

# **Kaledupa (Buton) Fishers in Sandakan, Malaysia: The Dilemma Between Malaysian Ringgit and The Abu Sayyaf Group (Asg) Terrorist**

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## **Abstract**

This article examines the dilemmatic situation faced by Kaledupa (Buton) fishers who are the victims of the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) terrorists kidnapping in the waters of Sabah, Malaysian-Philippine. On the one hand, they face a dangerous threat in these water areas, but on the other hand, they seem to have no other choice to meet their economic needs. This is a qualitative research with an ethnographic design, a type of research oriented to describe a culture. Data collection techniques include library research (using secondary data) and field research by conducting interviews, observations, and documentation. We find that fishers who risk their lives in foreign seas are an example of what experts call the uncertainty condition of migrants. In the host country, they face a number of problems, such as facing huge financial problems, being away from family, and feeling uncertainty, vulnerable, and insecure with their lives. Therefore, because the root of this problem is the economy, a solution is needed so that Kaledupa fishers can fulfill their daily needs without having to sail to this dangerous area. In other words, the Indonesian government must have a solution in order to stop the chain of migration for Indonesian citizens who work as fishers in the area.

**Keywords:** Kaledupa (Buton) fishers, Migration, Terrorism, Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), Maritime Economic Strengthening.

## **Introduction**

One day, November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2016, there was an unforgettable moment for La Utu and La Hadi, a Kaledupa (Buton) migrant who worked as a fisher in Malaysian waters. La Utu still remembers the moment after lowering the net, suddenly, three speed boats approached. Aboard the marine motor was a man with a gun, and jumped into our boat, shouting in a threatening tone, “put your hands on your head and follow us!”

At that time, La Utu realized that he and his friends had bad luck and had to become hostages of the Abu Sayyaf gang, which they had heard about as a terrorist gang in the Sulu waters of the Philippines. For more than a year living under the pressure of the Abu Sayyaf Group and always relying on the thought of them being cut off like the fate of white hostages.

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In addition, they also live as guerrillas in the jungle and have to move from the pursuit of the Philippine military. Finally, on September 7<sup>th</sup> 2018, La Utu and La Hadi was released and was able to go home with his family in Buton and now they are working back again as a crew on a *tauke* (the Chinese boss) fishing boat in Sandakan, Sabah, Malaysia”.

The narratives of La Utu and La Hadi Indonesian citizens from Kaledupa (Buton) are an important memory for Indonesian citizens in neighboring Malaysia, who have been referred to as "Foreign Exchange Heroes" abroad for Indonesia. Since 2018, they have taken hostages and five times and fifteen have become victims. All of the hostage victims were fishers from Sulawesi and most of them were Kaledupa (Buton), the rest were Bugis and Mandar. This is like a recurring incident that seems like there is omission and always Indonesian citizens are victims. The Indonesian government must find creative solutions to overcome the abduction of Indonesian citizens as a crime of terrorism committed by the Abu Sayyaf terrorist group.

The Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) is a terrorist group that is growing in the Southern Philippines. Historically, the ASG group was formed in 1991 as a reaction to the position of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) which took the path of peace negotiations with the Philippine authorities for the Bangsamoro struggle for independence on the basis of nationality and Islamic socialism. The ASG's reaction is the same as that of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) led by Nur Misuari, which broke away from the main terror group in the Philippines (Permono, 2019). Since then, ASG is the smallest terror group in the Philippines, however, the capabilities and threats caused by this terror group clearly need to be considered as the most radical group among other Philippine terror groups (Counter-extremism Project, 2019). This terrorist group has always had the background of the MILF's secessionism is to form an independent nation, Bangsamoro, based on the Islamic faith (Fellman, 2011). In carrying out acts of terrorism, the Abu Sayyaf Group always changes patterns and strategies depending on the dynamics they face. One of them is carrying out the act of kidnapping and taking Kaledupa (Buton) fishermen hostage who work in the waters of Sabah, Malaysia. However, please note that it does not mean all of the Bangsamoro people are terrorists or support the radical group, same as not all of the Islamic organizations are pro-terrorists (also, not all of the ultraconservative Islamic organizations support terrorism) (Isra, 2020; Bowen, 2014; Esposito, Fasching, Lewiss, 2006).

Thus, we consider this topic important since it describes the struggle of the people within the dilemma of being kidnapped or dying for food. In the midst of the debate between the values and the purpose of anthropology (Kaur et al, 2022), we believe that bringing the story of these Butonese people are the way we show that anthropologists try to solve contemporary hot issues.

## **Method**

This article is a qualitative research with an ethnographic design which is a type of research oriented to describe a culture of fishers from Kaledupa (Buton) who work in Sandakan, Sabah, Malaysia. This research was conducted in November 2019 as part of research at the Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict (IPAC) led by Sidney Jones. Operationally, the implementation of this research includes library research and field research. Library research activities to collect secondary data. Meanwhile, field research activities are intended to collect primary data in this study. Primary data collection is done through interviews with informants, observation of research objects, and documentation. Observation of the object of research is a challenge for any ethnographic research. On the one hand, researchers are required to engage

as much as possible with the object study, but on the other hand, researchers must also position themselves as researchers (Rudyansjah, 2012).



**Figure 1.** Location Map

The research was conducted in the City of Sandakan, Sabah, Malaysia. This is a migration location for Kaledupa (Buton) people who work as fishers in the Malaysian Sabah Waters and the Philippines Sulu Waters. The informants of this research are fishers from Kaledupa (Buton) who have been victims of the Abu Sayyaf hostage and fishers from Kaledupa (Buton) who have worked for a *tauke* in Sandakan Malaysia. To strengthen the data in this study, we also conducted interviews with the *tauke* of fishers from Kaledupa (Buton) in Sandakan. Data analysis in this study was carried out interactively (Miles & Huberman, 1992; Endaswara, 2003) through three lines, namely: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing.

## **Result And Discussion**

### ***“Dead” or “Dead”: Kaledupa (Buton) People Who are Always Victims***

Malaysia's response to criminal activity by Abu Sayyaf militarism in Malaysian waters has focused on military operations by the Eastern Sabah Security Command (ESSCOM) and tightened control over its immigrant population, especially the Philippines. Raids and reported harassment by ESSCOM officers have pushed many of the migrants inland, creating the possibility of new networks or safe havens for radicals in western Sabah- although the vast majority of the migrant population just wants to be left alone to work and earn money to send home (Garbin, 2018). The Malaysian government might want to consider injecting more of a community policing approach to ESSCOM to build trust rather than fear in a community that includes individuals who because of extended family ties may provide some logistic support to ASG. More generally, a serious independent review of ESSCOM policies and procedures is warranted if only to understand whether allegations by migrants of ill-treatment are valid and if so, how to improve training and accountability for the future (IPAC, 2020; Garbin, 2018; Bendixsen, 2013).

There is something that becomes an interesting question, why in the several years there have been intense arrests and kidnappings of Indonesian citizens who work as fishers in the waters of the Sabah? And why most of the abductees are Kaledupa (Buton) people? According to the Malaysian Marine Police, the first kidnapping incident was on November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2016, with the victim La Utu bin Raali, a Butonese, living at Balasuna Village, Kaledupa, Wakatobi Regency, and kidnapped again on 23 September 2019 but immediately released, he had been

held hostage for more than a year. Then La Hadi bin La Adi, a Butonese, living at Balasuna Kaledupa Village, Wakatobi Regency. Both were released on September 7<sup>th</sup> 2018. Furthermore, on September 11<sup>th</sup> 2018, two Indonesian citizens were arrested again, Samsul Saguni, a Mandar person living in Lalattedong Village, Majene Regency, West Sulawesi Province and Usman Yusuf, a Bugis living in Bruno Village, Polewali Mandar Regency, West Sulawesi Province. Then, on December 5<sup>th</sup> 2018, two more Indonesian citizens were arrested, Heri Ardiansyah, a Butonese living in, Kaledupa, Wakatobi Regency, and Hariadin, a Butonese Kaledupa, Wakatobi Regency, but died during the hostage-taking period. Then on September 23<sup>rd</sup> 2019, there was another arrest with the victim, Maharudin Lunani, a Kaledupa (Buton) living in Baubau City with his son Muhammad Farhan, and Samiun Maneu, a Butonese, living in Kaledupa, Southeast Sulawesi Province.

The last arrest was on January 18<sup>th</sup> 2020, with the victim who is currently still a hostage to the Abu Sayyaf gang, namely Arsyad bin Dahlan as a Butonese skipper living in Wakatobi Regency, Arizal Kasmiran a Butonese living in Wakatobi Regency, La Baa a Butonese living in Buton Regency, Edi bin La Walapo a Butonese, Muhamad Khoirudin a Butonese living in Wakatobi Regency and Riswanto a Buginese living in Palopo, South Sulawesi Province. The Abu Sayyaf gang is currently asking for a "ransom" of three billion rupiah per person (approximately USD 200,000), and automatically the Indonesian government must pay a ransom of fifteen billion rupiah (more than USD 1,000,000) for the cost of releasing Indonesian citizens who are being held hostage.

Kaledupa people (Buton) come from one of the islands of the Wakatobi archipelago (Wanci, Kaledupa, Tomia, and Binongko) which was formerly known as the Tukang Besi archipelago. In the era of the Sultanate of Buton, Kaledupa was an autonomous region which served as a sea defense fortress of the Sultanate of Buton from attacks in the west. This role is played by Kaledupa people with the ability to live a life as a sailor until they are able to take on the role and are able to show their existence in the Malacca Strait and Sulu Waters since the 18<sup>th</sup> century. For them, the sea and boats are representations of life, just like on land (Tahara, et al, 2015). Boats (*bangka/wangka*) have a very important role in their life at sea. In fact, because of its importance, the term boat is also used as a greeting to life on land, to refer to friends. The terms in the Butonese called *sabangka*. Sea and boats seem to be the most important part in the pulse of the culture of the Kaledupa (Buton) people as a maritime ethnic group.

They sailed across the sea, and from one island to another. This activity brings them closer to know other communities and cultures, and which is no less important is the "new country" which will later be used as a place for them to earn a living and to live/settle there. However, the intense sailing activity as a tradition must be reduced, along with the presence of motorization in traditional shipping. The workforce is decreasing, at its peak, in the 1970s, the Kaledupa (Buton) sailors chose to settle as migrant workers in Tawau, Kinabalu, and Sandakan areas. There is no choice since plantation workers have more salary than an inter-island sailor. This pattern continues until today, the flow of migrants to become fishing laborers seems to be the only field of work for the Kaledupa people in the midst of living with economic limitations in the village. As it turned out, Wakatobi as an "underwater paradise" in tourism promotion is a "Hell on Land" because the effects of tourism have not seen any improvement in the economy of the lower class. In fact, the migration flow of Kaledupa people as job seekers including being fishers for *tauke* is a solution in overcoming the problems of life they face, even though the threat of kidnapping terrorists from the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) always haunts them when they are active in the territorial waters of Malaysia and the Philippines.



***In the Shadow of Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG)***

The involvement of radical Islamic groups in the acts of terror is by no means a new phenomenon in the history of politics in the country. Behind the many acts of terror that have lasted almost a decade and half after the reformation, we can explore a long series of political and religious upheavals having taken place since the formative period of the formation of this republic until after wards, which can be seen as the root of Islamic radicalism today. Not all have connection with previous similar movements, but as far as involving certain parts of Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) led by Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, this connection seems quite clear (Singh 2004). The influence and networking with groups of globally radical Islam, like the Afghan Mujahideen, Al Qaeda, or ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) which many people recently discussed, are the aspects that distinguish with religious radicalism in the previous period that are domestic, besides the issues that caused it and also the actors (Putra & Sukabdi, 2013; Sukabdi, 2015; Mubarak & Abdul Hamid, 2018).

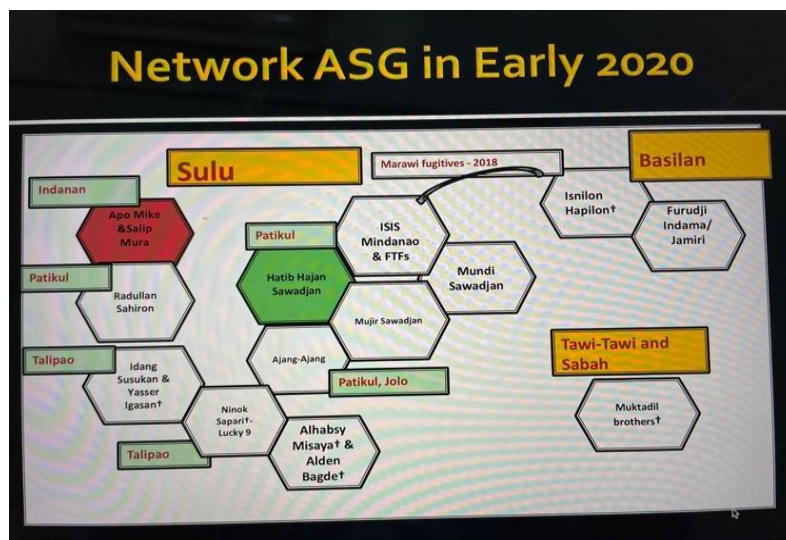
The terrorist group, Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), in Arabic means the “father of the swordsman”. The founder of this separatist movement was Abdu-Razzaq Abubakar Janjalani, a Filipino Muslim who studied in Saudi Arabia and Libya. The ASG terrorism group was founded in 1991 and consists of militias based around the southern Philippine islands, such as Jolo and Basilan (Hutchison, 2009). The ASG terrorism group carried out acts of violence against civilians as a form of resistance against the government because they felt they were victims of discrimination by the Philippine government in the past (Apriani, 2018). Even the Abu Sayyaf Group has pledged allegiance to ISIS which was announced by the caliphate in Mosul, Iraq on June 29<sup>th</sup>, 2014 by Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi (IPAC, 2017). The process of *bai'at* for some people is considered as an interpretation of the word *hijrah*, although it must be admitted that this definition is certainly very extreme. This is actually Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's personal interpretation, that the *hijrah* effort is considered as an effort to migrate from Syria to Iraq and join ISIS (Isra, 2020; Zamora, 2016).



**Figure 2.** Map of Mindanao ASG group operation sites

The ASG terrorist group has gone through a long struggle. Since their emergence as a separatist group, there have been many efforts by the ASG to fight for an independent territory for the Muslims of the Southern Philippines. ASG is even affiliated with Al-Qaeda group. The

end of Al-Qaeda's existence as an Islamic movement group was in line with the emergence of a new group known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) led by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. The emergence of ISIS has attracted the attention of separatist groups in several countries, including in the Southern Philippines. The expansion of the Al-Qaeda network in the Southern Philippines could be the basis for the expansion of the ISIS network in the Southern Philippines (Apriani, 2018). By early 2020, the ASG network had spread to around Sulu, Basilan, Tawi-Tawi, and Sabah areas. The affiliation and the region are explained in the following picture.



**Figure 3.** Affiliation and the region of ASG network

However, from the discussion and the result of the fieldwork, we found that today, they may be quite weak and badly hit by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). They are not growing. One of the reasons why there has been very least kidnapping (or maybe none) since the early of 2020 is because there were lots of their commanders, sub-commanders, and combatants that have died. In addition, they are not a monolith and not all of them pro-ISIS. One of the sub-groups, the Sawadjaan is pro with the ISIS, but the other fractions are different stories, they did not support the ISIS. Thus, with the Al-Qaeda, the relation happened in the past and for today, it is difficult to trace the relationship.

Nevertheless, at the end of May 2020, there were news that if it is true, it could be dangerous for the Butonese in Sabah. Given that no more money is coming from outside for the purposes of the Sawadjaan group and the FTF there, there are news that the Sawadjaan group has agreed a plan to increase kidnappings as a source of finance. Perhaps the perpetrators were more diligent in looking for victims in the waters of Sabah. If the information from this participant is correct, then it is better if the people of Kaledupa and Wakatobi can make a living in their homeland instead of having to go all the way with this high risk.

***Becoming Fishers for Tauke in Sandakan, Malaysia***

As a migrant group in Malaysia, the Kaledupa (Buton) people have shown their existence and have earned the trust as laborers for the *tauke* in Malaysia. The identity of the Kaledupa (Buton) people also varies, categorized into four groups: First, the Kaledupa (Buton) people who were born in Buton, work as migrants who are already Malaysian citizens or already have an ID Card; second, Kaledupa (Buton) people who were born in Buton work as migrants in Malaysia with guarantees from a Malaysian citizen but not a Malaysian citizen; third, Kaledupa (Buton) people who were born in Malaysia, live and receive guarantees from

a Malaysian citizen to become Malaysian citizens; and fourth, Butonese who were born and live in Malaysia but have not yet become Malaysian citizens.

From this, it is clear that these Kaledupa people who have been overseas (Malaysia in this context) gather with their own and form groups. They work or live there, regardless of whether they have become Malaysian citizens or not. This is as stated by several migrant researchers, that in alien places, far from their home country, migrants have to face various problems, ranging from ethnocentrism, racism, struggles in daily life, and getting into trouble with the authorities in the host country (Karagiannis and Glick-Schiller, 2006:139. See also Kivisto, 2016; Levitt, 2003; Glick-Schiller, 2001; Glick-Schiller, Basch, and Blanc, 1992). Thus, they tend to look for a “comfortable place” where they can share the same things. Associating with people who come from the same place overseas (in this context, fellow Kaledupa, Buton, or even from Southeast Sulawesi), is a good and important choice for them because of the similarity of background and shared culture (Isra, 2020; Gomes, 2017; Hammons, 2016; Zhang, 2015; Husson, 2015; Van Dijk and Botros, 2009. See also Johnson and Werbner, 2011: 205)

For the Kaledupa (Buton) people, the first and third categories mentioned before are dreams in Malaysia because they become a privilege in finding work and it is the responsibility of the government of the Kingdom of Malaysia for a decent life. However, currently, the second category is still dominant for Kaledupa (Buton) migrants in Malaysia. This condition implies that there is no other choice of work, except being a fishing worker on a *tauke* fishing boat at a *tauke* in Syarikat Malaysia and always being a victim of the kidnapping of Abu Sayyaf gangs in the Sulu Sea.



**Figure 4.** Research team with the Butonese fishers in Sandakan, Malaysia

Kaledupa (Buton) people work as fishers for Malaysian *tauke* have trust capital that have been previously built. They work on fishing boats using trawls with tiger nets. This type of fishing gear they use is prohibited in many areas in Indonesia, because apart from damaging the marine environment, it also causes over-exploitation of fishing. In a working relationship with a Malaysian *tauke*, a skipper (*seran*) is in charge of recruiting crew members (fishers). A skipper is an experienced fishers as a captain who is then responsible for employing the crew. To expedite the labor search process, the captain's wife often becomes a recruiter either by telephone or returning to Kaledupa to look for new crew members. One of informants, La Sani, a Butonese resident from Kaledupa who is also a *seran* and community leader in Sandakan,



estimates that in 2020 there will be around 800 Butonese residents working on more than 100 boats belonging to the *tauke* in Sandakan. From this, it can be seen that there are various efforts from each person involved (especially migrants who have left their homes) in the relationships that have been built. So, although sometimes, in this ongoing process, there are many problems abroad, for example financial, social, and cultural issues, these migrants can adapt to their new social and cultural environment in various ways, one of which is by staying connected with their fellow citizens from other cultures. and those in the circles they create or reproduce in the host country (Isra, 2022 and Ammarell, 2002; see Berger, Galonska & Koopmans, 2004:492)

The *tauke*, owner of the boat, in Sandakan, Malaysia, says that he pays his crew well and regularly every month, but it is a problem for the Kaledupa (Buton) fishers that almost every fisher owes a large debt to the *tauke*, starting with the amount charged for obtaining work permits, visas and other identity documents, most are in Malaysia legally and extend other loans. Several fishers said that they had to pay at least 1,500 ringgit (\$350) back to their *tauke* every month. One skipper said that he usually gets around 8,000 ringgit (\$1,900) per month with half of that amount divided among the rest of the crew, usually five to ten men. The *tauke* kept all passports as security and in some cases withheld payment as a way to force the crew to stay.

Until now, the population of Kaledupa (Buton) people in the Sandakan region of Sabah Malaysia is approximately 1,000 people and works as fishing laborers with Bugis and Filipinos. The location of the cities where Kaledupa work is centered in Sabasi, Tanah Merah, Vebri and Hengling as the coastal areas of Sandakan-Sabah Malaysia. Working with *tauke* with a wage system for fish catches that use tiger trawls (in Indonesia this type of fishing gear is prohibited) because it is considered environmentally unfriendly).



**Figure 5.** *Butonese fishing areas in Malaysia*

In economic terms, actually, working as a fisher is not an ideal job for Malaysians. Even though the results are quite large economically, it only gives big profits to the *tauke* as the owner of capital. The wages earned for crew members (fishing workers) are only 30% of the catch which is divided based on the number of crew members. In a month, fishing workers only get five million to eight million per month with four times the volume of fishing. From that salary, sometimes it is still deducted from debts lent when migrating to Malaysia from Kaledupa (Buton) as initial funds for the processing of immigration documents and chartering boats from Kaledupa (Buton) to Sandakan Malaysia.



The experience for Kaledupa people who have just migrated is that for three months of work, they can only send their salary from working with the *tauke*. The worst condition experienced by Kaledupa (Buton) migrants who work as fishing laborers, if abducted by the Abu Sayyaf Group, while still being held hostage they cannot make money and have implications for the lives of the families left behind in Kaledupa (Buton). It is sad, but this is a consequence that migrants have to live in Malaysia, not only in Malaysia, but this is also a problem all over the world, that immigrants experience social and cultural problems (Isra, 2022; Gomes, 2017; Husson, 2015; Clarke 2003; Malkki, 1992 and 1995). At this point, we can see the big problems faced by migrants: being away from family, facing huge financial problems, and feeling vulnerable, uncertain, and insecure. They are in the position of not knowing their faith and what tomorrow brings.

### ***Strengthening the Maritime-Based Village Economy as a Solution***

What steps must be taken by the Indonesian government to overcome the problem of Indonesian citizens who are always victims of the abduction of the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) in the Sulu Sea? So far, it has only been able to redeem hostages against the Abu Sayyaf. The Indonesian security forces (TNI and Polri) did not fight against the Abu Sayyaf. It is not that our military power is not capable, but this is within the sovereignty of Malaysia and the Philippines which have a special task in this matter.

So far, in the supervision of Malaysian territorial waters, there is the Malaysian Marine Police and ESSCOM (Easter Sabah Security Command) who are tasked with overseeing maritime security in the Malaysian territory. And for Indonesian fishers who work for *tauke* in Syarikat Malaysia, these two institutions are expected to help maintain security when they go to sea in Malaysian waters. However, they have not been able to maintain total control when fishers operate to catch fish, so that sometimes fishers are kidnapped in an area not far from the Sandakan-Sabah coast of Malaysia. Also, to some extent, either ASG and ESSCOM might get benefit if there are Indonesian fishers get caught by these two since Indonesian government, through the Ministry of Foreign Affair will pay some money as requirement to redeem the fishers.

Hoping to the *tauke*, the Royal Malaysian Government, and the Philippine Government in overcoming the abduction of Indonesian citizens in the Sulu Sea does not seem like a solution to get out of this problem. The Indonesian government must be creative in cutting the chain of migration of Indonesian citizens who work as fishing laborers in Malaysia. This is what needs to be realized actually, find the root of the problem and try to find a solution to the problem (Bowen, 2004). Several studies state that one of the reasons a person becomes a migrant, or in the context of this research, is that the Kaledupa people who seek sustenance to Malaysia and the Philippines are due to family (financial) and exchange problems (Isra, 2022; Levitt, 1998).

One option that can be taken is, for example, by strengthening the village economy, so that they do not migrate and become fishing workers. Kaledupa Island (Wakatobi Regency) with the potential of marine resources which has been a tourist attraction is not a priority in strengthening the village economy, but fishing and shipping activities have become an offer again. This offer is a form of strengthening the village economy by opening up jobs based on maritime traditions. It is not impossible, the Kaledupa fishers, who have been a *tauke* worker in Sandakan-Sabah, Malaysia, can return to being fishers in their village, using fishing boats with a capacity of 20-30 GT. Moreover, the potential of Wakatobi waters which are directly opposite the Banda Sea and Flores Sea have potential fish resources.

In addition, economic strengthening does not only extend to fishing gear and fishing technology, but the government should assist in post-catch processing and marketing as the main problem of fisheries development so far in Indonesia's coastal areas. This is a proposal from the Butonese to the Indonesian government, so that Indonesian citizens, like other migrants in the host country, do not face discrimination (Dewanto, 2020) and do not become "bait" in the global political vortex in the context of terrorism crimes committed by the Abu Sayyaf Group in the Sulu Sea.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, we can see that fishers from Kaledupa (Buton), Southeast Sulawesi, are in a dilemmatic position. On the one hand, they are faced with the issue of life and death who have always been the victims of the kidnapping of the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) terrorists in the waters of Sabah, Malaysia, and the Philippines. But on the other hand, they are also faced with the most basic issues of life and death, namely concerns about the inability to meet basic needs. The fishers who risk their lives in foreign seas, such as La Utu and La Hadi are examples of what experts call the uncertainty condition of migrants. We can see that the big problems faced by migrants are: being away from family, facing huge financial problems, and feeling uncertainty, vulnerable, and insecure.

Regarding the issue of life and death at sea related to ASG terror, of course raises questions, why the Philippine government cannot prevent the criminal activities of the Abu Sayyaf? Actually, there have been several efforts made by the Philippine government, but they have not been maximized. Why? The answer can be summed up as too many intertwined interests in the region. Indonesia certainly does not have the power to take immediate action if there are Indonesian citizens who are abducted unless they have obtained permission from the local government. Not to mention the ineffective efforts made by the *tauke* or the Malaysian government when it comes to terror cases at sea. Also, there are conflict of interest between ESSCOM or ASG with the Indonesian government if they get the Indonesian fishers at sea since Indonesia, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will pay some kind of retribution to release the captive.

Then, it seems that hoping for the *tauke*, the Royal Malaysian Government, and the Philippine Government in overcoming the terror problem in the Sulu Sea is not the best solution to be implemented. The Indonesian government must have a solution so that it can cut the migration chain for Indonesian citizens who work as fishers in the area. The root of the problem, of course, is economics, which means that the main problem solving is not in the Sulu Sea, but in the Sulawesi area itself, especially Wakatobi, namely by providing guarantees for the local communities so that their basic needs are met such as providing creative jobs.

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