

Policy on Refusal of Repatriation of Indonesian Citizens Former ISIS Members and Unseen Security Threats

Umul Fadilatul Ulla ⁽¹⁾, Zaky Ismail ^{(1)*}

International Relation Study Program, UIN Sunan Ampel ⁽¹⁾
Jl. Ahmad Yani No. 117, Jemur Wonosari, Kec. Wonocolo, Surabaya Jawa Timur 60237

Email: 10020222073@student.uinsby.ac.id*

Submitted: (May 6, 2025), Revised: (February 4, 2026), Accepted: (July 29, 2026), Available: (July 29, 2026)

Abstract:

Keywords:

Deportation;
Repatriation
Policy;
National
Security.

The defeat of ISIS has left many Indonesian citizens who were once members of the radical group trapped in conflict zones. However, this study argues that refusing repatriation will not completely eliminate security risks, as deportation loopholes will directly force Indonesia to accept returning Indonesian citizens without going through strict procedures. This study will use a qualitative descriptive approach and case study analysis to examine in depth Indonesia's decision to refuse repatriation and the security loophole from the policy. The case studies of Rullie Zeke and Ulfa, Indonesian citizens affiliated with ISIS, are used as examples of the limitations of deportation in preventing cross border radicalization and terrorism. Deportation makes countries vulnerable because they have to accept highly risky individuals without being able to refuse them, which ultimately weakens their longterm risk mitigation capacity. There is a potential for new, unseen threats if the policy of refusing repatriation continues to be implemented without other adaptive policies.

Introduction

The ISIS ideology is believed to have first entered Indonesia between 2014 and 2015 due to campaigns and propaganda regarding the implementation of a caliphate in Syria. Specifically on March 16, 2014, at the Indonesia Monument roundabout in Jakarta. This was followed by a declaration of support for ISIS and an oath of allegiance to the international ISIS leader on July 6, 2014, at the State Islamic University Sahid Ciputat. This ultimately led to the formation of Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD) as an organization that supports Indonesian citizens who wish to join ISIS and go to Syria. In its development, JAD itself is also considered responsible for a series of terrorist attacks in Indonesia, such as the Thamrin bombing in Jakarta (2016), the suicide bombing in Surabaya (2019), and the suicide bombing in Makassar (2021), even though this organization had actually been banned by the government in 2018. However, no matter how many times the government has tried to suppress this organization, its ideology

continues to spread freely in Indonesia. In response to this, the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs (2014) has also stated that ISIS is a radical, militant organization that uses violent means to fight for what it believes in, which is contrary to the beliefs of the majority of Muslims in Indonesia. ISIS has even threatened the life of the nation and the state (Kemenag, n.d.). In the end, after ISIS's defeat, the fate of Indonesian citizens who had already joined ISIS remains unclear. Many of the men were killed or are now in prison, while the women and children, who are vulnerable groups, are still labeled as dangerous individuals.

There are many arguments within society regarding the decision to repatriate them. Many people are against their return, but there are also many who support it, with an overall concern for vulnerable groups. Following up on this, the Indonesian government immediately issued a policy that had gone through a series of processes and cooperation from various stakeholders, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Coordinating Ministry for Political, Legal and Security Affairs, the Ministry of Immigration, the Indonesian National Police, the Indonesian State Intelligence Agency, and the Indonesian National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT), which finally on February 12, 2020, the Indonesian government, still under the leadership of former President Joko Widodo, made a final decision in a limited meeting (Ratas), where after considering various matters, especially the risks to national security that would arise if former ISIS Indonesian citizens were repatriated, the government also considered its ability to accept and deal with the wave of repatriations of Indonesian citizens who had been affiliated with ISIS (Kamarullah, 2023), they finally decided to release an official policy to reject repatriation.

Before this decision was made, the repatriation process had already been carried out several times. For example, around Christmas and New Year 2018, seven Indonesian citizens who were former ISIS sympathizers returned to Indonesia from Syria via Turkey. These repatriated Indonesian citizens had gone through a strict screening process. During a casual conversation that the author had while interning at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Indonesian Citizen Protection, when carrying out repatriation, the Indonesian government did not simply send home Indonesian citizens who had been affiliated with this dangerous terrorist group. The process was quite long and strict. The first thing that had to be done was to obtain consent for their return, because it turns out that there are also individuals who do not want to be repatriated because they believe that what they have done is right, especially before 2019, when ISIS was truly in its prime. After consent is obtained, these individuals must go through identification and verification steps. This is done to prove that those who are repatriated are indeed Indonesian citizens, and not foreign nationals who want to leave the conflict zone to seek

protection elsewhere. During this verification process, the government also faces several additional challenges, such as the fact that quite a number of Indonesian citizens want to join ISIS but go through illegal channels. They enter through Turkey with different purposes before going to Syria illegally. Furthermore, quite a few people who join ISIS discard their identities that could help them prove that they are Indonesian citizens. There are also many videos circulating on the internet showing these individuals burning their passports and other identity cards, without any proof that they are Indonesian citizens. The government needs to conduct strict checks to prove that the individuals concerned are indeed Indonesian citizens. After the verification process, these Indonesian citizens must still undergo a careful screening process supervised by the relevant government agencies. This process aims to sort individuals based on their level of security risk, the extent of their involvement in terrorist activities, and their psychological and social conditions. At this stage, the government prioritizes women and children in its repatriation scheme, based on the consideration that vulnerable groups, such as women and children, are often victims and are not directly involved in terrorist activities and warfare, while most adult men have died or are serving prison sentences.

This situation can be seen in the case study of Nada Fedulla, who mentioned in her interview with BBC News Indonesia that she was taken there by her father, along with her entire family, including her grandmother, in 2015. She personally did not know that her father was taking her to Syria to join ISIS. Her father is currently in prison and cannot take responsibility for the situation he has put his family in (Conway, 2020), Nada is one of many people, especially women and children, who are forced to leave without knowing what they are getting into. They only know that their husbands and fathers want the best for them. In the end, these unfortunate people become targets of complex and coercive situations. Not only that, there are also many people who are deceived by the promise of a job, without knowing that the job is to join a terrorist network and that no amount of money is worth it when it comes to personal safety. Some people also join because of propaganda spread through social media, targeting people who want to convert to Islam, saying that this is the right path to take if they want to devote themselves fully to Allah SWT. Therefore, in the repatriation process, the government will not only focus on the repatriation itself, but also implement a process of deradicalization and rehabilitation. This program includes the elimination of radical ideas, preparation for social reintegration, and psychological counseling, especially for children who have experienced severe trauma due to the loss of their parents and growing up in a conflict zone.

After returning to society, Indonesian citizens who have been exposed to radicalism will also continue to be monitored by the government to prevent the potential for re radicalization. However, the main challenge lies in the process of social reintegration, where stigma and rejection from the surrounding community cannot be ignored. The refusal of the community, which often occurs, will be a bitter reality that they must accept as a consequence of their choices. However, the community's concerns are understandable, given Indonesia's traumatic experiences with various acts of terror, including suicide bombings. In this context, the government's policy to protect the identities of children in particular is a strategic step to give them a second chance to grow and function as part of society again.

The existence of Indonesian citizens trapped in this situation, especially vulnerable groups such as women and children, ultimately raises a quite complex and serious dilemma, especially for the Indonesian government. On the one hand, Indonesia has a constitutional and legal obligation to protect Indonesian citizens outside the country, but on the other hand, the government must also consider the risk of radicalization, as well as further acts of terrorism that threaten national security if the repatriation process is carried out without sufficient mitigation preparation.

Based on these considerations, the Indonesian government has chosen to be more cautious by officially rejecting repatriation, with the aim of maintaining a balance between the state's commitment to its citizens and protecting national and regional stability and security. However, this policy of rejecting repatriation does not completely eliminate the possibility of future threats, such as the return of former ISIS members through deportation from other countries. Forced deportation, which cannot be rejected by the country of origin, puts Indonesia in a position of losing control over the screening process and individual risk assessment of those who have been affiliated with terrorist groups.

This study aims to examine the factors that influence the government's decision to refuse the repatriation of former ISIS Indonesian citizens, as well as to analyze the experiences of Indonesian former ISIS families who have returned through deportation. Using a qualitative approach and policy analysis, this study offers a case study of the conflict between the fulfillment of human rights and national security interests in Indonesia's counterterrorism policy. By positioning deportation as an indirect consequence of the refusal of repatriation, this study is expected to enrich the study of deradicalization, reintegration, and the formulation of sustainable security policies.

Method

This research will use descriptive qualitative research methods and case studies as a type of research, according to Siedlecki, in his writing entitled “Understanding Descriptive, the purpose of descriptive research is to provide a clear and detailed description of the individuals, events, or circumstances being studied (Siedlecki, 2020). Descriptive research plays an important role in providing a solid foundation for understanding the context and dynamics that exist before moving on to more in depth analysis or exploration of cause and effect relationships in research. In collecting the data, the author conducted a lot of document analysis such as news portals, journals as well as books relevant to the topic, the author also conducted an informal interview with one of the diplomats at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs who had several assignments to go to conflict areas, where Syria was one of them. The author also conducted a media analysis to see public opinion on ex IS citizens aimed at strengthening the author's arguments in this study.

Finally, the main objective of this study is to examine in greater depth the phenomenon faced by Indonesia in dealing with the possibility of new challenges arising from deportation loopholes that threaten national security, which must be maintained, by linking variables related to current policies, impacts, and situations in a more in-depth and accurate manner from different perspectives.

Result and Discussion

Indonesian Policy on Refusal of Repatriation

The Indonesian government's policy of refusing repatriation was born out of a lengthy decision making process that involved cooperation between various state institutions. This decision was made based on the assessment that the return of former ISIS members who are Indonesian citizens would pose a serious threat, such as the possibility of further radicalization and re involvement in international terrorist networks. Even Sri Mustifah, a counselor at a rehabilitation center, said in an interview with BBC News Indonesia that she could not guarantee that people who had undergone deradicalization would not commit acts of terror again (BBC, 2020). In a closed meeting held on February 12, 2020, the government calculated its policy, considering the potential risks and benefits of various available options. As a result, the rejection of repatriation for former ISIS Indonesian citizens was seen as the most rational choice to minimize national security risks, where national security for the general public was the main consideration compared to the interests of a relatively limited number of individuals. Ace Hasan Syadzily, in the Mata Najwa program “Defending Against ISIS: Former ISIS Indonesian Citizens or Former Indonesian Citizens in ISIS,” also revealed that the

government's cautious stance was solely taken to protect our national interests, quoting a statement from NU: “*Dar'ul Mafasid Muqaddamun 'Ala Jalbil Mashalih*,” which means that avoiding harm (mafsad) is more important than achieving benefits (mashlahat), where he sees that the potential percentage of harm that would be incurred if former ISIS members were brought back to Indonesia would be higher than the benefits (Mata Najwa, 2020) . In addition, there is also a strong tendency among the public to view the involvement of Indonesian citizens in ISIS as a consequence of individual choice.

Furthermore, this study also found heated debate among the public and experts regarding the legal uncertainty surrounding the citizenship status of former ISIS Indonesian citizens. Many argue that the involvement of these Indonesian citizens with ISIS automatically revokes their citizenship, with reference to Government Regulation No. 2 of 2007, Article 31, paragraph (1) which states that Indonesian citizens automatically lose their citizenship because: a. voluntarily obtaining another nationality; b. failing to reject or renounce another nationality, despite having the opportunity to do so; c. joining a foreign military without prior permission from the President; d. voluntarily joining the military service of a foreign country, where such positions in Indonesia, according to the provisions of laws and regulations, can only be held by Indonesian citizens; e. voluntarily taking an oath or making a pledge of allegiance to a foreign country or part of that foreign country; f. not being required but participating in elections of a constitutional nature for a foreign country; g. possesses a passport or passport like document from a foreign country or a document that can be interpreted as a valid proof of citizenship from another country in his/her name; or h. residing outside the territory of the Republic of Indonesia for 5 (five) consecutive years not in the course of official duties, without valid reasons and intentionally not expressing their desire to remain an Indonesian citizen before the 5 (five) year period expires, and every 5 (five) years thereafter, the person concerned has not submitted a statement of intent to remain an Indonesian citizen to the Indonesian Representative whose jurisdiction covers the place of residence of the person concerned, even though the Indonesian Representative has notified the person concerned in writing, provided that the person concerned does not become stateless (Government Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia Article 31 paragraph 1, 2007). However, upon closer analysis, this condition still raises legal debate, because the involvement of these individuals with ISIS cannot necessarily be used as a basis for revoking their citizenship, given that ISIS is not an internationally recognized state entity.

Although it is a fact that some former ISIS members who are Indonesian citizens have deliberately burned or destroyed their identity documents, such as passports, findings in the

field show that the citizenship verification process can still be carried out without relying solely on the possession of official documents, and can still be done through administrative mechanisms and other supporting data. The main problem is how former ISIS members who are Indonesian citizens can cross the country's borders if they do not have official documents that can be proven when they return to Indonesia (Pietersz & Saija, 2021).

Based on these findings and discussions, Indonesia's repatriation refusal policy can be understood as a response born out of national security considerations and public pressure from various parties. However, the absence of a longterm alternative strategy indicates that this repatriation refusal policy has not been fully designed to manage deeper risks, where repatriation refusal without further solutions does not completely eliminate challenges in managing security and protecting citizens, especially when the return of former ISIS Indonesian citizens occurs through mechanisms beyond the control of the state.

The condition of Indonesian citizens involved with ISIS

Indonesian citizens who have been involved with armed groups, especially vulnerable groups such as women and children, live in unacceptable conditions, where they even struggle to access basic human rights that they should be entitled to, based on informal interviews conducted by researchers with a diplomat at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. the lives of women and children in refugee camps are full of limitations, such as food shortages, lack of access to clean water, and even difficulty accessing health services. Furthermore, vulnerable groups such as women and children are also easy targets for irresponsible parties. For women, for example, sexual violence and genderbased violence are common occurrences. As in most other conflicts, Syrian women and children make up the largest proportion of refugees, currently around 78% (Sami et al, 2014), For Indonesian citizens, especially children and women, the number is estimated to reach 512 people, 330 women and 182 children who are now trapped in an unclear legal status. Furthermore, children are also vulnerable to becoming victims, one of which is the threat of brainwashing and recruitment to become members of radical groups, which ultimately repeats the cycle. Not to mention that more than 150 murders have been recorded in the camp since 2019, with an average of 2 people per month (Sicuro & Giuffrida, 2025). For the men, after ISIS was defeated in 2019, they were thrown into prison without knowing when they would be released. Their lives in prison were limited one cell could be filled with many people, and an uncertain future awaited them. Many of them were also haunted by guilt for bringing their families into this situation.

After ISIS collapsed in 2019, life there became increasingly difficult, with everything in short supply. Hussein Abri Dongoran, a journalist from Tempo Magazine who visited one

of the largest refugee camps in northern Syria in 2019, also revealed that in addition to many Indonesians who were involved with ISIS and asked to be repatriated, there were also many who felt that they had done the right thing and that what ISIS taught was in line with Islamic teachings. This is in line with the author's findings, where from the author's interviews, it was discovered that many Indonesians did not want to return to their homeland, and in fact, there was telephone access there, but not all of them used it to ask for help from the government.

Deportation as Security Loophole

Unlike repatriation, which is a formal process specifically designed by the country of origin, deportation is unilateral and cannot be avoided or rejected by the country of origin. When another country decides to deport individuals in its territory for various reasons, in this context dangerous individuals who may threaten their domestic security, Indonesia is in a position to accept their return without any room for policy selection. In some cases, the deportation of Indonesian citizens affiliated with ISIS or other groups was carried out after the individuals had moved across countries in a nonlinear and difficult to monitor pattern of mobility, with some individuals even experiencing repeated deportations in the period 2016-2020 (Ashar & Maharani, 2022).

This finding ultimately confirms that deportation is not the end point, but rather a risky starting point within the country. The fact that some individuals have been deported multiple times shows that the Indonesian government must continue to accept individuals who pose a high risk to national security. Without proper risk assessment prior to their return, the country loses the opportunity to mitigate risks preventively before their return occurs. Furthermore, deportation also prevents accountability for policy, as repatriation is based on the decisions of external parties. This has been proven to cause the state to lose control over crucial aspects of security management. The state has no control over the timing of returns, as deportation is carried out according to the needs of the deporting country. Indonesia must respond quickly, because without careful planning, and when the state loses the space to integrate security, legal, and humanitarian approaches, it will ultimately give rise to new threats.

Policy on Refusal of Repatriation and consistency with Indonesian law

This study does not position the repatriation refusal policy as a wrong choice. On the other hand, the decision to refuse the repatriation of former ISIS Indonesian citizens can be understood as a policy born out of legitimate and rational considerations, especially in the context of the state's limited capacity to optimally manage the risk of radicalization, even though on the official BNPT website we can also see how the government continues to strive to improve the terrorism security system. However, this policy cannot be understood in black

and white terms. The refusal of repatriation raises fundamental questions about the extent to which this policy can be sustained.

From a national legal perspective, an in depth study is needed regarding consistency with Indonesian laws such as Law No. 37 of 1999, which regulates various aspects of Indonesia's foreign relations, one of which covers the protection of Indonesian citizens abroad, including Minister of Foreign Affairs Regulation No. 5 of 2018, which contains provisions on the protection of Indonesian citizens abroad. Not only domestic law, Indonesia has also ratified several international agreements regarding this matter, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC 1990), through Presidential Decree No. 36 of 1990. With this ratification, Indonesia is bound by all provisions in the CRC and is committed to protecting and fulfilling the rights of children. Furthermore, Article 14 of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 states that children have the right to protection from the effects of war. Furthermore, Article 17 states that the parties to the conflict are required to make agreements that allow for the transfer of certain persons, including children, from areas under attack or siege (UN, 1949). Furthermore, there is also the CEDAW convention which prohibits discrimination against women and requires the state to provide protection from violence, which has been ratified through Law No. 7 of 1984. Thus, this non repatriation policy also needs to be placed within a clear legal framework so that it is not ambiguous in terms of the responsibilities of its own citizens.

From a longterm security perspective, the effectiveness of this non repatriation policy must also be critically evaluated, as children in refugee camps are highly vulnerable to re radicalization and recruitment by other extremist networks. Indonesian citizens who remain there also have the potential to become increasingly affiliated with radical elements without the supervision of the authorities. Thus, although the repatriation policy can be justified on security grounds, it still needs to be accompanied by a comprehensive and longterm alternative strategy to prevent new security loopholes and tensions with the legal and humanitarian obligations that have been agreed upon by the state.

Case Study: Rullie Zeke & Ulfa

Rullie Rian Zeke and Ulfa Handayani Saleh are Indonesian citizens affiliated with pro ISIS armed groups in Southeast Asia. Their involvement is not limited to ideological affiliation alone, but also includes direct involvement in transnational acts of violence. This case is relevant in the context of this study because it shows that the return of Indonesian citizens who were formerly ISIS members through deportation, and the threats that arise due to the absence of a formal, managed repatriation mechanism. Both individuals spent several months in Istanbul, Turkey, after failing to enter Syria, This did not reduce their enthusiasm to become

ISIS followers. After their hideout in Istanbul was discovered, they were eventually deported back to Indonesia. The return of these two individuals without any security planning from their country of origin placed Indonesia in a vulnerable position, as the country was forced to manage these high-risk individuals.

After their deportation, Rullie, Zeke, and Ulfa underwent a limited and short term deradicalization process at the Handayani Rehabilitation Center. After completing their rehabilitation, they went to Malaysia to reconnect with ISIS and then continued their journey to the Philippines to carry out ISIS orders on a small island called Sulu in Mindanao. The difficulties they faced in Turkey only strengthened their commitment to ISIS.

Sri Musfiah, a counselor at the Handayani rehabilitation center who had personally met the two individuals, also expressed her surprise at the news that the couple had carried out a suicide bombing in the Philippines because, according to her, the couple had been quite cooperative during their time at the rehabilitation center compared to other individuals but She also stated that the rehabilitation center still cannot guarantee that former Indonesian ISIS members will not commit crimes or further acts of terror even after undergoing a deradicalization program. In fact, one former extremist, Sofyan Tsauri, who knew them personally while at the rehabilitation center, said that the return of former ISIS members must be thoroughly reviewed. He is one of those who disagrees with their return because it will only create new threats, as these people are liar (BBC, 2020).

The case studies of Rullie Rian Zeke and Ulfa Handayani Saleh provide evidence that deportation has become a new security loophole, with Indonesia failing to provide legal and controlled return routes and the possibility of deteriorating camp conditions, ultimately also creating security for transit countries. Turkey, for example, is widely used by people who decide to avoid conflict zones (BBC, 2020), and for the sake of national security, these countries will choose to carry out deportations, and because deportation is non negotiable, the state control weakens, with limited screening, reactive deradicalization and suboptimal monitoring, these dangerous individuals may ultimately return without undergoing the preventive processes implemented by the state, strengthening the author's argument that refusing repatriation without a long term alternative strategy will not eliminate the threat of terrorism, but rather might make them shift and even amplify that risk beyond the state's control, ultimately creating the very security vulnerabilities that the policy wanted to avoid in the first place.

Comparative Insight

When compared to the policies of other countries, Indonesia's policy of refusing to repatriate Indonesian citizens who were formerly members of ISIS is quite different. For example, the United Kingdom, where Temporary Exclusion Orders (TEOs) also allow the British government to prevent anyone suspected of involvement in terrorism from returning to the United Kingdom for a period of up to two years. TEOs can be extended after the two year period ends. Even beyond TEOs, the British government has also taken the drastic step of revoking the citizenship of former British citizens detained in Syria (Rowat., & Thame, 2022), One of the most famous cases is that of Shamima Begum, a British woman who joined ISIS as a teenager. The British government revoked her citizenship in 2020 on the grounds that she was a Bangladeshi citizen by descent, but the Bangladeshi government denied this and stated that she would not be allowed to enter the country (BBC, 2024). This decision drew criticism from various parties because it was considered to violate the principle of non apartheid citizenship and create statelessness, especially if the individuals concerned did not have de facto access to other countries. Nevertheless, the British government insisted that the protection of national security and public interests took precedence over the rights of certain individuals, especially if those individuals were involved in acts of terrorism. Apart from the UK, in Germany: 85% of repatriated ex-ISIS children (2019-2022) were successfully reintegrated through integrated education and trauma therapy programs (BfV report, 2023), and Kazakhstan: A combination of mass repatriation and family based deradicalization has reduced the rate of re radicalization to below 5% (ICG, 2022).

This repatriation rejection policy is like a double edged sword. It may protect short term national security and prevent Indonesia from suffering greater losses if it repatriates former ISIS Indonesian citizens, but it cannot be denied that this policy also risks fostering a more complex crisis in the future. By combining policies that integrate the principles of prudence and humanitarian responsibility, Indonesia can set an example in handling the issue of Foreign Terrorist Fighters without sacrificing any of its constitutional values. Because an ideal policy must prioritize security without neglecting humanity, Indonesia has unfortunately missed the mark several times by being forced to accept deported Indonesian citizens. That is why there are still incidents of terror even though these individuals have undergone deradicalization and rehabilitation. Sooner or later, the Indonesian government must immediately address this issue clearly. So far, Indonesia's deradicalization program has been quite strict. This must truly become a new focus since the Indonesian government cannot refuse its deported citizens.

Policy recommendation

Based on the findings and discussion of this study, Indonesia's repatriation refusal policy is quite helpful in reducing the risk of immediate threats. However, to prevent the emergence of new security gaps that will also threaten the stability and security of the country, policy adjustments are needed that will require cooperation from various parties. The following policy recommendations can be considered:

1. Cooperation with transit countries for deradicalization programs before deportation

The Indonesian government could consider bilateral cooperation with transit countries, especially those that are often used as detention and deportation points for former ISIS Indonesian citizens, to develop additional deradicalization programs before the deportation process is carried out. This cooperation could include information exchange and screening regarding the level of radicalization of the individuals involved. This could be used to identify the level of threat posed by individuals based on their age, gender, gender, level of involvement, and network affiliations. With this approach, The Indonesian government will find it easier to map out and prepare rehabilitation processes that are more appropriate to the level of risk posed by each individual who is deported. Individuals who pose a high risk can be given special assistance and must undergo a more strict rehabilitation process and ongoing monitoring before being returned to society so that previous case studies will not be repeated.

2. Strengthening deradicalization program with long term monitoring

Deradicalization programs need to be strengthened with long term needs that focus not only on formal systems, but also on behavior and ideology in a sustainable manner, by implementing long term monitoring and periodic evaluations to detect potential re radicalization. This approach is important to prevent security failures such as the previous case study.

3. Selective repatriation for vulnerable groups

Without changing the non-repatriation policy as a whole, the government may consider repatriating the most vulnerable groups, namely children, who have no operational role in terrorist organizations. However, this repatriation process must still be carried out through strict security mechanisms, not only rehabilitation but also longterm monitoring. This approach allows the state to comply with national law without sacrificing national security interests.

Overall, these policy recommendations show that the repatriation refusal policy can still be maintained as a security option, but this policy cannot stand alone without a sustainable alternative strategy and adaptive policy adjustments. Otherwise, deportation will continue to be a security loophole that poses a threat to national security.

Conclusion

This study aims to show that the policy of refusing repatriation taken by the Indonesian government is a decision born out of legitimate security considerations, particularly in the context of managing the risks of radicalization and terrorism. This policy also exists due to strong domestic public pressure, so it is seen as an appropriate preventive measure to maintain national stability and security. However, the findings of this study show that the repatriation refusal policy does not completely eliminate security threats. One sided deportation that cannot be refused by the country of origin puts Indonesia in a vulnerable position because it weakens its capacity for preventive risk mitigation, ultimately turning deportation into a security loophole that threatens national security. Through the case studies of Rullie Zeke and Ulfa, their return through deportation, which bypassed the strict screening process and comprehensive risk assessment, as well as the weak longterm supervision at that time, led to their reinvolvement in cross border terrorist activities, making it necessary to address this issue as soon as possible. This situation ultimately only creates a new dilemma. On the one hand, the policy of refusing repatriation for Indonesian citizens who have been involved with armed groups is expected to protect Indonesia's national security stability by preventing the entry of radical elements. On the other hand, this will only trigger a more massive and uncontrollable illegal return flow. Individuals who return quietly or through deportation not only escape the deradicalization process but also have the potential to build networks that operate under the radar of security authorities. A sustainable solution requires a fact and evidence based approach that combines the principles of prudence and responsibility with a regional framework to ensure accountability and post repatriation monitoring. By creating more structured and comprehensive policies, Indonesia can continue to protect its national security while respecting constitutional principles and human rights. as seen in comparisons with other countries that have successfully proven that a balanced approach between security and humanity is not only possible but also proven effective in creating long-term stability.

References

- Ali, N., Din, J. U., Kousar Ali, D. M. I., & Azhar, M. (2024). The Root Causes of the Syrian Crisis: Analyzing Internal and External Factors. *Remittances Review*, 9, 211-229.
- Kementrian Agama Republik Indonesia "ISIS Faham Terlarang Di Indonesia" 5 Agustus 2014. <https://kemenag.go.id/nasional/isis-faham-terlarang-di-indonesia-sb0wcr>
- iedlecki, S. L. (2020). Understanding descriptive research designs and methods. Clinical Nurse

Specialist

- Sami, S., Williams, H. A., Krause, S., Onyango, M. A., Burton, A., & Tomczyk, B. (2014). Responding to the Syrian crisis: the needs of women and girls. *The Lancet*, 383(9923),
- Web Resmi PBB “Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War”<https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/geneva-convention-relative-protection-civilian-persons-time-war>
- Sasmito, P. H., & Harefa, B. (2020). An Analysis of Indonesian Children Repatriation in Syria. *Indonesian Journal of Criminal Law Studies*,
- Fitriyanie, A., & Sukabdi, Z. A. (2024). THE MANAGEMENT OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN ASSOCIATED WITH FOREIGN TERRORIST FIGHTERS UPON THEIR RETURN: A FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION ON POSSIBILITIES FOR REPATRIATION WITH PRACTITIONERS AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS IN INDONESIA. *Revista UNISCI*, (65).
- Munir, B., Wahyuni, Y. S., & Aulia, T. A. (2022). COMPARATIVE LAW REPATRIATION INDONESIAN CITIZEN EX FOREIGN ISLAMIC STATE IRAQ AND SYRIA ABOUT INDONESIA LAW AND ISLAMIC LAW. *Dusturiyah: Jurnal Hukum Islam, Perundang-undangan dan Pranata Sosial*,
- Shodiq, S. (2024). Women and Terrorism; Analysis of the Repatriation Policy for the Wives and Children of Former Indonesian Citizens from ISIS. *Constitutional Law Review*, 2(2)
- Kamil, R., & Fauzi, M. F. B. (2023). Should There Be A Second Chance for Ex-ISIS Indonesians?. *Journal of International and Local Studies*, 7(2),
- Nasution, M. A. R. (2020, November). Repatriation Plan for ISIS Members of Indonesian Citizenship from Iraq and Syria to The Homeland in the National Security Perspective. In *Proceedings of 3rd International Conference on Strategic and Global Studies*
- MacVicar, I. (2020). What about the camp followers-and their children? *Journal for deradicalization*, (22), 319-378.
- Selçuk, M., & Panagiotou, N. (2020). Impact of Isis on radical groups of Southeast Asia countries. *Journal of Islamic World and Politics*, 4(1) hal 3
<https://doi.org/10.18196/jiwp.4141>
- “Bisakah kamu memaafkan ayah yang jadi anggota ISIS” Youtube. BBC News Indonesia. 2020. <https://youtu.be/GbjMdAFZhJk?si=AwPPetjhK3Tbfh7K>
- Kamarullah, M. (2023). Dilema Pemerintah Indonesia Menolak Repatriasi WNI Eks ISIS: Antara HAM atau Keamanan Nasional [The Dilemma of Indonesian Government Rejecting The Repatriation Indonesian Ex-ISIS: Between Human Right or National

- Security]. *Jurnal Politica Dinamika Masalah Politik Dalam Negeri dan Hubungan Internasional*, 14(1) hal 54 <https://doi.org/10.22212/jp.v14i1.3772>
- “Menangkis ISIS: WNI Eks ISIS atau ISIS Eks WNI (Part 3) | Mata Najwa”. Youtube. Najwa Shihab.2020. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pbjim2ZCc_4
- Peraturan Pemerintah Republik Indonesia Pasal 31 ayat 1 tahun 2007
- Pietersz, J., & Saija, V. (2021, January). Citizenship Status of ISIS Members from Indonesia.”. In *ICILS 2020: Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on Indonesian Legal Studies, ICILS 2020, July 1st 2020, Semarang, Indonesia* (p. 263). European Alliance for Innovation.
- “Menelusuri jejak suami istri pengebom bunuh diri ISIS asal Indonesia - BBC News Indonesia”. Youtube. BBC News Indonesia. 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q6LU0SyYlpM>
- Rowat, M., & Thame, C. (2022). *The repatriation problem: comparing American and British efforts to secure the return to women and children following the fall of the Islamic state of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)* (Doctoral dissertation, Thammasat University).
- BBC News. (25 March 2024) “Who is Shamima Begum and how can you lose your citizenship?” <https://www.bbc.com/news/explainers-53428191>
- Dora, Z. K. (2020). International migrants as a matter of security: Open door policy and Syrians in Turkey. *Güvenlik Bilimleri Dergisi*, 9(2), hal 503
- Amir, I. (2020). An Analysis of Jokowi’s Policy in Refusing the Return of Former ISIS Foreign Terrorist Fighters Indonesian Citizens. *Al-Bayyinah*, 4(1),
- Rachma, S., Hikam, M. A., & Munabari, F. (2022). The Repatriation of Foreign Terrorist Fighters in Indonesia: Its Dilemma and Debates. *Deviance*, 6(1), 1-15.
- Akmal, D. U. (2023). Pencabutan Kewarganegaraan Indonesia Anggota the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS): di antara Kedaulatan Negara dan Hak Asasi Warga Negara. *Sultan Jurisprudence: Jurnal Riset Ilmu Hukum*, 3(1), 18-35.
- Astuti, E. W., & Nugraha, X. (2021). ISIS Ex-WNI or Indonesian Ex-ISIS? An Overview in the Perspective of National Law and International Law. *Budapest International Research and Critics Institute-Journal (BIRCI-Journal)*, 4(3),
- Gunawan, Y., Sienda, R. M., & Rizaldy Anggriawan, A. A. S. (2022). The Rights to Nationality for Indonesian Ex-ISIS Combatants Repatriation Under International Law. *Jurnal Hubungan Internasional*, 10(2), 108-110.
- Ashar, A. R., & Maharani, C. (2022). Far from Home: Profile of pro-IS Deportees' Mobility throughout 2016-2020 and Prevention Strategy of Indonesian Government. *Journal of*

- ASEAN Studies*, 10(1) hal 86 <https://doi.org/10.21512/jas.v10i1.7732>
- BBC NEWS INDONESIA. “WNI eks ISIS di Suriah yang ingin kembali ke Indonesia: 'Saya sangat lelah, saya sangat berterima kasih jika menerima kami pulang’ (2020 11 Februari) <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/dunia-51410570>
- Sicuro, Giammarco & Giuffrida, Lidia (2025, 8 April) "In Syria’s Detention Camps, Fears Grow of an Islamic State Resurgence" <https://newlinesmag.com/reportage/in-syrias-detention-camps-fears-grow-of-an-islamic-state-resurgence/>
- Maryani, L., & Sulisty, T. (2021). Pemulangan ‘Warga Negara Indonesia Eks Islamic State Of Iraq And Syria (ISIS)’ Dalam Perspektif HAM. *Jurnal Ius Constituendum*, 6(2), 497.
- Anns, M., & Syauqillah, M. (2023). The repatriation of returning ISIS foreign terrorist fighters: Analysis of the factors influencing Indonesia's refusal and its implications on counterterrorism efforts. *Masyarakat, Kebudayaan & Politik*, 36(4).
- The Habibie Center.” Counter-Terrorism Policy Brief Series” <https://www.habibiecenter.or.id/img/publication/0e23c5e7f86cbc5266158b63b0a89725.pdf>
- Amaliyah, S., & Anugerah, B. (2020). Mencari Format Kebijakan Terbaik Dalam Merespon Kepulangan WNI Eks-ISIS. *Jurnal Lemhannas RI*, 8(1), 61-74.