JEMAAH ISLAMIYAH'S COLLECTIVE MEMORIES IN POSO: NEGOTIATED BODIES AND SHIFTED SOCIAL SPACES

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ABSTRACT

This article traces the fragile and unfinished journeys of former Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) members as they attempt to re-enter the social fabric of Poso, Central Sulawesi. Through an anthropological lens, this study follows how their bodies bear the memory of conflict, how shifting social spaces reconfigure belonging, and how the disbandment of JI in 2024 unsettles older certainties while opening new dilemmas. Field observation from 2023 to 2025 was carried out through regular conversations, shared daily routines, and careful observation of how ex-militants negotiate presence and absence in communal life. The findings reveal that reintegration is not a straightforward passage from exclusion to acceptance, but a crossroads where ambiguities, fractures, and competing life orientations coexist. Rather than a linear process, it is lived as a series of negotiations—between stigma and recognition, faith and everyday survival, silence and speech. By situating these narratives within the anthropology of post-conflict regions, this article underscores the symbolic, interpretive, and relational dimensions of rebuilding social life, and calls attention to how the legacies of religious extremism are entangled with the embodied and spatial practices of return.

Keywords: Reintegration; Body; Social Space, Jemaah Islamiyah; Post-Conflict, Poso

INTRODUCTION

The history of Poso lingers like a wound on the Indonesian landscape, its scars etched in both memory and geography. What began in 1998 as clashes between Christians and Muslims soon spiralled into overlapping conflicts of tribe, ethnicity, and politics. Villages burned, churches and mosques were razed, and neighbours turned against one another in a spiral of killings that displaced thousands. By the early 2000s, Poso had become a name synonymous with fear, a place where communal coexistence collapsed into a vortex of violence (Rusdianto, 2019). The trauma of those years continues to circulate in stories of loss and survival, shaping not only how communities remember but how they live.

This vacuum of authority and trust allowed jihadist groups to take root. Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), with its disciplined structures and transnational ties, framed the conflict as part of a wider jihad, embedding itself in fractured geographies and fragile communities (Fealy & Borgue, 2005; Schulze, 2017). Poso became more than a battlefield: it was remembered as a laboratory for jihad, where recruitment, training, and ideological testing converged (Satria & Sjah, 2025). As Nurish (2022) notes, massacres such as that at *Walisongo Pesantren* became rallying points, transforming local fear and resentment into ideological fuel. Stories of revenge, identity, and threat circulated widely, narrowing the possibilities for reconciliation (Dwyer, 2015; McRae, 2013). Nurish (2019) has argued that extremism cannot be treated as a lingering drama but as a project that must be dismantled at its roots if Indonesia is to move forward, particularly in its eastern provinces.

Yet even as the guns quieted after the Malino Declaration, the memory of violence persisted as a kind of cultural sediment. Assmann & Czaplicka (1995) reminds us that cultural memory preserves the store of knowledge from which groups derive their sense of unity and peculiarity. In Poso, these memories are not neutral: they define who belongs and who does not, who is "us" and who remains an "other." Funkenstein (1989) adds that no memory, even the most intimate, can be detached from society; it is mediated by symbols, institutions, and collective consciousness. For Poso, this means that reintegration is haunted not only by state security agendas but by 'the everyday inscriptions of memory in markets, schools, mosques, and neighbourhoods divided along religious lines (Mashuri et al., 2024).'

Against this backdrop, the disbandment of JI in August 2024 was hailed as a national counterterrorism success. But disbandment is not erasure. As Ismail (2025) argues, the ideological legacies of JI remain embedded in *pesantren,* schools, and imagined solidarities of Islamic association (*ukhuwah Islamiyah*),

educating thousands of students and ensuring continuity across generations. In Poso, where JI's presence was once formative, disbandment did not dissolve embodied memories of violence or erase the traces of militant geographies. Rather, it unsettled them, forcing former militants to renegotiate their identities in communities where their bodies, reputations, and pasts remain visible.

Here, the anthropology of the body becomes crucial. Lock (1993) reminds us that the body is not a universal biological constant but a site of social inscription, historical memory, and political struggle. Former militants in Poso carry bodies marked by training, imprisonment, and torture — bodies that signify both stigma and survival. As Mahmood shows, religious identity is not only belief but embodied reality, enacted through repeated bodily acts that cultivate memory, desire, and agency (Mahmood, 2001, 2005, 2012). In Poso, the beard, the niqab, or the scars of conflict are not inert signs; they are living reminders of a jihadist past that complicates the possibility of ordinary life.

At the same time, space itself is contested. Lefebvre (2009) and Bourdieu (2018) teach us that space is never neutral: it is produced through power, ideology, and capital. In post-conflict Poso, neighbourhoods remain segregated along religious lines, and counterterrorism operations have reconfigured everyday geographies through surveillance, checkpoints, and suspicion (Dresser et al., 2025; Haripin et al., 2024). These spaces of exclusion and marginalization are precisely where former militants attempt to reinsert themselves — as farmers, traders, teachers — crafting new forms of visibility and silence.

Finally, reintegration must be understood through the lens of liminality. Turner described liminality as the in-between stage of transformation, where old identities are shed but new ones are not yet secure (Turner, 1967, 1987). For ex-JI members, reintegration is not a linear "return" but a precarious passage — neither militants nor fully accepted civilians, suspended between stigma and belonging. Winkler & Kristensen (2022) remind us that such thresholds are both precarious and creative: spaces where conflict and ambiguity can generate new possibilities of order.

Amidst the traces of collective trauma, the disbandment of JI thus marks a new milestone in the recharacterization of former militants in Poso. Yet it raises pressing anthropological questions: Where do the bodies of these men and women return? How do shifting social spaces shape their everyday negotiations of identity? What happens to bodies once touched by violence when they attempt to inhabit communities that may never fully accommodate them? This study seeks to address these questions, situating reintegration not

as a finished state project but as an open-ended negotiation of body, space, and liminality in Poso's fragile post-conflict landscape.

Indeed, this anthropological study is based on empirical data collected through research and fieldwork (**Žikić**, 2007). Alongside this, the researcher also draws on secondary sources, including literature studies (books, journal articles, research reports, and investigations) and other relevant documents that provide additional support for the analysis. The petitum is examined using an Interpretative Model (Franke, 1984; Geertz, 1983) in combination with a descriptive analysis approach. Data collection includes semi-structured, informal interviews with different actors and there were at least ten respondents identified as having relevant knowledge and authority on the subject.

ANTHROPOLOGICAL LANDSCAPE ON JAMAAH ISLAMIAH
Anthropology of the Body

The body, in anthropology, is never only a biological organ. It is at once flesh, faith, and form: a living archive where memory, ritual, and social exchange are inscribed. Foucault reminds us that bodies are not neutral matter but surfaces where discipline settles, where power writes itself into gestures, postures, and habits of obedience (Castro-Gómez et al., 2023; Dudrick, 2005; Foucault, 1975; Pylypa, 1998). Through discipline, the body becomes a citizen, moulded into productivity and docility. Yet to reduce the body to an object of control is to overlook its symbolic vitality — its capacity to carry meaning, to embody belief, to serve as a cultural artifact within religious and social life.

This double life of the body — as disciplined and as symbolic — is illuminated in Veena Das's Life and Words. Writing of the Partition riots of 1947 and the anti-Sikh violence of 1984, she shows how women's bodies became the ground upon which history was inscribed (Das, 2007). The pain of injury and humiliation could not be captured by statistics alone; it was felt and remembered in flesh, silence, and gesture. Through Wittgenstein's notion of "language games," Das reads the body as a grammar of suffering, a way violence seeps into the ordinary and continues to live there (Cook, 2000; Das, 1998).

Judith Butler takes this further, asking us to see the body as something that materializes only through norms that govern its recognition. In Bodies That Matter, she argues that bodies are shaped not once but continually, through rules, laws, and religious codes that dictate which lives appear intelligible (Butler, 2020). The body, then, is never private; it exists in relation, bound within webs of intersubjectivity.

Scheper-Hughes & Lock (1987) offer a map for holding these insights together. Their "Three Bodies" — the individual body of lived experience, the social body as a metaphor for society, and the body politic where institutions exert control — provide a layered framework for reading embodiment. This triad helps us see how bodies mediate between personal pain, communal belonging, and political regulation. In this way, the body emerges not simply as a passive surface but as a threshold: where memory, violence, and power collide, and where the possibility of reintegration must be negotiated.

Social Space

In anthropology, space is never empty. It does not simply sit as a backdrop to human life, waiting to be filled. Space breathes; it gathers and disperses, holding within it networks of interaction, intercultural exchange, ideology, and ritual. What appears physical — a street corner, a market, a mosque — is also social, political, and religious. It is a stage where bodies move and where meanings are constantly made and remade.

Henri Lefebvre reminds us that space is not neutral terrain but a production — shaped by symbols, values, and ideologies that circulate within society (Lefebvre, 2009). For him, space is the outcome of collective agreements and struggles, a texture woven by the state, by capital, by memory. Every built environment carries traces of these forces: a mosque funded by merchants, a school erected by missionaries, a field once fought over in communal violence. None are passive, for each is inscribed with power and shaped by histories of belonging and exclusion.

Pierre Bourdieu offers another layer to this understanding. While Lefebvre emphasizes the production of space, Bourdieu asks us to see its structuring logic. Social space, for him, is abstract yet concrete in its effects — formed through the distribution of capital: economic, cultural, and symbolic (Bourdieu, 2018). These forms of capital generate sub-spaces, arenas where individuals and groups struggle for recognition, prestige, and authority. Distinctions emerge, hierarchies harden, and positions within society are negotiated through the unequal play of these resources.

To dwell in a space, then, is to dwell within these invisible architectures of power. A village square may look communal, but who speaks there, who leads prayer, who claims legitimacy — these depend on accumulated capital. Space is always stratified, always contested. It is a map not just of geography but of social possibility, where inclusion and exclusion are enacted in ways both subtle and overt.

Liminality and Reintegration

Liminality speaks of thresholds — those in-between spaces where identities waver, unsettled between what has been and what has yet to come. Turner (1967) describes the liminal stage as a suspension of ordinary structures, a time when the old self has been loosened but the new self is not yet secured. In this interval, people inhabit a condition of betwixt and between, carrying fragments of past identities while groping toward uncertain futures (Turner, 1987; Wels et al., 2011).

This threshold is marked by instability. Rules lose their grip, hierarchies dissolve, and familiar scripts of belonging no longer hold. Yet within this disorientation lies possibility. For Turner, liminality is not simply void but fertile ground: it opens space for solidarity, for new ties of fraternity, for the creative improvisations of life unmoored from its usual constraints (Bigger, 2009). In ritual as in community, the dismantling of norms can bring forth unexpected forms of spontaneity, reshaping how people live with one another and imagine who they might become.

Still, liminality cannot endure forever. It is a passage, not a dwelling place. Its inherent instability demands resolution: the energies it releases must crystallize into some form of new social order, however fragile. As Blackstock (2024) reminds us, the liminal stage is both generative and precarious — it contains the seeds of transformation but also the risk of fragmentation. Reintegration, then, is the closing of this passage: the moment when identities reassemble, and when the creative turbulence of liminality is absorbed into the structures of a renewed, if altered, society. It is what Turner (1987) called a liminal passage — neither one thing nor another, elastic and dialogical, a constant reworking of identity in fragile everyday spaces.

Together, the three approaches — body, space, and liminality — serve as analytical companions in tracing the return of former Jemaah Islamiyah members after the group's disbandment. Their bodies, marked by beards, headscarves, and particular forms of dress, become living archives of memory that continue to speak within the community. These embodied signs circulate through social spaces in Poso — mosques, markets, neighbourhoods — where belonging is contested and recognition is never fixed but constantly negotiated. At the same time, their journey is liminal: a threshold state of being neither fully outside nor fully reintegrated, suspended between past identities and uncertain futures. Seen together, these lenses reveal reintegration not as a linear outcome but as a fragile, embodied, and spatially situated process of repositioning within the shifting fabric of post-conflict Poso.

JEMAAH ISLAMIYAH DISBANDMENT

Despite its formal dissolution on June 30, 2024, JI's ideological influence is likely to endure among segments of Indonesian society (Ismail, 2025). *Hizbut Tahrir* Indonesia (HTI), *Jamaah Ansharut Daulah* (JAD), *Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia* (MMI), and smaller circles ad all been banned in previous years, yet the disbandment of Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) carried a different resonance. For more than three decades, JI had inscribed itself into Indonesia's militant landscape, weaving together *pesantren,* da'wah, and armed training. Its decision to declare loyalty to the Republic of Indonesia signalled not only the end of a clandestine organization but also the unsettling of identities long anchored in allegiance and secrecy.

In August 2024, JI's Poso branch formally declared its disbandment, following symbolic announcements issued from Jakarta down to sub-district levels in Central Sulawesi. The ceremony was staged with visible choreography: state agencies such as National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT) and Indonesian Special Counterterrorism Task Force (Densus 88 AT Polri) stood alongside religious figures and community leaders, watching as former JI cadres publicly renounced their ties. At the heart of the event was a statement read aloud by the group, preserved in its textual form:

> "We, Al-Jamaah Al-Islamiyah (former), the people of Central Sulawesi and its surroundings, declare: (1) Support or we hear and we obey (*samina wa ato'na)* or the dissolution of Al-Jamaah Al-Islamiyah from our senior religious leaders (*masyayikh*)*,* in Bogor, June 30, 2024; (2) Ready to return to the embrace of the Republic of Indonesia and actively participate, moving away from the understanding of excessive extreme attitude (*tatharruf*) and groups; (3) Appreciate the applicable laws in accordance with the regulations in force in the Republic of Indonesia and, with commitment, consistently implement the policy of logical consequences" (TBNews, 2024).

The language was deliberate: loyalty, obedience, participation, law. It was a performance of reconciliation meant to reassure both the state and local communities that JI, at least as an organization, was no more.

Yet the disbandment was far from simple closure. Khoirunnisa & Priyanto (2025) argue it was largely symbolic, celebrated as a counterterrorism success while silencing victims' voices and leaving unaddressed the remnants of violence. Ismail (2025) highlights that Densus 88 AT Polri has identified over 100 active schools linked to JI across Java, Sumatra, Sulawesi, and West Nusa Tenggara, collectively educating around 18,000 students. This extensive

network ensures that JI's ideological influence persists, presenting significant ongoing challenges for counterterrorism initiatives. As Ismail (2025) contends, while dissolution may prevent cadres from joining global jihad fronts, it cannot extinguish the spirit of jihad nurtured by the imagined solidarities of Islamic association (*ukhuwah Islamiyah*).

In Poso, these ambiguities resonate even more deeply. The region remains a symbolic and practical stronghold in JI's history, where training, recruitment, and ideological testing converged during and after the communal conflict (Satria & Sjah, 2025). The transformation of Poso from a site of communal violence into what Satria & Sjah (2025) describe as a "laboratory for jihad" illustrates how extremist groups appropriated post-conflict environments to advance broader militant agendas. Former militants returning to this terrain now face the delicate task of reinserting themselves into communities that still bear the imprint of those histories.

Adnan Arsal, a charismatic and deeply respected religious leader in Poso, became pivotal in legitimizing the disbandment. Known for his influence during the conflict and later in peacebuilding, his endorsement enabled followers to revoke oaths of allegiance and align themselves with the state (Warta Sulteng, 2024). National figures such as Para Wijayanto and Abu Fatih echoed similar reasoning, acknowledging that imprisonment, suffering, and fatigue had made continuation untenable (Tempo, 2024).

Still, beneath the staged declarations, uncertainties persisted. Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict (2023) noted that underground teachings and informal indoctrination networks continued, even as *pesantren* leaders publicly pledged loyalty to the Republic. The government sought to close the door to JI's resurgence, wary of new divisions, women and children being drawn into militant subcultures, and the potential for sectarian conflict to reignite.

What becomes clear is that disbandment is not a single event but an unfolding process. Former leaders and followers alike must find strategies to socially survive this collapse — some embracing reconciliation, others retreating into quiet networks, and many navigating between memory and reformulation. After thirty years of da'wah, *pesantren*-building, and clandestine militancy, JI's collapse did not erase its imprint. Instead, it produced a liminal moment: a threshold where trauma, memory, and new negotiations intertwine, reshaping how communities imagine belonging, particularly for the most vulnerable — women, children, and those left to live in the shadow of its legacy. As one former incarcerated individual involved in the Poso case reflected in our conversation, the disbandment was not so much a voluntary end as part of the state's agenda-setting; for him, regeneration would continue in other forms,

sustaining the movement's spirit even if its structure has dissolved.

THE BODY AS A SITE OF MEMORY

The discourse of Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) in Poso cannot be read in the same register as that of JI in Java. In Eastern Indonesia, Poso became both a target and a fertile ground for JI's ideas, a place where its networks found resonance and promise. The story begins earlier, with the arrival of migrants under the New Order's transmigration program in the 1970s. Designed to relieve population pressures on Java and secure food self-sufficiency, transmigration succeeded in its developmental goals but also carried unintended consequences. Across the archipelago, new settlements often unsettled old balances, giving rise to communal frictions that would later ignite into conflict — in Ambon, in Kalimantan, and, most fatefully, in Poso.

As Ali-Fauzi (2018) notes, violence in Poso unfolded in two distinct but entangled episodes. The first, between 1998 and 2002, was a communal war between Muslims and Christians, a conflict that reconfigured everyday life in villages and towns. The second, from 2002 to 2007, was marked by targeted acts of terrorism by jihadist groups against Christian communities. Together, these episodes created a layered landscape of violence in which local grievances merged with transnational jihadist agendas.

The demographics of Poso made this convergence possible. The district's population of over 250,000 (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2024) is a mosaic of ethnic and tribal groups: Pamona, Lage, and Kaili in the coastal areas; Napu, Besoa, and Bada in the highlands; alongside Javanese, Bugis, and migrants from Gorontalo. Historically, these communities had coexisted with a degree of openness, sharing livelihoods in farming and fishing. But after 1998, suspicion seeped into daily interactions. Lines of difference hardened, particularly between Muslims and Christians, and violence redefined the ordinary rhythms of coexistence.

Into this charged atmosphere stepped JI. Their presence acted as both match and fuel: organized, ideologically driven, and ready to seize upon the instability. Poso became not just a battlefield but a hub, anchoring JI's broader mission of the Third *Mantiqi* — the eastern command zone that stretched across Mindanao, Sabah, East Kalimantan, and Sulawesi. For JI, the Christian–Muslim conflict provided the ideal terrain to advance the long-standing dream of an Islamic state, attracting fighters including former Darul Islam members who re-entered the struggle under JI's banner. At its height between 1997 and 2002, JI's relationship with al-Qaeda further internationalized this local war,

tying the hills and rivers of Poso to a global project of jihad (Jones, 2005).

Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) once operated through a transnational structure that extended well beyond Indonesia. *Mantiqi* I, based in Malaysia and Singapore, oversaw fundraising; *Mantiqi* II organized jihad in Java, Sumatra, and other Indonesian islands; *Mantiqi* III directed operations in the Philippines, Kalimantan, and Sulawesi; while *Mantiqi* IV managed fundraising networks in Australia (Karnavian, 2015; Nasrum, 2016). This layered hierarchy reveals the sophistication of JI's organizational design, linking local acts of violence with global currents of capital and ideology. Against this backdrop, the declaration of disbandment in Central Sulawesi in August 2024 raised urgent questions: how would reintegration unfold in a region where memories of violence remain vivid, and where the collective silence surrounding the past still lingers?

International Crisis Group (2007) documented in painful detail the pattern of JI's involvement in the Poso conflict. Their acts ranged from targeted killings to bombings, robberies, and attempted assassinations — violence that seeped into the everyday and transformed markets, churches, and roads into fragile spaces of fear:

Table 1

Jemaah Islamiyah's Attack During Poso Conflict

No.	Date	Incidents
1.	November 2003	The murder of the treasurer of the Central Sulawesi Protestant Church and his driver
2.	May 2004	The murder of Palu prosecutor Fery Silalahi by a motorcyclist
3.	July 2004	The murder of a Christian army officer's wife
4.	July 2004	The murder of Protestant pastor Susianti Tinulele
5.	November 2004	The beheading of village head Carminalis Ndele
6.	November 2004	The bombing at Poso's central market, which killed six people
7.	December 2004	The bombing at Imanuel Church in Palu
8.	April 2005	The armed robbery of approximately Rp 500 million in Poso regional government salaries
9.	May 2005	The bombing at Tentena's central market, which killed 22 people

10.	August 2005	The murder of Budianto and Sugito, suspected police informants
11.	October 2005	The murder of Agus Sulaeman, a police officer
12.	October 2005	The beheading of three Christian high school students
13.	December 2005	The bombing of a pork market in Palu, which killed seven people
14.	January 2006	The attempted assassination of the Poso Police Chief by a motorcyclist
15.	2001 Month?	The murder of a Balinese journalist
16.	2004 Month?	Armed robbery against a cigarette company truck and the shooting of its driver

Source: Results of data processing compiled from various sources by the authors.

Today, at least 180 former JI militants in Poso have formally declared their disbandment and pledged loyalty to Pancasila and the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (Kompas, 2024). Religious leader Adnan Arsal has been pivotal in encouraging their acceptance back into society, framing reintegration as not only symbolic but also functional: a way for reputations to be restored and for former militants to participate once more in community life. Reintegration, however, is negotiated not in declarations alone but in the minutiae of everyday existence. Dress, for instance, remains an embodied marker of continuity and change: veils, burqas, and other attire associated with JI's teachings continue to circulate in Poso, signaling both religious devotion and the enduring imprint of an organizational identity that persists even after formal dissolution.

The disbandment of JI cannot erase the memories inscribed on the bodies of those who lived through Poso's violence. As Lock (1993) reminds us, "the body is not a universal biological constant but a site of social inscription, historical memory, and political struggle." In the context of Poso, bodies of ex-militants and communities alike have been cultivated through militant training, carceral torture, and the embodied memories of conflict. They are at once disciplined and resistant, docile in some settings yet forceful carriers of unresolved narratives.

One former JI commander, imprisoned for his role in the conflict, described torture during his incarceration that left him medically declared infertile — a verdict later unsettled when he fathered children after release. His body thus becomes an archive of contradiction: scarred by institutional violence

yet resistant to its determinations. He also recalled meeting the sole survivor of one of his attacks, claiming she had since converted to Islam and donned the niqab. For him, this encounter was remembered as vindication, violence reframed as da'wah. But these memories, carried in and through his body, remain unsettling for the wider community: what he narrates as divine purpose, others recall as unhealed wounds.

His refusal to be interviewed by foreign, particularly white, researchers, also demonstrates how bodies remain entangled in broader hierarchies of representation. In his view, the Western researcher embodied colonial histories and global counterterrorism agendas. Here the body illustrates Lock's observation (1993) that 'the body mediates all reflection and action upon the world'. His gestures of refusal remind us that the body is not simply private matter but a medium through which historical struggle and political dissent are enacted.

Placed alongside her husband's story, the transformation of a former JI commander's wife — once veiled in niqab, now moving through Poso's marketplace unveiled like other Muslim women — illustrates how reintegration unfolds as an embodied negotiation of appearance, gesture, and meaning. Within JI, the niqab was more than fabric: it functioned as a marker of female identity, aligning with Salafi teachings that framed it as obligation, a symbolic wall that separated insiders from the wider community. To remove it is to dismantle that wall, to reconfigure the body as a communicative surface that signals openness and the will to inhabit neutral space with others (Alfredson & Cungu, 2008; Korobkin, 1992). In this metamorphosis, the body becomes both archive and experiment — carrying the stigma of jihad while testing new possibilities of ordinariness. As Lock (1993) observes, "the body, imbued with social meaning, is now historically situated, and becomes not only a signifier of belonging and order, but also an active forum for the expression of dissent and loss." In Poso, these bodily negotiations make visible the paradox of reintegration: bodies that remain reminders of conflict yet also strive toward the fragile work of becoming civilian.

Although large-scale violence in Poso has waned, the memories of conflict and the narratives once propagated by JI continue to complicate reconciliation (Satria & Sjah, 2025). In this fragile terrain, widows of former commanders gather to support one another in raising children, sustaining livelihoods, and navigating education. Men, too, perform this quiet labour of reintegration: helping each other socialize, work, and care for families. These practices suggest a shift in embodiment — from bodies once defined as "fighters" to bodies that now strive for ordinariness. Yet the "jihadi body" remains inscribed in

memory, both their own and the community's, making reintegration as much about the imagination of others as about their own transformation.

Here, Saba Mahmood's work offers a powerful lens. She reminds us that religious identity is not only a matter of belief and reason but also a material and embodied reality, inhabited and experienced through the body, affect, and sensibility (Mahmood, 2012). In Poso, the hijab, niqab, beard, or other attire associated with JI cannot be read as simple declarations of piety. They are material practices through which identity is performed, remembered, and reworked. Their alteration — removal, reshaping, softening — marks a conscious act of agency, a way of reconstituting the self in relation to others (Mahmood, 2005).

Yet Mahmood also pushes us to complicate our assumptions about agency. Repeated bodily acts train one's memory, desire, and intellect to behave according to established standards of conduct (Mahmood, 2001). In this sense, the niqab or beard once worn by JI members was not merely symbolic, but part of a disciplined practice that cultivated memory and desire toward jihadist ideals. The decision to remove or alter these signs does not necessarily erase discipline, but reorients it toward other forms of belonging. As Mahmood (2001) notes, agency is not only entailed in those acts that result in change but also those that aim toward continuity, stasis, and stability. Reintegration, then, is not simply a rupture with the past; it is also a continuity of bodily discipline, now redirected toward sustaining family life, building trust, and negotiating ordinariness in the everyday.

The body thus becomes what Mahmood (2012) calls the site where the precariousness of religious identity is both experienced and contested. In Poso, this precariousness is lived in ordinary gestures: in a widow's decision to unveil, in the shared labour of raising children, in men's quiet work of caring for families once fractured by conflict. These bodies carry scars of violence and memories of jihad, yet they also enact new modes of agency — not only through change, but through the fragile continuity of living as ordinary citizens once more. What matters are the cultural memories that sustain community boundaries (Assmann & Czaplicka, 1995), the embodied negotiations of everyday life (Mahmood, 2001, 2005, 2012), and the liminal crossroads where former militants and communities alike search for new ways of inhabiting a shared space.

BETWEEN EXCLUSION AND RESISTANCE

The 180 former members of Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) in Poso are not merely

numbers on a security register; they inhabit spaces, relationships, and imaginations within the community. They are religious teachers, traders, farmers, livestock breeders. Outwardly, their profiles are often indistinguishable from the wider population. They move through the same markets, cultivate the same fields, and share the same rhythms of everyday life. Yet what sets them apart lies less in their occupations than in their orientation to the state and its legitimacy. JI's vision of an Islamic state continues to linger as an ideological horizon, shaping how some of these men and women inhabit social space. Publicly, many appear reintegrated; privately, some still carry jihadist worldviews, tactically managing disclosure as a way of maintaining presence within Poso's social fabric. In this sense, reintegration is not a simple homecoming but a negotiation of visibility and silence.

On the afternoon of May 27, 2025, under Poso's sweltering heat, we entered the modest home of Junaidi (a pseudonym), a former JI commander once convicted for his involvement in the beheading of three non-Muslim high school students in 2005 — an event etched into communal memory as one of the cruellest markers of the conflict. For JI at the time, it had been a point of pride; for the community, it remains an open wound. Cultural memory, as Assmann & Czaplicka (1995) argues, preserves the store of knowledge from which a group derives its awareness of unity and peculiarity. In Poso, this means the memory of violence does not simply fade with organizational disbandment but remains inscribed in communal consciousness, marking former JI members simultaneously as insiders and as "the opposite" against which others define themselves (Assmann & Czaplicka, 1995).

Junaidi, a transmigrant from Yogyakarta, greeted us quietly with his wife. Once celebrated for his militancy, he now tills his land, drawing on agricultural skills honed during transmigration. His life story sits at the threshold of resistance and return: leaving the JI network before its disbandment in 2024, he framed his decision in terms of family — particularly the influence of his wife, whose presence anchored his reintegration and reshaped his sense of belonging.

His wife, Hartiningsih (a pseudonym), embodies another spatial negotiation. A Bugis woman, middle-class and economically successful, she runs a shop in Poso's bustling market — a space where identities are displayed and reputations built. Known for their resilience in trade, Bugis women often carry families through hardship, and Hartiningsih was no exception. Before marrying Junaidi, she had raised six children as a widow, sustaining her household through commerce. Her entry into JI's orbit was not ideological but relational, mediated through marriage. Initially, she had not worn the hijab and identified herself as a modern Muslim woman. But the Christian–Muslim

conflict in Poso unsettled her sense of self. Witnessing division, she sought refuge in a more visible religious identity, eventually reshaping her appearance and practices in line with Islamic norms.

The memory of violence in Poso is inscribed not only in collective recollection but also in the geography of everyday spaces. As Ali-Fauzi (2018) records, "these include snipers who killed 13 Christians in Poso and Morowali in October 2003; a minibus explosion in front of the Poso market that resulted in six deaths in November 2004; a bomb explosion in front of the Tentena market on May 28, 2005, that killed 23 people; the mutilation of three schoolgirls in October 2005; a bomb explosion in the Palu market on December 31, 2005, that caused the death of 8 people; and two bomb explosions, which killed a man and a woman in 2006." Such acts transformed markets, schools, and roads into haunted sites, reshaping how people moved, gathered, and remembered. Here, collective memory becomes normative: the narratives of past violence provide criteria, implicit and explicit, by which communities authorize, criticize, or justify contemporary actions (Knapp, 1989).

Post-conflict Poso itself remains spatially divided along religious lines, where Muslims and Christians inhabit different geographical zones, schools, and neighbourhoods (Mashuri et al., 2024). Segregated residential patterns persist: most Muslims in the capital, most Christians in the southern areas (Mashuri et al., 2024). This polarization, born of displacement, created vulnerabilities for groups like JI to embed themselves in fractured spaces, but also opportunities for peacebuilding through education (Mashuri et al., 2024). The religious diversity of Poso, once the basis of coexistence, was restructured through conflict: Christians exiled to the beach shore, Muslims consolidating inland, and militant groups embedding themselves in these fault-lines of belonging and exclusion.

Counterterrorism measures have further reconfigured this spatial order. Dresser et al. (2025) argue that counter-terrorism training and vigilance campaigns, while designed to enhance safety, often embed suspicion and surveillance into everyday life, producing unintended consequences: fostering exclusion, marginalization, and fear among communities most frequently targeted. Rather than building trust, such vigilance campaigns may deepen social divisions, cultivate environments of fear, and stigmatise minority identities in public space (Dresser et al., 2025). These dynamics were visible in Poso, where workplaces, schools, religious institutions, and neighbourhoods became saturated with the spatialisation of counter-terrorism.

During the height of military operations between 2016–2020, local communities reported displacement and hardship. Many residents evacuated their farms;

those who remained faced accusations of being terrorist accomplices. As Haripin et al. (2024) observe, 'instead of uplifting the social and economic condition of the local community, the territorial operation that was conducted by the military further marginalised the people living in the operation area'. This left deep marks in the landscape of trust, where the boundary between state protection and state suspicion became blurred.

In shifting from exclusion to participation, Junaidi's household illustrates how reintegration is both enabled and constrained by these spatial configurations. Suspicion lingers, but so too does the possibility of reclaiming space through everyday acts — running a market stall, tending land, sharing meals with neighbours. Former militants and their families, once denied access to communal life, are gradually re-entering educational, economic, and social spaces. As Assmann & Czaplicka (1995) reminds us, cultural memory works through identificatory determination — in positive forms of "we are this" or negative forms of "that is our opposite." In Poso, former JI members embody both, standing as reminders of violence yet also testing the fragile possibility of coexistence. Reintegration in Poso thus unfolds not in a vacuum but within landscapes of divided geographies, surveillance, and cultural memory, where solidarity projects emerge against the backdrop of haunted markets and roads that still whisper of conflict.

REINTEGRATION AS LOCAL PEACE INITIATIVE

The state regards JI primarily as a "deradicalization target" — a category to be managed, monitored, and disciplined. Yet at the community level, the picture is more complicated. Villages, mosques, and neighbourhoods remain caught in a quiet dilemma: should former JI militants be embraced as neighbours returning home, or kept at a wary distance as lingering reminders of conflict? Within this tense atmosphere, the trajectories of some 180 former members diverge. A number have retreated from public life, living in muted withdrawal, while others cautiously attempt to reclaim their religious identities in more moderate forms — for instance, by participating in Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) or Muhammadiyah, where the language of piety is anchored less in militancy and more in community service. As Pettinger (2020) observes, "pre-emptive counter-terrorism regimes cannot escape their reliance upon the intensely subjective separation of 'good' from 'bad', and of suspicion of the Other." In Poso, this logic lingers in everyday encounters, where suspicion and recognition coexist uneasily.

For many, reintegration resembles what Turner (1967) called a liminal condition: a space of being in-between — no longer militants, but not yet

fully ordinary citizens. Their lives unfold at a crossroads, suspended between identities that have not fully dissolved and new ones that have yet to take shape. Reintegration is precisely this struggle: the act of inhabiting a threshold while being acted upon by both state surveillance and communal memory. Some find belonging through mosque communities that encourage reinterpretations of faith, others through farming cooperatives or small businesses, and still others through embedding themselves in moderate circles. Each path reflects a negotiation with stigma, a search for continuity in lives marked by rupture.

Not all former JI members in Poso were drawn into militancy by the communal war itself; some framed their past jihad as resistance to wider structures of social injustice. Terrorism is not simply a descriptive category but a technology of governance, born out of colonial logics, which entrenches exceptional measures as normal responses to political violence (Khan, 2024). For them, jihad was less about sectarian strife than about confronting a system they saw as corrupt or *toghut*. This rationale — fluid, adaptive, and resistant — lingers even after the formal disbandment of JI, showing how ideology persists beyond organizations. Reintegration, therefore, is not merely dismantling cells but also grappling with embodied memories of injustice. As Maringira (2025) argues, ex-combatants rarely transition fully into civilian life because their military identities remain embodied, active in both personal and political realms. In Poso, this means ex-JI members occupy an uneasy threshold: disciplined as "targets," yet carrying embodied pasts as resources for resistance and remembrance.

From field observations, the most difficult hurdle for reintegration is not theological but economic. Before disbandment, JI maintained internal business bases under emirs to sustain income and cohesion. Once dismantled, many were cut adrift, stripped of that institutional economy. Survival now depends on improvisation: roadside stalls, farming, trade in herbal goods. Some carve out what might be called a sub-subaltern space in the social structure — modest enterprises that allow them to re-enter public life without drawing attention to their pasts. As Kaleem (2022) notes, "when surveillance becomes associated with safeguarding and vulnerability, the monitoring of conducts does not end with professional duties; people carry over the logic of risk into their personal interactions as well." The ex-JI entrepreneur is therefore both shopkeeper and suspect, woven into daily life yet watched from its margins.

Junaidi and his wife exemplify this paradox. Once commanders in JI, they now run a small business in herbal products and health equipment. Their shift from ideological leadership to entrepreneurship illustrates how reintegration unfolds not through abstract policy but through the quiet labour of farming,

trading, exchanging goods — creating fragile spaces where dialogue with neighbours can begin again. Yet, as Maringira (2025) reminds us, "the burden of ex-combatants' transition into civilian life is left to the ex-combatants and the communities through which they transit." Reintegration here is not gifted by policy but negotiated through households, kinship ties, and markets.

Still, tension persists. As former members told us, the disbandment of JI did not erase the dream of an Islamic state; it only reshaped its terrain. Some continue to see social and economic injustice as grounds for jihad. "JI's ability to mobilise around unresolved grievances in Poso demonstrates the enduring risk of extremist resurgence in post-conflict environments" (Satria & Sjah, 2025). Community memory sets symbolic boundaries: deciding who may return, and who remains an outsider. Cultural memory, as Assmann & Czaplicka (1995) suggests, holds "fixed points" of fateful events, preserved through rituals and narratives. These memories, both intimate and collective, authorize moral judgments about who belongs, and under what terms.

The state, meanwhile, continues to view reintegration through a securitized lens. Ajil (2025) conceptualizes counterterrorism as a spatialized biopolitical dispositive, where counter-terror power flows through institutions and everyday spaces, embedding itself in bodies and geographies. In Poso, this takes the form of checkpoints, patrols, and programs branded as deradicalization, which, while meant to provide safety, often reinforce suspicion. As Dresser et al. (2025) observe, counterterror vigilance campaigns risk deepening social divisions, cultivating fear, and stigmatizing minority identities in public space. Rather than trust, they produce fragmentation.

Even initiatives framed as benevolent — scholarships for children of convicted militants, some sent to universities or aviation academies — remain double-edged. They acknowledge material needs but risk reinforcing the sense that reintegration is a state-managed spectacle, rather than a community-driven process. Local figures like Adnan Arsyal stress that what former militants need most is economic opportunity and education rooted in everyday life, not the glare of securitized projects.

Ultimately, the question is not whether ex-JI militants can be "deradicalized" but how reintegration is imagined, by whom, and at what cost. Funkenstein (1989) reminds us that memory is never private but mediated by symbols and institutions. In Poso, local peace initiatives and neighbourhood reconciliation often stand in tension with state-authored counterterror narratives. The result is a liminal space where ex-militants and communities negotiate belonging amid overlapping yet competing frameworks of memory. Winkler & Kristensen (2022) describe such moments of transition as being "betwixt

and between" — suspended states where the old order has dissolved but the new has not yet taken root. Reintegration in Poso inhabits precisely this space: precarious yet creative, haunted by the past yet opening toward fragile solidarities of everyday life.

CONCLUSION

The finding of this study shows that disbandment of Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) in Poso demonstrates ideological and cultural networks that do not vanish with the dissolution of formal organizations. As our fieldwork shows, the legacy of JI is not only organizational but embodied, spatial, and remembered. Its traces persist in bodies marked by training and imprisonment, in spaces once haunted by checkpoints and segregated neighbourhoods, and in memories that continue to define who belongs and who remains outside the circle of community. Disbandment may have signalled a new milestone in Indonesia's counterterrorism narrative, but for those who lived the conflict, it is less an end than a turning point. What shapes the trajectories of former militants is not merely the absence of JI's command structure but the presence of relationships: family ties, community acceptance, the ability to forge livelihoods and new meanings. These are the forces that determine whether one "returns home" as a neighbour, or drifts toward the margins as an outsider. Reintegration in Poso is therefore a negotiation, suspended between exclusion and acceptance, memory and forgetting.

However, we need to study further analysis on this case to problematize disbandment, which describes beyond state narratives of success. The lesson of Poso is that state-led counterterrorism alone cannot secure this future. The reintegration of former JI members in Poso thus reflects more than a policy achievement; it is an unfinished anthropology of return. Bodies, spaces, and memories are continuously reconfigured, and peace itself is made and unmade in these negotiations. The "way home" is not simply a return, but a fragile and ongoing process of severing old ties while reweaving the threads of harmony in a landscape where trauma still lingers and futures remain contested.

The social and cultural process of reintegration of former JI is not linear but cyclical, a recycling of embodiment. Bodies once inscribed with the discipline of jihad are now reshaped within other social networks among former JI members—as ordinary citizens, sometimes as preachers, or as figures of suspicion. Lock (1993) reminds us that the body is a site where memory, politics, and identity intersect; in Poso, these former jihadi bodies carry both the symbolic margins of past militancy and the fragile hope of new belonging. Even within the remnants of prison networks, what once functioned as cells

of militant resistance now contain the possibility of reweaving social trust. The transformation of one former commander — now trusted by both Muslim and Christian communities to mediate dialogue — is emblematic of how ruptured identities can become resources for peace.

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