



SUPPORTING
AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT
FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

Enabling Environment Snapshot

Indonesia

November 2025

Context

Indonesia's enabling environment for civil society continues to face persistent challenges, including restrictions on freedoms of expression, association, and assembly, enforced primarily through [the Electronic Information and Transactions Law \(ITE Law\)](#) and the [Societal Organisation Law](#). These instruments allow authorities [to target activists](#), while state–civil society relations alternate between selective collaboration and outright repression.

[Nationwide protests erupted in late August 2025](#) over steep tax increases, lavish parliamentary perks, and deepening inequality. The unrest escalated dramatically after 21-year-old gig worker [Affan Kurniawan was crushed to death](#) by a police tactical vehicle during a dispersal operation on 28 August. Demonstrations rapidly spread to multiple cities, resulting in arson attacks (notably on the [regional parliament building in Makassar](#)), at least ten deaths, hundreds injured, and over 3,000 detentions. CSOs mobilised for accountability, but funding declines and regulatory threats intensified amid pressures from OECD accession.

These events unfold within a broader trend of democratic backsliding and [creeping authoritarian consolidation under President Prabowo Subianto's administration](#) (inaugurated October 2024). Growing [executive dominance, institutional weakening, expanded military influence in civilian affairs](#), and the use of vague legal provisions to silence dissent signal a deepening authoritarian turn that increasingly constrains civic space and undermines the achievements of the post-1998 Reformasi era.

1. Respect and protection of fundamental freedoms

Indonesia's civic space remains challenged by restrictions on freedoms of expression, association, and assembly. [Constitutionally protected](#), these rights are undermined by the [ITE Law's](#) criminalisation of defamation (Article 27A), which enables charges against human rights defenders. [CIVICUS Monitor](#) rates Indonesia's civic space as "obstructed", with over 400 arbitrary arrests of protesters and activists in 2024. [The case of Figha Lesmana](#), arrested on 1 September 2025 and designated a suspect for incitement under the Electronic Information and Transactions (ITE) Law and Criminal Code Article 160 after posting a video urging participation in the August 2025 protests, exemplifies ongoing concerns over the criminalisation of online expression and the erosion of civic space. The [Societal Organisation Law](#) (2013, amended 2017) imposes ambiguous restrictions, allowing for the non-judicial suspension of critical NGOs.

Repression escalated during protests against economic grievance and corruption. Sparked on 25 August by student and worker demonstrations in Jakarta and other provinces, unrest intensified after a [police vehicle fatally struck gig worker Affan Kurniawan](#) on 28 August, crushing him during dispersal. By 31 August, riots spread to cities like [Makassar](#), [Solo](#), and [Yogyakarta](#), resulting in ten deaths—including three government employees in a Makassar parliament fire, a pedicab driver from tear gas in Solo, and a student beaten near Yogyakarta police headquarters. Police deployed tear gas, water cannon, and rubber bullets, arresting over 3,000, with [eight activists facing multi-year sentences under ITE](#). In September, vigils and further protests in [Bandung](#) and [Jakarta](#) demanded accountability, but surveillance stifled coordination. [Prabowo's September orders](#) for stern military action against "rioters" echoed treason accusations, intensifying tensions.

Moreover, [October saw continued detentions and harassment of activists in the context of resource conflicts and the ongoing struggle for West Papuan self-determination](#), which further amplified the challenges faced by CSOs.

2. Supportive legal framework for the work of civil society actors

The [Indonesian Constitution of 1945](#) guarantees freedoms of association, assembly, and expression. However, the [Foundation Law \(No. 16/2001\)](#) and [Societal Organisation Law](#) (No. 17/2013, amended 2017) hinder CSO operations. Article 59(c) of the Societal Organisation Law permits non-judicial dissolution for threats to Pancasila (state ideology) or national security, granting broad discretion to authorities against critics who raise human rights or environmental issues. Stringent registration requirements align activities with Pancasila (Article 59), while the [Ministry of Home Affairs Regulation No. 38/2008](#) (Article 7(1)) restricts foreign funding for non-aligned organisations, impacting the sustainability of advocacy.

[Judicial reviews of the 2020 Omnibus Law's](#) deregulation amendments were filed by eight NGOs in July and debated through September. They challenged evictions, narrowed environmental assessments, and favoured elite projects, such as [Rempang Eco City](#). These changes, ratified in February 2025, limit CSO input on National Strategic Project (PSN) developments, exacerbating rights violations.

The [Criminal Procedure Code \(KUHAP\) revisions](#) that will become effective in January 2026, grant police broad arrest, detention, and surveillance powers with minimal judicial oversight—powers that seriously endanger Indonesia's civic space. The Civil Society Coalition for KUHAP Reform identified [nine critical flaws](#), most of which remain unaddressed in the final law.

[Perpol 3/2025](#), the National Police Regulation on Functional Supervision of Foreign Nationals, enacted in September, [threatened media-CSO collaborations](#) on sensitive topics by expanding police surveillance and administrative controls over foreign journalists and researchers, requiring police clearance for their activities and thereby restricting investigative reporting and international partnerships.

3. Accessible and sustainable resources

Funding accessibility for Indonesian civil society remains a persistent challenge, which has worsened recently. Established organisations access international donors more readily, but grassroots and local CSOs struggle for core support. Authorities pressure donors on human rights and advocacy projects, with barriers under the [Ministry of Home Affairs Regulation No. 38/2008](#) (Article 7(1)) requiring approval for foreign aid plans.

[OECD accession](#) perceptions as a middle-income country further limit grants. The DA OMS working group, led by INFID, advocates for a Presidential Regulation on CSO Endowment Funds from APBN, enhancing state responsibility for sustainability. Access to funding declined amid reductions in [USAID](#) and [Dutch Aid](#), resulting in a 20% drop in CSOs and straining grassroots efforts amid the economic fallout from the riots.

4. State openness and responsiveness

Interactions between Indonesian civil society and government blend collaboration and tension. CSOs advocate on human rights, environmental protection, indigenous rights, and equity, while authorities maintain control via media, laws, regulations, and arrests. Consultations involve women, minorities, and marginalised groups in gender equality and planning, reflecting the value of diverse perspectives. However, incorporation of feedback varies, leaving participation often tokenistic, with input ignored in final decisions.

Despite Prabowo's orders to deploy military forces against rioters, opportunities for civil society collaboration opened at the same time, including the launch of September's [National Civil Society Network on Women, Peace, and Security](#), which fostered inclusive dialogues. [October's OGP Global Summit reflections](#) emphasised parliamentary roles in local challenges, with CSOs urging RPJMN (Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Nasional) or National Medium-Term Development Plan participation.

5. Political Culture and Public Discourses on Civil Society

Civil society's role in Indonesian public and political discourse is multifaceted, balancing the challenges of progress and inclusion. Over the past year, CSOs gained visibility on human rights, environmental sustainability, and justice via social media campaigns and advocacy, raising awareness of societal roles. A prime example is the [#SaveRajaAmpat campaign](#) spearheaded by Greenpeace Indonesia in June 2025, which exploded on X and Instagram after the CSO released investigative footage and satellite imagery exposing nickel mining's devastation on the islands.

Ambivalent framing of civil society emerged: the [#IndonesiaGelap](#) trend gained traction, amplifying the roles of CSOs and earning favourable coverage for youth and labour groups on issues of inequality. At the same time, political leaders portrayed demonstrators as "treasonous", with [buzzers spreading disinformation](#). Public perception shifted toward CSO support amid growing grievances, but the [October arrests risked stigmatising](#) the movement.

6. Access to a secure digital environment

Civil society in Indonesia faces barriers to online access and information sharing, with high penetration offset by shutdowns, throttling, and censorship suppressing dissent. The digital environment is insecure, marked by surveillance and privacy violations like cyberattacks, disinformation, and harassment.

Post-riot restrictions intensified: [TikTok](#) suspended live streaming nationwide for "violence" and [Meta and X removed 592 protest-related accounts](#) under pressure. These escalating digital threats impede the work of civil society organisations, with rural areas and marginalised users being particularly vulnerable. International calls urge reforms to Indonesia's cybersecurity framework, while a lack of data protection means that engagement in digital spaces continues to be stifled.

Challenges and Opportunities

The next four months may see intensified repression post-riots, with [ITE](#) and Societal Organisation Law enforcement risking arrests and dissolutions amid unrest. [Funding shortfalls from donor cuts](#) and OECD status strain sustainability, while digital surveillance fragments civic efforts.

Amid shrinking funding, CSOs need diversified financing, such as a National CSO Endowment Fund to provide long-term, flexible institutional support for CSOs, particularly those in underfunded or sensitive sectors. In addition, CSOs also need anti-repression safeguards, and youth/influencer networks to [address challenges and leverage reforms](#).



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