

“Let’s Walk My Journey”: Securitization of Refugee Issues in Indonesia through Works of Art

Sekuritisasi Isu Pengungsi di Indonesia Melalui Karya Seni

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Abstract : This study aims to examine the securitization carried out by RDI Urban Refugee Research Group (RDI UREF) through the art exhibition Let’s Walk My Journey in 2022. The group used works of art as a medium to securitize human security issues faced by refugees who are in transit in Indonesia. The issues ranged from uncertain resettlement in a third country to lacking human rights access to legal employment and education in Indonesia. This study uses a qualitative method, with the securitization theory by Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver in place. The author found that the securitization carried out by RDI UREF aims to draw the attention of the Indonesian public to make them aware of refugee issues. The group expected the bigger public awareness of the issues to become a stronger force in urging the government to guarantee refugee rights. Let’s Walk My Journey enables UREF to become a securitization actor, with refugees in transit as a referent object and the Indonesian people and government as a targeted audience. In the exhibition, the group uses artworks as speech acts to make the public and government realize that refugee issues are an existential threat they must address and solve together for the sake of humanity.

Keywords: securitization, refugees, human rights, art, Indonesia

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk meneliti sekuritisasi yang dilakukan RDI Urban Refugee Research Group (RDI UREF) melalui pameran



seni *Let's Walk My Journey* pada tahun 2022. Kelompok ini menggunakan karya seni untuk melakukan sekuritisasi terhadap berbagai masalah keamanan manusia yang dihadapi oleh pengungsi asing yang berada di Indonesia, mulai dari masalah tentang pemukiman kembali di negara ketiga yang tidak pasti hingga masalah tentang absennya akses mendapatkan pendidikan dan memperoleh pekerjaan bagi para pengungsi. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif and teori sekuritisasi oleh Barry Buzan dan Ole Wæver. Penulis menemukan bahwa UREF melakukan sekuritisasi sebagai upaya untuk menarik perhatian masyarakat Indonesia agar mereka sadar akan masalah pengungsi. Kelompok ini mengharapkan bahwa kesadaran publik yang lebih besar terhadap masalah pengungsi bisa menjadi kekuatan yang lebih kuat dalam mendesak pemerintah untuk memenuhi hak-hak pengungsi. Dalam pameran *Let's Walk My Journey*, UREF berperan sebagai aktor sekuritisasi, dengan pengungsi sebagai objek sekuritisasi (referent object) dan masyarakat serta pemerintah Indonesia sebagai target sekuritisasi (targeted audience). Kelompok ini menggunakan karya seni sebagai alat tindak tutur (speech act) dalam menyadarkan publik dan pemerintah bahwa masalah pengungsi adalah ancaman terhadap kemanusiaan yang perlu mereka perlu atasi dan selesaikan bersama.

Kata kunci: sekuritisasi, pengungsi, hak asasi manusia, seni, Indonesia

Introduction

According to “International Relations: A Political Dictionary,” national security encompasses the allocation of resources to produce, deploy, and employ coercive facilities to pursue the interests of a nation.¹ Meanwhile, Harold Brown, former secretary of defense of the United States, provided a broader definition of national security, emphasizing the preservation of the nation’s territory, integrity, economic relations, and border control, as well as the protection of its nature and institutions from disruptions.² The Latin word ‘securus,’ which translates as free from danger and fear, forms the term ‘security’. While the security interest is not limited to nations alone, individuals and groups also seek security. This fact led to the emergence of the human security concept after the Cold War.

¹ T. May Rudy, *Studi Strategis dalam Transformasi Sistem Internasional Pasca Perang Dingin*, (Bandung: Refika, 2002), 64

² Ibid, 65

The end of the Cold War marked a shift in understanding and defining security, with the introduction of the human security concept in place. Echoed by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the concept of human security stresses the security of individuals. This shift expanded the concept of security beyond national security to encompass the security of people. It also involved transitioning, from security through armaments to security through human development, from territorial security to food, employment, and environmental security.³ Human security recognizes that all individuals have the right to freedom from fear and freedom from want, regardless of sex, race, religion, ethnicity, and nationality. However, refugees still face rights deficiencies, including the right to work, social protection, and education.

Indonesia is home to more than 13,100 persons of concern to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). They include 3,158 asylum-seekers and 9,991 refugees across the archipelago, from Medan in North Sumatra to Batam in Riau Islands, and from Semarang in Central Java to Kupang in East Nusa Tenggara. The majority come from Afghanistan (57%), Somalia (10%), and Myanmar (5%). Nearly three-fourths of the persons of concern to UNHCR in Indonesia are men, with the remaining being women.⁴

UNHCR reports that 73% of the persons of concern in Indonesia are adults, and the remaining 27% are children.⁵ They fled from their countries of origin, such as Afghanistan and Myanmar, in search of safety from war, conflict, and violence. They consider Indonesia a transit country, hoping to resettle in a third country like Australia. However, Australia has ceased accepting refugees registered with UNHCR from Indonesia since Jul. 1, 2014.⁶ In Indonesia, they have no access to fundamental human rights: rights to education and employment. After enduring dangerous journeys from their war-torn countries, they take suffering in Indonesia as they lack the basic rights they need.⁷

³ UNDP, *Human Development Report 1993* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 2

⁴ UNHCR, *Indonesia Country Fact Sheet-June 2022*; available from <https://www.unhcr.org/id/wp-content/uploads/sites/42/2022/08/Indonesia-Fact-Sheet-June-2022-FINAL.pdf>; accessed Dec. 30, 2022.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ilham, *Rights-based policy response urgent for refugees in transit*, The Jakarta Post, 31 October 2018; available from <https://www.thejakartapost.com/academia/2018/10/31/rights-based-policy-response-urgent-for-refugees-in-transit.html>, accessed Dec. 30, 2022.

⁷ Made Anthony Iswara, *On World Refugee Day, activists call for stronger human rights protections*, The Jakarta Post, 22 June 2020; available from <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2020/06/22/on-world-refugee-day-activists-call-for-stronger-human-rights->

Local news agencies have reported that refugees experience significant mental and emotional strain due to years of waiting for confirmation of resettlement without any certainty. This uncertainty has led to tragic incidents, such as the suicide of Afghan Hazara refugee Abbas Mohammady in Riau on Sept. 30, 2017, and the self-immolation of Afghan refugee Ahmad Shah at UNHCR headquarters in Medan, North Sumatra on Nov. 30, 2021. As of Aug. 2022, 16 refugees in Indonesia attempted suicide due to psychological stressors⁸, according to RDI Urban Refugee Research Group (RDI UREF), a research group focusing on urban refugees to raise public awareness and discourse on refugees.

Ilham, an officer of the Immigration Agency in Pekanbaru, Riau, shared that in 2018, a refugee committed suicide by hanging in the yard of Sekupang Immigration Detention Center in Batam. The refugee was frustrated for waiting for resettlement since 2016. In the same year, another refugee who lived in Medan, North Sumatra, also took his life. He recalled that in a shelter he oversaw, he witnessed a suicide attempt by a depressed teenage asylum seeker.⁹ Amara Putri, who taught refugees at the Roshan Learning Center, said refugees did not receive counseling for their psychological health problems. They had no access to health services, causing them to contract tuberculosis and suffer from other diseases, such as intestinal worms, malaria, and respiratory infections. Poor hygiene education, resource scarcity, and overcrowding exacerbated their vulnerability to such conditions.¹⁰

To address psychological challenges faced by refugees, RDI UREF set up an art exhibition titled “Let’s Walk My Journey” from Aug. 6 to Aug. 20, 2022, at the Work Coffee café in South Jakarta. This exhibition, which is the first to be conducted by the group, facilitated refugees to showcase their artworks, from handicrafts, drawings to paintings. RDI UREF senior researcher Akino Tahir explained that the exhibition served two purposes. First, it sought to facilitate refugees to use art to share their concerns, express their feelings, and tell their stories. Second, it aimed to engage refugees with society in a creative way. She hoped that “Let’s Walk My Journey” could not only open an interaction room between the refugees and visitors but also increase public awareness of human rights

protections.html, accessed Dec. 30 2022.

⁸ Akino Tahir, interview by author, Jakarta, Aug. 24, 2022.

⁹ Ilham.

¹⁰ Amara Putri, *Silent struggle of refugees in Indonesia*, The Jakarta Post, October 31, 2019; available from <https://www.thejakartapost.com/academia/2019/10/31/the-silent-struggle-of-refugees-in-indonesia.html>; accessed Dec. 30, 2022.

issues that the persons of concern faced and human security problems that the Indonesian government had yet to address fully.¹¹

Human security gives people freedom and safety to have and exercise choices.¹² It has many dimensions, from economic security, political security, food security, health security, personal security, environmental security to personal security.¹³ Refugees in their countries of origin lack personal security because they are terrorized and persecuted. However, after they manage to escape from terror and persecution in their home countries, they face challenges in accessing economic and political security in Indonesia. They have no financial security because they live in poverty, homelessness, and unemployment. That happens because the Indonesian government forbids them to work in the country. They are also politically insecure because of the violations of their rights, such as the right to get an education. Security is the prerogative of each individual. That's why the concept of security is inseparable from the ideas of human rights and dignity to end human suffering.¹⁴

As "Let's Walk My Journey" aims to make the public and government aware of human security issues faced by refugees, the author argues that RDI UREF conducts securitization through art. In this research, the state of the art is securitization. According to the Copenhagen School, securitization means the process of an actor declaring another actor or a particular issue and dynamics as an 'existential threat' to a particular referent object.¹⁵ In this research, the particular issue is the lack of basic human rights faced by refugees in transit. As human beings, they have the right to education and work. Education and employment are fundamental needs. However, these needs are denied. The denial of human rights is an existential threat to transiting refugees. RDI UREF tried to make the public and government aware of this existential threat through "Let's Walk My Journey." The author, therefore, argues that this exhibition is RDI UREF's way of securitizing human rights challenges facing refugees in transit across the archipelagic country. It means that RDI UREF is a securitizing actor, with the refugees transiting in Indonesia as the particular referent object in place.

¹¹ Akino Tahir, interview by author

¹² Šárka Waisová, "Human Security-the Contemporary Paradigm?", *Perspectives*, No. 2 (2003): 63.

¹³ Šárka Waisová, p. 62.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Yandri Kurniawan, *The Politics of Securitization in Democratic Indonesia*, (Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 14.

As “Let’s Walk My Journey” invites refugees to speak up through artworks, the author also argues that some refugees who became participating artists can also be considered securitizing actors. This fact shows that two non-state actors securitized this issue: RDI UREF and refugees participating in the exhibition. They displayed paintings, drawings, poems, photos, and handicrafts to raise public awareness and draw the government’s attention to the human security issue that they raised. They saw the artworks as a communicative medium for a ‘speech act’ to convey a message that were threatened because their rights and needs were denied. In the securitization theory, speech act matters because it attaches the word ‘security’ to an issue. Speech act refers to the actions of saying, speaking, or uttering the word ‘security’ to suggest the prominence of a threat or creating an environment, framework, or narrative that leads to specific security implications. Actors ‘speak the word’ and connect security to an issue to enable it to take on a security modality. Speech act rests at the core of securitization.¹⁶

The state of the art of securitization used in this research refers to the theory of securitization by Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver. In their book, “Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security,” they explain that securitization is a discursive process to construct an intersubjective understanding of an existential threat to call for urgent and exceptional actions to address it.¹⁷ It takes three stages during the process, from the non-politicized, politicized, to securitized stages. An issue has yet to incite a public debate in the non-politicized stage. The issue, therefore, needs to be politicized until it becomes part of public policy. The issue manages to be in the securitized stage when it has been perceived as an existential threat.¹⁸

Buzan and Wæver’s theory of securitization has been used in many studies, but most previous studies employed the theory to explain securitization made by state actors. The previous studies primarily focused on securitization carried out by the governments, such as Recep Tayyip Erdogan, president of Turkey, who did securitization for military intervention in Syria¹⁹, and Rodrigo Duterte, president of the Philippines,

¹⁶ Sabine Hirschauer, *The Securitization of Rape: Women, War and Sexual Violence* (UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 37.

¹⁷ Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 491.

¹⁸ Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (United States: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998), 23-24.

¹⁹ Alfiyan Nooryan Putra Pikoli, “Bulan Madu yang Singkat: Mengapa Turki Mengubah Sikapnya terhadap Suriah Sejak Perang Sipil 2011?”, *Andalas Journal of*

who did securitization for the war on illegal drugs²⁰. Other studies highlighted securitization by Joko Widodo, president of Indonesia, to roll out a health communication strategy during the Covid-19 pandemic²¹, securitization by Lee Hsien Loong, prime minister of Singapore, to demand the responsibility of Indonesia for haze pollution²², and the comparison of securitizations carried out by Indonesian president Joko Widodo and his predecessor, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, to stop illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing in Indonesia.²³ Unlike the previous studies, this research focuses on securitization by a non-state actor: RDI UREF. As this research aims to explore how the non-state actor used the work of art to securitize human security issues faced by refugees, such an objective serves as its novelty.

The fact that this is also the first study to examine UREF's use of art to securitize refugee issues in Indonesia enhances the novelty of this research. This research highlights the power of art as an innovation to securitize the refugee issues in the country, making it different from previous research that primarily focused on the dynamic of refugee policies in Indonesia. In her study, Adhaniah, for example, explained agenda-setting and cooperation structure behind a string of collaborations between UNHCR and Indonesian government agencies, such as the Ministry of Education and Culture and the National Commission on Human Rights (Komnas HAM), in handling refugees.²⁴ Kneebone's research, meanwhile, critically assessed the enactment of Presidential Decree No. 125 of 2016 concerning the Treatment of Refugees. She criticized the regulation, explaining that it focused on managing refugees rather than providing long-term solutions. She also found practical and logistical challenges in implementing the Presidential Decree, such as poor socialization and the lack of political will at the local-government level. The lack of political will is underpinned by a

International Studies, Vol. 10, No. 1, (2021): 105.

²⁰ Muhammad Anugrah Utama, "Securitization in the Philippines' Drug War: Disclosing the Power-Relations between Duterte, Filipino Middle Class, and the Urban Poor," *Indonesian Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (2021): 45.

²¹ Prasojo, "Nexus Sekuritisasi Kesehatan dan Komunikasi Kesehatan di Masa Pandemi", *Jurnal Keamanan Nasional*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (2022): 31.

²² Kardina Gultom, "Sekuritisasi Kabut Asap di Singapura Tahun 1997-2014," *Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (2016): 39.

²³ Rage Taufika, "Latent Securitization of Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing in Indonesia," *Global: Jurnal Politik Internasional*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (2020): 40.

²⁴ Nurul Adhaniah, Dudy Heryadi, and Deasy Sylvua Sari, "The Cooperation of UNHCR and Indonesia on Afghan Refugee Handling in Indonesia," *Andalas Journal of International Studies*, Vo. X, No. 1 (2021): 51

poor understanding of refugee issues within the local bureaucracy, among other factors.²⁵

In this paper, the author raises a research question: “How did the Let’s Walk My Journey art exhibition securitize the refugee issue and turn it into a human security problem?” The author outlined two things in the discussion to answer this research question. First, the author will explain how the securitization actor, UREF, articulated an existential threat faced by refugees in transit. Second, the author will explain how the actors securitized the threat and made it visible through paintings, drawings, poems, and other artworks displayed in the exhibition. Third, the author will evaluate the securitization move made by UREF.

Methodology

The author employed a qualitative method to discuss the securitization of human rights violations against refugees in transit in Indonesia. Monique Hennink defines the method as an approach that allows for a detailed examination of people’s experiences various research methods, such as observation, content analysis, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, to life histories or biographies.²⁶ Qualitative research enables researchers to understand the perspectives of their study participants, identify issues, and comprehend their definitions and interpretations of objects, events, and behaviors. Therefore, researchers need to listen attentively to the participants’ narratives. Qualitative research requires researchers to possess characteristics, such as open-mindedness, empathy, and curiosity.²⁷ These characteristics will also facilitate researchers to understand how the social, cultural, economic, and physical context of people’s lives shapes their behavior and experiences.²⁸

The author chose a qualitative approach because it helped understand the views, beliefs, and behaviors of RDI UREF and refugees and how they securitized refugee issues through Let’s Walk My Journey. This approach is necessary to elucidate the social, cultural, economic, and physical factors that motivated the group and refugees to become securitizing actors and organize the exhibition.

²⁵ Susan Kneebone, Antje Missbach, and Balawyn Jones. “The False Promise of Presidential Regulation No. 125 of 2016?” *Asian Journal of Law and Society* 8, no. 3 (2021): 431–450.

²⁶ Monique Hennink, Inge Hutter, and Ajay Bailey, *Qualitative Research Methods* (UK: SAGE Publications, 2020), 57.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 58.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

The author employed a theory development approach to present and structure the study findings. According to Hennink, this approach is significant as it helps researchers discuss how their study findings align with existing theories or contribute to formulating new theories or concepts.²⁹ Using the theory development approach, the author aimed to demonstrate that the securitization undertaken by Let's Walk My Journey aligned with the theory of securitization by Copenhagen School. The author reviewed the literature and conducted in-depth interviews to get the findings. The author collected and analyzed data from books, journals, reports, and news articles. In 2022, the author also interviewed RDI UREF senior researchers Akino Tahir and Nino Viartasiwi on Aug. 28, and refugees Azis Nowrozi on Aug. 20, Rija Batool on Aug. 24, and Ali Akbar Faryadi on Aug. 27.

The author needed to interview Tahir and Viartasiwi because they organized the exhibition. The author interviewed them to understand the idea behind Let's Walk My Journey and gain insights into how the exhibition could securitize human rights challenges faced by refugees in transit. On the other hand, interviews with Nowrozi, Batool, and Faryadi provided detailed perspectives on their perceptions, feelings, and emotions about uncertain resettlement and the denial of human rights during their time in Indonesia. Their stories could help readers understand how they perceived art as a medium for speech acts and became motivated to collaborate with RDI UREF as securitizing actors.

Discussion

In this section, the author will first explain the theory of securitization. This explanation is necessary because, according to Hennink, a theory describes a relationship between concepts.³⁰ The discussion of the securitization theory helps the author guide readers to understand this research design and data collection. After discussing the theory, the author will explain the securitization process conducted by RDI UREF and refugees. The author will describe their perceptions, beliefs, and feelings behind the artworks in the Let's Walk My Journey exhibition. Last, the author will employ the securitization theory to evaluate the securitization move made by UREF.

²⁹ Ibid., 846.

³⁰ Ibid., 119.

Securitization

In international relations, a non-military issue can become a security issue if an actor defines the former as a threat to a particular referent object, according to the theory of securitization by Copenhagen School.³¹ Introduced by Barry Buzan in the early 1990s, this approach saw that an issue might not threaten a country, but it can later become a security issue for the country if interpreted as a threat by an actor. The School facilitated non-military issues to get recognition as a threat to the security of a country. This approach saw the possibility of an issue becoming a threat to certain objects. Therefore, the threat should be immediately addressed and overcome. Copenhagen School has widened the definition of security.³² Today, security does not always revolve around the capability of states to pursue freedom from threat and maintain their independent identity. The term has become more complex because it also includes human security, societal security, economic security, and environmental security. With the securitization theory in place, states are no longer considered a major actor in international relations, and the concept of security is not always associated with a militaristic approach.³³ Security is the result of interpretation carried out by an actor to respond to what they consider as a threat.³⁴

Buzan and Ole Wæver defined securitization as a discursive process leading to the construction of an intersubjective understanding about something that a valued referent object treated as an existential threat and then called for urgent and exceptional actions to deal with the threat.³⁵ This process has three stages, from the non-politicized, politicized, and securitized stages. In non-politicized stage, an issue has yet to become the government's concern. The government has yet to deal with the issue. Therefore, the non-politicized stage revolves around actions to make the issue become public debate and draw public decision. If the issue has become part of public policy and the government realized that it had to make decision and allocate resources for it, it means that the issue has been politicized. The securitized stage, meanwhile, means that the issue has been perceived as an existential threat. It requires emergency measures

³¹ Yanyan Mochamad Yani, Ian Montratama, and Emil Mahyudin, 38.

³² *Ibid.*, 37.

³³ *Ibid.*, 2.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 38.

³⁵ Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 491.

and justifies actions outside normal political procedure to face a threat.³⁶ State and non-state actors agreed that the threat existed and that they needed to take immediate actions to overcome it.³⁷

In the definition of securitization, Buzan and Wæver stressed something treated as an existential threat by a referent object. The threat here means the dominance of one issue that must get absolute priority because it threatens the existence of the referent object.³⁸ A referent object here is usually a state, but it could be a society, government, or regime.³⁹ An existential threat can also mean situations of maximum danger. To face this danger requires potentially unlimited sacrifice and struggle. If the state cannot handle the threat, it will usually declare an emergency. This situation will force the state to use its right to take extraordinary measures. Extraordinary measures mean any means the state considers necessary to block the development of the threat. The use of extraordinary measures refers to a way for a state to mobilize, take special power or legitimize the use of force.⁴⁰ The extraordinary measure does not always include force because it can also be economic sanctions, withholding aid, and legal actions through an international court system. The measures are deemed extraordinary because their effectiveness and origin are exceptional. They produce a unique magnitude, which political leaders, institutions, NGOs, and other entities will not have endorsed if they are in a regular situation.⁴¹ Therefore, according to Yandry Kurniawan, securitization contains four concepts: existential, threat, referent object, emergency, and extraordinary measures.⁴²

Securitization has four objectives: raising an issue, legitimating future and past acts, reproducing security status, and exercising control.⁴³ This state of the art consists of four components, namely the speech act, securitizing actors, audience, and facilitating conditions, to explain the causes, effects, and objectives of securitization. Speech act plays a major role in uttering security and designating a threat. Speech act has three sequential actions: locutionary act, illocutionary act, and perlocutionary

³⁶ Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (United States: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998), 23-24.

³⁷ Agus Trihartono, Suyani Indriastuti, and Chairun Nisya, *Keamanan dan Sekuritisasi dalam Hubungan Internasional* (Depok: Melvana Media, 2020), 5.

³⁸ Yandry Kurniawan, *The Politics of Securitization in Democratic Indonesia* (Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan), 16.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁴⁰ Yandry Kurniawan, 19.

⁴¹ Sabine Hirschauer, 27.

⁴² Yandry Kurniawan, 19.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 22.

act. Locutionary act, means to say something, while illocutionary act, means to act in saying something. Perlocutionary act means to bring something through acting in saying something.

For Yandry Kurniawan, speech act is illocutionary act.⁴⁴ Speech act has five types, namely assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative speech acts. Assertive speech occurs when a speaker makes statements, assertions, and explanations. Directive speech act has the form of commands, requests, and orders. If the speaker commits to doing something, they can do commissive speech acts, such as vows, threats, and quarantines. Expressive speech acts, such as apologies and thanks, aim to express the speaker's feelings. Declarative speech act, meanwhile, expresses the speaker's intention to take action to change something, such as declaring war, pronouncing wedlock, and making a meeting.⁴⁵

In securitization, securitizing actors refer to those who have the sovereignty to decide on measures that need to take in the context of exceptionality and emergency. They generally represent state authority and institutions, such as public officials, bureaucrats, and political leaders. Facilitating conditions include the security plot, social capital, and any condition related to threat and audience. Audience means those persuaded and convinced by securitizing actors to get the legitimization of their securitization actions.⁴⁶

To justify securitization, Rita Floyd stressed three criteria. First, it has an objective existential threat. Understanding objectivity requires observation of the intention and capability of the threatening party. In a state-centric context, the capability comes from manpower, weapons strength, military budget, and mobilization capacity. In a non-state context, it comprises the size of the aggressor, past actions, and allies. Second, securitization has a legitimate referent object. Third, it receives appropriate responses. The response is appropriate if it is equal to the magnitude of the threat and it genuinely aims to address the threat.⁴⁷

Securitization by UREF and refugees

Founded in 2018, RDI Urban Refugee Research Group (RDI UREF) aims to increase public awareness and discourse on urban refugees for

⁴⁴ Ibid., 21.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 22.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 23.

⁴⁷ Rita Floyd, "Can Securitization Theory be Used in Normative Analysis? Towards a Just Securitization Theory", *Security Dialogue* (2011): 428.

urban development. As a part of the Children, Social Welfare and Health Cluster within the Resilience Development Initiative, the group researches cities across Indonesia experiencing the influx of migration welcome and dealing with refugees amid the country's limited framework and regulation. In 2022, the research group kicked off its first art exhibition entitled *Let's Walk My Journey* at cafe Work Coffee in South Jakarta.

The author argues that the *Let's Walk My Journey* exhibition is a securitization move by UREF. This group is a securitizing actor, with refugees in transit as a referent object. They are threatened by uncertain resettlement that causes them to live in limbo in Indonesia without access to basic human rights. As UREF invited refugees to participate in *Let's Walk My Journey*, the refugees who contributed artworks to the exhibition could also be considered securitizing actors. UREF and participating refugees teamed up to securitize the threats they faced: uncertain resettlement and lack of human rights access. These problems became the main issue they raised through *Let's Walk My Journey*. Paintings, drawings, and other artworks displayed in the exhibition were their speech acts. Through those speech acts, they sought to legitimize the threat to the public as their targeted audience. UREF and refugees participating in the exhibition intended to make the audience aware of the threat and persuade the audience to help force the government to take extraordinary measures to overcome the threat immediately. The author explained this argument in detail below.

Understanding human security issues faced by refugees

Indonesia is one of the main refugee-hosting countries in Southeast Asia. The majority of refugees in the country live in Jakarta. According to UNHCR, the capital hosted 7,137 refugees as of March 2021. It was followed by Medan in North Sumatra (1,798 refugees), Makassar in South Sulawesi (1,738 refugees), Tanjung Pinang in Riau Islands (952 refugees), and other cities.⁴⁸ Though refugees see Indonesia as a transit country, this archipelagic country has become a de facto country of final destination since at least the mid-1980s.⁴⁹ To get recognition as refugees, asylum seekers must first register with UNHCR. As Indonesia has yet to sign

⁴⁸ Arita Nugraheni, *Mengabaikan Pengungsi, Mengabaikan Kemanusiaan*, Kompas, June 25, 2021; available from <https://www.kompas.id/baca/riset/2021/06/25/mengabaikan-pengungsi-mengabaikan-kemanusiaan>; accessed Jan. 23, 2023.

⁴⁹ Itty Abraham, "Host Communities and Refugees in Southeast Asia", *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (2020): 180.

the Refugee Convention, the government forbids refugees to work and run small businesses in the country. As such, their lives depend on third parties, including religious charities and civil society organizations, who provide informal protection through refugee schools, medical camps, and home-based literacy and work programs.⁵⁰

Indonesia is not a signatory to the Refugee Convention. Still, the country ratified international human rights treaties, such as International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), on Feb. 23, 2006. The author argues that the ratification of the two treaties should be enough legal foundation for the Indonesian government to ensure refugee rights. Article 6(1) of ICCPR, for example, states that the state parties should recognize the right to work, including the right of everyone to the opportunity to gain his living by work that he chooses freely.⁵¹ The word 'everyone' in the article implies that the right to work belongs to everyone regardless of their status. It means that the word 'everyone' also includes refugees. However, the government ignores the two ratified treaties.

Regarding legal employment, for example, the immigration department demands refugees to sign a letter entitled 'Refugee Declaration of Compliance,' which contains a prohibition to applying for jobs and open business activities.⁵² In 2016, President Joko Widodo instead rolled out Presidential Decree No. 125, stressing Indonesia's position that the government would not allow refugees to resettle permanently in the country and grant them citizenship. According to the decree, the only options offered by the government were repatriation or resettlement.⁵³

The absence of rights and citizenship has caused refugees in transit to meet with legal, administrative, social, and psychological challenges. Adult refugees have no income, while their children cannot obtain education. As they have no access to join social activities, they feel isolated and find it hard to integrate with locals socially. That situation makes them feel extremely bored and get stuck. That poses a challenge to refugees,

⁵⁰ Ibid, 183.

⁵¹ General Assembly, *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*; available from <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-economic-social-and-cultural-rights>; accessed on Dec. 31, 2022.

⁵² Peraturan Direktur Jenderal Imigrasi Nomor IMI-1489.UM.08.05 Tahun 2020 tentang Penanganan Imigran Ilegal, available from https://kanibatam.kemenkumham.go.id/assets/resources/files/imi-1489.um_.08_.05_tahun_2010_ttg_penanganan_imigran_ilegal_.pdf

⁵³ Antje Missbach and Nikolas Feith Tan, *No Durable Solutions*, Inside Indonesia, March 13, 2017; available from <https://www.insideindonesia.org/no-durable-solutions>; accessed Jan. 27, 2023.

especially the youth, because they are forced to waste their valuable years while waiting for resettlement. As they find it difficult to have social integration with locals, they also face challenges in learning the Indonesian language and culture.⁵⁴

For refugees, Indonesia is just a transit country. They expect to resettle in Australia. Thousands of asylum seekers had tried to leave Indonesia by boat. However, reaching and getting resettlement in Down Under got harder after former prime minister Tony Abbott rolled out a new border policy in 2013. Before the policy took effect in 2013, the Indonesian authorities actively intercepted and arrested asylum seekers trying to leave Indonesia by boat. Aware of the new policy, they then preferred to surrender to Indonesian authorities rather than tried to take a boat to travel to Australia. To surrender, they went straight to the third floor of the immigration office in Jakarta. However, the authorities then blocked potential surrenders from entering the immigration building because they found it harder to accommodate bigger demand for surrender.⁵⁵

As the public lacked understanding of such issues, the idea of holding Let's Walk My Journey crossed UREF's mind. The group found that refugee issues were not widely understood in cities hosting refugees, such as Bogor in West Java and Pekanbaru in South Sumatra. According to public opinion polls by UREF in 2021, most respondents in Bogor and Pekanbaru were unaware of foreign refugees in their cities. In Pekanbaru, only 30.5% of respondents knew about refugees living in their city, but the remaining 69.5% were unaware. Bogor, meanwhile, had a bigger population who knew nothing about the presence of refugees around them, with 80.5% saying "not very aware" and "not aware at all".⁵⁶

The respondents understood that foreign refugees who lived in Pekanbaru and Bogor sought safety, but most did not know what happened in their country of origin. Only 15.25% of people in Bogor and 20% in Pekanbaru knew about war or conflict in refugees' home countries. A sprinkling of people in the two cities, 1% in Pekanbaru and 1.5% in Bogor, understood that refugees fled from their homelands due

⁵⁴ Cherry Zheng, Husnul Aris Alberdi, Saut Sagala, and Akino Tahir, *Navigating the Infinite Timeline: Social Integration of Refugees in Long-term Transit*, RDI Working Paper Series (2018), 7.

⁵⁵ Antje Missbach, *Asylum seekers stuck in Indonesia*, The Jakarta Post, 2014; available from <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2014/04/04/asylum-seekers-stuck-indonesia.html>; accessed Jan. 27, 2023.

⁵⁶ Nino Viartasiwi and Ikrana Ramadhani, *Public Opinion Polling on Social Integration Concerning Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Indonesia: Bogor (Regency and City) and Pekanbaru City* (Bandung: Resilience Development Initiative, 2022), 24.

to persecution.⁵⁷ Some 67.25% of respondents in Pekanbaru and 54.25% in Bogor opined that the countries of origin should be responsible for the lives of refugees, while only 13% in Pekanbaru and 10% in Bogor believed that their lives should be shared responsibility of all mankind due to a humanitarian reason.⁵⁸

Refugee issues are global issues, but refugees in Indonesia have different ways of responding to these issues. In Cipayung, 70 kilometers south of Jakarta, refugees, predominantly of Afghan and Pakistani Hazara descent, live in rife boredom, anxiety, and depression because they do not have many activities. While waiting for resettlement, they spend most of their time sleeping and playing football and board games. They depend on their families in Afghanistan and Pakistan to get financial support for food and rent.⁵⁹

Some refugees congregate in the laneways behind UNHCR offices and sleep on the street to protest and fight for resettlement. They seek to get the opportunity to meet and talk to UNHCR officials to demand immediate resettlement or the right to work. These refugees have no community and support network to get financial support.⁶⁰

In Cisarua, 75 kilometers south of Jakarta, refugees, mostly from Afghanistan and Pakistan, live as a community. While waiting for resettlement, they have meaningful activities in the community, such as practicing karate, making handicrafts, and playing football. They even have mixed-gender football teams and karate clubs and set up informal schools. Teachers, predominantly women, and management team members at these schools, predominantly young men, collaborate and work together to empower refugees. The schools teach them foreign languages, such as Bahasa Indonesia and English, and leadership and negotiation. These programs enable refugees to expand their social networks and participate in various forums. As such, these schools attracted UNHCR, the International Office of Migration (IOM), and foreign visitors.

Perceiving refugees' struggle as a security issue

The author argues that the lack of human rights access to refugees is a non-security issue. However, this issue is interpreted as a security issue

⁵⁷ Ibid., 25.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 26.

⁵⁹ Lucy Fiske, "Crisis and Opportunity: Women, Youth, and Ethnic Minorities' Citizenship Practices During Refugee Transit in Indonesia", *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* (2020): 3.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 3.

by UREF because the group sees that the lack of rights has threatened the lives of refugees as human beings. UREF, therefore, securitized the human rights issues faced by the refugees through the Let's Walk My Journey exhibition to urge the government to guarantee refugee rights.

For the author, the refugee issues are in the politicized stage within Buzan's three stages of securitization. The author argues so because the government is already aware of the issues and has rolled out public policies to deal with them, such as Presidential Decree No. 125/2016 on the Treatment of Refugees from Overseas. Signed by President Joko Widodo in 2016. The decree, however, still ignores refugee rights to do legal work and get formal education. As such, those issues were securitized by UREF.

The decree has 45 articles, but none mentions refugee rights to education and employment. The decree provides legal certainty and standard procedures for mandated government agencies to effectively coordinate and collaborate in treating refugees. Still, it, does not offer the refugees legal pathways to socially integrate with locals and legally access school, job, and health facilities. By highlighting the better procedure and stronger legal certainty in treating refugees, the Indonesian government just used the decree as a political instrument to make international communities recognize the country as a 'human rights defender' for refugees.⁶¹

To get international recognition, the government wrote its commitment in the decree to rescue refugees coming to the country. Article 9, for example, stated that refugees found in an emergency should be immediately saved. First, they should be transferred to a rescue boat if their ship is going to sink. Second, they should be rushed to the nearest port or land if their lives are in danger. Third, they should be immediately identified if they need emergency medical help. Fourth, foreigners should be taken to the nearest immigration detention center if they are allegedly refugees.⁶² That article matters because it shows the government's readiness to rescue refugees in need immediately. Article 9 can prevent the inhuman incident in Aceh in 2016 from reoccurring. At that time, a boat with 44 Tamil asylum seekers, including a pregnant passenger and nine children,

⁶¹ Kevin Ronaldo Sirait, Mohamad Rosyidin, Ika Riswanti Putranti, and Shary Charlotte, "Usaha Mendapatkan Pengakuan Internasional: Kebijakan Indonesia Mengeluarkan Peraturan Presiden 125/2016 dalam Menangani Isu Pengungsi", *Indonesian Perspective*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (2019): 157.

⁶² Peraturan Presiden Republik Indonesia Nomor 125 Tahun 2016 tentang Penanganan Pengungsi dari Luar Negeri, p. 5.

was left stranded on Acehese water as Indonesian authorities forbade it from disembarking in Aceh.⁶³

Legal certainty and standard procedures to rescue refugees regulated in the presidential decree should be appreciated. However, the government still neglects their rights, including their work right. The government claims it cannot allow refugees to work because the country has yet to ratify the Refugee Convention. For UREF, the claim is unacceptable because Indonesia has signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Nino Viartasiwi of UREF argued that as a signatory to the declaration, Indonesia should allow refugees to work to comply, with Article 23 of the declaration. The article, which states that “everyone has the right to work”, shows that all individuals, including refugees, should get the work right though they are not Indonesian citizens.⁶⁴ That’s why UREF securitized refugees’ lack of rights in Indonesia and interpreted the problem as a security issue.

The presidential decree stressed the government’s decision not to allow refugees to integrate with locals. The government gives them two options only, namely repatriation or resettlement. As the government has closed the door for integration, refugees remain unable to access basic rights. The decree does not guarantee that refugees will get their rights because it focuses only on technical guidelines for handling refugees, such as evacuation, identification, and deportation procedures. The decree shows a greater emphasis on deportations.⁶⁵

For the Indonesian government, the presidential decree is an alternative to the Refugee Convention that the country refuses to sign. With the decree in place, Indonesia sought to avoid criticisms from international communities demanding the country to become a signatory to the convention. Indonesia does not want to ensure the refugee rights, but the government wants international communities to recognize the country as the defender of refugee rights. That’s why President Jokowi rolled out the decree to establish a positive image that Indonesia defends refugee rights..⁶⁶

⁶³ BBC News Indonesia, *Kapal 44 pengungsi Srilanka masih terdampar di Aceh*; available from https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/berita_indonesia/2016/06/160613_indonesia_pengungsi_srilanka; accessed Jan. 23, 2023.

⁶⁴ Nino Viartasiwi, interview by author, Jakarta, Aug. 28, 2022.

⁶⁵ Antje Missbach and Nikolas Feith Tan, *No Durable Solutions*, Inside Indonesia, March 13, 2017; available from <https://www.insideindonesia.org/no-durable-solutions>; accessed Jan. 27, 2023.

⁶⁶ Kevin Ronaldo Sirait, Mohamad Rosyidin, Ika Riswanti Putranti, and Shary Charlotte, 163.

Using Artworks for Speech Act

The author identifies UREF as a securitizing actor because the group initiated *Let's Walk My Journey*, which securitized refugees' struggle for human rights in Indonesia . The exhibition enables refugees in transit to speak up and express their feelings and emotions in visual forms, such as painting, drawing, and handicrafts. At café *Work Coffee* in South Jakarta, the exhibition showcased 74 works of art from 35 refugees from Aug. 6 to Aug. 20, 2022. They comprised 6 digital paintings, 11 paintings, 6 drawings, 10 handicrafts, 28 pieces of jewelry, and 13 writings. Afghan refugees made the majority of the displayed work. War, conflict, and violence in their countries of origin forced them to flee to save their lives. However, after enduring perilous journey and arriving in Indonesia as a transit country, they still suffered because they had no access to basic human rights that they needed most as human beings: rights to education and employment. During the exhibition, they used art to share how they dealt with psychological challenges in Indonesia.

Among them was Azis Nowrozi, who lives in Jakarta. He made a drawing entitled "Beyond the Boundaries". The work depicts a faceless head with a neck being shackled and a yellow badge reading 'Refugee'. The badge drew the attention of many during the exhibition. According to the 18-year-old Afghan refugee "Beyond the Boundaries" tells about refugees' limitations while they are waiting for resettlement. The fetters on the neck symbolize how the authorities limit their moves, including forbidding refugees to get a formal education and do legal work.⁶⁷

The faceless head, yellow badge, and fetter are symbols that function as speech acts within the Securitization Theory. By making the drawing, Nowrozi tried to convey that refugees worldwide find it difficult to access human rights. That's why he made the head without physical characteristics from a certain country. He wanted the visitors to know that the challenges he faced today were a global issue and the faceless person on the paper was a refugee from any nationality and country of origin. On "Beyond the Boundaries", the hair of the faceless refugee turns into flying birds. Nowrozi shared that the birds symbolize refugees' minds. Though he is not allowed to travel to any place in Indonesia, his mind remains free like flying birds.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Azis Nowrozi, interview by author, Jakarta, Aug. 20, 2022.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

Everything is limited, but our mind cannot be limited. The power of thinking cannot be limited. I still have the power to think freely.⁶⁹

Girukshy and Sakshy Hilman, meanwhile, spoke up through illustrated postcards. On the postcard, they drew a little girl carrying a school bag in a position of standing behind a chain-link fence, with word clouds reading her hopes: school, home, freedom, and resettlement. Another postcard illustrated a hopeless girl sitting with hands covering her eyes and head lowering to her calf. The girl said:

Everything is far. I can't reach anything; no resettlement, no home, no freedom. I feel like my life is in a dark room!

That line is Hilman's speech acts to convey a message that refugees face two existential threats: uncertain resettlement and lack of human rights access. The artist served as a securitization actor, with refugees in transit as his referent object. By drawing the little girl and teenager, he wants the public to know that the future of children refugees in Indonesia is under threat because, in the country, they are unable to get a formal education and realize their dreams. As the illustration has said, refugees feel like they live in a dark room because they have no freedom and access to formal education. Hilman wants the Indonesian government to take extraordinary measures to help refugees in transit, especially child refugees.

Unlike Hilman, Ali Reza Yawari made speech acts through poems and prose. During the Let's Walk My Journey exhibition, he showcased his book entitled "Lost in the Calm." The book, which consists of 20 poems and prose, revolves around Yawari's personal story as a displaced person and war victim. Political violence and war in Afghanistan forced him to flee and seek refuge in other countries. After struggling to survive a perilous journey from his war-raged country, he experienced an uncertain long wait for resettlement in Indonesia. His poetries in the anthology not only revolves around his story of survival, but also expresses how he deals with loss and maintains hope. On Aug. 13, he also did speech acts by reading and discussing some of his proses in a talk show set up by UREF. In a prose entitled "Imagine", he wrote:

Imagine doing nothing and nothing for a decade.
Not because you don't want to
But because you are not permitted to.
The courage is gone
And never coming back.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ali Reza Yawari, *Lost in the Calm* (2022), 20.

Those lines express his anxiety because he cannot reach his dreams in the golden years of his life. He is aware that time keeps running. However, he still lives in uncertainty. He lives in worry because he understands that time will never return when it is gone. feels that he has lost everything, including the most important one: freedom. Like time, his freedom is also gone and never comes back.⁷¹

“Imagine” also talks about the constant prosecution faced by his ethnic group, the Hazara, in Afghanistan. Hazaras are indigenous to the country, but they are discriminated against and persecuted for their different faith and race. Through the prose, he invites his readers to imagine the pains of being stalked, kidnapped, and tortured for praying differently.⁷² He wrote:

The story of kidnappings written by Yawari in “Imagine” is Imagine your ethnic generation is being slaughtered and subjected to genocide yet the world is silent and does nothing.

Humanity has dead and is never coming back.⁷³ based on true events. Among the victims of the kidnappings were the father and elder brother of Abdul Samad Haidari. Like Yawari, Haidari is also a Hazara-Afghani refugee. Before becoming a refugee, he was a poet and journalist for *The Daily Afghanistan Express* in Afghanistan. His father and brothers were kidnapped in 2013 for the news agency’s editorials about graft, war crimes, and human rights violations in Afghanistan. A year later, his colleagues at his office were also kidnapped for an opinion piece that the Afghan government deemed blasphemy.⁷⁴

UREF also invited Haidari on Aug. 13 to talk on the talk show. Like Yawari, Haidari is also a book writer. He wrote a poetry collection entitled “The Red Ribbon.” This book, which has 11 chapters, centers around his journey from war-torn Afghanistan to Indonesia. He has lived in Indonesia since 2014. The book sheds light on the post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) that he suffered because of genocide, authoritarianism, and persecution committed by Taliban to Hazara in Afghanistan. When

⁷¹ Ibid., 20.

⁷² Ibid., 19.

⁷³ Ibid., 19.

⁷⁴ A. Kurniawan Ulung, ‘*The Red Ribbon*’: A refugee’s search for love and peace, *The Jakarta Post*, March. 22, 2020; available from <https://www.thejakartapost.com/life/2020/03/22/the-red-ribbon-a-refugees-search-for-love-and-peace.html>; accessed on Jan. 2, 2023.

recalling and writing about such traumatic experiences, he felt pain in the back of his head. To remove the pain, he used to cut his palms.⁷⁵

Haidari mentioned PTSD as one of his biggest challenges when writing *The Red Ribbon*. The disorder often made him fall over and unable to move or do anything. He felt like his body was locked up, and he always felt high pain in the back of his head. He said he sometimes felt like the sky was down and the earth was up.⁷⁶

Haidari has become a refugee since he was seven. At that age, he witnessed how the Taliban attacked his house. After no longer having a home, he went to Iran. The Iranian authorities detained him because he could not show them legal travel documents. As such, Iran then deported him to Afghanistan. On his way to Kandahar in Afghanistan, his bus was stopped in Kand-e-Pusht. The Taliban forced him and other passengers to take off the bus, ordering them to stand in line. The Taliban then shot Hazara passengers. He was not shot because some Pashtun women saved him. After he got back to the bus, the women hid him under a seat to prevent the Taliban from finding him again at other checkpoints on their way to Kandahar. While placing some bags in front of him, Haidari slept on the hot bus floor.⁷⁷

Before Indonesia, Haidari sought asylum in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. However, he failed. He then met an agent who promised to take him to a safe destination. It turned out that the agent sold him more than ten times until he became a refugee in Indonesia. He said that he had no options to choose a destination. For him, the destination chose him. He felt like he no longer had control over his life. In a poem entitled “The Pride of a Hazara Child”, he wrote:

I only pray to see my parents and my siblings once more
Dreaming of a peaceful and free world where children like my little
brother and sisters don't have to grow up under a chemical sky
A world where women like my mother would never have to cry.⁷⁸

In the exhibition, Afghan refugee Rija Batool shared a story about her terrifying trip from Afghanistan to Indonesia through a painting titled “The Stages of No Hope.” The painting, which describes the terrifying travels of refugees from war-raged countries to safe destinations, depicts some families looking desperate on a small boat sailing amid strong waves

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

and thunderstorms. She witnessed many refugees dying during the trip, but others couldn't help because they were also helpless.⁷⁹ Batool said:

Many people don't know about refugees, from what they are going through to how they are surviving.⁸⁰

Having lived in Indonesia since 2013, the 18-year-old Batool hopes that people of her age can go to school and live their lives. By participating in the exhibition, she wanted Indonesian people to know that many refugees were also talented but were restricted due to their status.⁸¹ Batool said:

We all are humans, but we are not equal.⁸²

For Batool, painting can make her forget the difficulties in life. She said that painting and sketching were her hobbies as they enabled her to express her feelings. When painting, she felt happy.⁸³ Like Batool, Nowrozi also said he liked painting for the same reason. He painted when he felt lonely. Nowrozi is grateful to get a safe place and meet kind and friendly people in Indonesia, but he expects refugees to obtain better access to basic rights in the country. The lack of basic rights gives him emotional pressure. To cope with the stress, he draws and paints.⁸⁴

Tired of waiting for resettlement, Ali Akbar Faryadi, who has lived in Indonesia since 2012, tried to take a small fishing boat with other refugees to go to Australia. However, they failed to leave the Indonesian water because the boat did not fit long travel. His experience on the boat terrified him as the machine suddenly broke and the water entered the boat.⁸⁵ Faryadi shared that story in a painting titled "My Journey as a Refugee in Massive Ocean Waves."

His second painting, "My Hometown 20 Years Ago", revolves around his imagination of what his country, Afghanistan, looked like 20 years ago. He knows that the Taliban have ruined Afghanistan, but in his imagination, it was a lovely and peaceful country back then. Faryadi made the painting to express his longing for his hometown.⁸⁶

⁷⁹ Rija Batool, interview by author, Jakarta, Aug. 24, 2022.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Azis Nowrozi, interview by author.

⁸⁵ Ali Akbar Faryadi, interview by author, Jakarta, Aug. 27, 2022.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

Faryadi is aware that uncertain resettlement and the absence of human rights access have prompted some refugees to commit suicide, but he says he will not allow such things to trigger him to self-harm. Like other refugees, he is also stressed. To reduce the level of his mental and emotional stress, he draws and paints. For Faryadi, art is also a medium to ignite optimism among other refugees.⁸⁷ Faryadi said:

When I see my friends around me, we hold and convince each other that we will get out of this place one day.⁸⁸

The author saw illustrations made by Hilman and paintings by Nowrozi, Batool, and Faryadi are speech acts within Securitization Theory. The author categorized them as an expressive speech act because the refugees expressed their feelings through their artworks. In Nowrozi's drawing, "Beyond the Boundaries", he drew a shackled neck to express the stress of refugees being forbidden from working and receiving formal education. Unlike Nowrozi, Batool expressed refugees' suffering for their terrifying experiences to seek safe destinations. Faryadi, meanwhile, expressed his longing for his beautiful hometown in Afghanistan before the Taliban attacked it.

Curated by artist and activist Vincent Rumahloine, Let's Walk My Journey received positive responses from the public. They came to the exhibition to see the works and learn about the refugees' issues and purchased some of the exhibited artworks. According to UREF senior researcher Akino Tahir, who organized the exhibition, 10 of 74 works were sold. She was grateful because 74 artworks displayed in the exhibition managed to create dialogues between the artists and visitors, who were mostly common people. She explained that the exhibition's targeted visitors were people new to refugee issues. Therefore she chose a coffee shop, instead of an art gallery, to host Let's Walk My Journey because she expected the art exhibition to attract people in general, not just art enthusiasts, to visit.⁸⁹

One of the visitors was journalist Dera Menra Sijabat, who bought two paintings. He thanked the art exhibition for making him aware of refugee issues: lacking human rights access to legal employment and education in Indonesia. When looking at the paintings, he could feel refugees' psychological suffering for waiting for resettlement in uncertainty

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Akino Tahir, interview by author.

for years. The exhibition showed him that his life problems were nothing compared to the human security challenges refugees face.⁹⁰

According to Tahir, convincing the refugees to join the exhibition and persuading people to visit were the major challenges she faced during the exhibition. She said that many refugees had minimum interaction with Indonesians. When she offered them to join the exhibition, they first felt doubtful that Indonesians would be interested in visiting the exhibition, seeing their works, and listening to their stories.⁹¹ UREF senior researcher Nino Viartasiwi said Indonesian people generally did not stigmatize refugees. However, authorities sometimes made public statements implying that they worried that refugees could disturb public order, ruin local culture and norms, and bring in radical thoughts.⁹²

Despite such worry, Indonesian people generally do not mind the presence of refugees. They lack general knowledge about forced migration and Indonesia's responsibility to protect refugees. Still, they sympathize with their plights and support the Indonesian government to protect them, according to a public opinion poll conducted by UREF in Bogor in West Java and Pekanbaru in South Sumatra in 2021.⁹³ Most respondents (85.75% in Bogor and 78.25% in Pekanbaru) said that the Indonesian government and people needed to protect refugees in transit in Indonesia.⁹⁴ Meanwhile, 69.75% of respondents in Bogor and 72% in Pekanbaru had no objection to the involvement of refugees in community activities.⁹⁵ Most respondents (57.25% in Bogor and 45% in Pekanbaru) also agreed that refugee children and youth should have the same access to education as Indonesians.⁹⁶

Believing that art can become a beautiful communication bridge between refugees and society, Viartasiwi hopes that the Let's Walk My Journey exhibition will make the public understand refugee issues better. The exhibition seeks to facilitate the refugees and Indonesian people to meet and discuss, with the intention of building a stronger mutual understanding. As the Indonesian government tends to be responsive to public opinion, Tahir believes that better public understanding can be a

⁹⁰ Dera Menra Sijabat, interview by author

⁹¹ Akino Tahir

⁹² Nino Viartasiwi, interview by author.

⁹³ Nino Viartasiwi and Ikrana Ramadhani, *Public Opinion Polling on Social Integration Concerning Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Indonesia: Bogor (Regency and City) and Pekanbaru City* (Bandung: Resilience Development Initiative, 2022), 84.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 66.

powerful force in urging the government to form better governance for refugees. Tahir said:

Making a change at the policy-making level requires public support.⁹⁷

Calling for better governance on refugees

Let's Walk My Journey exhibition facilitated refugees in transit to articulate the existential threat they face through art. Their artworks showcased in the exhibition, such as poems, paintings, and handicrafts, functioned as speech acts. They used the speech act to securitize uncertain resettlement and denied refugee rights, elevating their narratives from non-political issues to security ones. That's why the author called UREF and refugees who participated in the Let's Walk My Journey exhibition the securitization actors.

As the securitization actors, UREF used Let's Walk My Journey to narrate the refugee issues and build on the dichotomy of 'self' and 'other' as the core of the security speech acts. In the securitization theory, bipolarity is important because it frames the securitization of refugee issues. From UREF's perspective, the framing of the issue placed refugees as 'self' and the Indonesian government as 'other'. Through the speech act, UREF and refugees called for an extraordinary action from 'other' to address the existential threat faced by 'self'. The extraordinary action here referred to the Indonesian government's policies to give the refugees access to human rights, such as rights to legal employment and formal education.

By organizing Let's Walk My Journey, UREF wants the public to see that the lack of refugee rights is a security issue. Within the theory of securitization, security is interpreted as a concept. This concept connects to the existential survival of states, people, objects, and issues, such as identity, environment, and global health. For Buzan, security is a matter of interpretation. So does insecurity. He defined insecurity as the combination between threats and vulnerabilities.⁹⁸

UREF set up Let's Walk My Journey to inform the public that the lack of rights and uncertain resettlement had made refugees have insecure and vulnerable life. The group, therefore, not only expected the public to be aware of the issue and understand it as an existential threat to refugees, but also join forces to demand the government to take extraordinary measures,

⁹⁷ Akino Tahir

⁹⁸ Sabine Hirschauer, 42.

such as forming better governance for refugees and guaranteeing their rights.

The fact that Indonesia has yet to sign the Refugee Convention always becomes the government's reason to forbid refugees to study and work in Indonesia. That also answers why refugees cannot resettle or get residency rights in the country. However, the government does not enforce refolement towards refugees, allowing them to be in the community as long as they comply with laws and regulations and have been registered with the UNHCR.⁹⁹

Though Indonesia is not a signatory to the Refugee Convention, the government should not use it as a reason to overlook refugee rights, according to UREF senior researcher Nino Viartasiwi. She reminds the government that Indonesia has the 1945 Constitution that respects human dignity regardless of its status. The country has also ratified the UN Charter of Human Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). She opined that the constitution and two international laws should be a foundation for the government to form better governance of refugees. She is upset that, as a big country, Indonesia has yet to have a governance system that fully respects the dignity of refugees as human beings.¹⁰⁰

According to her research, the majority of Indonesian people see refugees in a positive way. They do not object to the presence of refugees in the country. However, the problem is that some public officials worry that refugees will disrupt public order, norms, and local culture. Viartasiwi said that RDI UREF teamed up with NGOs concerning the refugee issue in urging the government and lawmakers to form better governance for refugees, including giving them access to work and study in Indonesia. Viartasiwi said that RDI UREF and NGOs had met government officials and lawmakers. However, the meetings upset them because it turned out that the government and lawmakers had yet to see the refugee issue as a priority. They understood the issues but had no political will to solve them.¹⁰¹ Viartasiwi said:

⁹⁹ Lucy Fiske, "Crisis and Opportunity: Women, Youth, and Ethnic Minorities' Citizenship Practices During Refugee Transit in Indonesia", *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* (2020).

¹⁰⁰ Nino Viartasiwi.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

They [government authorities] have yet to see the urgency [in refugee issues]. They feel that the issue is not sexy and important to talk about.¹⁰²

Viartasiwi of UREF expected a social integration between refugees and Indonesian people in Indonesia.¹⁰³ According to Tom Kuhlman, integration means a process of adaptation through which refugees try to become part of the host society to the extent that they can live together with the host population in an acceptable way. During the process, the refugees still maintain their identity.¹⁰⁴ Social integration allows refugees to get involved and become part of Indonesian society. As such, they can access employment, education, and health services. The problem is that the government has yet to allow the refugees to socially integrate with the Indonesian people. The government claims that the people are not ready yet for social integration.¹⁰⁵ Its claim, however, contradicts reality. According to a public opinion poll conducted by UREF in 2021 in cities hosting refugees, such as Bogor in West Java and Pekanbaru in South Sumatra, the majority of respondents (57.25% in Bogor and 45% in Pekanbaru) agreed with the idea of giving refugee youth and children the right to education.¹⁰⁶ They also did not mind providing refugees the right to work, with 44.25% of respondents in Bogor and 44.50% in Pekanbaru taking a neutral position. Regarding health access, 52% of respondents in Bogor and 38.25% in Pekanbaru supported the idea of giving refugees the right to health facilities.¹⁰⁷

The majority of the Indonesian people express a willingness to work with refugees. Some 62.75% of total respondents in Bogor and 57.50% in Pekanbaru said they would work with refugees if the government gave them a work permit.¹⁰⁸ In Pekanbaru, respondents said that they would work with refugees if they met certain conditions, such as having the ability to understand and speak Bahasa Indonesia (41.30%), mastering a particular skill (19.13%), and embracing the same religion (17.83%). In Bogor, meanwhile, those who considered the same religion as a condition to work with refugees reached 22.31%. Like Pekanbaru, Bogor also saw

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Nino Viartasiwi, *Integrasi Sosial Pengungsi Luar Negeri di Indonesia*, Media Indonesia, June 21 2022; available from <https://mediaindonesia.com/opini/500698/integrasi-sosial-pengungsi-luar-negeri-di-indonesia>; accessed Jan. 3, 2023.

¹⁰⁴ Tom Kuhlman, "The Economic Integration of Refugees in Developing Countries: A Research Model", *Journal of Refugee Studies* (1991): 7-8.

¹⁰⁵ Nino Viartasiwi, *Integrasi Sosial Pengungsi Luar Negeri di Indonesia*.

¹⁰⁶ Nino Viartasiwi and Ikrana Ramadhani, 66.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 67.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 80.

that Indonesian proficiency (27.8%) was the most important requirement for refugees to work with locals.¹⁰⁹ Unlike the government's claim, this poll shows that Indonesian people are ready to socially integrate with refugees as long as they can meet with requirements, particularly having the ability to demonstrate their proficiency in Bahasa Indonesia.

Local integration can solve refugee issues. It does not mean that the Indonesian government grants them citizenship. The government needs to allow refugees to integrate with locals and ensure their rights. Local integration can become a viable solution for refugees waiting for resettlement to a third country. The government does not need to give them special privileges, but allows them to work and participate in local economic activities. The government needs to provide refugees the opportunities to become self-reliant individuals and join local communities through a local integration program. To design this program, the government should collaborate with refugees and other non-state actors, such as local communities.¹¹⁰

Evaluating securitization by UREF

According to Buzan and Wæver, it takes four stages in the securitization process. First, the securitization actor presents an issue as an existential threat to a referent object. Second, a credible audience accepts the threat. Third, the credible audience deploys extraordinary measures to address and combat the threat. Fourth, de-securitization takes place.¹¹¹ The author argues that the securitization action carried out by UREF is in the first stage because the group is still in the process of presenting a lack of human rights access as an existential threat to refugees. In this process, refugees in transit are the referent object, with the Indonesian government and people as a credible audience targeted by UREF playing a securitization actor in the Let's Walk My Journey exhibition. UREF urges the government to form better governance to ensure refugee rights. For the group, formulating better governance is an extraordinary measure the government should take. The exhibition might have made the public and government understand the refugee issue better. However, the fact that the government has yet to fulfill the group's demand shows that the

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 81.

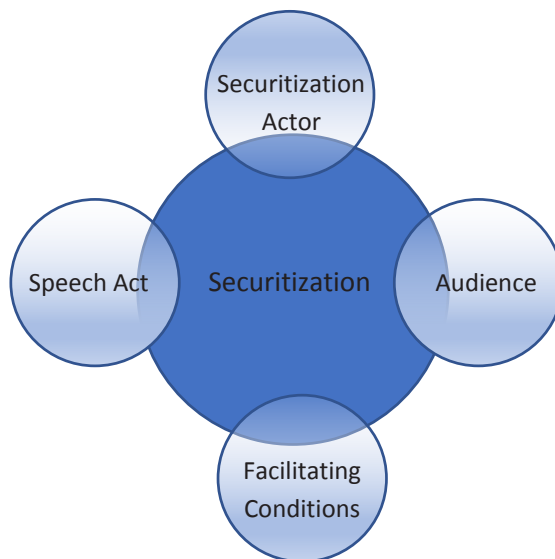
¹¹⁰ Yessi Olivia, Yusnarida Eka Nizmi, Ahmad Jamaan, Mohammad Saeri, Irwan Iskandar, and Haniva Sekar Deanty. "Considering Local Integration for Refugees in Indonesia." *Jurnal Hubungan Internasional* Vol. 9 No. 2 (2020): 162.

¹¹¹ Sabine Hirschauer, 27.

process of securitization initiated by UREF has yet to reach the second and third stages. It means that the government has yet to validate the threat exposed by the group through the exhibition and has yet to see the need for extraordinary measures to address it.

By visiting the Let's Walk My Journey exhibition, we can observe four components of securitization: the speech act, securitizing actors, audience, and facilitating conditions. In the exhibition, we could see how UREF and participating refugees used artworks as the instruments of speech act to utter human security issues and designate threats faced by refugees in Indonesia. For the author, the artworks showcased in Let's Walk My Journey are expressive speech acts because they aim to make the public and government aware of the feelings of the participating artists. For example, postcards made by refugees Girukshy and Sakshy Hilman convey the emotion of a refugee teenager desperately hoping for opportunities to realize dreams and get freedom and resettlement. The objective behind their securitization action is to raise a human security issue.

Components of Securitization



Source: Yandry Kurniawan, p. 21

The Let's Walk My Journey exhibition shows that securitization actors do not always refer to government, bureaucrats, and political

leaders. They are common players in securitization, but securitizing actors can also include non-state actors such as UREF and refugees. In this study, the government is instead in the audience's position. The author opines that the government and public are the audience within the theory of securitization. The public is the audience because UREF seeks to make them have a better understanding of refugee issues. For UREF, the exhibition is a medium for advocacy. Viartasiwi of UREF said:

In our advocacy, we want to situate refugee issues in the right place to prevent them from causing negative stigma in society.¹¹²

To prevent public misunderstanding about refugees, UREF prefers to introduce the issues in a persuasive way, according to Viartasiwi. That's why she set up the Let's Walk My Journey exhibition, believing that art could facilitate refugees and society to dialogue and understand each other. She is upbeat that communication is key to making refugees get bigger public acceptance. She cites the popular Indonesian adage of *tak kenal maka tak sayang*, which translates as "if you don't know, you don't love."¹¹³

Like society, the government is also UREF's targeted audience. UREF used the exhibition to prompt the government to ensure refugee rights. The fact that Indonesian people generally do not stigmatize refugees and they support refugee rights is the facilitating condition that made UREF confident that it could realize two purposes. First, to establish better mutual understanding between refugees and locals through art. Second, to persuade and convince the public to urge the government to address refugee issues and form better governance for refugees, including allowing them to work and study in the country.

As the Indonesian government has yet to give refugees access to education, employment and other basic rights, the government has yet to see refugee issues as a security threat. To change the government's mind, UREF needs bigger public support. That's why this group set up Let's Walk My Journey exhibition to attract the public to refugee issues. After understanding the issues, they are expected to help the group urge the government to perceive refugee issues as a security threat. Akino Tahir of UREF said:

¹¹² Nino Viartasiwi, interview by author.

¹¹³ Ibid

When our event makes one person understand the refugee issue, we are already happy. Though it is just one person, [She/he] can tell the issue to others. It's a snowball effect.¹¹⁴

For the author, the lack of refugee rights is an objective existential threat. The author argues so because the situation endangers the survival of refugees. They find it difficult to survive in Indonesia if they are not allowed to work and make a living. This condition has triggered some to commit suicide. As of August 2022, 16 refugees in Indonesia attempted suicide due to the stress and strain of building and adjusting life here.¹¹⁵ Refugees' suicide attempts were witnessed by refugee Ali Reza Yawari, who participated in Let's Walk My Journey exhibition. During the exhibition, he shared the experience through poetry entitled "Imagine." He wrote:

Imagine you waking up in the morning
and seeing your roommate hang himself
with a rope in the bathroom.
He is gone
and never coming back¹¹⁶

According to Rita Floyd, objective existential threat is one of three conditions to justify a securitization act. Other conditions are legitimate referent objects and appropriate security responses.¹¹⁷ To justify securitization requires an objective existential threat. This threat can become a security threat if a powerful actor frames and responds to it.¹¹⁸ She said a referent object of security was legitimate if it was conducive to human well-being. She used Amartya Sen's terminology to define human well-being as a person's freedom to promote or achieve objectives that they value. For her, the capability to flourish mattered. Liberal democracy and human rights could become helpful indicators to measure human well-being.¹¹⁹ To ensure the survival of the referent object, a security response should be appropriate. To see the appropriateness, the degree of response must be measured to the threat faced by the referent object and the response must genuinely address the threat. The genuine aim here means that the securitizing actor must seriously intend to secure the identified referent object. To check the intention of securitizing actors requires an

¹¹⁴ Akino Tahir, interview by author.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ali Reza Yawari, 22.

¹¹⁷ Rita Floyd, 428.

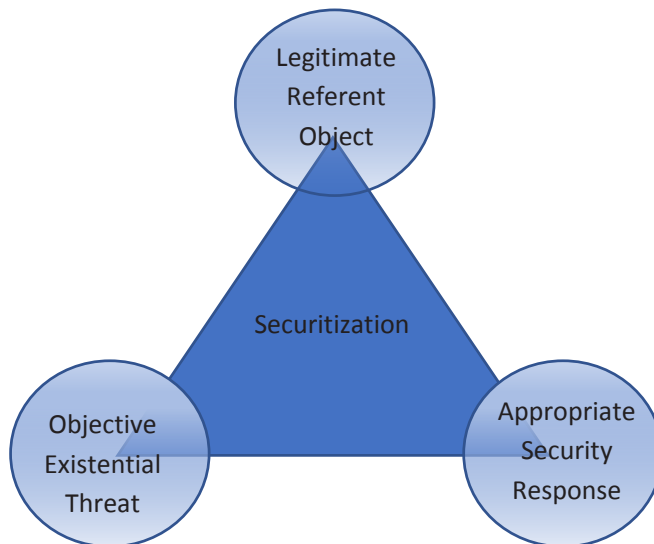
¹¹⁸ Ibid., 430.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 432.

examination of the consistency of the securitization itself. Therefore, it is important to compare and contrast what a securitizing actor says about the threat with what they do to respond. If the actions match the words, the securitizing actor is considered sincere.¹²⁰

Using Floyd’s theory, the author argues that refugees are a legitimate referent object because the problems that they face affect their well-being. They are humans but cannot function as humans because they have no freedom to realize their objectives. According to James Griffin, what makes us human is that we can make autonomous decisions. Humans can deliberate, assess, choose, and act to make what they see as a good life.¹²¹ Meanwhile, refugees can form pictures of what the good life will be, but they cannot realize those pictures. They do not have an autonomous life. They do not live in an environment that respects independence and provides various options. They do not have well-being because they do not have a basic human need: autonomy.

Justification of Securitization



Source: own design, derived from Rita Floyd, p. 428

The author saw that UREF genuinely addressed the existential threat through the Let’s Walk My Journey exhibition. As a securitization actor, UREF not only identified the lack of human rights access as a threat to

¹²⁰ Ibid., 433.

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 432.

refugees, but also ensured that the artists highlighted the threat in the 74 artworks displayed from Aug. 6 to Aug. 20, 2022, at the Work Coffee café in South Jakarta. UREF also set up talk shows, inviting some participating artists to talk to the audience, such as refugees Ali Reza Yawari, the writer of *Lost in the Calm*, and Abdul Samad Haidari, the writer of the *Red Ribbons*. It means that UREF had given an appropriate security response to the refugees as the referent object of security. The exhibition benefited the referent object because it facilitated the refugees to share their stories directly with the public and government. Tahir and Viartasiwi's statements that *Let's Walk My Journey* aimed to open an interaction space between refugees and Indonesian people matched the actions because the exhibition allowed the refugees to make friends with the visitors, talk to them, and discuss their artworks in a friendly atmosphere. The location choice also matched the purpose of the exhibition. UREF chose a café, instead of an art gallery, to host *Let's Walk My Journey* because the group wanted the exhibition to be visited by ordinary people, not art enthusiasts. Tahir said she opted for a café because people from different backgrounds liked to flock to it to gather. She said:

This exhibition targets people who are new to refugee issues to visit.¹²²

Conclusion

Let's Walk My Journey exhibition shows that UREF interpreted the lack of human rights access to refugees as a security issue because it posed a threat to the persons of concern as human beings. Such interpretation motivated the group to securitize the issue, to draw the public's attention, particularly those new to refugee issues. UREF believed that a bigger public understanding about the issue could be stronger power to urge the government to guarantee basic refugee rights, such as the right to get formal jobs and education. To attract the public to the issue, UREF utilized art. The group set up the exhibition, inviting refugees in transit to speak up through various artworks, such as paintings poems, and handicrafts. The group teamed up with the refugees to give people a better understanding of refugee issues through art. The artworks facilitated dialogues between refugees and the participating artists. The dialogues functioned as speech acts within the securitization theory by Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver. It means that UREF and refugees participating in the exhibition played

¹²² Akino Tahir, interview by author.

securitizing actors, with the visitors as their targeted audience. The Let's Walk My Journey enabled UREF and refugees to present the lack of human rights access as an objective existential threat to the referent object: refugees in transit. Setting up the exhibition was an appropriate security response made by UREF to address the refugee issue that the group had raised.

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