

RESEARCH BRIEF: INDONESIA

OVERVIEW OF RESTRICTIONS TO CIVIC FREEDOMS



*Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto during his inauguration at the Presidential palace, 21 October 2024
(Photo Credit: REUTERS/Willy Kurniawan)*



INTRODUCTION

On 20 October 2024, Prabowo Subianto was sworn in as [president](#) of Indonesia, having [won the election](#) in February 2024 with close to 60 per cent of the vote. Many civil society organisations (CSOs) and human rights activists expressed their deep concern, since before he became a politician, Prabowo was a military officer who was dishonourably discharged in 1998 for his involvement in the [abduction of political opponents](#) of former President Suharto. Thirteen of those abducted remain missing, yet Prabowo has never faced trial.

The [CIVICUS Monitor](#), a civil society platform that tracks civic space around the world, has documented a decline of civic freedoms in [Indonesia](#) since Prabowo came to power. His presidency has seen attacks on media freedom, attempts to silence dissent and the targeting of human rights defenders (Human Rights Defenders) with attacks, harassment, intimidation and prosecutions. It has brought a severe crackdown on protests with arrests and excessive force and an escalation of repression in the Papua region. It has come with censorship, the passing of restrictive laws and ongoing impunity for past crimes.

Due to this, Indonesia's civic space is rated as [obstructed](#) by the CIVICUS Monitor. In July 2025, Indonesia was added to the CIVICUS Monitor [Watchlist](#), which tracks countries where civic space is rapidly deteriorating.

These civic space violations are inconsistent with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which Indonesia ratified in 2005. The ICCPR imposes international obligations on the state to respect and protect civic freedoms, including freedoms of association, expression and peaceful assembly. These rights are enshrined in Indonesia's [constitution](#).

Indonesia's actions are also inconsistent with recommendations made by states to the government in November 2022 at its [Universal Periodic Review](#) at the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council. The government was urged to ensure the rights to freedoms of association, expression and peaceful assembly and media freedom and to take measures to foster a safe, respectful and enabling environment for civil society and Human Rights Defenders, particularly in the Papua region.

Further, Indonesia's civic space restrictions are at odds with the concluding observations issued by the [UN Human Rights Committee](#) during the review of Indonesia's implementation of the ICCPR in October 2024. The committee urged the government to ensure that any restrictions on the rights of peaceful assembly comply with the ICCPR, all allegations of excessive use of force, harassment, intimidation and surveillance are investigated promptly, thoroughly and impartially and those found responsible are prosecuted. The committee also called on the government to adopt measures to effectively protect people who exercise their freedom of expression and conduct prompt, thorough and impartial investigations into all reports of harassment, intimidation and reprisals against Human Rights Defenders.

This brief assesses actions undertaken by the Prabowo government, highlights issues of concern and makes recommendations for improvements.

ABOUT THE CIVICUS MONITOR

The CIVICUS Monitor, an online platform that tracks threats to civil society in countries across the globe, rates civic space – the space for civil society – in Indonesia as **Obstructed**.

The data provides the basis for civic space ratings, which are based on up-to-date information and indicators on the state of freedom of association, peaceful assembly and expression. Countries can be rated as:

CLOSED**REPRESSED****OBSTRUCTED****NARROWED****OPEN**

ATTACKS, HARASSMENT AND PROSECUTIONS TARGETING HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Over the last two years, human rights groups have documented attacks, harassment, prosecutions and surveillance targeting Human Rights Defenders.

In March and April 2025, the army committed acts of [harassment and intimidation](#) against the Commission for the Disappeared and Victims of Violence (KontraS), a human rights organisation. Army vehicles drove by or stopped in front of its office compound four times. On at least two occasions, military personnel were seen taking photographs of the KontraS office gate from the vehicles. KontraS staff also received numerous missed calls from unknown phone numbers. One of the numbers was identified as being associated with a security intelligence official. In May 2025, the harassment and surveillance persisted as two vehicles drove slowly in front of the office, occasionally stopping briefly. In several instances, they seemed to be documenting activities outside the office.

In April 2025, environmental activist Yusril Koto was accused of defamation and [arrested](#) under the Electronic Information and Transactions Law (ITE Law) for criticising Batam city authorities. Authorities systematically use the ITE Law, which contains broad and vague language, to arrest, prosecute and punish activists, government critics and journalists. Koto also [faced charges](#) for defamation under article 310 of the Criminal Code. He was [sentenced](#) to six months in jail in September 2025.

Amnesty International Indonesia reported that over 100 [Human Rights Defenders were targeted](#) in the first half of 2025, including anti-corruption, environmental, human rights, labour and student activists. Fifty-three of the cases involved physical attacks against Human Rights Defenders, while others included acts of criminalisation, harassment and intimidation.

On 3 June 2025, at the Indonesia Critical Minerals Conference and Expo in Jakarta, three Greenpeace Indonesia activists and a young Papuan activist were [arrested](#) after unfurling banners and giving speeches about the environmental damage and social tensions created by nickel mining activities in Raja Ampat in Papua. They were subsequently released.



Activists Khariq Anhar and Wawan Hermawan who have been prosecuted for their social media activism around the 2025 protests
(Photo Credit: X/@lbhjakarta)

[Eight activists](#) – Saiful Amin, Khariq Anhar, Muhammad ‘Paul’ Fakhurrozi, Wawan Hermawan, Syahdan Husein, Shelfin Bima Prakosa, Delpedro Marhaen Rismansyah and Muzaffar Salim – were arrested and detained separately for expressing their opinions and posting on social media in support of [nationwide protests](#) that took place in August 2025. The eight have been engaged in civil society advocacy and student movements, including grassroots initiatives promoting government accountability. Authorities charged them under article 160 of the Criminal Code on incitement to violence and articles 28(3) and 45A(3) of the ITE Law on hate speech.

On 6 March 2026, a court in Jakarta [acquitted](#) four of the activists – Khariq Anhar, Syahdan Husein, Delpedro Marhaen and Muzaffar Salim – after seven months in detention, ruling that prosecutors had failed to prove allegations of child exploitation, dissemination of false information, hate speech and incitement. However, on 7 April 2026, the Central Jakarta District Court [convicted](#) Wawan Hermawan under the ITE Law and sentenced him to seven months’ imprisonment for reposting social media content during the protests. That same month, Shelfin Bima Prakosa was [sentenced](#) to four months in prison for incitement. In August 2026, Khariq Anhar was [prosecuted](#) under the ITE Law for a satirical social media post related to the 2025

protests. Activist Saiful Amin has been [acquitted](#) while Muhammad ‘Paul’ Fakhurrozi was [released on bail](#) in October 2025.

On 27 November 2025, 24 police officers reportedly ambushed and [arbitrarily arrested](#) Human Rights Defenders Fathul Munif and Adetya ‘Dera’ Pramandira in Semarang. Pramandira is a staff member of the Indonesian Environmental Forum in Central Java, while Munif is longstanding coordinator of Aksi Kamisan Semarang, a weekly silent protest calling for justice for victims of past human rights violations. They were accused of inciting the August 2025 protests. On 10 December 2025, they were [released](#) but remain under criminal investigation for hate speech and incitement.

In January 2026, police [arrested](#) environmental activist Arlan Dahrin as she supported people from Torete Village, Morowali Regency, Central Sulawesi who were defending their land amid the expansion of the mining industry.



HRD Andrie Yunus who was attacked with acid
(Photo Credit: KontraS)

On 12 March 2026, HRD Andrie Yunus was the victim of a [targeted acid attack](#) by two unidentified perpetrators as he rode his motorcycle in Jakarta. The men threw acid at him, causing severe chemical burns on his chest, eyes, face and hands and leaving him with [burns](#) over more than 20 per cent of his body. [According to findings](#) in March 2026 by the Advocacy Team for Democracy (TAUD), a civil society coalition, the attack may have involved a broader network of individuals, including a field coordinator, site scouts, surveillance operatives and trackers, suggesting a considerable degree of planning and coordination, rather than an isolated action perpetrated by a small group of people.

In June 2026, the Jakarta Military Court [sentenced](#) four members of the Strategic Intelligence Agency of the Indonesian National Armed Forces for their involvement in the attack on Yunus. [Human rights groups](#) believe the sentences are not proportionate to the gravity of the attack and said the court failed to address broader questions regarding the responsibility of the superiors of the perpetrators.

According to a July 2026 Human Rights Watch [report](#), since taking office in 2024, the Prabowo administration has intensified the crackdown on free expression by expanding the military’s role in state-owned infrastructure projects, mining, oil palm plantations and what are described as energy and food estates. The report highlights how police have responded to complaints filed by company officials or politicians by targeting environmental and Indigenous community defenders, using the Criminal Code and other laws to bring charges including defamation and spreading communism to silence protest over environmental harm.

VILIFICATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

In May 2026, [Amnesty International reported](#) that under Prabowo there was a coordinated disinformation campaign portraying government critics including Human Rights Defenders as foreign agents to silence dissent. The report found that the government has responded to multiple waves of protests by repeatedly and publicly accusing critics of being paid, manipulated and controlled by foreign interests and framing dissent as orchestrated rather than legitimate. This has been followed by a proliferation of online foreign agent slurs against civil society, often based on unsubstantiated claims that they want to divide or undermine Indonesia on the basis that they receive foreign funding or other international support. Hundreds of accounts have acted in sync to post identical graphics, messages and videos in quick succession, with the false information amplified across Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter/X and YouTube.

The pervasive use of disinformation has created a climate of fear far beyond those directly targeted, discouraging people from participating in protests, collaborating with CSOs or expressing critical views online.

There are also [concerns](#) about risks for LGBTQI+ activists and organisations following Presidential Regulation No. 111/2025 on the General National Defence Policy 2025-2029, issued in October 2025, which classifies the spread of LGBTQI+ culture as a non-military threat to the state and places it in the same category as radicalism, separatism and terrorism. [Human rights groups](#) have stated that such regulations violate human rights and foster an environment where LGBTQI+ people are highly susceptible to discrimination, harassment and threats from state and non-state sources.

CENSORSHIP AND SILENCING OF DISSENT

The authorities have gone after critics who speak up or criticise the government and its activities online and offline.



Indonesian mother imprisoned for protesting palm oil factory next to school (Photo Credit: Mongabay)

Gustina Salim Rambe, a woman protester from North Sumatra province, was [sentenced](#) to over five months in prison in November 2024 for speaking out against the environmental damage caused by a palm oil mill. Labuhan Batu police arrested Rambe during a protest against the factory's reopening, accusing her of obstructing vehicle access to the factory and threatening violence against an official acting in the lawful performance of his official duties under article 212 of the Criminal Code.

In January 2025, punk rock band Sukatani had to [issue a public apology](#) and with Human Rights Defenders saw their song about police corruption, [Bayar Bayar Bayar \(Pay, Pay, Pay\)](#) from online platforms. Many believe the police had put pressure on them to do so.

In May 2025, police accused a female Bandung Institute of Technology student with the initials SSS of [online defamation](#) and charged her under the ITE Law. The student had allegedly uploaded an insulting meme of Prabowo kissing former President Joko Widodo.

In January 2026, Zainal Arifin Mochtar, an academic at Universitas Gadjah Mada, received a [threatening anonymous phone call](#) from someone claiming to be a law enforcement official. Mochtar has been vocal on human rights issues.

Sherly Annavita, an influencer from Aceh, received [repeated insults and threats](#) via Instagram and private phone numbers after voicing critical views regarding disaster response in Sumatra and Prabowo's Free Nutritious Meal programme. Physical forms of intimidation against her included vandalism of her personal vehicle and delivery of a threatening letter that mentioned one of her family members.



Police closing down Pesta Babi film screening at Mataram University, May 2026 (YLBHI)

On 15 January 2026, A court found Laras Faizati Khairunnisa [guilty of incitement](#) over social media posts during the August 2025 protests. She was convicted of spreading incitement through social media under article 161(1) of the Criminal Code and given a six-month prison sentence. Khairunnisa had been held in pretrial detention since 1 September 2025.

Throughout May 2026, public screenings of Pesta Babi (The Pig Feast), a documentary highlighting environmental exploitation in several regions of Indonesia, particularly Papua, were met with criminalisation, forced shutdowns and intimidation. At least 21

instances of [intimidation](#) were documented during screenings across different regions. These included forcible break-ups of events, monitoring by security intelligence, requests for the identity of organisers and threatening phone calls. Many of these incidents were carried out by security forces.

Civil society groups are also concerned that the government is seeking to erase grave human rights violations from school textbooks, such as those committed during Suharto's New Order era from 1966 to 1998. In January 2025, the Ministry of Culture launched an initiative to revise the country's official history. In June 2025, Culture Minister Fadli Zon [dismissed](#) the well-documented mass rape of Indonesians of Chinese descent during May 1998 protests and riots that led to the fall of Suharto. Historians and human rights activists warn the rewrite could omit important historical episodes and serious human rights abuses.

On a positive note, on 28 August 2026, the Constitutional Court [struck down](#) Criminal Code articles 218, 219 and 220, which criminalised insulting the government and disseminating such insults, punishable by up to three years in prison.

ATTACKS ON THE MEDIA AND PRESS FREEDOM RESTRICTIONS

There have also been reports of attacks, harassment, restrictions and threats against journalists.

The National Police Regulation No. 3 of 2025, issued in March 2025, requires [foreign journalists to obtain police clearance](#) before reporting in Indonesia. According to ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights, this draconian measure is a direct attack on press freedom, reinforcing censorship, intimidation and surveillance and restricting independent reporting. This regulation opens the door for arbitrary denials of permission, harassment and deportation of journalists, creating an atmosphere of fear that weakens journalistic integrity.



Journalist Francisca Christy Rosana who received a pig head (Photo Credit: Instagram/ Francisca Christy Rosana)

According to Human Rights Watch, the Tempo media outlet, which has a long history of public criticism, was [targeted](#), apparently because of its critical coverage of the Prabowo administration. On 20 March 2025, Francisca Christy Rosana, a journalist at Tempo who hosts its popular Bocor Alus Politik (Fine Political Leaks) podcast, received a package containing a pig's head without its ears, a menacing symbol in a Muslim-majority nation. She was doxxed, her mother's phone was hacked and a relative received threatening anonymous phone calls. On 22 March 2025, cleaners at Tempo's office in Jakarta found a box of six rats with their heads cut off. This appeared to be an act of intimidation against the podcast's six hosts, who discuss sensitive political issues and have criticised the Prabowo administration.

Journalists in the city of Surabaya were targeted while covering mass protests against [revision](#) of the military law. [According to the Committee to Protect Journalists](#), on 24 March 2025, several police officers forced Rama Indra, a journalist with the local digital outlet Beritajatim, to stop filming them beating protesters, hitting him on the head with their hands and a wooden stick to force him delete his footage. They also confiscated his phone, even though he identified himself as a journalist and presented his press ID card. Indra reported the incident to the police. Police also forced Wildan Pratama, a journalist with the local digital outlet Suara Surabaya, to delete his photos of around 25 arrested protesters at the same site. On 23 March 2025, police and military forces assaulted at least eight student journalists who were documenting a similar protest in the East Java city of Malang.

There were also reports that at least 16 journalists were assaulted or intimidated while covering the August 2025 nationwide protests. [According to The International Federation of Journalists](#), on 25 August 2025,

Antara photojournalist Bayu Pratama was assaulted by police while covering protests outside the House of Representatives compound in Central Jakarta. That same day in Medan, a journalist was assaulted while working from the North Sumatra Regional People's Representative Council building, and at least three other media workers reported obstruction and the confiscation of equipment.

On 28 August 2025, police intimidated a Jurnas.com journalist reporting outside parliament. On 30 August 2025, DetikBali's Fabiola Dianira and TV One's Leo Chandra Sibarani reported police intimidation at the Bali Regional Police building and the Bali Regional House of Representatives. Bali Topik's Rovin Bou was also arrested, beaten and briefly detained while livestreaming outside the Bali police building, despite showing his press card.

Journalists covering a protest outside the East Kalimantan Governor's office in Samarinda on 21 April 2026 [faced intimidation](#) from the authorities, who seized their mobile phones and forcefully deleted recorded news data. On 28 April 2026, individuals suspected to be Indonesian National Armed Forces members [forcefully took](#) a journalist from a cafe in Medan and pressured him to record a clarification video on his report on allegations of military involvement in an illegal condensate oil business. On 12 May 2026, a Central Kalimantan journalist [received a threatening message](#), suspected to have been sent by the Cyber Crimes Directorate of the National Police. The message threatened that the journalist would suffer the same fate as Andrie Yunus if he didn't delete a social media post inviting people to watch a documentary.

DISRUPTION AND CRACKDOWN ON PROTESTS

Protests against corruption and government laws and policies under the Prabowo administration have been met with excessive force and arbitrary arrests of protesters, among them children. In some cases, the military has been deployed to police protests in contravention of international standards. As far as CIVICUS is aware, none of those involved in violations have been held to account.

In December 2025, [Amnesty International Indonesia reported](#) that at least 5,538 people were arbitrarily arrested, subjected to violence or exposed to teargas in 2025 while exercising their right to peaceful assembly. Rather than engaging in dialogue, authorities relied on heavy-handed security measures to disperse protesters.

In December 2024, police [dispersed a student protest](#) in Jakarta against a 12 per cent Value Added Tax increase. [According to reports](#), at least 820 police and military personnel were deployed in advance to oversee the protest at the Presidential Palace in Central Jakarta. The students [gathered](#) peacefully and read poems and speeches and released balloons. However, police used water cannon against protesters, forcing them to disperse. Police [physically assaulted](#) some protesters.

In March 2025, police used excessive force and arrests against tens of thousands of activists, labour groups and students who [took to the streets](#) to protest in almost all major provinces against controversial revisions to the military law.



Police at protest against military law revisions in Semarang, March 2025
(Photo Credit: X/@skmamanat)

An April 2025 [TAUD investigation](#) identified the military and police as the primary perpetrators of violence during protests against the military law. Based on TAUD's data, 83 protesters were injured and 161 people were arbitrarily arrested during the period of protests. These numbers were spread across 69 protest locations throughout Indonesia. TAUD also [documented](#) that 18 journalists experienced violence while covering the events. The Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation reported that violence in some locations was committed by military and police personnel in [civilian clothes](#), as well as by several social organisations.

On 23 April 2025, UN experts sent a [communication](#) to the government concerning alleged violence by police against peaceful protests, particularly in Jakarta, Manado, Semarang and Yogyakarta, including the use of batons, teargas and water cannon to disperse protesters.

Police also committed widespread violence and repression against peaceful 2025 May Day protesters. [According to the Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development](#), in commemoration of International Workers' Day, various alliances, civil society groups and labour unions organised peaceful protests and rallies across major Indonesian cities. The groups protested against rising authoritarianism and government policies.

Police met May Day protests outside the parliamentary complex with brutality. According to [TAUD](#), police arbitrarily arrested 14 protesters, including four paramedics. Thirteen of those arrested were reportedly subjected to assault, including beatings, resulting in significant injuries. The police reportedly fired teargas and blasted water cannon to disperse the peaceful protests. In June 2025, TAUD said a total of 14 people had been [charged](#) under Criminal Code articles 212 on physically resisting or obstructing a public official performing their duty, 216 on the offence of sabotage or war and 218 on insulting the president or vice president, articles the state often uses to criminalise expression.

Between 25 August and 1 September 2025 [mass protests erupted](#) in Jakarta and spread nationwide after Prabowo announced a housing allowance for lawmakers. This was widely criticised, particularly because of government austerity measures that included cuts to education, health and other services. [According to Human Rights Watch](#), around 1,500 police officers dispersed the initial protest with teargas and water cannon. According to information aggregated from various CSOs and legal aid organisations, at least 4,194 protesters were [arbitrarily arrested](#), including children.



A woman confronts riot police during a protest in Jakarta 28 August 2025 (Photo Credit: REUTERS/Willy Kurniawan)

Some were [coerced and intimidated](#) into signing official statements and denied access to adequate legal assistance. [Reports indicate](#) there was military involvement in some protests. According to KontraS, at least 20 people went [missing](#) after the protests, with some taken to police stations without due process. [A detailed Amnesty International investigation](#) published in December 2025

found that the police used unlawful force against protesters, including beatings and the improper use of water cannon and teargas canisters containing explosive materials, warning that such weapons carried a high risk of causing permanent injuries. Instead of conducting a thorough evaluation of these incidents, the national police chief issued [Regulation No. 4 of 2025](#), which loosened restrictions on the use of firearms by police officers.

There were also [reports](#) from human rights groups of digital attacks targeting people who voiced their criticism on social media. These include doxxing, gender-based online violence and other cyberattacks. Authorities further disrupted internet access and restricted information flows, including by suspending TikTok's livestream feature, which had become a vital tool for documenting protests in real time.

Police used excessive force and made arbitrary arrests against protesters in Pati, Central Java on 13 August 2025. According to reports, the [protest](#) was part of a mass mobilisation demanding the resignation of local politician Sudewo over an unfair tax hike and other controversial policies. Police and military were [deployed](#). Instead of facilitating the protest, police responded with teargas and water cannon and [arbitrarily arrested](#) 22 protesters, confiscating their belongings without due process. The police also reportedly



Protest in Pati, Central Java in August 2025 (Photo Credit: Tempo)

required the detained protesters to sign a statement that they would not participate in any future protests. At least 33 protesters and one journalist were injured.

On 1 May 2026, during May Day protests in Jakarta, the Jakarta Metropolitan Police reportedly [carried out arbitrary arrests](#) of peaceful protesters.

In August 2026, thousands [marched](#) on parliament in Jakarta to demand harsher punishment for corrupt officials. According to reports, police [arrested](#) 65 people ahead of the protest.

TARGETING OF ACTIVISTS AND REPRESSION IN PAPUA

In the Papua region, at the east end of the Indonesian archipelago, there have been reports of [gross human rights violations](#), including extrajudicial killings, torture and arbitrary arrest of activists by security forces under the pretext of suppressing separatism. Although the government continues to promise to address the grievances of Papuan people, they face ongoing discrimination, exploitation and repression. The authorities have also restricted access to Papua for international CSOs and observers.

In the last two years, the CIVICUS Monitor has continued to document incidents of civic space repression in the region, including arbitrary arrests, the disruption of protests with excessive force and intimidation of Papuan activists.

[The Human Rights Monitor reported](#) that on 15 November 2024, thousands of Papuans took to the streets after the West Papua National Committee (KNPB), a movement that promotes the right to self-determination through peaceful action, called for peaceful Papua-wide protests against the central government's plan to relaunch its [transmigration programme](#), with West Papua one of the target areas. The programme, which promotes movement from densely populated areas, could exacerbate land-grabbing and exploitation of natural resources instead of bringing benefits for Indigenous communities.

In Sentani, Jayapura Regency, police reportedly prevented KNPB activists from distributing leaflets ahead of the protests. Authorities used rubber ammunition, teargas, water cannon and wooden sticks to forcibly disperse protesters. At least 11 protesters were injured during the crackdown. In Nabire, Central Papua, at least four protesters were injured, while 14 protesters were arbitrarily detained at the Nabire District Police Station.

On 26 January 2025, Indigenous Papuan HRD Tineke Rumkabu [faced intimidation](#) from security forces. Security force personnel arrived at the GIDI Church outpost in Biak and questioned Rumkabu about her alleged activities related to the Free Papua movement. Later that afternoon, the officers returned to Rumkabu's house, with some in full military gear and others in civilian clothes.



Papuan women human rights defender Tineke Rumkabu (Photo Credit: Rima News)

On 17 February 2025, police [restricted and ill-treated Papuan students](#) who held protests across Papua rejecting the Free Nutritious Meal programme introduced by Prabowo and instead demanding free education and improvements to school facilities. In Nabire, police blocked dozens of students who were heading to the protest location and took them to a police station. In Jayapura City, Papua Province, police briefly detained and questioned 15 students when they were about to join the protest before sending them home. In Yalimo Regency, Papua Highlands, police reportedly [fired 12 shots and teargas](#), while in Wamena City, Papua Highlands, police fired teargas.

According to the [Human Rights Monitor](#), on 7 April 2025, Papuan students and solidarity organisations held coordinated protests in major cities across Indonesia, calling for the closure of the mining company PT Freeport and other extractive industries, denouncing the militarisation of West Papua and demanding

the right to self-determination. While some protests remained peaceful, [police met others with violence](#), including in Jayapura and Nabire, with arrests, forced dispersals and teargas.



Protests demanding closure of PT Freeport Indonesia and revocation of TNI Law (Photo Cedit: Human Rights Monitor)

On 10 April 2025, joint Indonesian security forces, including military and police, used excessive force against a protest by Papuan students and civil society on the revision of the military law and the expansion of National Strategic Projects in Manokwari, West Papua Province. Two students, Naikus Alua and Mona Siep, were [arrested](#) and reportedly beaten during detention. On 22 May 2025, police [violently repressed](#) a peaceful protest organised by students of Cenderawasih University in Jayapura City.

On 31 May 2025, police allegedly subjected Papuan political activist Er Giban to [intimidation and ill-treatment](#).

A police patrol unit stopped next to Giban while he was sitting outside the KNPB office in the town of Dekai, Yahukimo Regency. Police forcibly confiscated his phone without presenting a warrant, accusing him of possessing a suspicious device. He was then ordered to follow them to the police station for interrogation, where he was accused of involvement in a murder case and affiliation with the West Papua National Liberation Army, an armed group fighting for Papua independence. He was released without charge.

Police used [excessive force](#) against peaceful protesters in Sentani, Jayapura Regency on 15 August 2025. The protest, organised by KNPB, was part of region-wide commemorations organised to mark the controversial 1962 New York Agreement that transferred Papua from Dutch to Indonesian control. Despite KNPB's advance notice, security forces responded with violence, resulting in at least nine documented injuries.

On 23 September 2025, officers from the Jayapura police [arbitrarily detained](#) 13 KNPB members in the Sentani area while they were distributing leaflets to announce an upcoming peaceful protest marking International Farmers' Day.

On 30 September 2025, police [forcibly dispersed](#) a peaceful protest organised by Solidaritas Peduli Uncen at Cenderawasih University in Jayapura. The protest was held to mark the 63rd anniversary of the 1962 Rome Agreement between Indonesia, the Netherlands and the USA, and to demand the right to self-determination. Police fired teargas to disperse the crowd and arrested four students.



Four Papuan political activists convicted for treason (Photo Credit: X/@VeronicaKoman)

In December 2025, four Papuan political prisoners were [sentenced](#) to seven months' imprisonment on treason charges under articles 106 and 110 of the Criminal Code for letters sent to the government in April 2025 asking for peaceful dialogue between a pro-independence organisation and the president.

On 6 December 2025, Jayapura police [forcibly dispersed](#) a peaceful assembly organised by KNPB in Sentani. On 8 December 2025, police officers carried out [acts of intimidation and physical violence](#) against students during a peaceful free speech rally.

On 27 April 2026, security forces [violently dispersed](#) a peaceful student demonstration organised by Papuan Student Solidarity in Abepura and Waena. Officers used physical force and teargas and fired warning shots, including in densely populated residential areas, exposing residents to harmful effects. At least one student was arbitrarily arrested, while three others were reportedly injured. The protest was part of coordinated demonstrations across West Papua and other parts of Indonesia demanding accountability for recent civilian killings.



Students protest against a revision to the armed forces law on 20 March 2025 (Photo by Aditya Irawan/NurPhoto)

On 1 May 2026, members of the military [detained](#) four political activists in the grounds of the Catholic Church of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in Mawan Village, Mandobo District, Boven Digoel Regency, South Papua province. The arrest was reportedly carried out without an arrest warrant or clear legal basis.

On 5 June 2026, a group of [environmental activists](#) in South Sorong Regency, Southwest Papua province, were allegedly subjected to intimidation, threats and an incident of physical assault following a peaceful World Environment Day protest at the South Sorong Regent's Office.

PASSAGE OF LAWS IMPACTING HUMAN RIGHTS

Human rights groups have raised concerns over the passing or proposal of several laws during the Prabowo administration that could be used to expand state powers and undermine human rights. Laws have been passed without adequate consultation.

Civil society has serious concerns about the revisions to the National Armed Forces (Tentara Nasional Indonesia) Act, Law No. 34/2004 (TNI Law), passed on 20 March 2025. The law significantly [expands the military's role in civilian governance](#) and weakens legal checks on abusive officials. The revisions grant the president authority to appoint military personnel to 14 ministries or government agencies and will enable officials to fill more civilian posts with active-duty military personnel, including in the justice system and state-owned companies.

The TNI Law also includes a [troubling expansion](#) of the military's authority in 'operations other than war', including in relation to cyberthreats. This could be used to justify coercive measures, including censorship, mass and intrusive surveillance and restrictions on online freedom of expression. Many are concerned this will take the country back to the [authoritarian New Order period](#) of the Suharto era, where the army was the government's primary weapon of political control and repression.

Civil society was also concerned about minimal public participation and a [severe lack of transparency](#) in the drafting process. Activists who voiced their opinions and concerns over the proposed revision to the faced harassment and intimidation.

In November 2025, the House of Representatives passed the draft Criminal Procedure Code bill into law. Civil society raised concerns about the [lack of transparency](#) in the deliberations about the law, with the government rushing through the bill without seeking meaningful [engagement](#) with civil society.

Civil society groups have [raised concerns](#) about the revisions, [saying](#) the new law shows authoritarian tendencies. They argue it expands the authority of law enforcement agencies without effective control and diminishes the role of citizens, legal counsel and victims in the criminal justice process.

On 9 June 2026, the House of Representatives [approved a revision](#) of Law No. 2 of 2002 concerning the National Police of the Republic of Indonesia. Critics have pointed out that the revision [contains vague provisions](#) apparently meant to expand police powers, including by allowing active police officers to hold civilian positions in ministries and government agencies without resigning. Despite reports of rampant police abuse, the revision did not introduce new provisions that could improve oversight mechanisms. The bill also includes provisions granting the police new powers to 'supervise' and 'secure' cyberspace, even

though that authority is already in the hands of the Ministry of Communication and Digital. This provision is extremely dangerous as it could lead to mass surveillance of digital space.

There are also [concerns](#) about a draft Cybersecurity and Cyber Resilience Bill that has been submitted to the House of Representatives for prioritisation in the 2026 legislative agenda. The bill introduces concepts such as 'digital treason' with penalties of up to 20 years' imprisonment for attacks that threaten sovereignty and controversially assigns the military investigative roles. In another [contentious provision](#), it grants the National Cyber and Crypto Agency the authority to filter content deemed a cyber threat.

There are also concerns about a Bill on the Prevention of Disinformation and Foreign Propaganda, announced on 14 January 2026. Civil society groups [warn](#) that the bill's broad framing around disinformation and 'foreign propaganda' risks entrenching and expanding patterns of digital repression. They fear that a new, vaguely defined disinformation regime will further legitimise the targeting of activists, journalists and organisations, particularly those working on sensitive issues or engaging with foreign partners, as foreign agents or security threats.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The government of Indonesia should:

PROTECT CIVIL SOCIETY, HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS AND JOURNALISTS

- Provide activists, civil society personnel, Human Rights Defenders and journalists with a safe and secure environment in which to carry out their work without fear of being subjected to harassment, intimidation, persecution or reprisals.
- Undertake a consolidated process of repeal or amendment of legalisation and decrees that unwarrantedly restrict the legitimate work of Human Rights Defenders, in line with the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.
- Ensure that all allegations of arbitrary arrests, harassment, intimidation, killing and surveillance of activists, civil society personnel, Human Rights Defenders and journalists are investigated and perpetrators are brought to justice.
- Halt the vilification of Human Rights Defenders and ensure that laws are not passed to target and criminalise activists, journalists and organisations as foreign agents.
- Immediately and unconditionally release all Human Rights Defenders who have been detained for exercising their fundamental rights to freedoms of association, expression and peaceful assembly, and review their cases to prevent further harassment.
- Ensure free and unimpeded access to the Papuan region for foreign journalists, international human rights CSOs, the UN and other independent observers to report on human rights violations.

GUARANTEE THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

- Review all laws, particularly Criminal Code provisions, in order to bring them into line with international law and standards on freedom of expression. Ensure there is transparency and that civil society is effectively consulted when laws that impact on human rights are passed or revised.
- Take immediate steps to ensure everyone can exercise the right to freedom of expression online and offline without interference by ending measures that unduly restrict freedom of expression.
- Ensure that journalists and writers may work freely and without fear of retribution for expressing critical opinions or covering topics the government may deem sensitive.
- Refrain from introducing laws and provisions that will curb or restrict freedom of expression.

RESPECT AND PROTECT THE RIGHT TO PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

- Publicly condemn at the highest levels all instances of the use of brutal and excessive force by security forces in response to protests.
- Review all laws and regulations to ensure they are consistent with the ICCPR and General Comment No. 37 on the right to peaceful assembly adopted by the UN Human Rights Committee in 2020.
- Unconditionally and immediately release all protesters detained for exercising their right to peaceful assembly and review their cases to prevent further harassment.
- Ensure that all allegations of arbitrary detention, excessive use of force and torture during protests are promptly, impartially and effectively investigated, that those responsible are brought to justice and all victims of such acts receive full reparation.



- Ensure that paramedics are not targeted during protests and lawyers are given unfettered access to detained protesters.
- Provide law enforcement officials with appropriate training on the use of force and the employment of non-violent means of crowd control, including on the Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials and the UN Human Rights Guidance on Less-Lethal Weapons in Law Enforcement.