

# Children 'victims' of terrorism

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Fifteen-year-old AR refused to believe in radical narratives told by his parents.

Unlike his three siblings, AR opted to continue his education and live with his grandmother instead of staying with his family in an apartment in Wonocolo, Sidoarjo, East Java.

"He did not want to follow in the footsteps of his parents," East Java Police chief Insp. Gen. Machfud Arifin said recently, citing an investigation into a blast in a different apartment in the Wonocolo low-cost rental apartment (Rusunawa) that housed AR's family.

AR survived a bomb that had detonated prematurely while it was being assembled by his father Anton Febriyanto in the building, killing three members of the suspected terrorist's family: Anton, the mother and the eldest child.

Another story gained international media attention, this time from 16-year-old FH, a son of suicide bomber Dita Oepriarto. He reportedly cried in a show of opposition before hopping on the back of the motorbike his older brother used to blow themselves up at another church in Surabaya last week.

In total, there were seven children and teenagers involved and killed in the terror attacks across East Java last week, which were planned by their own parents, who also died in the blasts.

Following the deadly attacks, all eyes are now on how children

Government to intensify deradicalization, counter-radicalization

5 children, teenagers killed in terror acts by parents in E. Java

are lured into terrorism.

The government is set to intensify deradicalization programs and introduce counter-radicalization measures on children and teenagers who have been exposed to terrorism.

The programs are included in the terrorism draft bill, which is expected to be passed into law by the end of this month.

In the draft bill, a copy of which has been obtained by *The Jakarta Post*, the National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT) will be in charge of the counter-radicalization programs, which will also involve related ministries and institutions.

They will address people who are prone to be exposed to radical campaigns, including children whose parents or relatives are terrorists, and children who are part of terror plots.

BNPT head Suhardi Alius said the authority would refrain from prosecuting or using a criminal justice approach to such children under 15 years old because "they are just victims and basically have no intention to launch any attacks".

"We [the state] can instead take them under our custody and BNPT's monitoring in the counter-radicalization programs, which will last for at least a month. Psychologists and reli-

gious figures will play key roles in the programs through counter-narratives," Suhardi said.

When they return to their families or neighborhoods, the BNPT and local administrations will keep monitoring them to ensure they do not get involved in any terrorism networks in the future.

In the bill, the BNPT is also in charge of deradicalization programs aimed at eliminating radical ideologies of terror suspects, defendants and convicts, including youths who have committed acts of terrorism.

The existing deradicalization programs, which are regulated under a 2010 presidential regulation, have been criticized as ineffective, particularly since a number of terror attacks either involved terror convicts or were planned from behind bars.

The recent deadly suicide bombings in East Java are the first of such attacks in which parents involved their children in the acts.

However, children involved in terrorism is not a new phenomenon. Hatf Saiful Rasul from Bogor, West Java, was 11 years old when he told his father, a convicted militant, that he wanted to go to Syria to be a fighter. He then traveled there with a group of relatives in 2015, joining a group of French fighters. His case came to surface after he was killed in an air strike in late 2016.

Society and culture expert of Indonesian Institute of Sciences Sri Sunarti said the government might adapt the deradicalization program Singapore had been implementing through so-called community-based services.