



Indonesia: Civil society calls on the Government of Indonesia to respect and uphold human rights and fundamental freedoms of Papuan people

(Bangkok, 23 August 2019) – We, the undersigned civil society organisations, express grave concerns on the recent escalating violence and human rights violations against people of Papua conducted by Indonesian security forces and fundamentalist groups. We call on the Government of Indonesia to side with the victims and fully protect the human rights of people of Papua.

The situation was sparked by the raid conducted by Indonesian police forces, military, and radical groups in a university dormitory for students from Papua and West Papua in Surabaya, East Java, on 16th August, based on a false allegation of throwing the Indonesian flag into a sewer. During the raid, police, military forces, and unidentified fundamentalist groups worked together against the Papuan students, utilised tear gases, and directed lots of racial and inhumane comments to the Papuans. A number of Papuan students were arrested and released because no evidence was found.

This situation fueled mixed reactions and resulted in 33 incidents of human rights violations against Papuans across the country in various forms,¹ including intimidation, racism, raids, dispersal of discussions, arbitrary arrest, persecution, as well as human rights violations conducted by law enforcement apparatuses.

On handling the situation, instead of giving a formal apology and its utmost effort to protect the rights of victims, the Government of Indonesia decided to deploy additional military forces to the areas of conflict. Furthermore, it decided to ban internet access in the province of Papua and West Papua to prevent the so-called hoax and disinformation. None of these efforts are directed to provide protection and proper remedy to the Papuans.

These incidents have shown to what extent the Government of Indonesia has failed to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms of minority groups, specifically ethnic minorities such as the Papuans. First, the deployment of military personnel during the raid in Surabaya and other areas is an abuse of power since it is against the law enforcement process and military authority according to the Law No. 34/2004 on Indonesian National Armed Forces. Additionally, the decision to block the internet access in

¹ <https://ylbhi.or.id/informasi/siaran-pers/16-kantor-lbh-ylbhi-kecam-diskriminasi-rasial-terhadap-mahasiswa-papua/>

Papua is violating the rights of the public to obtain information, collect and disseminate information as guaranteed under Article 28F of the Constitution of 1945.²

This is not the first time for the Indonesian Government to curb access to information under the pretext of national security and to address political unrests. Similar measures were taken during the general elections this year,³ for the reason of national security, and the blocking of websites related to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI), including those that belong to human rights organisations, under the pretext of combating pornography and to address social unrests.⁴

These incidents have added to the long list of human rights violations against Papuans, and revealed how law enforcement apparatuses and fundamentalists cooperate and become perpetrators that continuously oppress the Papuans, as well as other minority groups.

We urge the Government of Indonesia to lift the ban of internet access and commit itself to protecting and restoring the human rights and fundamental freedoms of Papuans. The Government should address violence in ways that respect human rights and freedom of expression.

Furthermore, we encourage the Government to work with the Indonesian National Human Rights Institution to investigate human rights violations during the incidents, particularly those related to racial discrimination and hate speech, the involvement of fundamentalist groups, and the indicated cooperation between them and law enforcement apparatuses. The Government of Indonesia should also investigate the abuse of power by the Indonesian armed forces.

Finally, we call on the Government of Indonesia to realise its commitment made during the Universal Periodic Review to ensure that human rights in Papua are universally upheld, respected, and promoted, including freedom of peaceful assembly, freedom of expression, and freedom of the press.⁵ We hope that such incidents will never happen again in the future.

Signatory organisations:

- Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)
- Aliansi Jurnalis Independen (AJI)
- Human Rights Working Group (HRWG)
- Inisiatif Masyarakat Partisipatif untuk Transisi Berkeadilan (Imparsial)
- Komisi Untuk Orang Hilang dan Korban Tindak Kekerasan (KontraS)
- Lembaga Studi dan Advokasi Masyarakat (ELSAM)
- Perhimpunan Bantuan Hukum dan Hak Asasi Manusia Indonesia (PBHI)

² <https://kontras.org/2019/08/22/pelambatan-akses-internet-di-papua-tidak-tepat-komisi-untuk-orang-hilang-dan-korban-kekerasan/>

³ <https://www.rappler.com/world/regions/asia-pacific/231384-attacks-journalists-social-media-blocks-indonesia-amid-election-riots-2019>

⁴ <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2017/01/07/indonesia-blocks-800000-websites.html>

⁵ Recommendation no. 139.51 and 139.67, which enjoy the support of the Government of Indonesia.

- Yayasan Lembaga Bantuan Hukum Indonesia (YLBHI)
- Yayasan Sekretariat Anak Merdeka (Yayasan SAMIN)

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