression of violent extremism is lower. There are still many people online sharing intolerant views, but they are a small group, mostly interested in spreading propaganda. Their agenda is about politics, ideology and finances, but they are not a good representation of the real Indonesian society.

Rosyid Nurul Hakim

Rosyid Nurul Hakim is the Editor-in-Chief at a social enterprise, named Ruangobrol.id. Ruangobrol.id emerged from intervention efforts and dynamics. The website was made to provide an alternative narrative that is related to P/CVE issues. Mr. Hakim hopes that Ruangobrol.id can be a good medium and community for former terrorist inmates.

There are two practices of Ruangobrol.id. First, as an online platform, they give an explanation to the public regarding the issue of radicalism and terrorism. Why just an explanation? Because they do not want to point or blame those who have joined radical groups. They try as much as possible not to blame others. Hakim is aware that the distortion of understanding this issue in the public is quite diverse.

Second, not only does Ruangobrol.id raise the issue of radicalism and terrorism, but they also match the issue with the current trends. For example, they also published writings about pop culture and Korean dramas in order to engage more with the youth. The objective now is that Ruangobrol.id would not only attract students from terrorism studies in well-known universities, but also students from other majors, such as communications, engineering, or even sociology would be interested to discuss PVE issues by visiting their website.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, Hakim sees there has not been so much change in terms of the quantity of online narratives. ISIS has always used underground propaganda in promoting their efforts and they continue to do it during the Covid-19 pandemic. For example, they have issued a fatwa (a belief based on Islamic law) that this is a good opportunity to weaken all countries. They see that Covid is not something to be feared, in fact, they believe it

is an opportunity. This belief has been related to the increase of violence in several regions in Indonesia. They see that Covid is not something to be feared, in fact, they believe it is an opportunity. This belief has been related to the increase of violence in several regions in Indonesia.



In addition, he also mentioned that in an online space, our consistency to provide a narrative about radicalism and terrorism with a certain angle will build trust. For example when there is a case of terrorist arrest in Indonesia, Ruangobrol.id captures the family story. There is also a chat facility on Ruangobrol.id website to help anyone who wants to tell their story. He also highlights that online trust is more difficult than offline. To get attention from people we can use online efforts, but to have people genuinely believe in us, there needs to be further human connection.

Akil Yunus

Akil Yunus is the research manager at IMAN Research, a civil society organization in Malaysia. During an interview, Akil shared with SEAN-CSO that there has been a significant rise in hate-speech and xenophobia through social media and other online platforms. Cyberbullying and hateful speech is taken advantage of by VE groups in order to promote radical ideologies and recruit members.

“If you’re talking about very current trends during this pandemic, I think that a lot of the extremist trends you see online stem from narratives of racism, hatred and xenophobia that we’ve seen during this pandemic. It’s essentially the main driving force for violent extremism in cyberspace. Some of the targets, or victims, of these hateful and xenophobic comments are people like refugees, marginalized communities, and undocumented migrants who are at the receiving end of this kind of hate. And we are seeing all of this happen predominantly on social media. What then happens when you have this kind of hateful solidarity online, is you have these violent extremist groups that are monitoring these conversations and are then tapping into these narratives as a way to recruit people.”

Even before the Covid-19 pandemic, VE groups were active on online platforms. “There were clashes because of religion, clashes because of race, clashes because of different ideologies. If we’re talking about the region of Southeast Asia, then the hateful speech definitely is focused around race and religion, but in a place like the U.S. you have other issues like white supremacy. One of the reasons for the proliferation of violent extremist narratives online is attributed to social media- people generally can choose to be anonymous online and have no qualms about being hateful or racist because

online anonymity shields them from any kind of accountability or vilification- the worst that could happen is someone would condemn their actions.”

However, PVE efforts are still fighting these issues despite the hardships. “I think that a lot of the efforts online have been in terms of increasing digital and media literacy online. How we can encourage people to consume news and information online more effectively, and how we can teach people to respect differences of opinion.”





Member Highlights



ARK is a social enterprise that aims to empower local communities through the provision of agile and sustainable interventions to create greater stability, opportunity and hope for the future. ARK was created in order to assist the most vulnerable, particularly refugees, the displaced and those impacted by conflict and instability. ARK believes that strong, resilient communities are the foundation of local, national, regional and international development and stability – and ultimately a safer, peaceful and more prosperous world. At ARK, they have delivered research and programmatic interventions validating this approach in over twenty countries since 2008. As a social enterprise they work in partnership with communities, donors, and other implementers to build local capacities, generate opportunity and bring about sustainable change.



In Southeast Asia, ARK works with women-led civil society organisations in the southern Philippines to advance and promote the role of women in building social cohesion in their communities. They have provided capacity building training and mentorship to a coalition of fifty gender-focused NGOs and activists who are now leading education, advocacy and outreach programmes that work towards the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.



Patani Forum is a non-profit organisation made up of former student leaders, young activists, academics and writers working on a debate about the nature of the conflict in Thailand's Malay-speaking South, and how best to address and resolve these issues.

They work with a new generation of local leaders and activists to raise issues deemed important to the people in the area, through advocacy, civic participation, and in-depth analysis of the dynamics of the region and of the ongoing conflict.

The idea is to convince Thai society and the state, as well as the international community, that the road to peace and peaceful coexistence must be firmly rooted in the acknowledgement that the Malays of Southern Thailand have a historical and cultural identity of their own and that their narratives must be respected, which does not necessarily mean undermining Thai statehood.



Patani Forum has a tremendous amount of research and programs in Thailand. Recently, they have one program where they help poor and impoverished people, it is called The Patani Humanitarian Emergency Fund. The program distributes survival bags for impoverished families in Tung Ya Daeng and Ma Yor districts.

E-Learning

Everyone has a role in maintaining a safe atmosphere. Don't miss your opportunity to become educated on building peace and resilience in your community. Check out free e-learning course about Countering Violent Extremism by clicking:

bit.ly/E-LearningSEAN-CSO



Updates

- SEAN-CSO currently *has*



- All SEAN-CSO social media is *followed by*

 **2,705** accounts

- SEAN-CSO posts focused on PVE *receive*

 **3,000** likes

Funding Opportunity

Journalism 360 Challenge

- ▶ <https://journalists.org/programs/journalism-360/challenge/>

Ashoka Grant

- ▶ <https://khyentsefoundation.org/ashoka-grants/>

John Templeton Foundation

- ▶ <https://www.templeton.org/grants/apply-for-grant>

Elrha

- ▶ <https://www.elrha.org/funding-opportunity/innovation-challenge-responses-to-intimate-partner-violence/>

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Also check our website:

 sean-cso.org

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Would you like to be featured in the next SEAN-CSO Newsletter or in our upcoming social media campaign?

If you have stories, research, or programs focused on Preventing or Countering Violent Extremism, contact us at:

sean-cso@peacegen.id

This update has been brought to you by SEAN-CSO in collaboration with Peace Generation Indonesia.



May the day bless you with peace and happiness.

Happy Eid al-Adha!