INADIS ANTHOLOGY

TRANS

BORDER

MOVEMENT

FOREWORD

Transnationalism

In today's world transnational movement has become a common circumstance. What is commonly understood is that transnational activities comprise of "those that take place on a recurrent basis across national borders and that require a regular and significant commitment of time by participants. Such activities may be conducted by relatively powerful actors, such as representatives of national governments and multinational corporations, or may be initiated by more modest individuals, such as immigrants and their home country's kin and relations. These activities are not limited to economic enterprises, but include political, cultural and religious initiatives as well."

This definition indicates the close relationship between transnationalism and globalization, which also refers essentially to the rapid expansion of cross-border transactions and networks in all areas of life. At the same time, the concept suggests that boundaries between nation-states are becoming less distinct. Ideas, capital, commodities, or even finished products are often moved across borders through the different facets of transnationalism. Interactions between countries and regions are affected by these cross-border movements. Furthermore the discourse on this subject may also generate a variety of points of views.

The Location of Transnationalism

Transnationalism is clearly in the air. Expansion of transnational capital and mass media to even the remotest of hinterlands has provoked a spate of discourses on "globalization," "transnationalism," and "the crisis of the nation state."

A core theme in these discourses is the penetration of national cultures and political systems by global and local driving forces. The nation-state is seen as weakened "from above," by transnational capital, global media, and emergent supra-national political institutions. "From below" it faces the decentering such as "local resistances of the informal economy, ethnic nationalism, and grassroots activism." These developments are sometimes viewed in celebratory terms.

For some they bring market rationality and a liberalizing push to a disorderly world "from above." For others they generate conditions conducive to the creation of new liberalizing practices and spaces "from below" like transnational migration and its attendant cultural hybridity.

In more pessimistic readings, these developments are seen as preludes to a new form of capitalist modernization that is bound to convert the entire planet to "global consumerism."

The convergence of several historically specific factors all help explain the complexity of transnationalism. This is a new complexity not only in terms of scale, but also because of the scope of effects that contemporary transnational flows have upon the societies involved.

These includes: (i) the globalization of capitalism with its destabilizing effects on less industrialized countries; (ii) the technological revolution in the means of transportation and communication; (iii) global political transformations such as decolonization and the universalization of human rights; (iv) the expansion of social networks that facilitate the reproduction of transnational migration, economic organization and politics.

Cross-border movement is becoming a dynamic topic that may invigorate the sense of curiosity of international affairs scholars who will pursue studies of the issue in depth. The publication of the INADIS Anthology Vol.3 invites you to reflect on the essays that may generate new ideas pertaining to the attempt of finding a more holistic approach to anticipate the consequences of cross-border and transnational movements.

Happy reading and hope these essays contribute in further developing your ideas.

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C O N T E N T

Islamophobia in Southeast Asia and Threats to Human Security

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Introduction

The terrorist attacks in the United States on September 11, 2001, led to an increase in Islamophobia in Western countries and a similar phenomenon in Southeast Asian countries. Fear of Islam or Islamophobia, which continues with rejection, hatred, discrimination, and anti-Muslim sentiment, occurs in ASEAN member states such as Myanmar, Thailand, and Indonesia. This was emphasized by the United Nations (UN) Special Envoy, Ahmed Shaheed, at the 46th Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in March 2021. In his report, Shaheed (2021) stated that Islamophobia in several countries in the world has escalated into hatred and anti-Muslim sentiment. Such hostility has also developed into government-supported violence against religious freedom and the lives of Muslims in several countries, including the Rohingya in Myanmar.

Anti-Islam sentiment also occurs in Thailand, with different backgrounds. Discrimination against Muslim Malays in Southern Thailand mainly occurs at the border between Thailand and Malaysia. Despite being motivated by an ethnic-nationalist struggle based on religion, Buddhist hatred of Muslims in Pattani has caused Muslims to fear threats from Buddhist Nationalists, most of whom are monks. The emergence of anti-Islam sentiment in Thailand was initiated by the attitude of the majority of Thai people, who tried to cover up the history and facts of the existence of Muslims in Southern Thailand. They built Thailand's national historiography, which was generally dominated by Buddhism, thus encouraging Muslim separatism in Southern Thailand (Abdulmani, 2013).

In its various forms and levels, Islamophobia occurs in predominantly Muslim countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia. Osman (2017) explains how Islamophobia in

Even though the Coordinating Ministry for Political, Legal, and Security Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia (abbreviated Kemenko Polhukam), Moh. Mahfud MD (Humas Kemenko Polhukam, 2020) denied Islamophobia arose at the level of the Indonesian government, in reality, in society, there are still concerns about fear of Islam and Muslims.

Malaysia was caused by inequality in social, economic, and political issues that benefited Muslims in Malaysia more than others. This situation eventually led to anti-Islam sentiments appearing in people's daily lives. Islamophobia also happens in Indonesia. Even though the Coordinating Ministry for Political, Legal, and Security Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia (abbreviated Kemenko Polhukam), Moh. Mahfud MD (Humas Kemenko Polhukam, 2020) denied Islamophobia arose at the level of the Indonesian government, in reality, in society, there are still concerns about fear of Islam and Muslims. This was confirmed by the General Secretary of the Central Executive Muhammadiyah, Abdul Mu'ti (Sakinah, 2022).

Starting from the image of Islamophobia in Southeast Asia, this article will address the phenomenon of the emergence of suspicion, fear, discrimination, and even hatred towards Muslims in Myanmar, Thailand, and Indonesia. Specifically, this article aims to answer why Islamophobia occurs in Southeast Asia and how it affects regional human security. Researchers argue that Islamophobia in Myanmar, Thailand, and Indonesia has happened in various backgrounds long before the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States. In addition, Islamophobia also threatened human security in Myanmar, Thailand, and Indonesia with different levels, ranging from hate speech on social media to expulsion and genocide.

Therefore, at the end of this article, the researcher will provide specific recommendations for ASEAN to prevent and overcome the impact of Islamophobia.

In this article, the author uses an exploratory and descriptive qualitative methodology that can result in a discourse that describes, explores, understands, and interprets the behaviour of actors in social life (Blaikie, 2010: 204). The qualitative approach is a study where results cannot be obtained through statistical data procedures or other calculation forms (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

This study aims to explain and analyze the phenomenon of Islamophobia in several countries in the Southeast Asia region. To this end, the author uses a qualitative methodology with a case study method of the studied issue. Case study methods are ideal for answering research questions requiring much information about a particular case. Therefore, this study becomes in depth and obtains very detailed information about the issues to be studied (Neuman, 2011).

Islamophobia in Southeast Asia

After the al-Qaeda attack on the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center (WTC) and the United States Pentagon Building on September 11, 2001, fears and negative

perceptions of Islam and Muslims arose. This attack killed about 3,000 people and left US citizens fearing Islam-based terrorism. The concerns of the US government and citizens about terrorist attacks in their country and various countries quickly turned into hatred against Muslims. A survey conducted by Pew Research in September 2001 showed an increase in the number of Americans suspicious of Middle Eastern ancestry from 28% to 36% in less than a year (Hartig, 2021).

Similar sentiments but in different forms of action also occur in Southeast Asian countries. Islamophobia has increased in Myanmar since 2012, especially after a Buddhist monk named Ashin Wirathu formed the 969 movement and spread anti-Rohingya sentiment in the country. Wirathu launched propaganda to convey that Muslims wanted to establish an Islamic state in Rakhine. As a result, several attacks and riots were frequent in the Rakhine area, which is home to most of the Rohingya ethnic group (Bhattacherjee, 2014).

Human Rights Watch (HRW), in its report in 2013, mentioned that attacks on Muslims by Buddhist extremist groups in Myanmar were organized by the religious, community, and government figures. The persecution by the extremist Buddhist group got supported by local security by not giving any protection to the threatened Rohingya, even allowing violence, and seems to be on the side of the Buddhists. In 2017, the United Nations received reports of the eviction of 700,000 Rohingya, some of whom fled to Bangladesh (Office of International Religious Freedom, 2020). Yet the rest of the Rohingya who are still in Myanmar are under severe pressure.

In the worst case, even though Myanmar's political system is democratized and guarantees freedom of religion in the constitution, acts of discrimination against Rohingya Muslims still occur. These actions include anti-Muslim and anti-Rohingya hate speech in

official events, *preaching* hatred toward Muslims by monks, and hate speech through social media among the public and the military group. Sadly, the government seems to be deliberately turning a blind eye. In response to these allegations, the Myanmar government insisted on rejecting further investigation permits from the United Nations. For this reason, Myanmar was designated as a "Country of Particular Concern (CPC)" under the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (ICJ International Commission of Jurists, 2019).

Discrimination against Muslims also occurs in Thailand, especially in the Southern Thai provinces of Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat. This anti-Islam sentiment occurred due to a group of Buddhists inciting and spreading fear and hatred toward Malay Muslims living in the border area between Thailand and Malaysia. Even these opponents of Muslims intentionally spread fanaticism, discrimination, and marginalization, which resulted in the exclusion of Muslims from economic, social, political, and social activities (Pathan et al., 2018).

Muslims in Thailand experience various acts of violence ranging from discrimination, hatred, and persecution from Buddhists to *counter-insurgency* by the army. These varying types of violence started from the presence of a separatist movement in southern Thailand, which later deteriorated by negative perceptions of Islam following the 2001 terrorist attack (Quinley, 2019). Separatism in Southern Thailand arose when Muslim residents living in the area were distressed by the difficulty of implementing Sharia (Islamic Law) even though Thailand's central government had allowed the practice of Islamic law in three southern Thai provinces (Sun, 2017: 25-26). However, a group of Buddhist-Nationalists living in that area strongly resisted (Brown, 2020). As a result, religious conflict is inevitable in this border area between Thailand and Malaysia.

One of the conflicts based on religion happened

at the Anuban Pattani school in 2018. There was a discourse on the use of hijab in public schools, considering a majority of the population in Pattani are ethnic Malay. As a result, there was a dispute and arguments between the Buddhist-Nationalist group and the ethnic Malay Pattani Muslims. Since this incident, hatred of Muslims grew stronger throughout Southern Thailand, so almost every school prohibits their students from wearing the hijab and reminds them of the term *"Kwam Pen Thai"*, which means that the local Buddhist community would accept only Thai identity. Even the Nationalist-Buddhist residents rejected the local identity of Islam and Malay in the region (Pathan et al. 2018, 13-21).

Unlike Myanmar and Thailand, where Muslims are a minority group, Indonesia has a Muslim majority population. According to a survey by Statistics Indonesia (Indonesian: Badan Pusat Statistik, abbreviated BPS), in 2020, 86.88% or around 237.53 million Indonesians are Muslims, in a total of about 270 million Indonesians (Kusnandar, 2021). However, the Muslim population in Indonesia cannot be assumed to be a single entity because they have a different range of concepts, from traditional, modern, and moderate to fundamental and radical. Muslims in Indonesia have also been supporters of various political parties with diverse bases ranging from religious to nationalists (Wanandi, 2002; Anwar, 2009; Damayanti, 2017; Yunanto, 2018; Toyibah, 2020).

Fear of Islam mostly comes from non-Muslims, especially Christians. This concern began when Indonesia became independent in 1945, and there was a debate about the ideology and foundation of the state. Several Islamic politicians from *Masyumi*, *Nahdlatul Ulama*, the Syarikat Islam Party, and the *Persatuan Tarbiyah Islamiyah* (Perti) proposed the establishment of an Indonesian state by making Islam the foundation and ideology of the state through the Jakarta Charter (*Piagam Jakarta*) (Boland, 1985; Anshari, 1997; Maarif, 2005; Solahudin, 2011;

Syarif, 2016). These concerns finally subsided after an agreement was reached between Islamists, Nationalists, and Christians to form the Republic of Indonesia with Pancasila as the basis of the state (Syarif, 2016; Effendy, 2009).

Islamophobia among Christians reemerged at the end of the New Order (Indonesian: *Orde Baru*, abbreviated Orba) and the beginning of the Reform era (Indonesian: *Era Reformasi*), and is characterized by four events: (1) horizontal conflict between Muslims and Christians in Poso and Ambon in the late 1990s, (2) acts of terrorism based on Islam in the form of bomb detonations in several churches, including the Christmas Eve bombings in 2000, (3) Acts of intolerance and intimidation against churches and rejection of church construction since the 2000s by extremist groups, and (4) the re-emergence of discourse on the formation of a state based on Islam by Islamic parties—the United Development Party (Indonesian: *Partai Persatuan Pembangunan*, abbreviated PPP) and the Crescent Star Party (Indonesian: *Partai Bulan Bintang*, abbreviated PBB)—in the 2000 general assembly of the People's Consultative Assembly of the Republic of Indonesia (Indonesian: *Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat Republik Indonesia*, MPR RI) and the Islamic Defenders Front (Indonesian: *Forum Pembela Islam*, abbreviated FPI) (Faiz, 2005).

What is interesting here is that Islamophobia in Indonesia is not only in the form of fear and prejudice of the Christian minority against the majority of Muslims but also in the form of discriminatory acts and verbal and physical violence among Muslims. This happens as Muslims in Indonesia consist of various sects with diverse political views. Later with the strengthening of the phenomenon of the emergence of terrorist organizations such as Al Qaeda and ISIS, a few militant Islamic groups in Indonesia openly claim to be affiliated with ISIS, such as *Jamaah Ansharut Daulah* (JAD), East Indonesia

Mujahideen (MIT) dan *Jamaah Ansharut Tauhid* (JAT) (Hakim, 2021).

This grouping of Muslims creates tension between groups who disagree; moderate versus radical and traditionalist versus modern. The tension among the groups is not very visible in the real world but hate speech over the decisions of different political parties, and Islamic groups of various sects is visible in cyberspace. This was conveyed by Munir (FGD, 2021), a former member of JAD who used to be very fanatic about supporting the ISIS

movement and was sentenced to 5 years in prison. Munir claims to have returned to mainstream Islamic thought, although he still receives real rejection and negative comments on social media.

A similar case happened to Febri Ramdani (FGD, 2021), a former foreign terrorist fighter (combatant) who went to Syria with his family to join ISIS. After realizing that the propaganda spread by ISIS through online media did not match the reality in Syria, Febri and his family decided to return to Indonesia. Then they joined the

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deradicalization program provided by the Indonesian government. However, even though Febri and his family have joined the deradicalization program, rejection of him is still happening, especially on social media.

The Root Causes of Islamophobia in Southeast Asia

Fear that later turned into hatred and rejection of Islam and Muslims in Southeast Asian countries is not something new. Islamophobia that encourages persecution of Muslims in Myanmar has occurred since the country was still a monarchy dominated by Buddhism from the beginning. One of the trigger factors for Buddhist hatred of minority groups, particularly Muslims, was that when the British controlled Burma, the British trusted Indian Hindus and Bengali Muslims to rule Myanmar (Wildan, 2021).

Most immigrants, protected by the British and the rule of the Indians and Bengalis during British control, encouraged the creation of a Burmese nationalism based on strong Buddhism. This privilege given to immigrants who are not Buddhists becomes the cause of social tensions between indigenous Myanmar people and non-Myanmar. When the Indian-Bengali community received special privileges, the indigenous Buddhist population in Myanmar saw it as a threat to the identity and cultural existence of Myanmar's indigenous peoples (Wildan, 2021).

The forced transfer of power from the Buddhist leaders of Burma (now Myanmar) to non-Burmese immigrants who did not understand Buddhism sparked hatred that led to violence against non-Myanmar. After Myanmar's independence from Britain in 1948, Rohingya Muslims living on the borders of Myanmar, Bangladesh,

and India could not obtain their rights as citizens. As a result, they often face violence from indigenous Myanmar peoples around them (Anwary, 2018).

This is also motivated by the fact that during World War II several Muslim Rohingya supported the British government to hold power in this region, whereas Buddhist Burmese supported the Japanese government. As a result, when this country finally became independent, the Burmese community—the majority population in Myanmar—refused the Rohingya people to live in Myanmar (Damayanti, 2018).

Discrimination against Muslims also extends to the political order at the national level (Barany, 2019; Abrar, 2013). Historical and socio-cultural factors of the Myanmar people who are intolerant of Muslims contribute to shaping the attitude of the Myanmar government. In exercising its power, Myanmar's military junta has often supported Buddhist historical and socio-cultural patrons in Myanmar. The background of the military junta's long reign and their way of maintaining a poor perception of the non-Myanmar community led the majority of Myanmar's indigenous population to agree with the poor perception of the Rohingya. This flawed perception drives them to take violent actions.

Poor democratization in Myanmar and the vital role of the military have also contributed to the persecution of the Rohingya Muslim community. Kevin B. I (2018) mentioned that the *Tatmadaw* or the Armed Forces in Myanmar is the cause of the slow democratization in line with the resolution of the Rohingya issue. This domestic condition was compounded by the international political situation marked by the rise of radical Islamic movements globally, especially after the Al Qaeda terrorist attacks in 2001 in New York. This negative perception of extremist movements and Islamic terrorism started Myanmar's military junta to take a hostile stance towards the Rohingya community (Wildan

2021).

Unlike in Myanmar, violence against Muslims in Thailand is motivated by religious and political interests in the form of an Islam-based ethnonationalism struggle. More than 90% of Thailand's population is Buddhist, but 85% of the people in Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat in the Southern Thai provinces are Malay and Muslim. Over the years, Malay Muslims in the area attempted to gain independence from Thailand through the Islamic Liberation Front of Pattani (Malay: *Barisan Islam Pembebasan Pattani*, abbreviated BIPP) and made resistance efforts against the central government, especially when the political situation in the country was heating up as a result of the coup (Damayanti, 2018).

Malay Muslims in Southern Thailand is not only threatened by religious leaders but also under pressure from the central government, which conducted counter-insurgency operations in the Pattani area. In some conflicts, the government has even deployed troops to protect Buddhist places of worship and allowed Buddhist nationalist groups in the south to raise monk armies. This troop, called *Tahanpra*, lived the life as an ordinary monk but trained as a soldier and received a salary from the government (Damayanti, 2018).

The Thailand government is carrying out "counter-insurgency" because it often associates the Islamic community in the Pattani region with an insurgent group that has fueled the separatist conflict for years. The Thai government sees the violence in the south as an uprising for ethno-nationalist reasons and not as discrimination based on religion. However, most Thais tend to disregard official government analysis and believe that all local acts of violence resulted from Malay Muslims' actions.

On the one hand, Muslims in Southern Thailand are reluctant to coexist peacefully with Thai Buddhists. Even the facts show that the Pattani Malays reject the

identity and historical narrative created by the Thai government and locals. As a result, Thais are enraged, blaming Islamic teachings for their rejection of this identity. On the other hand, Buddhist nationalists also disregard the Thai Government's assimilation policy arguments against the Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat Malays. This factor contributed to some of the violence against Muslims that still occurs today in Southern Thailand (Pathan et al., 2018).

In contrast with Myanmar and Thailand, Islamophobia in Indonesia had existed since 1945, when the founding fathers began to formulate the foundations for the newly independent Indonesian state and ideology. Several Muslim politicians from *Masyumi, Nahdlatul Ulama, Sarekat Islam* or Syarikat Islam Party, and Perti presented Islam as the foundation and ideology of the Indonesian state through the Jakarta Charter, thus causing concern and anger among Christian groups. (Boland, 1985; Anshari, 1997; Maarif, 2005; Solahudin, 2011; Syarif, 2016) Syaifudin Zuhri (2021) even sees that Islamophobia has existed in Indonesia since the Dutch colonial period due to the perception that Islam poses a threat to the ruling Dutch Colonial government.

Nashih Nasrullah (2020) explicitly highlights the practice of intolerance by some Muslims against minority groups as the reason for Islamophobia in Indonesia over the last two decades. Meanwhile, Achmad, Srinawati, and Aristianingsih (2021) see that the phenomenon of terrorism and religious conflict has the effect of giving the impression that Islam is a religion of violence and terrorism as the cause of negative sentiments and Islamophobia towards Islam and Muslims.

Typology of Islamophobia Threats in Myanmar, Thailand, and Indonesia

From the explanation above, the background of the causes and forms of Islamophobia in Myanmar, Thailand, and Indonesia are different from each other. Interestingly, the Islamophobia that exists in Myanmar, Thailand, and Indonesia has a lengthy historical background. It can even be traced back to the time of empires, colonialism, and the founding of a country. In other words, the rise in global terrorism and Islamic radicalism since 2001 is merely a symptom of the pre-existing condition of Islamophobia in the countries above.

According to Ciftci's (2021) theory, Islamophobia in these three Southeast Asian countries has four components. *First*, except in Indonesia, Islam is perceived as a distinct group, which contributes to Islamophobia. There are three reasons why the governments and citizens of Myanmar and Thailand regard Islam as just another group in their respective countries. First, there are differences between Muslims and the majority of Buddhists in Myanmar and Thailand regarding identity, values, and teachings. Second, because Muslims are a minority in both countries, they have little influence on the sociopolitical life of these countries. Third, political leaders in power tend to make a difference by providing convenience and privileges to the majority citizen based on the difference between majority and minority.

Second, Islamophobia occurs in the three countries because Islam is often associated with abusive behaviour, full of violence, aggressive actions, and threatening and supporting terrorism. Islamophobia based on this kind of thinking mainly occurs in Myanmar and Thailand, where the governments of these countries often clash with the local Muslims. Then the perception is constructed that Muslims are rude, aggressive, and support terrorism. This perception was then used as a justification by the government to act decisively against the Muslims there. Specifically in Indonesia, this view is common among minority groups, especially Christians Protestant, who experience the impact of acts of intolerance,

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radicalism, and terrorism by Islamic extremist groups and terrorist groups in Indonesia affiliated with Al Qaeda and ISIS (Damayanti, 2018).

Third, Islamophobia occurs because Islam is considered a political ideology and is often used for political purposes. The rise of anti-Islamic movements such as the Rohingya separatist movement in Myanmar and the Pattani movement in Thailand confirms anti-Islamic elements. In Indonesia's early years of independence, a political consensus established this country based on Pancasila and not Islamic law. Still, the discourse and movement for establishing a nation based on Islam continue to this day. When the reform era began, there were Indonesian Muslims who began to affiliate with political parties and Islamic community organizations to establish an Islamic State in Indonesia (Solahudin, 2011).

The last is that hostility to Islam and Muslims is the justification for discriminatory behaviour that causes Islamophobia in Myanmar, Thailand, and Indonesia. When Muslims are seen as "other and different", plus there is the aggression of Muslim groups for various reasons, all of that will lead to hostility towards Muslims. Especially when "something other and different" is related to the issue of majority and minority groups, as is the case in Myanmar and Thailand. Interestingly, in Indonesia, the hostility occurred precisely between the Islamic groups and was more caused by differences in flow, point of view, the choice of political parties, and the choice of political leaders.

This hostility towards Islam and Muslims leads to discriminatory actions ranging from less dangerous levels such as rejection and hate speech on social media to actual violence in the form of expulsion and mass murder. Myanmar and Thailand are Southeast Asian countries where Islamophobia has reached the level of physical violence, including the destruction of houses, beatings, expulsion, and even the murder of Muslims in their countries.

Even violence executed by citizens of Myanmar and Thailand seems to be supported by the national government in the presence of laws that favor the majority of citizens and harms Muslims who are minority citizens in the country. In the case of Thailand, the government's support has also manifested itself through the State of Emergency Law, which gives the military the authority to control border areas and act against Muslims who are considered separatist groups.

Islamophobia sentiment in Myanmar and Thailand clearly shows a real threat to human security, especially to Muslims. Muslims are often the target of violence by local people who commonly come from different religious groups, especially Buddhists in Myanmar and Thailand. Even violent acts have left Muslims homeless and dead on a massive scale. Even more tragic is that these cases of violence against Muslims are often supported by the government or do not receive a severe response so that when Muslims become victims, no one is confirmed as a suspect.

Islamophobia in Indonesia can be divided into two different types. The first one is the fear and anxiety experienced by minority groups such as Christians toward Muslim groups. The fear felt by Christian minority groups

is visible in community life. The second type is hatred, anti-Islamic sentiment, rejection, and discrimination by one Muslim group against another. This second type of Islamophobia is increasingly prevalent on online media, mainly social media. Hate speech and discrimination against fellow Muslims on social media, especially on Twitter, are widespread and have increased since 2018. This was started primarily by political issues such as during the 2017 Jakarta Gubernatorial Election and the 2019 Indonesia Presidential Election.

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Conclusion

Islamophobia occurs not only in Western countries but also in the Southeast Asian region, albeit for different reasons. Tensions between majority and minority groups in Myanmar and Indonesia, as well as separatist movements taking place in the border areas of Thailand and Malaysia, are the first triggers of Islamophobia in these countries. The effects range from fear, sentiments, and hate speech on social media to forms of discrimination, rejection, and physical violence such as beatings, evictions, home destruction, and mass murder.

What is even more tragic is that acts of violence are not only perpetrated by locals and religious leaders but also supported by the government, which implements policies and regulations that harm and threaten the safety of Muslims in the country. Thailand's Emergency Law and the military junta's strong influence on Myanmar's government have increased pressure on Muslims within the two countries. That is why the international community and regional organizations must take action to stop human rights violations in Southeast Asia in the frame of Islamophobia.

In this case, ASEAN must take strategic steps such as (1) ensuring the ASEAN Charter and the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration agreed since 2012 are genuinely implemented by considering things such as respecting, improving and protecting ASEAN citizens' rights, including the democratic principles, law enforcement, and good governance with concerning human rights and other human freedoms, national security, public order, health, convenience, and public morality, as well as the general welfare; (2) conducting a unique approach and dialogue with member states experiencing humanitarian crises with an Islamophobic background, especially Myanmar and Thailand, through the ASEAN mechanisms and unique mechanisms that are gradually, systematically, and continuously implemented; (3) bringing up and discussing issues of human rights violations and humanitarian crises under the guise of Islamophobia in several dialogues and conference mechanisms owned by ASEAN; and (4) institutional strengthening, especially at the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights, in dealing with human rights violations, including issues related to Islamophobia in member states and partner countries. This requires commitment and seriousness from ASEAN member States to ensure that the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights fulfills its role.