



JURIDICAL REVIEW OF EXCESSIVE FORCE DEFENSE (NOODWEER EXCES) IN THE CRIME OF MURDER

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Keywords: *Abstract*

Noodweer Exces; Homicide; Criminal law is a branch of law that regulates acts prohibited by law and prescribes punishments for the perpetrators. One important concept in criminal law is self-defense (noodweer), which provides exemption for individuals who commit crimes in defense of themselves from threats. However, in some cases, self-defense may exceed what is considered reasonable, known as noodweer exces. Noodweer exces occurs when an individual acts excessively in self-defense due to psychological pressures such as fear or panic. This study analyzes the application of noodweer exces in homicide cases. The research aims to understand the concept of noodweer exces in criminal law and how legal approaches can be applied in cases involving excessive self-defense. The research method used is a normative juridical approach through literature study. The findings indicate that the application of noodweer exces in homicide cases involves considerations of proportionality, subsidiarity, and the psychological condition of the perpetrator. By considering human rights and the emotional state of the perpetrator, the law provides room for excessive self-defense to not be subject to punishment

Submit : 2025-04-14

Review : 2025-05-13

Received : 2025-05-31



A. Introduction

Criminal law constitutes a distinct branch of the legal system that regulates actions deemed unlawful under statutory provisions and imposes corresponding sanctions on offenders. Within the domain of criminal law, the concept of criminal liability occupies a central position, referring to the legal responsibility borne by individuals who are proven to have committed criminal acts. Nevertheless, criminal liability may, under specific circumstances, be negated or extinguished. In the criminal justice system, certain legal conditions may preclude the imposition of punishment by preventing judges from adjudicating an offender. These conditions are recognized as grounds for the exclusion of punishment (Dhiya, 2021).

Such grounds are generally categorized into two main types: justifying grounds and excusing grounds. A justifying ground refers to a legal situation wherein an act that

How to cite	Azzahrah, B., T., et al., Juridicial Review of Excessive Force Defense (Noodweer Exces) in the rime of Murder, Volume 01, Issue 05 September 2024
Published by	Zhata Institut

formally fulfills the elements of a criminal offense is not considered unlawful, thereby exempting the perpetrator from criminal sanction. An example is self-defense (noodweer), as provided for in Article 49(1) of the Indonesian Criminal Code (KUHP), which permits an individual to act in defense of themselves, others, honor, or property against an unlawful assault. Similarly, overmacht (force majeure) constitutes a justifying ground, whereby a person is compelled to commit an act due to circumstances beyond their control. Likewise, actions undertaken in the execution of a legal duty—such as a police officer using force in the enforcement of the law—may be regarded as justified.

In contrast, excusing grounds do not eliminate the unlawful nature of an act but absolve the perpetrator of criminal responsibility due to specific mental or psychological conditions affecting their capacity at the time of the offense. Excusing grounds are subjective in nature and closely related to the personal and emotional state of the defendant before or during the commission of the act (andi hakim, 2024). One such excusing ground is noodweer, or necessary self-defense, which may exonerate a person from criminal liability when the act is carried out to defend themselves, their honor, or property from an imminent and unlawful threat (Indonesian Criminal Code [KUHP], Article 49 Paragraph 1).

The principle of noodweer is enshrined in Article 49(1) of the KUHP, which stipulates that an individual cannot be punished for an act committed in self-defense, provided the act is proportionate and remains within reasonable limits. Self-defense thus serves as a legal basis for the exclusion of punishment, even when the act in question fulfills the objective elements of a criminal offense. However, not all acts of self-defense automatically qualify as noodweer. Certain conditions must be satisfied, including the existence of an unlawful attack and the absence of any alternative means to avert it other than through defensive action.

Further, Indonesian criminal law recognizes the concept of noodweer exces, or excessive self-defense, as regulated in Article 49(2) of the KUHP. This provision addresses situations in which an individual's act of self-defense exceeds reasonable limits due to a severe psychological disturbance or emotional shock (Indonesian Criminal Code [KUHP], Article 49 Paragraph 2). For instance, if a person, in a state of panic, fatally retaliates against an assailant using disproportionate force, the act may be categorized as noodweer exces. Although such an act objectively surpasses what is deemed reasonable, criminal liability may be mitigated or even eliminated on account of the perpetrator's diminished capacity for rational judgment at the time.

In the context of Indonesia's positive law, adjudicating cases involving noodweer exces presents a number of challenges, particularly in determining whether an act falls within the scope of the provision. This determination lies within the discretionary authority of the judge, who must assess the specific circumstances of each case (Anggraeni & Mahyani, 2022). Judicial assessment is not limited to the textual interpretation of Article 49(2) of the KUHP but must also incorporate psychological and sociological considerations relevant to the defendant's conduct.

A core issue in adjudicating noodweer exces cases involves evaluating the degree of emotional or psychological shock experienced by the defendant. In practice, there is no standardized metric to assess whether the mental disturbance experienced was sufficient to justify the excessive defensive response. This ambiguity may lead to inconsistencies in judicial decision-making. Consequently, in cases involving noodweer exces, judges are required to meticulously examine all relevant facts, including the context of the incident, the relationship between the defendant and the victim, and the defendant's mental and emotional state before and during the event. Moreover, the potential misuse of noodweer exces as a pretext to escape liability necessitates heightened judicial scrutiny to determine whether the defendant's actions were truly driven by uncontrollable impulses or were in fact deliberate.

In light of the foregoing, there is a pressing need for a comprehensive legal analysis of the concept and application of noodweer exces in cases of homicide. Such an analysis should encompass both theoretical and practical dimensions, including the legal framework employed by the judiciary in adjudicating cases involving excessive self-defense.

B. Method

In this study, the author employs a library research technique, which involves examining written documents relevant to the issues being discussed. For data analysis, the author applies a normative juridical approach, focusing on the study of existing legal rules or norms, as well as how they are applied within the existing legal system. The data sources used by the author include primary legal sources, such as laws and regulations, as well as secondary legal sources, including academic journals and books related to the topic being researched. The approach taken in this study is the statute approach, which involves analyzing all regulations related to the issue being discussed.

C. Result & Discussion

1. The Concept of Excessive Self-Defense (Noodweer Exces) in the Crime of Murder

The main principles of *Noodweer Exces* are proportionality and subsidiarity. Proportionality refers to the balance between the action taken and the threat faced. If the act of self-defense goes far beyond the actual threat, it becomes difficult to categorize it as a lawful *Noodweer Exces*. Meanwhile, the principle of subsidiarity emphasizes that self-defense must be a last resort after no other option is available to avoid the danger. Van Hamel argues that a person who commits excessive self-defense should not be punished because the act does not constitute a violation of law but is instead a natural right to defend oneself. In evaluating cases of *Noodweer Exces*, judges must take into account the psychological condition of the perpetrator at the time of the incident, which may include extreme fear, panic, or trauma that results in excessive actions. Therefore, in practice, each case of *Noodweer Exces* must be analyzed based on the facts and the subjective conditions surrounding the event.

In murder cases, the application of *Noodweer Exces* remains a topic of debate within the criminal justice system. This is due to the need to strike a balance between protecting individuals under threat and restricting actions that exceed reasonable limits. If the defense taken goes significantly beyond the actual threat, the perpetrator is still likely to be convicted, although they may receive a lighter sentence. *Noodweer Exces* occurs when a person facing a serious threat acts disproportionately due to intense psychological pressure. The key factor in determining the validity of *Noodweer Exces* is the causal link between the attack and the emotional disturbance experienced by the perpetrator. If it can be proven that the act of killing resulted from an uncontrollable emotional impulse triggered by a real attack or threat, the defendant may be acquitted or at least have their sentence reduced.

In certain circumstances, a victim may commit murder as a form of *Noodweer Exces*, often due to an inability to think clearly because of severe psychological pressure. Mental shock resulting from threats or attacks can impair a person's ability to make rational decisions regarding self-defense. In such situations, the individual may not be fully in control of their actions, and the defense is not the result of a deliberate decision. In a state of *Noodweer Exces*, there is no error in perception or misjudgment. There is indeed an unlawful attack, but the response given by the defendant is excessive and no longer proportional to the nature of the attack. The defendant can only be exempted from punishment if the judge accepts that the excessive act was "directly caused by intense mental shock," such that the external pressure resulted in a disturbed mental state, which then serves as the basis for an excuse. Therefore, the mental and emotional condition of the perpetrator must be a primary consideration in assessing *Noodweer Exces*, considering the complexity in determining criminal liability under such conditions.

According to Van Bemmelen, *Noodweer Exces* is an act that, although still unlawful in nature, cannot be punished due to the absence of fault or *schuld*. This indicates that while *Noodweer Exces* may be considered a violation of the law, the element of fault is the main factor in determining whether the perpetrator can be held criminally responsible. Under Indonesian law, Article 49 paragraph (2) of the Criminal Code provides the basis for exempting punishment for acts of excessive self-defense. This provision offers a legal avenue for individuals who act beyond reasonable limits in defending themselves not to be punished, as long as there is a justifying or excusing reason for the act. Thus, even though the act may legally be categorized as excessive self-defense, an individual acting under compulsion due to psychological disturbance still has the opportunity to be exempt from punishment.

The fundamental principles of human rights in Indonesia, as stated in Article 28A of the 1945 Constitution and Law Number 39 of 1999 on Human Rights, affirm that every individual has the right to life and to defend the continuity of their life. In relation to *Noodweer Exces*, someone facing a threat to their safety has the right to defend themselves, including in situations where the actions taken exceed reasonable limits. However, this right is accompanied by the obligation to respect the rights of others, as stipulated in Article 69 paragraph (2) of the Human Rights Law, which states that every

human right comes with a fundamental obligation to respect the rights of others reciprocally.

From a criminal law perspective, Article 49 paragraph (2) of the Criminal Code states that a person who defends themselves beyond reasonable limits shall not be punished if the act was committed under intense psychological pressure due to a real attack or threat. Although *Noodweer Exces* may result in the loss of life, this is not automatically considered a violation of human rights, provided the action complies with legal limits. Human rights law also establishes several principles that must be considered in self-defense cases. One such principle is proportionality, which requires that defensive actions be proportionate to the level of threat faced. Therefore, the use of deadly force should be a last resort when no alternative exists to avoid the danger.

The principle of protecting the right to life is also a critical factor in assessing the legality of self-defense, whereby the legal system must ensure that such actions are not misused as a form of revenge or disproportionate violence. Additionally, efforts to avoid lethal violence should be prioritized, where the use of force must be minimized to stop the threat without taking a life if possible. Hence, in Indonesia's legal system, which does not recognize human rights as absolute rights, excessive self-defense can still be justified as long as it meets the applicable legal principles. Therefore, *Noodweer Exces* in murder cases does not constitute a human rights violation as long as the action was taken under real compulsion and within the legal boundaries established by law.

Referring to the explanation above, *noodweer* or self-defense is an act carried out by a person in an effort to protect themselves from a sudden threat that endangers their safety or that of others. The main principle of self-defense is the element of compulsion, which leaves the individual with no choice but to act to protect themselves. In judicial proceedings, determining whether an act qualifies as *noodweer* is entirely at the discretion of the judge. The judge has the authority to assess each case individually by considering various aspects, such as the proportionality of the action, the urgency of the threat, and the psychological condition of the perpetrator at the time of the incident. Therefore, in every trial, the judge is responsible for examining whether the act remained within the reasonable limits of self-defense or had exceeded the justifiable boundaries under the law. The judge's decision in determining the applicability of *noodweer* heavily depends on the facts and evidence presented in court, so every legal event must be analyzed carefully and thoroughly to ensure the fair and objective application of justice.

2. How the Legal Approach in Deciding Cases Involving *Noodweer Exces* in the Crime of Murder

The right to freedom and the right to life are inalienable rights, this is stated in Article 281 paragraph (1) of the 1945 Constitution. Society has the right to protect these rights as long as they are within the limits set by the applicable legislation. Referring to the Criminal Code, a criminal offence is an act that includes an unlawful act caused by a responsible party accompanied by a behaviour. One of the main categories of criminal offences can be seen through the subjective component, which refers to aspects of the

offender's identity that are intrinsic or related to his or her identity such as an individual's innermost feelings and thoughts. The subjective component itself consists of intentional (dolus) or unintentional (culpa) actions, then depending on the purpose which refers to Article 53 paragraph (1) of the Criminal Code or Article 17 paragraph (1) of Law 1/2023, then the use of different labelling, in terms of the offence and refers to the emotion of fear or vress which is expressed in unlawful acts in accordance with Article 308 of the Criminal Code (Nadita Maulida et al., 2024).

Forced defence is regulated in Article 49 paragraph (1) of the Criminal Code. The existence of an unlawful attack that occurs at a time that harasses another person, his dignity, his property, his security, or himself is one of the components of self-defence. Self-defence or what can also be called emergency resistance must be in proportionality between the method and the object of defence. Therefore, forcible defence must conform to the conditions of being carried out because it has no other choice with the aim of defending or maintaining the dignity, integrity, or property of a person or group. Although forcible defence is allowed in Indonesian law, it cannot be denied that this does not give a person the right to violate the provisions of the law. Article 49 paragraph (2) of the Criminal Code explains that Noodweer Excess can be established when the perpetrator suffers from severe psychological pressure due to a threat that will not only harm himself but also harm others (Nadita Maulida et al., 2024).

Deciding a case needs to be done through the judge's consideration by assessing justice (ex aequo et bono), legal certainty, and the benefits for the parties involved which are carried out with serious, comprehensive, and wise attention. In resolving disputes impartially, the judge must decide issues related to the law, the morality of the perpetrator, and the legal position of the parties involved. Considering the act of Noodweer Excess refers to several points such as the background of self-defence, the condition of the defendant that triggered the forced overreaction, as well as considering the mitigating circumstances of the act. The excuses in the elimination of the guilt of the perpetrator of Noodweer Exces are interrelated with each other, this can adjust the adage that reads *non tam ira, quam causa irae excusat* which means that an act of a provocative attack will be excused (Heni Susanti & Mutia Maduri, 2023).

There are two forms of Noodweer Exces, namely a person facing an attack then experiences a mental shock that is so great that it then turns his self-defence into an act of attack, and a person who makes a defence is forced to experience a very great mental shock that immediately at least uses drastic efforts to defend himself which ultimately behaves excessively. In this case, it is necessary to consider proportionality by considering the balance between the attack that occurred and the self-defence that was carried out (Heni Susanti & Mutia Maduri, 2023). Although judges can consider these matters in deciding to acquit from all criminal charges due to forced defence, these reasons cannot justify the unlawful act committed, but only eliminate the guilt.

Noodweer Exces is a valid legal defence based on several approaches. In the first statement, Noodweer is stated to have a basis in legal opinion. The second opinion states

that noodweer is punishable and loses its character as an act that does not fall under onschlechtsig (contrary to law). As well as the third statement *Memorie Van Toelichting* (against the law) states that 'uitwendige oorzaak van ontoerekenbaarheid' or interpreted Noodweer as one of the rights which is then continued with 'het recht nooit behoeft te wijken voor het onrecht' which means 'something that is legal according to the law is never necessary to succumb to impartiality' (Irwandi S & Fachri W, 2023).

Regarding Noodweer Exces which is closely related to the soul and mind, this can be related to the theory of pointless punishment, namely the theory that someone who commits a criminal offence with an unstable mental state does not need to be subject to punishment. This can also be related to the mental deviation of a perpetrator, so the actions of the perpetrator of Noodweer Excess can be categorised as excusable and cannot be punished (Irwandi S & Fachri W, 2023). Referring to the realisation of the values of justice, expediency, and legal certainty in deciding cases, judges have three options in deciding cases, namely punishment, acquittal, and release as stated in Article 191 paragraph (1) and paragraph (2) of the Criminal Procedure Code. Therefore, in order to achieve the highest level of justice, the Law has also regulated the discussion of reasons that can eliminate the punishment. The reasons for the elimination of punishment consist of justification and excuse which are regulated in Article 44 to Article 51 of the Criminal Code. Unlike the forced defence which is included in the justification reason, the forced defence of exceeding the limit (Noodweer Exces) is actually included in the category of excuse with the meaning of excuse as the inability to be responsible (Maria Idayu S & Itok Dwi K, 2024).

Another thing that needs to be considered in deciding cases of forced defence that exceeds the limit as mentioned earlier is consideration of the proportionality requirement, as well as consideration of the subsidiarity requirement which means that the defence must be carried out in the lightest way (subsidiarity) and which allows exceeding the subsidiarity requirement is Noodweer Exces. According to Fletcher, a legal expert stated that forced defence cannot be punished because Noodweer is a form of defence that is legitimate according to the law or also known as 'legitimate defense' or the right to self-defence, and forced defence is a defence that has been permitted by law or 'De wet staat hier eigen richting toe'. Thus, Noodweer Exces, which is a form of self-defence accompanied by a shaken mental condition and forced defence by exceeding the limit, is referred to as the basis of Noodweer Exces as an excuse in the case decision (Maria Idayu S & Itok Dwi K, 2024).

Focusing on the Noodweer Excess in the criminal offence of murder, it refers to the definition of murder itself which means that crimes committed with the intention of ending human life are considered murder by reference to the Criminal Code. The description of murder is when someone 'kills' or 'takes life'. In relation to the Noodweer Excess, this relates to actions on the basis of 'they are obliged to protect themselves' in critical situations when they are forced or denied due to urgent circumstances. The trigger for this action is also that the perpetrator of Noodweer Exces is essentially a victim who in most cases has no choice but to fight for their own survival, their property, and

for the sake of others. Therefore, the balance of attack and resistance is crucial in determining the verdict of the case (Nadita Maulida et al., 2024). Judges in deciding cases must thoroughly analyse all aspects, ranging from aspects related to human rights to the psychological condition of the perpetrator. For the sake of deciding cases on the basis of justice, expediency, and legal certainty that is appropriate and proportional.

D. Conclusion

Based on the discussion regarding excessive self-defense (Noodweer Exces) in cases of homicide, it can be concluded that this concept is a part of criminal law that allows individuals to defend themselves in situations where they are under threat. Excessive self-defense occurs when the actions taken by an individual to defend themselves exceed reasonable limits, typically triggered by psychological conditions such as extreme fear or panic. In theory, noodweer excess is not considered a violation of the law because there is no mistake in the perception or intent of the perpetrator, and it is considered a natural right to defend oneself, even if the action exceeds proportional limits. This is in accordance with Article 49 paragraph (2) of the Criminal Code, which provides an exception for excessive self-defense, as long as there is a strong psychological pressure on the perpetrator.

However, in practice, the judge's decision to acquit or mitigate the punishment of the perpetrator depends greatly on the judge's analysis of the psychological condition of the perpetrator and the relationship between the threat faced and the response given. The legal approach in deciding cases involving noodweer excess must take into account the psychological condition of the perpetrator that triggers the excessive self-defense, the background of proportional self-defense (the balance between the threat and the response), and subsidiarity (which is the last resort with no other alternatives). Judges need to evaluate whether the defensive action taken remains within justifiable limits or has exceeded reasonable bounds.

Therefore, each case of noodweer excess must be analyzed carefully and thoroughly, considering the emotional and psychological factors that influence the perpetrator's actions. Overall, noodweer excess in cases of homicide reflects the balance between an individual's right to self-defense and the importance of applying fair law, taking into account both objective and subjective circumstances surrounding the incident. The principles of proportionality and subsidiarity should guide the assessment of whether the excessive defensive actions taken can be justified.

E. Recommendation

In light of the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Judicial Guidelines:** The Supreme Court of Indonesia should consider issuing comprehensive guidelines to assist judges in consistently interpreting and applying Article 49(2) of the Criminal Code, particularly in relation to psychological assessment in cases of excessive self-defense.

2. Interdisciplinary Assessment: Courts should routinely involve psychological experts and criminologists in evaluating the mental state and condition of defendants claiming noodweer exces, ensuring that verdicts are based on thorough and objective analysis.
3. Increased understanding of law enforcers: periodic training should be held regarding the consistency of the application of the concept of noodweer exces and the determination of noodweer exces itself to avoid disproportionate decisions.
4. Public Legal Education: there should also be wider socialisation to the public regarding the limits and legal boundaries of self-defense to prevent misuse or misunderstanding of noodweer exces as a legal justification.

F. Acknowledgments

The author would like to express sincere gratitude to Almighty God for His blessings and grace, which have enabled the completion of this research.

Gratitude is also extended to our university, UPN “Veteran” Jakarta, especially the Faculty of Law, for providing the academic environment that made this research possible.

The author further extends thanks to the Journal Review Division of FRDM UPN “Veteran” Jakarta for their support, facilitation, and valuable feedback during the writing process.

Our fellow members of Group 31 FRDM Law Review for their active contributions in this research and academic discussions.

Additionally, sincere appreciation is given to the journal’s editorial team for the opportunity to publish the results of this research.

Finally, the author acknowledges that this journal may still have shortcomings. Therefore, constructive criticism and suggestions are highly welcomed for future improvement.

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