

Sacred Text Narratives and Religious Violence: The Case of Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

FPI is one among several Islamist Groups in Indonesia. Seeing through its fierce actions, people tend to judge FPI as radicals. Some political elites even classify it as terrorist. Despite the fact that it violates many rules, FPI claims to be a religious and pious one. The government disbanded FPI at the end of 2020 because of its numerous violent actions. However, it continues to get support from many Islamic communities. For some conservative Muslims, FPI actions are a sample of how Islamic teaching should be applied in daily life. Using qualitative research and narrative analysis, this paper explored the narrative of Sacred Text, especially the Quran and Hadith presented by FPI, on how it is managed, interpreted, and spread to the public. This paper also explored the possible errors FPI made in narrating sacred text. The results show FPI's determination to interpret and narrate sacred text as a way to achieve a goal, without considering the views of other religious scholars and books that can better guide narrating and interpreting the Sacred Text.

Keywords: FPI, Narrative, Sacred Text, Violence.

Introduction: FPI and Its Violent Actions

One year after its disbandment, the Islamic Defenders Front or *Front Pembela Islam* (FPI) continues to take much part in public discussions. The case of six bodyguards shot dead by the police, the detainment of Munarman, secretary general of FPI, and Habib Rizieq Shihab's activities in prison still appear on many news and social media. The latest news also shows the group that is called FPI reborn. Television, YouTube, digital news, printing newspapers, magazines, and journals appear intrigued by every improvement of FPI's case. Debate in public, either in television or seminars, is added up by public discussion on social media. Twitter accounts, Facebook Groups, and WhatsApp Groups are filled up with the outrageous discussion of people who are attached to political ideologies affiliation.¹ Many discussions and debates on politics and religious issues often bring up the topic of FPI again.

FPI is Indonesia's most famous Islamic radical movement. FPI commands many actions that allegedly oppressed another group that disagrees with their ideology. Churches banning, hotels invading, restaurants out bursting, and many other criminal actions become a trademark of FPI. Almost everyone in Indonesia identifies FPI with violence, radicalism, and extremism. Some Indonesians even equate FPI with a terrorist.

Established in 1998, FPI started as *PAM Swakarsa*, a self-initiated community security group. It was founded in a riot situation when Jakarta was full of rallies and demonstrations, and some thugs took advantage of security skirmish. Jakarta then settled down after Gus Dur rose to be President. Along with this democratic circumstance, new organizations emerged and got their legal stance, and one was FPI. The following eight years marked the triumph of FPI. Almost every year, they succeed in combating immoral places in Jakarta. Police and other parties that did not have the same opinion as FPI should stay backward and refrain from the event that FPI got involved. Even though their leader, Shihab, was arrested and sentenced to seven months in prison in 2003, FPI closed some discotheques and other entertainment places in 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, and 2006. The raid to immoral places continued until Shihab was arrested again in 2008 and sentenced to one and a half years in prison. As for today's situation (in 2021), Shihab went to jail once again for the case of breaching the pandemic instructions. This time, he will spend 2 years in prison.

Seeing its activity in the past ten years, FPI can appear in three faces. They can appear as good and obedient citizens, as people who have a strong voice against their enemies, and as a brutal group who attack harm and, if necessary, kill their enemies.² The first face can be seen when FPI helps people in the neighborhood fight criminals on the street when they help the fire brigade put out a fire or send humanitarian corps to help victims of a natural disaster. However, the second and third faces can be seen in most cases brought up by FPI. FPI always persecutes the people whom they consider to be defaming Islam. They also attacked minorities like Shi'ite and Ahmadi people, rejected the construction of Yasmine Church in Bogor, and cursed and attacked traditional religious adherence.

However, the Indonesian Ulama Council or *Majelis Ulama Indonesia* (MUI), in many cases, supports the actions of FPI. Menchick regarded MUI as the actor responsible for FPI actions.³ Woodward points to MUI as the organization that protects FPI by saying all the opponents of FPI are violating religious teachings.⁴ This is true since every time MUI disagrees with them, FPI often provides an argument from Sacred Text (Quranic Verses and Hadiths) not connected to MUI recommendations.

As Indonesia's highest council of religious scholars, MUI can direct FPI to all the verses they need to combat society's nasty habits, but not all can lead to violent actions. In the case of violence, war, and subjected enemy, many verses can be reversely translated and explained on spreading justice, kindness, and peace.

FPI then had their idea to explain and narrate the verses. They claim that so many unbelievers and hypocrites in today's situation want to destroy Islam.⁵ They are the enemy of Islam and want to reach their objectives indirectly. For FPI, most enemies will take all Muslims out of daily ritual activities within Islamic values. They create the decline of Islamic morality and bring Muslims out of their fundamental religious values.⁶ Some enemies may be seen as good Muslims, while others also come as unbelievers who appear to sympathize with Muslims but initially want to demolish Muslims from the inside. To connect with that, FPI quoted The Quran, Chapter 9 (The Repentance), verses 107–108, translated as follows:

"And [there are] those [hypocrites] who took for themselves a mosque for causing harm and disbelief and division among the believers and as a station for whoever had warred against Allah and His Messenger before. And they will surely swear, "We intended only the best". And Allah testifies that

indeed they are liars. Do not stand [for prayer] within it - ever. ...”⁷

FPI addresses all the opponents to fit with those verses. As stated in the verses, all the Muslims who disagree with them could be hypocrites. The narrative of the opponent then developed and pointed them as liars who masquerade themselves as Muslims who always stay in the Mosque.⁸ However, the narrative on FPI members is directed in a positive way, in which they always purify themselves to make them clearly on the right path and have justification for fighting the hypocrites. The same narrative goes with FPI when they see the unbelievers or people from another religion, including the Islamic sects, that they consider as a deviate.

The cause of violence and social problems that arose from FPI is rooted in their understanding of sacred texts, i.e., Quranic verses and hadiths. They see only some parts of the Quran, choose the verses supporting their argument and actions of violence, and narrate it the way they like. Leaders and members of FPI are supposed not to have sufficient religious background and education, so they made some errors in narrating and understanding the verses. ***This paper will explain the texts FPI chose to support their violent action, how they narrate it, and what error they probably made.*** The error may come from misunderstanding the wholeness of the sentence in the verses and putting out the sociology, anthropology, and historical situations.

Research Method

This study was based on two methods: library study and fieldwork research. A library study is needed to describe the Islamic Narratives and sermons supporting FPI. At the same time, fieldwork research is done to find the activities connected to those narratives and sermons in everyday life and the interaction with other groups and government policies. The data are collected from the library (books, magazines, journals, newspapers, and websites), interviews, and field observation. Data was organized through descriptive analysis. This study uses the qualitative research method, which is, to sum up, focusing on the general thinking and result of the study.

In collecting data, the researcher came back and forth to the field. Neutrality on seeing the data came as a summit priority for the researcher. Visitations to 23 mosques were made, as well as joining 36 sermons and Friday prayers, interviewing 19 subjects, examining 1,618 Facebook accounts, exploring 203 Twitter accounts, inspecting 405 websites, and observing 42 YouTube accounts and videos. Researchers also confirmed the narrative text to the authorized sacred text version issued by the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Indonesia, Nahdlatul Ulama Organizations, and Muhammadiyah. There is also an International Standard translation version of the Quran as provided by Quran.com, a non-profit organization. All the translation used in this research refers to the Sahih International translation of The Noble Quran. On completing the method, there is also a triangulation process on checking up data, assuring the narrative sent by actors and circulating in society are on the same concept.

The result comes in the form of focusing verses that FPI mostly uses in every narrative they deliver. Explanations and narratives are added to the verses. Some were based on hadith and Prophet Life's history, but many were narrated based on the leader's logic and experiences. The most brought up verses from The Holy Quran are found to be: Chapter (The Cow) 2: verse 120 and verse 190, (Family of Imran) 3:185, (The Women) 4:104, (The Table Spread) 5:50, (The Spoils of War) 8:57, (The Repentance) 9:29, 107-108, (Joseph) 12: 40, (The Night Journey) 17:81; and (The Pilgrimage) 22: 39-40.⁹

Discussion: Narratives and Interpretations on Sacred Text

To begin explaining this paper, we are starting from the narratives and interpretations framework of thinking to see the sacred texts, which the FPI probably unrealizes. Several academic researches are focusing on narrative. Most of the writing is working on the literature subject. Other big parts are working on religious studies, especially concerning interpretation, narratives, and history.

The narrative tradition is notably different in many schools of Islamic law and sects. The Narrative of Ulama's history and hadiths are considered authoritative by some Muslims, but the Quran is the true words of God. Giving meaning and translating the Quran and other sacred texts is not without problems. Transliterating, translating, narrating, and introducing it to the follower is a big task.¹⁰ The Quran comes in Arabic, and it always brings together the original sound when translated and narrated. Both processes can create issues that not all Islamic groups agree with the resolution. FPI might come as one that disagrees with standard public translation and narration processes in the Quran.

Halverson, Goodall, and Corman have managed to explain the ideological functions of master narratives that exist in Muslim societies and cultures and how these narratives are exploited and employed specifically by Islamist extremists.¹¹ This explanation is needed when terrorism and extremist attacks happen in many big cities in the world. Terrorists had targeted New York, London, Paris, and Hanau-Germany.

Even though people seem to understand easily, the term "narrative" is not very clearly defined and is often used interchangeably with stories.¹² A narrative is a description of an event, a spoken or written account of a connected experience. It is a writing that tells a story. It has a description, sequence, plot, and objective. A narrative can be written for entertaining purposes, historical archives, tales, philosophical ideas, public information, or for specific agendas such as politics.

The narratives play an important role in creating the spirit of fighting. The main source of narratives is cited in the sacred texts.¹³ Quran is the words of God placed in top position, followed by hadith and the history of Prophet Muhammad's life. Other scholars such as Dupret, Drieskens, and Moors focused their attention on Legal Narratives, which also play a significant role in politics.¹⁴ Based on Dupret studies within Islamic Law, criminals (and actors in general) are either self-deterred through norms or economic punishment.

Verses of the Quran are God's Words sent to human beings through Prophet Muhammad's thinking and memory. It is connected to moral and social circumstances in the Prophet's time, especially in the cities of Mecca, Medina, and Arabic society. It is bringing the spirit of morality and social justice. Morality and social justice are universal and eternal concepts that can be applied in all countries, cultures, and times.¹⁵ Verses in the Quran are not about the legal system or regulations in society, seen in the texts or words in the verses, but about the main idea alive within the verses.

The enhancement of the Quranic narrative is just ordinary. Ulama with specific qualifications on Quranic narratives is called *Mufassir*. Before becoming a *Mufassir*, a man should be an expert in knowledge of hadith, as well as other subjects such as the occasion of revelation, the affirmation of verses, classical Arabian language, Arabic grammar, the meaning of words, genealogy of words, Arabic sentence narratives, Quranic recitation, Islamic Law, and many other subjects. Following the development of civilization, *Mufassir* needed a new interpretation method that could deeply explore the historical fact that accompanying the revelation of the verses in the Quran. In other words, there should be a new contemporary *Mufassir* who can see the history and social condition in the era of Prophet Muhammad as well as the era of modernity.¹⁶

The narrating process on the text then came in a plural way so as the community. Most countries in Central Asia, South Asia, and China are going with the narrative from the Hanafi School, while Morocco, Algeria, and some African countries are going with the Maliki School, and Saudi Arabia and some

neighborhood countries are going with the Hambali School.¹⁷ In contrast, Indonesia likes the other countries in Southeast Asia, going with Shafii School. Indonesian community then became more plural since there was a new idea of narrative from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and other parts of the world, with their own narrative style.

Sahiron Syamsuddin offers a new concept of narrating the Quran.¹⁸ He said the Quran should be narrated according to the situation and the era. In the Indonesian case with a very plural society, the narratives are based on historical context and applied to the current situation. The new concept that he calls *Ma'na cum Maghza* grasps the historical meaning of the text (*Ma'na*) and explores its significance (*Maghza*) to the society in the current situation. Every verse in The Quran is revealed in a specific situation. They have specific historical events that accompany the text. The verse becomes universal when the situation can be equated to the place and era, but not if the verses are seen word by word without understanding the historical context. Syamsuddin then mentions the importance of *Asbabun Nuzul* (occasion of revelations). What happened in the 6th century is not the same as today. There was no extended technology, microphone, mobile phone, internet, or TV. There are no advanced weapons to hurt people, conduct violence, or wage war. Consequently, applying verses word by word without concerning the situation is useless. If it happens in the modern era, Allah would probably tell Muslims to fight the unbelievers with tanks and nuclear weapons to finish the war quickly. The same thing happens in preaching, proselytizing, and stopping people's evil deeds. It should consider the era and the place it is carried out to meet the objective correctly and in a good way.

Seeing FPI's actions from Syamsuddin's point of view, it is possible to understand the whole meaning of a sacred text just by understanding the words. Nevertheless, it is common human nature for the narrator to recreate the author's idea, which, in the Islamic case, is almost impossible to reach since the Quran's author is the God himself.

With explanations from leaders like Shihab and other *Habibs*, members of FPI are convinced that all the verses and Islamic teachings they received are correct. *Habib* is the title for the man who is a descendant of Prophet Muhammad. Consequently, all the virtuous characters will be placed upon them, and they can narrate and explain verses correctly because God always guides them. Whether it faces many critics from other religious scholars or even other groups of *Habib*, FPI members will see it as another issue and should be ignored.

FPI should realize the position of *Habib* and priesthood, and Islamic teaching does not recognize priesthood.¹⁹ Consequently, understanding the Quran and God's command is the obligation of each person. Some people could become *ulama* (religious scholars) or *Mujtahid* if they have expertise in religious knowledge. Most *mujtahids* come from *ulama* with exceptional knowledge about Islamic jurisprudence, the history of Islam, and, indeed, the narratives of the Quran. A *Mujtahid* can make a decision in Islamic law based on their knowledge. Regardless, each person has to bear only his sin, and all the rewards from God will go to each person based on his actions. Therefore, no *ulama* or *mujtahid* can bear anyone's sin nor take anyone's reward. The ability to narrate the Quran definitely will have a reward from God, but if used incorrectly, it will personally bring sins to the actor. The best human being for God is not the one who came from a specific race, family kinship, economic status, gender, or religious title but from piety to God.

As well as the variety of identities in a community based on religious teaching and narrative approaches, there is also a variety of understanding and narrating holy texts. In the Indonesian case, it is directed to the Quran and a specific group's narratives.²⁰ To cope with this variety and the problems that come with it, Fazlur Rahman introduced the correct narrative method.²¹ In this case, he focused

the historical precedence accompanying the development of Quranic narratives.

In his historical analysis, Rahman finds a strong relationship between the ideal model of Prophet Muhammad's life recorded in books of hadith and the process of creating the Islamic decree by *Ulama*.²² According to Rahman, daily Muslim personal activities are the first level of creating personal regulation. Man understands the verses and Islamic law as a whole unit. The Prophet's companions probably are the first generation that generated all the personal understanding to become public laws. After three or four generations, the religious leader considered all the regulations and Islamic laws perfectly codified and final. It happened in about the 10th century, and after that, no new important narrative method developed for a long time.

It then created a problem when Islamic geographical domination spread to a large part of the globe. The Islamic laws met a new land, with a new kind of people and a new culture that was very different from those in Arabic countries. In any case, the Islamic government should not rule like a tyrant.²³ Consequently, it is necessary to analyze and alter the previous agreement of Islamic law.²⁴ The final version of Islamic Law then should be rewritten, with a new translation and narratives of verses in The Quran and books of hadith. Rahman nonetheless pointed to three types of standards where *ulama* referred to the source of Islamic law. The first one is the ideal model of Prophet Muhammad's life. The second one is the law created in the life's era of companion and two generations after it; some *ulama* considered it the definitive source. The third one is the law created by *ulama* who lived long after the Prophet and came from a different culture. In this case, the Islamic law could be much different from the first one, but for *ulama*, in essence, they are the same.

In his other book, *Islam and Modernity*, Rahman eventually comes to the basic ideas of understanding Quranic verses perfectly.²⁵ He suggests the first thing we must understand is logical thinking that the Quran is the word of God sent to Prophet Muhammad. Whether there is confirmation of God's presence or not, we have to admit that Quranic verses are told to humans and the community at large by the voice of Prophet Muhammad. That is why the basic decree of the Islamic faith is witnessing that there is no God but Allah, and Prophet Muhammad is His Messenger. The following understanding is that we need to realize that Prophet Muhammad is a human being, not an angel or other form of God. Verses of the Quran are God's words sent to the living through Prophet Muhammad's thinking and memory. It is connected to moral and social circumstances in the Prophet's time, especially in Mecca and Arabic society.²⁶ It is bringing the spirit of morality and social justice. Morality and social justice are universal and eternal concepts applicable in all countries, cultures, and times. Verses in the Quran are not about the legal system or regulations in society, which can be seen in the text or words in the verses, but they are about the main idea alive within the verses.

In analyzing the verses, Rahman also found that verses of the Quran have to be understood thoroughly.²⁷ Understanding only some verses in part of the Quran could direct us to false principles. Some parts or chapters in the Quran could contain more basic ideas than others, but we need to scrutinize them to see where it is located. Intellectually, we do not require knowledge about God. Verses in the Quran are the knowledge for humanity; it is more practical if we pay attention to the human business and focus on morality even though the Quran could contain a lot more than the human has already been exposed to. Islamic kingdoms might spread worldwide, but the enhancement of Quranic narratives is ordinary. Rahman then specifically mentions that Islamic Religious Scholars with specific qualifications in Quranic narratives (*Mufassir*) need a new narrative method that could deeply explore the historical fact accompanying the revelation of the verses in the Quran. In other words, there should be a new contemporary *Mufassir* who can see the historical and social conditions in the era of Prophet Muhammad and the era of modernity.

FPI verses appear to have a specific method of narratives but deal nothing with the historical matter that happened in the Era of Prophet Muhammad. FPI also looked as if they did not understand verses of the Quran entirely and only focused on a specific verse that correlated with violence.²⁸ The idea of religious plurality also did not come to FPI consciousness since they just had their specific verses told by the leader.

There are some ways for Mufassir to analyze Quran verses and write the Quran narratives.²⁹ First, he might narrate the Quran based on their source for narrating. It could be the source from the chronicle histories of Prophet Muhammad, the companion, and one generation after it, or the source of later generations that work more on a logical base. Second, he can narrate the Quran based on the explanation of verses. It could use the comparison method of verses or a direct explanation for each verse. Thirdly, they can narrate the Quran based on the broadness of language. It could be explained with the broad or narrow meanings of languages. The fourth method of narratives is to see the explanation based on sequences of verses. *Mufassir* can arrange explanations of verses based on the regular Quranic sequence on the topic of some verse that compiles to some subjects or based on the time order of revelation. Fifth and last, some Mufassir narrates the Quran based on their expertise tendency. There is *Mufassir*, who focuses on historical explanation; Mufassir focuses on language explanation; and *Mufassir*, who focuses on legal explanation. Nevertheless, they are generally at the same level as Mufassir, who can narrate the Quran widely and correctly.

The FPI claims they use a reliable source of Quranic Narratives, or they have their Imam who can narrate the Quran, but the result seems worse than the prominent Mufassir that Muslims have known at large. Possibly, they use chronicle histories as the source of narratives. They also use a method of direct explanation and the narrow meaning of languages.³⁰ However, FPI also possibly uses a new kind of expertise tendency on the narrative process since they focus on the strength, struggle, power, and glory of Islam.

Discussion: FPI's Narratives on Quranic Verses

There are many verses in the Quran that are used by FPI to strengthen the spirit of its followers. There are verses in the Quran, Chapter 9, verses 107-108, about permission to fight the hypocrites who can drag Muslims to be unbelievers, even though they seem to be praying in the Mosque. They are liars, and God certainly will inform Muslims about who they really are. Other groups than FPI were then considered hypocrites and permissible to be fought. It depends on the FPI leaders who point the finger at a group considered hypocrites.

As well as the hypocrites, FPI also plays hard to oppose the unbeliever. In this case, they recognize Christians, Jews, and other religious adherence as unbelievers. There are not many Jews in Indonesia, but there are many Christians. The Christians can be seen as minorities in Indonesia based on their followers in Indonesia's specific area. Christians usually love to organize philanthropy events or visit an orphanage, but FPI sees all the activities as a cover-up to proselytize the Muslim Community. There are also attempts to construct a new church building in Muslim-majority neighborhoods. FPI then fights the Christian and other religious adherence, and it works under the reasoning of the following verses: Quran Chapter 2 (The Cow) verse 120, and the second is from Chapter 9 (The Repentance) verse 29.

"And never will the Jews or the Christians approve of you until you follow their religion. Say, 'Indeed, the guidance of Allah is the [only] guidance' ..".

"Fight those who do not believe in Allah or the Last Day and who do not consider unlawful what Allah and His Messenger have made unlawful and who do not adopt the religion of truth from those who were given the Scripture - [fight] until they give the jizyah willingly while they are humbled".

While the second verse was always recited and translated fully, the first verse was always read in the beginning part of the sentence. Consequently, the understanding will stop at "And never will the Jews or the Christians approve of you until you follow their religion". The continuing part was never mentioned because it is considered not really important to raise the spirit of fighting. However, we can find in another book the full narrative explanation of chapter 2, verse 120.

The narrative of the verse, on the contrary, goes to the peaceful and just way of Islam. The cause of their disconcertment with the Prophet (peace be on him) was not that they were earnest seekers after the truth which the Prophet had failed to make clear to them. The real cause of their unhappiness was that he had not resorted to hypocrisy and trickery concerning religious matters. Unlike Jews, The Prophet did not pursue self-interest and self-indulgence under the facade of godliness and piety. He did not twist religious principles and injunctions without doubt, as the Jews were inclined to make them suit their desires and fancies. The Prophet did not resort to the deception and treachery which characterized the religious life of the Jews. As a result, it was no use trying to appease them. Unless the Muslims were prepared to assume the attitude and orientation of the Jews and to follow all their errors in belief and practice, there was no question of their being able to bring about any reconciliation with them.

With the recitation of those four verses, The Quran 9:107-108, 9:29, and 2:120, and the reading of its translation, it is enough reason for FPI members to see other groups, other religions, and other communities as enemies.³¹ Furthermore, it is added by some explanation by the leader with many powerful, provocative speeches and sermons. The usual tactic that is even used in Turkey.³² FPI then glorifies himself by surrounding the members with the idea that they are soldiers of God. They have to fight for the religious cause to defend the great name of Islam and its doctrine and fight for Allah and His Messenger. There is no fear for them since they are the only genuinely righteous ones, while the others are fake and wrong. The speeches then continue to focus on themselves to strengthen the members' spirit. The leaders bring the idea of telling the truth to others, and righteousness has to be fought for. If we believe in God, His Messenger, and all the teachings, we must ensure all the truth and righteousness are enforced. If nobody wants and can do it, FPI certainly will do and fight for it.

Even further, the members of FPI are willing to sacrifice their lives if necessary. To fight for Allah is to fight without a doubt, and it should be done in complete faith. There is no slight chance that Muslims, especially FPI members, will struggle and fight with a very tiny portion of disbelief. All the spirits must submit to Allah so He will help the fighters and give them Paradise as a reward. FPI also tells its members to fight harshly, chase the enemy, and beat them without mercy. If the Muslim feels fear, the enemy will fear more. Allah promises it.

The Quran Chapter 17 (The Night Journey), verse 81 states the enforcement for what is true and righteous: And say, "Truth has come, and falsehood has departed. Indeed is falsehood, [by nature], ever bound to depart". In the case of the willingness to fight and go for struggle even if that will cost life and fortune, FPI comes with The Quran Chapter 3 (Family of Imran) verse 185: "Every soul will taste death, and you will only be given your [full] compensation on the Day of Resurrection..." Another verse used by FPI is the verse about chasing the enemy with the help of Allah in doing so. It is in Chapter 4 (The Women), verse 104: "And do not weaken in pursuit of the enemy. If you should be suffering - so are they suffering as you are suffering ..".

The FPI argument based on Quranic verses can go as far as the punishment stories in the Quran. There are cases about the People of Prophet Hud and Prophet Salih, called the Ad and the Thamud. These stories also had been analyzed by Western scholars. Tottoli explains the detail about the Ad community that God eventually punishes because they reject to repent.³³ Another explanation comes

from Reuven Firestone, who managed to give a clear explanation about the community of *Thamud*.³⁴ They also had to face punishment from God because they sinned and failed to regret it. There are twenty-four verses about Ad in the Quran, while Thamud is revealed twenty-six times. The concepts of the stories are the same. There is a messenger of God preaching to the people who had done so much sin. The people then refuse the messenger because they want him to show some miracles. However, after they saw miracles, they abandoned him. The messenger then prayed to God to punish the people.

Furthermore, there is disaster following the prayer as a punishment to the evil community. It is then confirmed the truthfulness of the messenger. Narratives of Punishment Verses that are scattered all over The Quran then become a strong supporter of FPI's actions.

Discussion: The Failed Logic of FPI's Narratives

Violence carried out by FPI is frequently referred to as Jihad by its members. For them, Jihad is the act of fighting the enemy and crashing those who reject God's rule. Previously, we mentioned the verse of The Quran Chapter 9:29, which tells FPI to fight the enemy until they pay tax and obey the Islamic government. This verse is telling about Jihad that had to be done by FPI. Another verse about Jihad is The Quran Chapter 22 (The Pilgrimage), verses 39-40.

"Permission [to fight] has been given to those being fought because they were wronged. And indeed, Allah is competent to give them victory. [They are] those who have been evicted from their homes without right - only because they say, "Our Lord is Allah". And were it not that Allah checks the people, some by means of others, there would have been demolished monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques in which the name of Allah is much mentioned. And Allah will surely support those who support Him. Indeed, Allah is Powerful and Exalted in Might".

The verses about Jihad have to be understood carefully. There are many opportunities for other narratives than just understanding those verses as a command of war.³⁵ The narratives of verses of Jihad as justifications for conducting violence and fighting can be traced back to the 10th century. Some religious scholars describe the verses of Jihad as verses of war because of the situation when Islamic kingdoms were at the top of their power in world politics. Islamic army was so strong that it could conquer many parts of the world. The army certainly needed strong moral reasoning to fight in the war, and they had it within Quranic verses.³⁶ However, some of the warlords used false stories and instructions that were said to be Prophet Muhammad's teaching to justify their desire for violence and aggression. FPI might understand those verses only to encourage the violence they undertook. Nevertheless, experts on Quranic Narratives (Mufassir) will say that the FPI lacks understanding of the entire Quranic idea. Ordinary Muslims cannot narrate the Quran as they wish; the average religious scholar also cannot do it. Being a Mufassir is not just about knowledge but also wisdom. Mufassir is a man with authority; he knows the difference between the unbeliever and the people of the book. He also can explain the defensive war and fight against wrong desires. He knows the real meaning of the Quran Chapter 22, verses 39-40, mentioned before. It needs logical reasoning, knowledge, and wisdom more than the leader of FPI already had.

The Mufassir certainly can clearly explain The Quran Chapter 8 (The Spoils of War) verse 57. However, FPI, with the logic of hatred, will give a translation as follows: "If you meet them in battle, inflict on them such a defeat as would be a lesson for those who come after them, and that they may be warned". Mufassir will know that this also can be translated as: "So if you, [O Muhammad], gain dominance over them in war, disperse by [means of] them those behind them that perhaps they will be reminded".

A good Mufassir will also give an explanation that accompanies that verse, which comes from the same chapter, verse 61: "And if they incline to peace, then incline to it [also] and rely upon Allah. Indeed, it is He who is the Hearing, the Knowing". Moreover, another verse should accompany the verses of Jihad based on FPI logic. The Mufassir will tell FPI about Chapter 2 (The Cow) verse 190: "Fight in the way of Allah those who fight you but do not transgress. Indeed, Allah does not like transgressors".

Syamsuddin explains the importance of Mufassir in creating the logic of Muslims. Mufassir will know all the content of The Quran, while FPI is not. Moreover, without understanding the entire verses of the Quran, it is impossible to create the correct logical reasoning. Obviously, God wanted peace more than He wanted war. God only gives permission for war in an emergency or if the enemy highly corners the Muslim. God even uses a specific word for permission, "udzina lilladziina" at the beginning of Chapter 22:39 to indicate that, actually, He does not want it to happen.³⁸ Knowing the whole Quran means our logical thinking will see that God prefers to incline with peace, and He does not like transgressors.

The failed logic of FPI can be traced back to the meaning they infer in so many verses. The leader of FPI and its members are far away from the qualification of Mufassir. There is an excellent idea for narrating The Quran: "verse in the Quran is the narrate for another verse". It means we cannot see only one verse and narrate it as we wish without knowing the other verses or the entire verses in The Quran. To see this, we will believe that FPI does not understand the Quran as a whole unit.

There is also a verse that says verses in The Quran indeed are meant to be explained, as in Chapter 16 (The Bee) verse 44: "[We sent them] with clear proofs and written ordinances. And We revealed to you the message that you may make clear to the people what was sent down to them and that they might give thought".

Verses in the Quran cannot be identified and narrated one by one, and it needs to be read as a whole before we can make a good logical understanding of one verse only. Most of the verses could be understood generally, but the Prophet's job was to clarify the meaning and the fundamental idea of Quranic verses. Failed logical reason to understand the verses can lead Muslims to bring destruction to humanity, and it has happened just one generation after the Prophet.

Good *Mufassir* will explain the history of Abu Muljam, which FPI never brought up. The history of the failed logical understanding of Quranic verses led to the murder of the fourth Caliph, Ali bin Abi Talib. Using only one verse that defines unbeliever (*kafir*), Abu Muljam then accused Caliph of being so. Abu Muljam also brings the verse that refers to the only law that has to apply in this world: the Law of God. Obviously, he did not read another verse in the Quran about the consultative and counseling process in making a decision.

FPI logic resembles Abu Muljam in accusing people and creating a feeling of having the right to harm or kill someone.³⁹ If they sufficiently pay attention to many other verses of the Quran and the hadith that explain them, it will be apparent that there are only three reasons people have the right to kill others: First, because someone is killing others without a justified reason; Second because he does complex adultery, and third because he converted and want to oppose and destroy Islam. There are no other reasons to kill someone legally. FPI also needs to read the verse that says killing innocent humans is the same as killing the whole human that lives on the earth, just like it is mentioned in The Quran Chapter 5 (The Table Spread) verse 32. Indeed, understanding other verses and the explanation from the Prophet will stop the logic of killing and bring peace instead.

It needs a strong mind, good heart, and spiritual wisdom to understand the whole concept of The Quran. Reading and reciting it will not make Muslims understand The Quran and make true narratives on it. The Quranic verses are full of meaning and very rich in narratives. Trying to narrate it without sufficient knowledge will lead us to deviation. It is when we need experts to explain the meaning of each verse, which we can find in Mufassir.

Some Mufassir says that Muslims can also live the Islamic Life in any country. The Grand idea of The Quran is living the good life. As long as Muslims can pray five times a day, have good morality, help others, and not mess up others' lives, he has already lived in the Islamic way. The Quranic verses taught Muslims to live together with society and pay attention to good behavior and personality. Therefore, living in a non-Muslim state is not an obstacle to living in an Islamic way, even if we have to stay in the United States, Australia, France, India, or other non-Islamic countries without feeling restricted.

Another part in which FPI misuses the Quranic verse is in Chapter 12 (Joseph), verse 40. It is said that "... Legislation is not but for Allah", the narrative then goes to the Islamic law that has to be applied anywhere in the world. All Muslims only have to obey Islamic law, not the law created by men. It is then continued with another verse from chapter 5 (The Table Spread), verse 50, that said: "Then is it the judgment of [the time of] ignorance they desire? But who is better than Allah in judgment for a people who are certain [in faith]". The narratives of this verse by FPI directly blame the Indonesian Law system, a legacy of Dutch colonization. They blame the Dutch as the unbelievers, so the law must not be obeyed. The FPI forgets that all Muslims in Indonesia are free to practice their religion. Muslims can do the Friday Prayer, organize almsgiving, and go to Mecca for pilgrimage. All worship can be carried out freely, and even the government facilitates and protects religious activities. Therefore, it is hard to say that the law should be replaced. Even more, there are many versions of Islamic Law in the world. Arab Saudi, Pakistan, Iran, and Malaysia applied Islamic Government and Islamic law; nevertheless, they appear in a different form of government and employ a different law model.

Back to Chapter 5, verse 50, it is also the occasion of revelation (Asbabun Nuzul) that we have to pay attention to. The story behind the revelation is that there were Jews and Christians who sought justice, and they tried to create their logic based on their evil intention. God then revealed the verse that said God's judgment is the best. Previously, the Jews wanted to escape from their group regulation or the Jewish law that gives severe punishment for adultery. They went to the Prophet hoping to have lower penalties, but God then gave the answers.

Conclusion

FPI is very famous for its violent actions instead of the significant number of humanitarian actions it made. They conduct violence in many aspects of life. Starting as police on morality, FPI then continues with the act of intolerance toward a religious minority group. They have strong reasoning since they took the source from sacred texts. Compared to many narratives scholars in the last century, FPI meets its equal in Conservative Islamist Ulama, which in many parts of the world proved to be promoting violence and terror.

Similarly, FPI makes some logical fallacies in the process of translating and narrating Quranic verses. They seem to prioritize their passion for violence and fighting. It is not obvious whether the leaders or Imams of FPI can be classified as Mufassir, but even if they are, their work is not suitable for the Indonesian community and social situation in the present era. On the other side, if we recognize FPI as a lack of capability in understanding The Quran, there are some faults that we can see, even if we abandon the method of narratives.

Firstly, FPI does not sufficiently understand the meaning of Arabic Classic Language and Arabic Words. All the translated and narrated words tend to be incorrect and lean to the opposite meaning. Secondly, FPI does not have enough knowledge of The Quran as a single entity to be understood entirely. They see only one or two verses, take them randomly to many places in the Chapters, and arrange them to support their intention. They discard consideration of many other verses that say a different thing or say the opposite idea. Thirdly, they never try to understand the social situation and the events that accompany the process of revelation. In short, they do not study the occasion of revelation or Asbabun Nuzul.

FPI Quranic verses are just one case of faulty narratives made by a specific religious group. However, the study of narratives and the process of narratives continue to develop. The idea of FPI's narratives might be wrong in today's situation in Indonesia, but the same idea could be very suitable in another time, another country, or another religion. Religious scholars must keep improving many good ideas within religious teaching and spread love, peace, humanity, and justice in the world.

ENDNOTES

¹ Zainuddin Syarif, Syafiq A. Mughni and Abd Hannan, "Post-truth and Islamophobia in the Contestation of Contemporary Indonesian Politics", *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 10, 2 (2020): 199-225, doi: 10.18326/ijims.v10i2.

² Mark Woodward, et al. "The Islamic Defenders Front: Demonization, Violence and the State in Indonesia, *Cont Islam*, 8 (2014):153-171. DOI 10.1007/s11562-013-0288-1

³ Jeremy Menchick, "Illiberal but not Intolerant: Understanding the Indonesian Council of Ulama's", *Inside Indonesia* 90, (2007).

⁴ Woodward, et al., "The Islamic Defenders Front", p. 165.

⁵ see the similar explanation in Javier Albarran, "The Almohads and the 'Qur'anization' of War Narrative and Ritual", *Religions* 12, (2021): 876, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12100876>

⁶ see also Ihsan Yilmaz, and Ismail Albayrak, "Instrumentalization of Religious Conspiracy Theories in Politics of Victimhood: Narrative of Turkey's Directorate of Religious Affairs", *Religions* 12, (2021): 841, doi.org/10.3390/rel12100841

⁷ The Noble Qur'an, *Open Source of Tarteel Team*, (1995), <http://quran.com>, retrieved 12 April 2022.

⁸ Chiara Formichi, "Violence, Sectarianism, and Politics of Religion: Articulations of Anti-Shi'a discourse in Indonesia", *Indonesia* 98, (2014): 1-27, doi: 10.1353/ind.2014.0016

⁹ *The full text and sentences of verses used in this paper can be seen in: The Noble Qur'an, Open Source of Tarteel Team.*

¹⁰ Shari L. Lowin, *The Making of a Forefather: Abraham in Islamic and Jewish Exegetical Narratives*, (Leiden: BRILL, 2006).

¹¹ Jeffrey R. Halverson, H. L. Goodall Jr., and Steven R. Corman, *Master Narratives of Islamist Extremism*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011).

¹² Halverson, Goodall, and Corman, *Master Narratives*, 11.

¹³ Albarran, "The Almohads and the 'Qur'anization'", 876.

¹⁴ Baudouin Dupret, Barbara Drieskens, and Annelies Moors, (eds.), *Narratives of Truth in Islamic Law*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2008).

¹⁵ Rumea Ahmed, *Narratives of Islamic Legal Theory*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

¹⁶ Zafarullah Khan, *Islam in the Contemporary World: A New Narrative*, (Islamabad: National Book Foundation, 2016).

¹⁷ Thomas Gibson, *Islamic Narrative and Authority in Southeast Asia: From the 16th to the 21st Century*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007)

¹⁸ Sahiron Syamsuddin, (2017). "The Qur'an on the Exclusivist Religious Truth Claim, a Ma'na Cum Maghza Approach and Its Application to Qur'an 2: 111-113" in *Transformative Reading on Sacred Scriptures*, ed. Simone Sinn, (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2017), 99-109.

¹⁹ Khaled Abou El Fadl, *Speaking in God's Name: Islamic Law, Authority and Woman*, (London: Oneworld Publications, 2014).

²⁰ Syarif, Mughni, and Hannan, "Post-truth and Islamophobia".

²¹ Fazlur Rahman, *Revival and Reform in Islam: A Study of Islamic Fundamentalism*, (London: Oneworld Publications, 2003).

²² Rahman, *Revival and Reform*.

- ²³Matteo Benussi, "Sovereign Islam and Tatar Aqidah: Normative Religious Narratives and Grassroots Criticism amongst Tatarstan's Muslims", *Contemporary Islam* 14, (2020): 111-134, doi.org/10.1007/s11562-018-0428-8.
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- ²⁵Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).
- ²⁶Danielle Ross, "Retelling Mecca: Shifting Narratives of Sacred Spaces in Volga-Ural Muslim Hajj Accounts, 1699-1945", *Religions* 12, (2021): 588, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12080588 .
- ²⁷Rahman, *Islam and Modernity*.
- ²⁸Firdaus Syam, et al., "Narrative and the Politics of Identity: Patterns of the Spread and Acceptance of Radicalism and Terrorism in Indonesia", *Religions* 11, (2020):290, doi:10.3390/rel11060290.
- ²⁹See, Ismail Ibn Katsir, *Tafsir Ibnu Katsir, (ditahqiq oleh Dr. Abdullah bin Abdullah bin Abdurahman bin Ishaq Alu Syaikh)*, (Jakarta: Pustaka Imam Syafii, 2009).
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- ³¹David Harnish, "Tolerance of Ambiguity: Negotiating Religion and Sustaining the Lingsar Festival and Its Performing Arts in Lombok, Indonesia", *Religions* 12, (2021): 626. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12080626.
- ³²See, Yilmaz, and Albayrak, "Instrumentalization of Religious Conspiracy Theories", 841.
- ³³Roberto Tottoli, "Ad", in *Encyclopaedia of The Qur'an 1*, ed. Jane D. McAuliffe, (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 21-22.
- ³⁴Reuven Firestone, "Thamud", in *Encyclopaedia of The Qur'an 5*, ed. Jane D. McAuliffe, (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 252-254.
- ³⁵Firdaus Syam, et al., "Narrative and the Politics of Identity", 290.
- ³⁶Albarran, "The Almohads and the "Qur'anization"", 876.
- ³⁷Sahiron Syamsuddin, *A Peaceful Message Beyond The Permission of Warfare (Jihad)*, (Oregon: Cascade, 2014)
- ³⁸Syamsuddin, *A Peaceful Message*.
- ³⁹See also, Formichi, "Violence, sectarianism"

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