



Complexity of Violences Towards Afghanistan Refugee Women in DKI Jakarta

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Abstract. The increasing number of foreign refugees throughout the world also has an impact on Indonesia as a developing country that is used as a transit country by foreign refugees. By 2016, according to UNHCR, in Indonesia there were 13,840 refugees and asylum seekers who came from many countries such as Afghanistan, Somalia, Iran, Iraq due to various reasons. Among these refugees, 4,428 are women. And more than a half are Afghanistan women. In Indonesia, refugees and asylum seekers cannot work and get formal education because Indonesia is not a country that ratified the 1950 Convention and the 1967 Protocol. Therefore, many refugees and asylum seekers in Indonesia have many social problems, especially women. For refugees and asylum seekers in DKI Jakarta — the city with the largest number of Afghanistan refugees and asylum seekers in Indonesia — these problems come in various forms such as; difficult accessing basic needs, being neglected, marginalized, as well having physical and sexual violence. This paper seeks to explain the experience and complexity of the violence experienced by Afghanistan women refugees and asylum seekers in Indonesia by adopting Johan Galtung's concept of violence namely direct violence, cultural violence and structural violence. The authors of this paper developed it based on data collected through observation and in-depth interviews with 5 subjects. The data collection and analysis apply a gender perspective approach to gender dimension and related socio-cultural dimensions of experiences of Afghanistan women refugees and asylum seekers. This paper argues that Afghanistan women refugees and asylum seekers have been experiencing complex forms and sources of violence that in line with their differences in social, economic and past status.

Keywords: Refugee · Asylum Seeker · Afghanistan · Violence

1 Introduction

Based on data from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the number of refugees and asylum seekers in a number of years has increased steadily by more than 22 million refugees and asylum seekers at the global level [1]. They stated

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that in the past few years, the refugee crisis has been the worst refugee crisis since World War II. These refugees leave the country for a number of reasons such as constant war, their threatened conditions, natural disasters, or their country does not give rights to its citizens. As of 2016, there were 13,840 people in Indonesia consisting of 9,795 refugees and 4,045 asylum seekers [1]. Indonesia has been a transit country for asylum seekers and refugees since the existence of Indochina refugees came using ships since decades ago. The location and geography of Indonesia, as a vast archipelago consisting of islands of more than 55,000 kms, makes its borders difficult and almost impossible to control. Since then, Indonesia has been chosen by refugees as a transit country [2]. In Indonesia itself, there is a large contribution from Afghanistan with an amount of more than 50% [3].

Ideally, people who feel threatened can be said to be refugees when they have left their country. Yet actually, the journey of being a refugee as well as the process to receive official status as a refugee is not a short one. Before the UNHCR makes an official decision to become a refugee, someone who leave their country has the status as an asylum seeker. Therefore, asylum seekers are people who are seeking protection to get status as refugees. They are waiting for the process of acknowledging their claims so when they leave their country and decide to stay permanently in other countries, they must obtain official status from the government and UNHCR to obtain refugee status in order to obtain international protection [2]. To get the official status of being a refugee, asylum seeker must go through many processes which take a long time. Registered asylum seeker can submit recognition of refugee status as assessed by UNHCR through a process called Refugee Status Determination (RSD) procedure. Asylum seekers are interviewed by RSD officers who are assisted by an interpreter regarding their submission to get protection. When submissions to get protection are rejected, RSD procedures still provide one more chance to appeal the negative decision [2].

This paper focuses on refugee women from Afghanistan because all of Afghan refugees in Indonesia have gotten the status of refugees related to the latest UNHCR policy since 2 years ago [4]. Another reason why we choose to focus on Afghan refugee women is, more than 55% refugees in Indonesia come from Afghanistan [3]. In addition, refugees and asylum seekers from Afghanistan that came to Indonesia have always increased every year since 2009 compared to asylum seekers from other countries [6]. Since there are more refugees and asylum seekers from other countries, many of them are displaced and cannot access their basic needs [2]. Many Afghan refugee women who live in Indonesia are displaced, they live on the streets even though among them are pregnant women, women with toddlers, and the elderly. They live on the sidewalk because there is no other choice. They do not have jobs and do not have access to education and health services from the government of Indonesia. In fact, they really need a lot of special facilities such as clean water, healthy food, and adequate health services [6]. In addition, refugee women are also vulnerable to sexual violence [10].

In addition to getting sexual violence, not being able to get basic needs such as education and health, Afghan refugee women also cannot work and do activities that are more flexible like men. This is caused by the presumption and culture that women do not have higher capacity and ability than men, activities opportunities for women are also smaller than men [11]. This paper tries to present various forms of very complex

violences. This paper uses the theory of forms of violence proposed by Johan Galtung. Galtung divides violence into 3 forms, namely direct violence, cultural violence, and structural violence.

Direct violence involves the use of physical force, such as murder or torture, rape and sexual violence, as well as beatings. Verbal violence, such as humiliation, is also widely recognized as direct violence [9]. Direct violence is a male dominated phenomenon [10]. According to Galtung, patriarchy is the institutionalization of male domination in a vertical structure, with a very high correlation between position and gender that is legitimized by culture, and often appears as direct violence with men as subjects and women as objects [10].

Cultural violence refers to prevailing attitude and beliefs that have been taught since childhood and have been being practiced in everyday life. Cultural violence is closely connected to power and the habit of conducting violence [9]. Meanwhile, structural violence, which is not carried out by individuals but hidden in smaller and wider structures. Penetration, segmentation, marginalization and fragmentation, as part of exploitation are reinforcing components in structures that function to block formation and mobility to fight against exploitation [9].

In delivering the examination of different and complex forms of violence faced by Afghanistan refugee women, this paper presents the following components: (1) brief discussion on how conflicts in Afghanistan caused them to become refugees (2) identification of forms of violence that occurred to Afghan refugee women, and (3) concluding discussion that included conclusions and recommendations.

2 Analysis

2.1 Afghanistan Conflict

Afghanistan is an Islamic country located in Central Asia. In the third century to the eighth century, Buddhism was an influential religion in Afghanistan. New era of Islam came in at the end of the seventh century, and began to spread in Afghanistan when Arab invaders from the Umayyad Dynasty overthrew the Persian empire from the Sasanians. In the tenth century, Muslim rulers summoned Samanids from Bukhara (now Uzbekistan), to expand the influence of Islam into Afghanistan. The complete change of Afghanistan into Islam occurred during the rule of Gaznavids in the eleventh century. Throughout the 16th and 21st centuries there were wars until the tour of the world struggled for power, ranging from tribal wars in Afghanistan to war with other countries such as Britain, the Soviet Union and the United States [14]. Afghanistan, a country known as one of the sources of world civilization, a country inhabited by people of different ethnic and religious backgrounds This makes it rich in cultural richness. The Afghan population has been formed from various tribes, namely Pashton, Tajek, Hazara, Uzbek, Turkmen, Pasha, Noristani, Baloch, Qeezlbash, Sikhs, and many other small ethnic groups. This happens because this country is located in the central part of Asia, among different countries [12].

The war in Afghanistan actually includes internal and external war. It is called internal war because it involves the ruling government war with Taliban separatist groups that make Afghanistan the base of their struggle, especially in the city of Kabul. External war

was mentioned because the United States invasion of Afghanistan was the trigger of the war that occurred in Afghanistan. Through the Anti-Taliban Northern Alliance forces and the CIA the United States officially attacked and succeeded in entering the city of Kabul on October 7, 2001. This invasion was the beginning of War on Terror which was declared by President George Bush Jr. After the 9/11 attack where the bomb was detonated at the WTC [15]. Since the invasion until 2008, counted as many as 810,000 people consisting of 309,000 coalition soldiers, and 501,000 United States soldiers were killed in the war. \$ 4,400,000,000 has been spent and is likely to continue to grow as the Afghan war continues. Not only the loss of life and material losses must be borne by both parties. However, Afghanistan as a country affected by the invasion of the United States and NATO must bear the loss of damage to public facilities in the country and damage to cultural heritage sites [15].

Since the 9/11 incident, under the banner of the war on terrorism, the Taliban government in Afghanistan has been attacked mercilessly. This is of course related to the reluctance of the Taliban government led by Mullah Muhammad 'Umar handed over Osama bin Laden, a Saudi Arabian accused of America as an intellectual actor for 9/11 events or attacks. The United States attack on the Taliban later became a massive project of the United States in the agenda of the "war on terrorism" which was directed at pursuing "Islamic terrorists" which endangered western interests, and the United States in particular [5]. What caused this war to be so long? One of them is because the resistance of the Afghan people through the Taliban is an act of self-protection for the massive attacks by the United States and its allies to their homeland. They argued that the attack was not initiated by them, but was an American engineering so that they were justified for their attacks on Afghanistan [15]. In addition to continuing to wage war with America, they also executed people from minority groups, who were not in line with their beliefs, and who opposed them.

More and more Islamic activists from various parts of the world travel to Afghanistan to become members of the Taliban and call for jihad against America. The Taliban, with many supporters, are increasingly convinced of establishing an Islamic state that is very fundamental and extreme. The sympathy of Afghan civil society against Taliban militants is also increasing, this is evidenced by only 50,000 people who want to support the United States to expel the Taliban from Afghanistan. The United States troops are overwhelmed by Afghan fighters who always provide resistance and now over 70% of Afghanistan is under control. Afghan fighters [15]. That is what made the residents then become refugees. Those who fled were those who felt threatened that they would be persecuted by the Taliban because of different beliefs and views from the Taliban group.

2.2 Forms of Violences faced by Afghanistan Refugee Women Living in DKI Jakarta

As stated previously, we develop this paper based on a qualitative research in which we collected data by conducting observations and in-depth interviews with five key informants. Five subjects of this study came from different backgrounds such as economic, age, and social status differences. Based on in-depth interviews, we found out that direct violence forms that often occurs in Afghan refugee women are physical and sexual violence. One of the research subjects with the initials NI stated that she had been beaten

by a fellow male refugee because she did not want to take part in social activities held by other refugees. The activities did involve many refugees, but NI did not want to take part in the activity because she had to take care of his sick mother. NI also mentioned that when she was walking alone, she was often tempted by men of fellow refugees and local residents, even NI had been forced to marry by a local man she had just met after shopping at a convenience store. Another resource person, WA, was once yelled at and beaten by an immigration official because his autistic child always walked around, shouting, and that disturbed the immigration officer. She even got drenched with drains when WA and his family lived in a tent in front of Rudenim, West Jakarta. Two research subjects who received direct violence were those from the lower middle class of the economy.

This is very much in line with what Galtung said about direct violence that as direct violence, men as sexes who have dominance in the world of patriarchy, often become the subject of violence and women as objects [10]. NI and WA get direct violence in physical and sexual form because of this dominance, that men are indeed stronger so that they become perpetrators of violence and women are victims of violence. They make women the object of violence because men feel they have a higher power relationship than women.

The next violence is cultural violence. Cultural violence is violence that occurs because of a cultural product that has been internalized since childhood so that the violence that befalls the victim is seen as a natural thing and even the victim does not feel that it is a violence [9]. As a country with a very patriarchal culture, Afghanistan views women as human beings who are lower than men. In Afghanistan, very few women work, go to school, and can speak in public [16]. One of the research subjects who was very clearly seen as having cultural violence was a resource writer named FA. She comes from a family whose economic condition is middle to upper. She lives in an apartment and easily accesses many things except access to certain activities such as attending meetings of refugee communities or traveling alone outside the home. All that should not be done if she is not with her husband. FA can only say yes because she thinks that a good wife is someone who takes care of household and accept anything that husband's request. As FA said,

“Sometimes I was feeling lonely because I didn't do anything and just stay at home. But my husband told me to do so... And I believe that a good wife should obey their husband” (FA, Personal Communication [in-person interview], June 7, 2019).

FA does not even have any information about the Afghan women's community. Actually, FA really wants to gather with other Afghan women in Indonesia. However, she was not allowed by her husband to attend meetings with other Afghan women because her husband was afraid that Indonesia's situations is not quiet safe if she travelled alone. According to her husband, the situation in Indonesia is not the same as in Afghanistan, so her husband is afraid that FA will do activities without being accompanied by him. FA also really wants to travel alone without her husband, just with her friends because sometimes she feels very lonely when her husband is not home. Cultural values that are firmly embedded in the minds of FA and her husband have made FA a victim of cultural violence because every access that FA wants to have is limited by her husband and FA accepts that condition with very cultural reasons. This can happen and will continue to

surround women because the culture they hold is deeply rooted and is not easy to change even though they are already in another country [10].

Other cultural violence can also be found in other sources, although not as clearly as what happened to FA. Violence in cultural form also afflicts WA who is now 8 months pregnant. When interviewed, WA stated that it was very difficult to become a refugee woman who was pregnant and also had children with special needs because WA had to take care of everything properly. WA feels that as a housewife, WA must do many things such as take care of her baby's health and also take care of her two children. WA must have extra energy because her husband always comes out every morning and comes home at midnight. WA said, WA did not know what her husband was doing because it was none of her business to ask her husband. Her obligation is just to take care of her two children and also maintain her health and content. If WA feels very stressed and dizzy, WA usually cries until she sleeps because she does not have a mobile phone to inform her husband and also does not have money to go to the hospital. Cultural violence that comes to FA is a double burden. As a pregnant woman, WA feels she is obliged to take care of her two children and also takes care of other household needs because that is how she should be a woman. WA is also not aware of this because rooted patriarchal culture has been internalized into WA's mind so that she feels that this is a natural thing [10].

The next violence is structural violence that afflicts women caused by a small structure or a larger structure [9]. The small structure is an order, rule, treatment made by a social structure that causes one group to be marginalized, exploited, and unable to access certain spaces while the larger group is a particular state institution, organization or institution [9]. For the case of international refugees who live in Indonesia as a transit country before they could go to another country where they will establish their new permanent citizenship status, various forms of structural violence they face are related to the fact that Indonesia has not ratified international convention and protocol related to the protection of the rights of international refugees.

Several research subjects stated that they had difficulty accessing basic needs such as health facilities, shelter, food, and clean water. This happened to AW, a widow with 2 children. Before being assisted by UNHCR, AW had lived on the road for several months and AW did not get a safe place to live, could not get clean water, and even AW had to wait for donations from local residents. This did not only happen to AW, but also to NI and also to WA who had spent several months on the road in front of the Jakarta Immigration Detention House (known as Rudenim) located in West Jakarta. In addition, AW and WA both have young children who certainly need adequate basic needs such as vitamins, milk, healthy food, clean water, as well as a safe and comfortable place to live. However, both AW, WA and NI did not receive support to meet basic needs for them and their young children. What AW, NI, and WA and their family members face are different forms of structural violence caused by a state institution that should take care of refugees properly. Meanwhile, when NI and WA lived on the streets, one regulation which concerning refugees has been issued by the government of Indonesia and it is written that refugee women are vulnerable groups that must be fulfilled by their basic needs for shelter, food and clean water.

AW also had difficulty accessing health facilities for her first child. When her first child was 4 years old, before AW was assisted by UNHCR and was living in a tent on the

street, once her child was vomiting, AW panicked, then she rushed to bring her child to the nearest health center and turned out the health center refused to provide help because she had to pay a large amount while she has no money so her child cannot be handled. Besides that, the doctor also put other Indonesian patients first and wondered at length to AW as if he didn't believe AW.

A similar thing also happened to other research subjects, namely SA. SA felt difficulties especially relating to health facilities. Once SA felt very dizzy then she went to the nearest health center and she was asked to wait for 5 h while the other patient, which was an Indonesian citizen who had come after her, had been given treatment. SA felt she had this experience because she was a refugee and the staff of health center did not understand what she was talking about, then she was abandoned. Finally she fainted on the spot and when she woke up she was already in the treatment room. In the case of AW and SA, these two Afghan refugee women receive negative stigma and discrimination from the staffs of Indonesian health facilities. AW and SA did not know whether there was a written policy regarding patient priorities. At that time the government of Indonesia has agreed to provide support for international refugees, yet what happened to AW could be referred to as violence caused by marginalization created by both social and structural structures at the health center [9].

Other structural violence was also felt by SA. According to SA, discrimination and marginalization are still very common experiences among refugee women. The most disturbing experience faced by SA was difficulties to get informal employment opportunities compared to refugee men. Indeed refugees may not officially work in Indonesia, but some male refugees are not facing difficulties in getting acquaintances and jobs from Indonesians. According to SA, this was caused by the assumption that refugee women could not do anything and needed more money than men. SA once enrolled in a non-profit organization to become a translator, but when SA had reached the final stage of interviews, those who were accepted were refugee men even though according to them their abilities were the same. And when SA asked why she was not accepted, the organization said because she is a woman and the organization need more male refugees who they thought were more competent and stronger to face any challenges.

Considering that Indonesia has not ratified international convention and protocol on the protection of the rights of international refugees, the establishment of Presidential Decree on how relevant state institutions in Indonesia have to treat international refugees could be considered as an appropriate but limited policy. Nevertheless, several things still stated in the policy have to be re-evaluated because there are still many things that are not clear mentioned by the presidential regulation. The regulation concerning the detention center, the imposition of fees for managing refugees to the Regional Government is one of the good things mentioned in the Presidential Decree and there needs to be further supervision so that the implementation of the regulation can run well. The fact is, even though it is a good sign that the government has issued a policy regarding foreign refugees, the regulation has not been gender sensitive and has not been able to address the problems of refugee women.

3 Conclusion and Recommendation

Being a refugee woman is very difficult, especially when they come from a country where has a thick patriarchal culture such as Afghanistan. The reasons they decided to become refugees were in many cases influenced by imbalance power relations dominated by men. In many cases, a decision to leave their home country is not even taken by the women. The decision mostly taken because of the pressures from men. The journey to becoming a refugee is also full of difficulties and contains different forms of violence which include direct violence and cultural violence. When they arrive in a transit country such as Indonesia that has not been ratifying international convention and protocol related to the protection of the rights of international refugees, they face more problems including different forms of structural violence.

A variety of forms of direct violence they get include physical, verbal, and sexual violence. They experience these forms of direct violence because of the patriarchal culture that has been internalized in the minds of Afghan refugee women and men so that women are seen as inferior and considered as objects that can be treated not equally. In addition, direct violence against Afghan refugee women is also caused by a cycle of poverty they have been facing both in their home country and in their transiting place in Jakarta, Indonesia. Those who often get direct violence in their transiting place in Jakarta are those whose prior economic conditions are lower. The cultural violence that afflicts Afghan refugee women certainly does not only apply to Afghan women refugees who are in middle to lower economic conditions. The violence is certainly caused by a very thick patriarchal culture from Afghanistan that objectified women even until they arrive in a transit country. Cultural violence that occurs to many refugee women is in the form of domestic violence, which is given by the family sphere, which causes women to have a double burden and limited in accessing certain sources that are actually desired by refugee women. Those who commit direct violence are mostly male Afghan refugees themselves and also male Indonesian citizens.

The forms of structural violence that afflict Afghan refugee women come in various forms and afflict women from various backgrounds. The actors who give structural violence include officers of official institutions that supposed to take care of refugees, as well as members of social groups that perform discriminating acts towards Afghan refugee women. In this case, the violence makes Afghan refugee women having difficulty accessing health facilities and access to livelihood and other economic resources. Afghan women refugees also find it difficult to get out of structural violence because there is a dependency on women refugees on certain institutions or social groups.

We argue that the various forms of violence faced by Afghan refugee women certainly complex based on economic status, social status, religion, age, and ethnicity. These women experience complex forms of violences; based on socio-cultural and political factors that shape their multiple identities as a woman who belong to certain social group within an ethnic group and forced to leave their home country then became refugee. One aspect that is very influential within the stories of various forms of violence experienced by the Afghan refugee women is the patriarchal culture and social structures they brought from their countries which has continued when they live in Indonesia as a transiting country.

Since Indonesia has not ratified international convention and treaties on international refugee, internal policy established by Indonesian government should be used by state and public institutions in Indonesia to provide support for the Afghan refugee women and other international refugee women. However, this policy needs to be properly implemented and even re-evaluated.

Based on what we encountered in the field, we propose several recommendations. First, UNHCR needs to collaborate with local non-profit organizations which focus on refugee issue to provide empowerment programs for international refugee women and other displaced women who are still in the process of getting status as international refugees. The empowerment program is needed to increase the capacity and ability of soft skills and hard skills for refugee women, considering that there are many women refugees who have limited abilities to access various forms of livelihood in transit country because they do not get formal education in their country. In this empowerment program, the values of feminism also need to be inserted so that refugee women who are still internalized by patriarchal culture can slowly learn and understand that the position of women and men is equal so that they can gain full awareness if they get forms of violence.

Second, UNHCR and other organizations which focus on refugee issue need to provide information and socialization regarding the reporting mechanism if refugee women get violence. This needs to be done because refugee women are very vulnerable to violence and a well-socialized reporting mechanism can help them to at least reduce their burdens or even follow up on the perpetrators of violence towards women refugees.

Third, it is important for the government to make policies that also cover the needs and problems of refugee women because the existing policies have not even discussed further about regulations for refugees living in Indonesia. In addition, there is a need for supervision from the government assisted by UNHCR and other organizations regarding the implementation of the Presidential Decree concerning foreign refugees so that what is expected to be achieved properly.

Finally, further research is needed on the complexity of other violence that afflicts women refugees from other countries and who live outside DKI Jakarta. Considering there are also women refugees from other countries who may get different forms of violence because of different backgrounds. Further research on the complexity of this violence is needed to encourage the UNHCR and the government to be more careful when making a policy. In addition, further research is also useful to provide the widest possible information to the public regarding the issue of refugee women who are still very rarely heard. Further qualitative research with gender perspective can be carried out with a similar method, namely in-depth interviews and close observations of refugee women. This approach will be able to help researchers revealing and exploring as well as analyzing deeper the narratives of refugee women.

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