

## **ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE OF THE POLICE IN LAW ENFORCEMENT AGAINST TERRORISM CRIMINAL ACTS**

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### **Abstract**

Terrorism is an extraordinary crime that threatens national security, public safety, and the rule of law. The Poso region in Central Sulawesi has long been exposed to terrorist activities, particularly by the East Indonesia Mujahideen (MIT) group. In addressing this threat, the Indonesian National Police (Polri), through the Special Detachment 88 Anti-Terrorism Unit (Densus 88 AT), plays a crucial role in enforcing anti-terrorism laws. This study aims to analyze the law enforcement efforts carried out by Densus 88 AT in handling terrorism cases involving wanted persons (DPO) in Poso, as well as to examine the challenges faced from legal and human rights perspectives. The research applies a normative-empirical approach by combining statutory analysis, conceptual frameworks, and case studies, supported by primary, secondary, and tertiary legal materials. The findings indicate that Indonesia has a strong legal framework for combating terrorism, particularly through Law Number 5 of 2018. Law enforcement efforts in Poso have been effective in enhancing security, as demonstrated by the successful neutralization of key terrorist actors. However, several challenges remain, including issues related to the criminal justice process, human rights protection, limited public participation, and coordination among institutions. In practice, obstacles are categorized into structural, substantive, and cultural aspects. Structural challenges include difficult geographical conditions and inter-agency coordination. Substantive issues involve debates over the use of force under special legal authority. Cultural barriers, such as low public trust, also hinder early detection and prevention. Therefore, counter-terrorism law enforcement must balance security, justice, legal certainty, and human rights to ensure effective and fair outcomes.

**Keywords:** Law Enforcement, Terrorism, Densus 88 AT, Wanted Persons, Poso, Human Rights

## INTRODUCTION

Terrorism remains a crucial problem facing a number of countries around the world, including Indonesia. The 2020 Global Terrorism Index ranked Indonesia as the country most affected by terrorism, ranking fourth in the Asia Pacific region and 37th globally. Terrorist acts in Indonesia began to receive attention after the Bali Bombing in 2002, which killed 202 people. Terrorist attacks have continued since that tragedy to the present day on a smaller scale, with both individual and group perpetrators (Britannica, 2020). Terrorism is legally regulated as a special crime that includes acts of violence or threats of violence that create widespread terror or fear in the community, and result in a large number of victims or damage or destruction to vital strategic objects, the environment, public facilities, or international facilities. Such acts are categorized as acts of terrorism with very severe criminal penalties (including being subject to a maximum sentence of life imprisonment or the death penalty) (UU, 2023).

One of the Indonesian regions that has been in the world spotlight due to radical movements that gave birth to acts of terrorism is the province of Central Sulawesi. Substantially, Central Sulawesi has become an endemic area of radicalism in Indonesia due to the widespread access of communal conflict in the Poso community and implications for exceeding social boundaries over a long period of time. In addition, the Central Sulawesi region has become an endemic area of radical action, caused by the expansion of radical terrorist networks to Central Sulawesi based on the Poso conflict and outside the context of the Poso conflict. Other triggers that make Central Sulawesi a target for the development of radicalism in Indonesia are also caused by: (1) the ideological spirit that drives terrorists is religious dogma, so that it appears as an extreme fundamental radical movement; (2) power, or in this case the government, is the most responsible party; and (3), Poso's terrorist actions are part of an interdependent national and global terrorist network (Ali, 2016).

The East Indonesia Mujahideen (MIT) group in Poso carried out acts of terror, shooting and killing police and civilians on August 8, 2020, and killings in Lima Lewonu Hamlet, Lemban Tongoa Village, Palolo District, Sigi Regency, Central Sulawesi on November 20, 2020. This group also massacred a family of coffee farmers in Kalimago Village, East Lore District, Poso Regency on May 11, 2021. The many murders that occurred raise questions about the Government's policy in handling terrorism in Poso Regency. That the process of someone's involvement in terrorism, specifically in the Poso Regency area, is the result of the movement of psychosociological mechanisms due to the conflict that occurred. The impact of the conflict on the victims' families is a tragic experience and is very disturbing to psychological stability, so it has the potential to be an entry point for terrorism to recruit new potential terrorists (Firmansyah, 2011).

In line with the dynamics and developments in countermeasures against criminal acts of terrorism in Indonesia, in 2018 changes were made to Law Number 15 of 2003 which was subsequently updated and stipulated as Law Number 5 of 2018 concerning the Eradication of Criminal Acts of Terrorism. Furthermore, this policy was strengthened by the issuance of the Decree of the Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal, and Security Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia Number 33 of 2019 concerning the Inter-Ministry/Institutional Coordination Team in the Implementation of the Counter-Terrorism Program and the Decree of the Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal, and Security Affairs Number 33 of 2019 concerning the Synergy Team of 36 Ministries and Institutions in Counter-Terrorism, as well as the Decree of the Head of the National Counter-Terrorism Agency of the Republic of Indonesia Number 136 of 2019 concerning the Task Force for Synergy of Ministries/Institutions in the Implementation of the Counter-Terrorism Program in Central Sulawesi Province, West Nusa Tenggara Province, and East Java Province in 2019 (Tressa, 2021).

Efforts to prevent radicalism in Poso Regency are carried out through In the implementation of security operations, the Regional Government collaborates with the National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT) and related government agencies, such as the Ministry of Religious Affairs, to conduct outreach and guidance on preventing radicalism, as well as distributing aid to places of worship and Islamic boarding schools. Operation Sogili is a centralized special operation involving elements of the security apparatus such as the National Police Headquarters consisting of Bareskrim, Densus 88 Anti-Terror, Puslabfor, Baintelkam, Babinkam, Sdeops Kapolri, and Public Relations of the National Police Headquarters. These elements are also strengthened by the involvement of Brimob elements from North Sulawesi, East Kalimantan, South Sulawesi, and Brimob Unit III/Peloppor, as well as the State Intelligence Agency (BIN) is also involved in this operation. Operation Sogili places the Central Sulawesi Regional Police Chief as the person in charge.

Law enforcement against perpetrators of terrorism is a serious challenge that demands a comprehensive, integrated approach that upholds the principle of justice. In Indonesia, these law enforcement efforts are based on Law Number 5 of 2018 concerning Amendments to Law Number 15 of 2003 concerning the Eradication of Criminal Acts of Terrorism. This regulation provides expanded authority to law enforcement officials to carry out preventive and enforcement measures, including preventive pre-crime measures (Hosnah & Utami, 2024). Another challenge lies in coordination between law enforcement agencies such as the Police, the National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT), and the Prosecutor's Office, which often face overlapping authority and differing approaches in handling cases (Tressa, 2021).

Operation Tinombala is a security operation aimed at capturing Santoso, the leader of the East Indonesia Mujahideen (MIT) group. On July 18, 2016, the Tinombala Operation Task Force, a joint operation between the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI) and the Indonesian National Police (Polri), successfully shot dead Santoso alias Abu Wardah in the Poso mountains, followed by the capture of Basri alias Bagong, Santoso's right-hand man. Following Santoso's death, the East Indonesia Mujahideen (MIT) group's leadership was transferred to Ali Ahmad alias Ali Kalora, who was on the Indonesian National Police's Wanted List (DPO) and was killed in the Madago Raya security operation in the Poso-Parimo area on September 18, 2021. However, there are still remaining members of this group who are being hunted by security forces. Furthermore, the 2020-2021 security operation, codenamed Operation Madago Raya, is currently pursuing the remaining members of the MIT group. In addition to conducting security operations, the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI) and the Indonesian National Police (Polri) also engage in community outreach by donating to places of worship and Islamic boarding schools, providing business capital assistance to former terrorists, and providing lectures on strengthening Pancasila values in schools and universities to prevent the spread of radicalism (Tressa, 2021).

As a form of response to acts of terrorism which are classified as extraordinary crimes and have cross-border impacts, the Republic of Indonesia National Police formed a special unit called the Special Detachment 88 Anti-Terror through the Decree of the Chief of Police Number 30/VI/2003 dated June 20, 2003. The formation of this unit is an implementation of Law Number 15 of 2003 which confirms the position of the National Police as the front guard in efforts to eradicate acts of terrorism (Immanuel, 2017).

The main task of the Special Detachment 88 Anti-Terrorism Unit (Densus 88 AT), as stipulated in the National Police Chief's decree, is to handle acts of terrorism within Indonesia, with a primary focus on acts involving explosives. This unit plays a technical role in implementing the Anti-Terrorism Law.

In carrying out its duties, the Special Detachment 88 Anti-Terrorism Unit implements four main strategies: preventive, deradicalization, repressive, and rehabilitation approaches. Preventive efforts are implemented through intelligence activities to prevent acts of terror,

including monitoring and early detection of potential threats. Deradicalization, meanwhile, is aimed at changing the extreme mindsets of individuals and groups exposed to radical ideology. Repressive approaches are implemented through law enforcement processes when acts of terror occur, including investigation, detention, and evidence collection. Rehabilitation aims to restore social and security conditions in areas affected by acts of terrorism (Immanuel, 2017).

The authority of the Special Detachment 88 Anti-Terrorism Unit (Densus 88) is regulated in Article 25 of Law Number 15 of 2003, which was later amended by Law Number 5 of 2018. This provision emphasizes that the investigation, prosecution, and trial of terrorism cases are carried out based on applicable procedural law, unless specifically regulated in the law. In addition, investigators are given the authority to detain suspects for a maximum period of six months (Meinaky & Fakhur, 2022). Based on the provisions of Article 28, investigators have the authority to arrest anyone strongly suspected of being involved in a criminal act of terrorism, as long as there is sufficient preliminary evidence. The arrest can be carried out within a maximum period of seven times twenty-four hours. This provision confirms that in the context of eradicating terrorism, the Special Detachment 88 Anti-Terror Unit (Densus 88) has duties and authorities equivalent to those of the police in general, considering that structurally the unit is under the auspices of the Republic of Indonesia National Police.

Although the Special Detachment 88 Anti-Terrorism Unit (Densus 88) has recorded numerous successes in its counterterrorism efforts, public criticism continues to emerge. Several studies have highlighted allegations of human rights violations through these repressive measures, which are often considered excessive, including allegations of extrajudicial killings. Nevertheless, Law Number 5 of 2018 and Law Number 8 of 1981 (KUHAP) provide the legal basis for the Indonesian National Police, including Densus 88, to implement coercive measures to enforce the law against terrorism (Saputra et al., 2023).

Coercive measures as stipulated in Chapter V of Law Number 8 of 1981 (KUHAP) encompass a number of actions, including arrest, detention, searches, confiscation, and document examination. Therefore, the Special Detachment 88 Anti-Terrorism Unit has broad authority to carry out intelligence, investigation, enforcement, and prosecution functions in terrorism cases. This authority is a consequence of the character of terrorism as an extraordinary crime that requires special measures in its handling. However, designating someone as a terrorist solely based on the formulation of normative definitions in the law often draws criticism, both from academics and human rights activists, due to concerns that it has the potential to lead to multiple interpretations, abuse of authority, and violations of the principles of due process of law and human rights protection (Saputra et al., 2023). If law enforcement officers use intimidatory methods or physical violence to coerce confessions, such actions constitute a violation of their principles and responsibilities as protectors of human rights (Hidayat et al., 2018).

Based on the description above, the research on the Analysis of Law Enforcement Against Criminal Acts of Terrorism and the Role of the Indonesian National Police in Law Enforcement of Criminal Acts of Terrorism (Case Study of Densus 88 AT Polri in Handling DPO Terrorism Cases in the Poso Region, Central Sulawesi) This research is expected to provide academic contributions in the form of legal analysis of the application of criminal sanctions and policies for handling terrorism cases, as well as offering theoretical and practical solutions for improving the national criminal law system. Thus, it is hoped that the results of this research will be able to provide applicable recommendations in order to realize a legal system that does not only uphold justice. Based on the explanation above, the main problems that will be studied and outlined in this writing can be formulated as follows: 1. What are the steps of law enforcement against criminal acts of terrorism by the Indonesian

National Police, especially the Special Detachment 88 Anti-Terror, in handling terrorism cases involving the Wanted List (DPO) in the Poso region, Central Sulawesi? 2. What are the obstacles and challenges faced by the Indonesian National Police through Densus 88 AT in the process of law enforcement against terrorist perpetrators with DPO status in the Poso region, Central Sulawesi?

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

In this paper, the author uses the normative legal research method (Subagyo, 2004). Normative legal research, or library legal research, is legal research conducted by examining library materials or secondary data alone. Normative legal research or library legal research includes research on legal principles and research on the level of vertical and horizontal synchronization (Soekanto, 2001). This means that existing problems are examined based on existing laws and regulations. Normative legal research uses normative case studies in the form of legal behavioral products, for example, reviewing laws. The main focus of the study is law conceptualized as norms or rules that apply in society and become a reference for each person's behavior. Therefore, normative legal research focuses on the inventory of positive law, legal principles and doctrines, legal discoveries in concrete cases, legal systematics, levels of synchronization, legal comparisons, and legal history (Muhammad, 2004).

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **A. Law Enforcement Steps Against Terrorism Criminal Acts By The Police, Particularly The Special Detective 88 Anti-Terror, In Handling Terrorism Cases Involving Wanted Persons (Dpo) In The Poso Area, Central Sulawesi**

Based on the research results, law enforcement against criminal acts of terrorism in Poso is carried out by referring to Law Number 5 of 2018 as *lex specialis*, and referring to the provisions of the Criminal Procedure Code (KUHP) as a general criminal procedure law. In addition, the implementation of duties in the field also refers to various internal regulations of the Indonesian National Police that regulate standard operating procedures, the use of force, and coordination mechanisms between units. Law Number 5 of 2018 provides broader authority to law enforcement officers, including in matters of arrest, detention, prevention, and the involvement of intelligence elements in the process of counter-terrorism, thereby strengthening the legal basis for preventive and repressive measures against perpetrators. In the operational context, Densus 88 AT plays a role as a special unit that has the competence and capacity in the fields of intelligence, investigation, inquiry, and the implementation of armed repressive measures against terrorist perpetrators who are classified as dangerous. This role includes gathering information through intelligence operations, mapping terrorist networks, tracking DPOs, and carrying out arrest operations that are often carried out in areas with difficult geographical terrain and high levels of risk. In the case of Poso, enforcement operations against DPOs often involve an integrated tactical approach with regional units of the Indonesian National Police and elements of the Indonesian National Armed Forces, considering the armed and organized nature of the threat.

The research findings indicate that the National Police's law enforcement efforts are not solely oriented toward a repressive approach, but also integrate preventive and preemptive approaches. The preventive approach is implemented through increased security patrols, surveillance of vulnerable areas, and collaboration with community leaders and village officials to prevent the development of radical ideology. Meanwhile, deradicalization and counter-radicalization approaches are implemented through mentoring programs for former terrorist convicts and their families, with the aim of breaking the chain of transmission of violent ideology. Efforts to restore security and public order after the operation are also crucial in maintaining social stability in the Poso region, allowing people to return to normal

activities without fear. However, law enforcement against terrorist crimes in Poso faces various challenges. Legally, there are issues regarding the limits of authority, the protection of human rights, and the potential for overlap between special and general procedural law. Sociologically, law enforcement officers are faced with a pluralistic society with varying levels of trust in state officials, necessitating a persuasive approach to build legitimacy and public support. Technically and operationally, the challenges include Poso's hilly and forested geographical conditions, limited communication access, and the ability of terrorists to exploit the terrain to avoid capture.

Thus, this study confirms that the effectiveness of law enforcement against terrorism in Poso is largely determined by the balance between firm enforcement based on positive law and a humanistic approach that respects human rights principles. Inter-agency synergy, community support, and consistent application of legal norms are key factors in achieving just and sustainable counterterrorism efforts.

Based on the results of research on the handling of the Wanted List (DPO) terrorism case in the Poso region, Central Sulawesi, it was found that the implementation of law in counter-terrorism was carried out through integrated security operations led by the Indonesian National Police (Polri), specifically the Special Detachment 88 Anti-Terror (Densus 88 AT). The case study focused on the handling of the East Indonesia Mujahideen (MIT) group operating in the Poso region and its surroundings. This group has in fact committed various acts of terrorism, such as the murder of security personnel, intimidation of the community, and the possession of illegal firearms and explosives. These conditions make the Poso region an area with a high level of terrorism threat for a long period of time. The results of the study indicate that the implementation of law in the field is not carried out through conventional law enforcement mechanisms alone, but through an extraordinary law enforcement approach adapted to the character of terrorism as an extraordinary crime.

Based on field findings, the initial stage of law enforcement against terrorism suspects in Poso was carried out through covert investigations and intelligence activities. Densus 88 AT gathered information on the movements, hideouts, support networks, and operational patterns of the MIT group. In practice, the implementation of these investigations referred to Article 26 of Law Number 5 of 2018, which authorizes officers to conduct wiretapping, surveillance, and intelligence gathering on suspected terrorist acts. Implementation of this article in the field was carried out selectively and based on threats, considering the limited terrain and high risk of information leaks. The research results showed that intelligence activities in Poso faced challenges in the form of minimal community participation due to the trauma of the conflict and fear of terrorist groups. As a result, officers relied more on technical intelligence and direct surveillance in the mountainous forest area.

In the case study of the handling of terrorist fugitives in Poso, the most prominent implementation of the law was seen at the stage of arrest and armed action. Based on research findings, action was taken when officers directly confronted a fugitive who actively resisted and endangered the safety of officers. This action was carried out based on Article 28 of Law Number 5 of 2018, which provides a longer arrest authority than the Criminal Procedure Code, as well as Article 16 paragraph (1) letter l of Law Number 2 of 2002 concerning the Indonesian National Police, which allows the police to take other actions according to responsible law. A concrete example of the implementation of the law in the field can be seen in the case of the death of Ali Kalora, the leader of MIT, during Operation Madago Raya in 2021. Based on the official statement from the Indonesian National Police, the shooting was carried out because the person concerned put up armed resistance and attempted to escape. In the context of criminal law, the actions of officers can be qualified as forced defense (*noodweer*) as regulated in Article 49 of the Indonesian Criminal Code. The research results show that the implementation of these articles in the field is carried out situationally,

depending on the level of threat faced by the authorities, and it is not always possible to capture DPO perpetrators alive.

In cases where terrorists are captured alive, Densus 88 AT conducts investigations in accordance with Article 25 of Law Number 5 of 2018 and the provisions of the Criminal Procedure Code. Investigations focus on proving the suspect's involvement in a terrorist network, possession of weapons, and planning a terrorist act. However, research shows that in the Poso context, most of the fugitives were killed during operations, preventing the full implementation of the criminal justice process. This has limited the ability to uncover terrorist networks through trial mechanisms, even though the threat to national security can be quickly eliminated.

In addition to repressive law enforcement, research shows that the Indonesian National Police (Polri) also implements a non-penal approach in the field, particularly through deradicalization programs and post-operation social recovery. This approach is carried out in collaboration with the National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT) and local governments. The implementation of the non-penal approach in Poso includes counseling for the families of former terrorists, providing social assistance, and engaging with the community through religious outreach. Although not explicitly regulated in criminal law, this approach is part of an integrated criminal policy aimed at preventing the recurrence of terrorism.

Based on the case study results, it can be concluded that the implementation of counterterrorism law in Poso has been carried out in accordance with the positive legal framework, specifically Law Number 5 of 2018. However, this implementation places more emphasis on effective security measures than on resolution through conventional criminal justice processes. The research also reveals a tension between legal certainty and security needs, as authorities are often faced with emergency situations that demand swift action. In this context, the law functions not only as a written norm but also as an instrument for protecting the public from real threats.

The latest National Criminal Code, namely Law Number 1 of 2023 concerning the Criminal Code, which will come into effect in 2026.<sup>1</sup>The 2023 National Criminal Code strengthens the principle of modern legality (*nullum crimen sine lege*), including the recognition of living law within certain limits. This reformulation of the legality principle has an impact on the construction of criminal liability in terrorism cases, particularly regarding: Expanding the form of inclusion (*deelneming*), Corporate liability, Additional and supervisory penalties and a criminal system based on a balance between justice and expediency.

With the enactment of the National Criminal Code in 2026, the paradigm of criminal punishment in Indonesia has been reaffirmed, moving towards a more comprehensive and objective-oriented approach. The National Criminal Code positions punishment not only as a means of retributive punishment, but also as an instrument to prevent crime, restore social balance, and reintegrate perpetrators into society. Therefore, the resolution of terrorism cases, including those involving DPO perpetrators who are successfully apprehended, is no longer solely based on *lex specialis* provisions such as Law Number 5 of 2018, but must also be aligned with the general principles of criminal punishment stipulated in the National Criminal Code.

The Anti-Terrorism Law's position as a *lex specialis* continues to provide specific provisions regarding the elements of the offense, the expansion of evidence, and the threat of heavier penalties given the extraordinary nature of the crime. However, in the sentencing stage by the judge, the general principles of the National Criminal Code regarding the purpose of punishment, consideration of aggravating and mitigating circumstances, and

proportionality of punishment remain a normative foundation that cannot be ignored. Thus, the Indonesian criminal law system is moving toward harmonization between special provisions and general principles, thereby creating consistency within the framework of the national criminal justice system.

The implications of the enactment of the National Criminal Code also emphasize that the repressive actions carried out by the Special Detachment 88 Anti-Terror (Densus 88 AT) cannot be understood solely as a security approach, but rather as an integral part of an integrated criminal justice system. Every act of arrest, detention, search, or use of force must be placed within a series of legal processes that culminate in a trial in court. This means that operational actions in the field are the initial stage of a judicial process that must be legally accountable.

Within the framework of an integrated criminal justice system, coordination between investigators, prosecutors, the judiciary, and correctional institutions is a crucial element in ensuring that sentencing is effective and fair. This approach emphasizes that combating terrorism is not merely a matter of armed action against fugitives, but also involves a legitimate evidentiary process, an independent judiciary, and the implementation of sentences that support the goal of social reintegration. Even in cases of terrorism, where the penalty can be long-term imprisonment or life imprisonment, the principles of humanity and respect for human rights remain integral.

Thus, the enactment of the 2026 National Criminal Code reinforces the paradigm that criminalization of terrorists must be implemented proportionally, accountably, and oriented towards a balance between justice and expediency. The state retains firm authority to protect the public from the threat of terrorism, but this authority must be exercised within the framework of an integrated criminal justice system based on the principle of the rule of law. This approach is ultimately expected to create a deterrent effect, safeguard national security, while maintaining legal legitimacy and public trust in the Indonesian criminal justice system.

## **B. Obstacles And Challenges Faced by the Police Through Densus 88 at in the Law Enforcement Process Against Terrorism Perpetrators on the Dpo in the Poso Area, Central Sulawesi**

Law enforcement against terrorist acts involving perpetrators listed on the Wanted List (DPO) in the Poso region, Central Sulawesi, is carried out within a national legal framework established through various laws and regulations, both specific and general. Normatively, the main legal basis for efforts to eradicate terrorist acts is Law Number 5 of 2018 concerning the Eradication of Criminal Acts of Terrorism, which amends previous regulations and provides strengthened authority to law enforcement officers. In addition, the implementation of the stages of investigation, inquiry, arrest, detention, and prosecution remains guided by the provisions of the Criminal Procedure Code (KUHAP) as the generally applicable criminal procedure law. In practice, law enforcement officers also refer to internal regulations and standard operating procedures established by the Indonesian National Police (Polri), specifically the special unit Detachment 88 Anti-Terror (Densus 88 AT) which has a specific mandate in counter-terrorism.

Conceptually, this legal framework provides strong legitimacy for law enforcement officials to take repressive and preventive action against terrorists, including those on the wanted list. The law provides broader authority for arrests based on sufficient preliminary evidence, extensions of detention periods, and the involvement of intelligence agencies in the evidentiary process. Thus, the state strives to create a legal system that adapts to the characteristics of terrorism, which is organized, cross-border, and has the potential to threaten national security.

Thus, it can be concluded that although the legal framework for combating terrorism in Indonesia is relatively comprehensive and provides a strong basis of legitimacy for authorities, its implementation in the Poso region faces various multidimensional challenges. These challenges include technical and operational aspects, normative limitations in the interpretation and application of the law, and the social dynamics of the local community. Therefore, strengthening inter-agency coordination, increasing the capacity of authorities, and continuous evaluation of existing regulations are necessary to ensure that law enforcement against terrorism crimes, particularly those involving fugitives, can be effective, proportional, and uphold the principles of the rule of law.

a. Geographical Constraints and the Implementation of Law Enforcement Authority

Normatively, the authority of the Indonesian National Police in enforcing the law against criminal acts of terrorism is regulated in Law Number 5 of 2018 concerning the Eradication of Criminal Acts of Terrorism and Law Number 2 of 2002 concerning the Indonesian National Police. Article 13 of Law Number 2 of 2002 emphasizes that the main duties of the Indonesian National Police are (a) maintaining public security and order, (b) enforcing the law, and (c) providing protection, assistance, and services to the community. These provisions serve as the primary legal basis for the Indonesian National Police, including Densus 88 AT, in carrying out their law enforcement functions against crimes of terrorism.

Furthermore, the operational authority of the Indonesian National Police in enforcing terrorism law is strengthened through Article 16 paragraph (1) of Law Number 2 of 2002, which states that in order to carry out the duties as referred to in Article 13, the Indonesian National Police has the authority to, among other things, make arrests, detentions, searches and confiscations, as well as carry out other actions according to responsible law as regulated in Article 16 paragraph (1) letter l of the law. This provision provides discretionary space for police officers in dealing with emergency situations that threaten public security.

In the framework of eradicating criminal acts of terrorism, Article 28 of Law Number 5 of 2018 expressly authorizes investigators to arrest any person who is strongly suspected of committing a criminal act of terrorism based on sufficient preliminary evidence. In addition, this law also provides special regulations regarding the period of arrest and detention which is longer than the provisions of the Criminal Procedure Code, as a consequence of the nature of terrorism as an extraordinary crime.

However, research results indicate that the geographical conditions of the Poso region, dominated by forests and mountains, are a hindering factor in the optimal implementation of this normative authority. In practice, the arrest of terrorist suspects on the wanted list, as mandated by Article 28 of Law Number 5 of 2018, often cannot be carried out according to ideal procedures, because the perpetrators hide in hard-to-reach areas and actively resist using weapons.

This condition requires law enforcement officers to adapt their legal actions to the situation on the ground, including the use of discretionary authority as stipulated in Article 18 of Law Number 2 of 2002, which states that in the public interest, officers of the Republic of Indonesia National Police in carrying out their duties and authorities can act according to their own judgment. Although normatively the law requires arrest and criminal justice process, in the context of handling terrorism DPOs in the Poso region, law enforcement is often in an emergency situation that prioritizes the safety of officers and the public.

The Poso region is characterized by mountainous terrain, dense forests, and limited transportation access. These conditions significantly complicate the tracking and pursuit of terrorist fugitives who use the terrain as a hiding place.

Normatively, the 2026 National Criminal Code provides legal certainty regarding the elements of terrorism crimes in Articles 600–602. However, this certainty does not necessarily guarantee effective implementation if there are physical and operational obstacles in the field. In other words, the problem lies not in a legal vacuum, but rather in the capacity to implement norms in difficult geographic contexts.

This condition also has an impact on optimizing the authority of the Indonesian National Police as regulated in Law Number 2 of 2002 concerning the Indonesian National Police which provides the task of law enforcement and maintaining security.

b. Challenges of the Use of Force and the Principles of Human Rights Protection

One of the main challenges in law enforcement against wanted persons (DPO) terrorism crimes in the Poso region, Central Sulawesi, is the use of armed force by Densus 88 AT in dealing with perpetrators who are actively resisting. Normatively, the use of force by the Indonesian National Police has a clear legal basis in Law Number 2 of 2002 concerning the Indonesian National Police. Article 16 paragraph (1) states that in order to carry out the duties as referred to in Article 13, the Indonesian National Police has the authority to carry out police actions, including making arrests, detentions, searches and confiscations, as well as carrying out other actions according to responsible law as expressly regulated in Article 16 paragraph (1) letter l.

In addition, repressive actions by law enforcement officers can also be justified based on the provisions of Article 49 paragraph (1) of the Criminal Code "providing the basis for the elimination of criminal penalties for acts carried out in the context of forced defense to protect legal interests in the form of oneself, other people, honor, morality, or property from attacks that are immediate and unlawful." Thus, the use of force by police officers can be legally justified as long as it fulfills the elements of a real attack, is unlawful, and endangers life.

However, the research results show that the implementation of these articles in the field often gives rise to public debate regarding the protection of human rights, especially the right to life as guaranteed in Article 28A of the 1945 Constitution, which emphasizes that every individual has the right to live and to defend his life and livelihood. This right is also emphasized as a non-derogable right (cannot be reduced under any circumstances) as regulated in Article 28I paragraph (1) of the 1945 Constitution.

On the other hand, Article 28I paragraph (4) of the 1945 Constitution emphasizes that the protection, advancement, enforcement, and fulfillment of human rights are the responsibility of the state, especially the government. In the context of counter-terrorism, this responsibility includes not only the protection of the human rights of individual perpetrators, but also the state's constitutional obligation to protect the right to life and safety of the wider community from the threat of terrorism.

Therefore, in confronting terrorism as an extraordinary crime, the state is required to interpret and apply the law proportionally, accountably, and responsibly. This principle is further emphasized in Regulation of the Chief of the Indonesian National Police Number 1 of 2009 concerning the Use of Force in Police Actions, which requires that every use of force comply with the principles of legality, necessity, proportionality, and accountability. Thus, the challenges posed by Densus 88 AT's use of force in Poso reflect the state's efforts to balance effective law enforcement and human rights protection within the framework of a state governed by the rule of law.

The reform of the national criminal law through the 2026 Criminal Code and the reform of criminal procedural law strengthen the principle of due process of law. The process of arrest, detention, search, and seizure must still comply with the provisions of Law Number 8 of 1981 concerning the Criminal Procedure Code (KUHP), particularly regarding sufficient preliminary evidence and the rights of suspects. On the other hand,

Article 28J of the 1945 Constitution emphasizes that restrictions on human rights may be implemented as long as they are stipulated by law in the interests of security and public order. In practice in Poso, measured firm action against DPOs who engage in armed resistance often comes under the scrutiny of the public and oversight bodies. Authorities must be able to prove that the use of force was carried out based on the principles of: Legality, Necessity, Proportionality, and Accountability. Thus, the main challenge is not only the successful arrest of DPOs, but also how these actions can be legally and morally accounted for within the perspective of a state of law.

c. Obstacles to the Criminal Justice Process and the Implementation of the Criminal Procedure Code

Law Number 5 of 2018 concerning the Eradication of Criminal Acts of Terrorism firmly places the handling of terrorism cases within the framework of criminal procedural law. Article 25 of Law Number 5 of 2018 stipulates that the investigation, prosecution, and trial of terrorism crimes shall be carried out in accordance with the provisions of laws and regulations concerning criminal procedural law, unless otherwise stipulated by the law. This provision demonstrates that the Criminal Procedure Code (KUHAP) remains the primary reference in the criminal justice process for terrorism cases.

In the Criminal Procedure Code, the principle of due process of law is reflected, among other things, in Article 1 number 2, which defines an investigation as a series of actions by investigators to seek and collect evidence to clarify a crime and find the suspect. In addition, Article 50 paragraph (1) of the Criminal Procedure Code guarantees the suspect's right to be immediately examined by an investigator, while Article 51 letters a and b of the Criminal Procedure Code provide the suspect with the right to clearly know the charges imposed and to provide information freely. This principle is reinforced by Article 66 of the Criminal Procedure Code which emphasizes that the suspect or defendant is not burdened with the obligation to provide proof.

However, research shows that in many cases of wanted persons (DPO) terrorism in the Poso region, the criminal justice process, as stipulated in the Criminal Procedure Code (KUHAP), could not be fully implemented because the perpetrators died during ongoing law enforcement operations. This situation prevented the prosecution and trial stages from being carried out, thus preventing the suspects' right to be tried through the criminal justice system from being formally realized.

Legally, the death of a perpetrator during a law enforcement operation results in the elimination of the authority to prosecute, as stipulated in Article 77(a) of the Criminal Procedure Code, which states that the authority to prosecute is terminated upon the death of the defendant. Therefore, the impossibility of criminal proceedings against a deceased wanted terrorist is a recognized legal consequence within the Indonesian criminal justice system.

Although the authorities' actions may be legally justified in emergency situations, the limitations of the criminal justice process remain a challenge in implementing the principle of due process of law. The absence of a trial process results in a lack of court decisions that could serve as legal precedent, a means of judicial evidence, and a means of comprehensively exposing terrorist networks. Furthermore, the absence of court decisions also has the potential to raise public questions regarding the transparency and accountability of law enforcement.

Thus, the obstacles in implementing the Criminal Procedure Code (KUHAP) in handling terrorism fugitives in the Poso region indicate a gap between criminal procedural norms and the reality on the ground. This situation demands the strengthening of alternative mechanisms in law enforcement, such as optimizing network disclosure through intelligence and cross-agency cooperation, without neglecting the basic

principles of the rule of law and the protection of human rights.

With the codification of the crime of terrorism in the 2026 National Criminal Code, the challenge of harmonizing the general provisions of the Criminal Code and the specific provisions of the Terrorism Law arises. The National Criminal Code regulates the principle of modern legality and a criminal punishment system that emphasizes the balance between the act and the perpetrator (*daad-dader strafrecht*). Meanwhile, the Terrorism Law provides special, extraordinary powers, such as: arrest for a certain period, extended detention, and wiretapping for investigative purposes.

In law enforcement against fugitives in Poso, authorities must ensure the application of the principle of *lex specialis derogat legi generali* to avoid conflicting norms between the National Criminal Code and the Terrorism Law. This harmonization challenge is crucial because misapplication of these norms can result in the legal process being disqualified in court.

d. Obstacles to Community Participation and Implementation of Preventive Approaches

The preventive approach to combating criminal acts of terrorism is expressly regulated in Law Number 5 of 2018, specifically in Articles 43A to 43D. Article 43A emphasizes that efforts to prevent criminal acts of terrorism are implemented through national preparedness, counter-radicalization, and deradicalization. This provision demonstrates that counter-terrorism policies do not solely focus on repressive aspects, but also emphasize systematic, integrated, and sustainable prevention strategies.

Furthermore, Article 43B of Law Number 5 of 2018 stipulates that national preparedness, as referred to in Article 43A, is carried out through community empowerment, capacity building of state apparatus, protection and improvement of infrastructure, and mapping of terrorism-prone areas. In this context, community participation is a key element because the community is positioned as a strategic partner for law enforcement officials in detecting and preventing the development of radical ideology in the social environment.

Furthermore, Article 43C of Law Number 5 of 2018 regulates counter-radicalization, which is implemented through a planned, integrated, systematic, and sustainable process involving relevant ministries/institutions and community participation. Meanwhile, Article 43D of Law Number 5 of 2018 regulates deradicalization aimed at terrorism suspects, defendants, convicts, and prisoners, former terrorism convicts, and individuals or community groups exposed to radical terrorist ideology.

However, research results indicate that the implementation of these preventive norms in the Poso region still faces serious obstacles, particularly in terms of community participation. The trauma of prolonged conflict and fear of terrorist groups have made the community reluctant to actively participate in supporting law enforcement and terrorism prevention efforts. This situation has resulted in limited public information and the low effectiveness of the community-based approach, which is traditionally considered one of the pillars of terrorism prevention.

This situation demonstrates a gap between the normative provisions of the law and the social reality on the ground. Although Law Number 5 of 2018 provides a clear legal framework for community-based terrorism prevention, its successful implementation depends heavily on the level of public trust in law enforcement. In this context, low levels of trust and social support are key challenges that must be addressed for the preventive approach mandated by the law to be effective. Thus, the obstacles to public participation in implementing a preventative approach to counterterrorism in the Poso region reflect the need to strengthen social recovery strategies, improve public communication, and actively involve local governments and community leaders. These

efforts are crucial to ensure the optimal and sustainable implementation of prevention norms, which have been comprehensively regulated by law.

e. Challenges of Inter-Agency Coordination within the Legal Framework

Normatively, efforts to combat terrorism in Indonesia are carried out through an integrated mechanism involving various state institutions, as regulated in Law Number 5 of 2018. Article 43E paragraph (1) emphasizes that prevention of criminal acts of terrorism is carried out in a coordinated manner by relevant ministries and institutions under the coordination of BNPT. Furthermore, Article 43E paragraph (2) states that the implementation of terrorism prevention involves the role of regional governments in accordance with their authority.

In addition, regulations regarding inter-agency coordination are also strengthened through Presidential Regulation Number 46 of 2010 concerning the National Counterterrorism Agency, as last amended by Presidential Regulation Number 7 of 2021. Article 2 of the BNPT Presidential Regulation emphasizes that the BNPT has the task of formulating national policies, strategies, and programs in counterterrorism, as well as coordinating with relevant government agencies in implementing these policies and programs. Furthermore, Article 3 letters b and c of the BNPT Presidential Regulation stipulate that the BNPT has the authority to coordinate efforts to prevent and prosecute terrorism carried out by the National Police, the Indonesian National Armed Forces, and other relevant ministries/institutions.

In the context of TNI involvement, the coordination framework is also regulated in Article 43I of Law Number 5 of 2018, which states that the involvement of the Indonesian National Armed Forces in countering acts of terrorism is part of military operations other than war (OMSP) and is implemented based on the state's political decisions. This provision emphasizes that the TNI's role in countering terrorism is within the framework of assistance to the National Police and must be implemented in a coordinated manner while still respecting civilian supremacy and the principles of the rule of law.

However, research results indicate that the implementation of inter-agency coordination in handling terrorism suspects in the Poso region still faces various obstacles. Differences in authority and operational approaches between the National Police (Polri), which focuses on criminal law enforcement, the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI), which focuses on defense and security aspects, and the National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT), which carries out coordinating and preventive functions, often pose challenges in unifying strategies in the field. This situation indicates that despite the existence of a comprehensive legal framework, the effectiveness of law enforcement is largely determined by the harmonization and synergy of implementation between institutions.

Thus, it can be analyzed that the existence of legal norms governing inter-agency coordination does not fully guarantee the effectiveness of counterterrorism efforts if it is not accompanied by clear operational mechanisms, a clear division of authority, and ongoing communication at the implementation level. Without optimal coordination, the broad legal authority stipulated in legislation does not always translate into effective law enforcement on the ground, particularly in handling the DPO terrorism case in the Poso region, Central Sulawesi.

f. Normative Analysis of Law Enforcement Challenges

Based on the discussion in the previous sub-chapter, it can be normatively analyzed that the obstacles and challenges of law enforcement against the Wanted List (DPO) terrorism crime in the Poso region, Central Sulawesi, do not reflect a weak regulatory framework, but rather demonstrate the complexity of law implementation in a security

emergency situation. Normatively, the state has provided a comprehensive legal basis through Law Number 5 of 2018 concerning the Eradication of Criminal Acts of Terrorism, which grants special authority to law enforcement officers to carry out preventive, repressive, and intelligence-based action.

From the perspective of the principle of the rule of law (*rechtstaat*), every law enforcement action must be based on the principle of legality as stated in Article 1 paragraph (3) of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, which states that Indonesia is a state based on law. This principle of legality is also reflected in Articles 2 and 3 of the Criminal Procedure Code (KUHP), which state that all law enforcement processes must be carried out based on applicable law, while still upholding legal certainty and the protection of human rights.

Normatively, the authority of the Republic of Indonesia National Police in enforcing the law against criminal acts of terrorism is regulated in Law Number 2 of 2002 concerning the Republic of Indonesia National Police. Article 13 of the law emphasizes that the main duties of the Indonesian National Police include maintaining public security and order, law enforcement, and providing protection, patronage, and services to the community. In addition, Article 16 paragraph (1) letter l of Law Number 2 of 2002 gives the Indonesian National Police the authority to carry out other actions according to responsible law, which normatively becomes the legal basis for the use of police discretion, especially in emergency conditions and situations of threat to security.

In the context of the use of force, normative regulations are also regulated in Regulation of the Chief of the Republic of Indonesia National Police Number 1 of 2009 concerning the Use of Force in Police Actions, which emphasizes that every use of force must be based on the principles of legality, necessity, proportionality, and accountability. These principles are a manifestation of the protection of human rights, as guaranteed in Article 28A of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, which affirms the right of every person to live and to defend their life and livelihood.

However, the research results show that in the practice of handling terrorism DPOs in the Poso region, law enforcement officers are often faced with less-than-ideal factual situations, such as extreme geographical conditions, armed resistance from perpetrators, and limited community participation. In such situations, the application of legal norms textually is not always possible, so that officers are required to interpret and apply the law in a contextual and situational manner. In this case, the legal justification for the actions of officers can be linked to Article 49 of the Criminal Code (KUHP) concerning forced defense (*noodweer*), as long as the action is carried out to defend oneself from an attack that is unlawful and endangers life.

Thus, it can be asserted normatively that the main challenge in law enforcement against terrorists listed on the Wanted List (DPO) in the Poso region, Central Sulawesi, does not lie in the absence or weakness of legal norms governing the eradication of criminal acts of terrorism. The national regulatory framework is relatively comprehensive, both through Law Number 5 of 2018 as *lex specialis* and through general provisions in the Criminal Procedure Code and the National Criminal Code. These norms have provided a clear basis for law enforcement authorities' authority to conduct investigations, inquiries, arrests, detentions, and prosecutions of terrorists.

A more complex problem lies in the process of translating these legal norms into concrete actions on the ground. Implementing the law in the context of handling wanted terrorism cases does not take place in an ideal situation, but rather in conditions fraught with risks, time pressures, and the potential for armed threats. Law enforcement officials, particularly the Indonesian National Police through the Special Detachment 88 Anti-Terrorism Unit (Densus 88 AT), are faced with the need to act quickly and decisively to

prevent casualties or the spread of threats, while simultaneously upholding the principle of due process of law. This is where practical challenges arise that demand professionalism, precision, and discretion in every operational decision-making.

Theoretically, this condition is closely related to the theory of legal objectives, which emphasizes a balance between legal certainty (*rechtssicherheit*), justice (*gerechtigkeits*), and expediency (*zweckmassigkeit*). Legal certainty requires that every action by law enforcement officers be based on clear norms and legitimate procedures; justice demands proportional and non-discriminatory treatment of every individual; while expediency emphasizes protecting the public and preventing greater harm. In the practice of counterterrorism, these three objectives are not always easy to reconcile, especially when officers must make quick decisions in high-risk situations. Therefore, the balance between the three is a crucial parameter in assessing the legitimacy of law enforcement actions.

Furthermore, the social and historical dynamics of the Poso region also influence the implementation of legal norms in the field. Authorities are not only confronted with individual fugitives, but also with a complex social context, including the potential for group sympathy, community fear, and the trauma of past conflicts. In such a situation, a purely repressive legal approach has the potential to generate social resistance if not balanced with transparent communication and a persuasive approach. Therefore, the effectiveness of law enforcement is measured not only by the successful arrest or incapacitation of perpetrators, but also by the ability to maintain social stability and public trust in law enforcement institutions.

Within the framework of a state based on the rule of law (*rechtstaat*), every action by the police must be legally and constitutionally accountable. Law enforcement by the Indonesian National Police (Polri) through Densus 88 AT must always be carried out within the principles of legality, accountability, proportionality, and respect for human rights. These principles are crucial to ensuring that counterterrorism efforts do not result in human rights violations that could undermine the state's legitimacy in the eyes of the public. Effective law enforcement is not only about operational success, but also about consistency with the constitutional values that underpin the national legal system.

Thus, it can be concluded that the main challenge is not establishing new norms, but rather ensuring the implementation of existing norms is professional, measured, and fair. Synergy between firm enforcement and a commitment to the principles of the rule of law is key to ensuring effective counterterrorism efforts while simultaneously gaining strong social and constitutional legitimacy. This approach will ultimately strengthen the national criminal justice system while maintaining a balance between state security and human rights protection.

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that law enforcement against terrorist crimes by the Indonesian National Police through Densus 88 AT in the Poso region has been implemented comprehensively through a preventive, repressive, and coordinative approach, as well as security restoration. These efforts are supported by a strong legal framework, particularly Law Number 5 of 2018, and have proven effective in suppressing terrorist network activities, including through integrated operations that have successfully paralyzed perpetrators and maintained security stability in the region.

However, its implementation still faces various structural, substantial, cultural, and ideological obstacles and challenges. These obstacles include limited inter-agency coordination, difficult geographic conditions, debates regarding human rights protections in the exercise of authority, low public participation, and the adaptive growth of radicalism.

Therefore, law enforcement against terrorism needs to be continuously strengthened through increased institutional synergy, a human rights-oriented approach, and strengthening the role of the community in prevention and deradicalization efforts.

### **Suggestion**

Based on the research conclusions, it is recommended that the Indonesian National Police (Polri), particularly Densus 88 AT, continue to strengthen its preventive approach through intelligence-based early detection, cyber surveillance, and the development of counter-radicalization and deradicalization programs in vulnerable areas. In carrying out enforcement, professionalism must be maintained by prioritizing the principles of due process of law, transparency, and accountability to maintain public trust. Furthermore, cross-institutional coordination between the Polri, TNI, BNPT, the Prosecutor's Office, and local governments needs to be optimized in an integrated manner, followed by post-operational social recovery efforts to maintain community stability.

On the other hand, the government needs to evaluate and refine regulations and operational standards for enforcement to avoid multiple interpretations, particularly regarding the authority of officers and the protection of human rights. Strengthening facilities, intelligence technology, and operational capacity is also crucial in addressing the geographic challenges and dynamics of terrorist networks. Furthermore, increasing public participation and trust through persuasive approaches and social empowerment must be continuously encouraged. Ideological prevention efforts also need to be strengthened through deradicalization and counter-narrative programs, particularly in the digital space, so that counter-terrorism efforts can be effective, comprehensive, and sustainable.

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