

[Joint Statement] International civil society strongly condemn digital crackdown by the Government of Indonesia and Big Tech

Jakarta (10 September 2025) – We, the undersigned organisations, strongly and unequivocally condemn the ongoing digital crackdown that immediately followed the ongoing national protests in Indonesia from 25-31 August, 2025, of which at least 10 civilians tragically lost their lives. We condemn the death of 10 civilians during the national protests and denounce the mass arrests of young human rights defenders being carried out by the Indonesian government, which some of them charged due to legitimate expression on social media. We further hold the social media companies complicit for enabling repression. Through their deliberate overreach in content moderation and the imposition of restrictive features, they did not merely fail to protect the voices on the ground, instead the reinforced the state's campaign of policing dissent.

As of today, four young human rights defenders have been charged under multiple provisions of the Electronic Information and Transactions Law (ITE Law) and the Indonesian Penal Code. Delpedro Marhaen (Lokataru Foundation), Khariq Anhar (Aliansi Mahasiswa Penggugat), Syahdan Husein (Gejayan Memanggil), and Wawan Hermawan (Bekasi Menggugat) were accused of violating Article 160 of the Penal Code (incitement against the authorities), Article 28(2) of the ITE Law (hate speech), Article 28(3) of the ITE Law (false information), Article 32(1) and 32(2) of the ITE Law (altering and transferring others' electronic documents), and Article 35 of the ITE Law (manipulating electronic documents). The police justified these charges solely based on satirical political memes and electronic posters calling for protests. National police also intensified [cyber patrols](#), which led to the arrest of [two individuals in Semarang](#)—one for commenting on a TikTok Live and the other for posting a joking status on WhatsApp.

Amidst the ongoing state repression in Indonesia, activists are also confronting heavy restrictions and excessive content moderation imposed by social media platforms. [National Police and Ministry of Communication and Digital stated that they're blocked 592 social media accounts that share provocative content](#) On 30 August 2025, TikTok announced a [blanket suspension of its Live feature in Indonesia](#) to maintain a 'safe and civilised space.' TikTok even banned the account of the

pro-democracy legal aid foundation, [LBH Jakarta](#) and *LBH Pekanbaru* in 4 September 2025, also critical independent media outlet [Pikiran Rakyat](#) in 29 August 2025. Meanwhile, Meta-owned platforms imposed a sweeping and arbitrary take-downs, including the removal of a video showing [Chief of Police Listyo Sigit Prabowo ordering his subordinates to shoot protesters that trespass Mobile Brigade Headquarters](#). In addition, multiple accounts faced restrictions merely for posting supportive comments on the protests, due to their "incitement and violence" rules. Meta also suspended and restricted features on several influential pro-democracy Instagram accounts, such as Social Movement Institute, Social Justice Indonesia, Bareng Warga, and Story Rakyat. Other critical individual accounts also being suspended after post critical comments. It remains unclear whether such excessive moderation was an independent company decision or the result of government pressure.

We do condemn the digital repression carried out in relation to the protest and call for its immediate end, holding both the Indonesia government and social media companies accountable:

First, the Government of Indonesia must immediately release all detainees who have been charged under the abusive provisions of the ITE Law for expressing themselves on social media or engaging in digital activism. Indonesia must uphold its obligations as a State Party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Any restrictions on freedom of expression must meet the three-part test of legality, necessity, and proportionality, and must pursue a legitimate aim. The Indonesian government's actions also demonstrate its failure to uphold at least four recommendations it supported during the [4th Cycle of the Universal Periodic Review](#), including protecting human rights defenders from violence and harassment for their expression (Rec. 140.114), safeguarding defenders from unlawful prosecution (Rec. 140.95), refraining from criminal prosecution against defenders for their legitimate work (Rec. 140.99), and ensuring an environment free from persecution, intimidation, and harassment for defenders and civil society (Rec. 140.121).

Second, we strongly denounce the actions of Bytedance/TikTok and Meta as active agents of repression, operating not as neutral platforms but as

extensions of state power. Their suppression of political expression reflects the material interests of corporations whose profit depends on alignment with ruling elites. By enforcing pro-government censorship, they reproduce the very structures of domination that silence the working class and oppressed. These companies are not merely negligent. They are complicit in the machinery of exploitation, transforming digital spaces into arenas where capital and the state converge to crush dissent and deny people in Indonesia their collective voice.

Bytedance's decision to suspend its live-streaming feature has exposed democracy defenders on the ground to greater danger amidst brutal police violence, which has already claimed at least six lives. TikTok Live has been crucially used to document and broadcast in real-time the abuses of the police during the protests. The decision also affects millions of Indonesians SMEs who rely on TikTok Live for livelihoods. Instead of imposing a blanket ban, Bytedance could have used more proportionate measures, such as demonetization or targeted takedowns of specific content deemed to incite violence. Targeted takedowns must be implemented with due care, taking into account the context of the content.

We also condemn Meta for engaging in excessive content moderation. By silencing voices under pressure from the state, Meta reveals its true commitment which is not to freedom but to protecting its own political and economic interest. Instead of shielding users from repression, it bends to demands of power, stripping communities of the ability to communicate, organise and resist. This is not the behavior of a neutral platform, but a behavior of a corporation that willingly participates in the erosion of democratic space in exchange for market access and security. Meta must end these practices and take responsibility for ensuring that Indonesians can exercise their right to speak, assemble, and expose injustice without corporate censorship amplifying state violence. Meta must recognise its responsibility to uphold its users' freedom of expression, consistent with the [GNI Principles on Freedom of Expression and Privacy](#), which affirm that companies should protect the rights of users when faced with government demands or regulations aimed at suppressing legitimate political speech. “

Third, we urge the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to continue

closely monitoring the wide-scale violations of digital rights in Indonesia during the protest period. Such a monitoring is crucial to ensure long-term accountability for the Government of Indonesia and to prevent the recurrence of mass digital rights abuses in the future.

Fourth, we call on civil society organisations, digital rights advocates, Internet freedom activists, technical communities and individuals worldwide to take concrete action against both the Indonesian government and the corporations complicit in its repression. This means mobilising coordinated campaigns to expose digital repression in Indonesia across international media, pressuring foreign governments to suspend security cooperation and trade benefits until the crackdown ends and challenge companies like Meta and Bytedance through boycotts and legal complaints. Solidarity must disrupt the flows of profit and legitimacy that allow both the state and capital to continue their assault on the people of Indonesia.

Media Contact:

Hafizh Nabiyyin (hafizh@safenet.org, Head of Freedom of Expression Division, SAFEnet)

Signatories

1. South East Asia Collaborative Policy Network (SEA CPN),
Regional/Southeast Asia
2. Access Now, International
3. ARTICLE 19, International
4. Center for the Study of Organized Hate (CSOH), International
5. CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation, International
6. Asia Democracy Network, Regional/Asia-Pacific
7. Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA),
Regional/Asia-Pacific
8. Nationality for All, Regional/Asia-Pacific
9. Tech Global Institute, Regional/Asia-Pacific
10. Alternative ASEAN Network on Burma (ALTSEAN-Burma),
Regional/Southeast Asia
11. MataSEA, Regional/Southeast Asia

12. Southeast Asia Freedom of Expression Network (SAFEEnet),
Regional/Southeast Asia
13. Pan-African Human Rights Defenders Network (AfricanDefenders),
Regional/Africa
14. Manushya Foundation, Regional/Laos-Thailand
15. Activate Rights, Bangladesh
16. Campaign for Good Governance, Bangladesh
17. Digitally Right, Bangladesh
18. Cambodia Center for Human Rights (CCHR), Cambodia
19. Cambodia Media Promotion Organization (CMPO), Cambodia
20. Politikoffee, Cambodia
21. A Common Future, Cameroon
22. Point of View, India
23. Right Track, India
24. Tibet Action Institute, India
25. Asian Muslim Action Network (AMAN), Indonesia
26. Commission for the Disappeared and Victims of Violence (KontraS),
Indonesia
27. Indonesia Climate Justice Literacy (ICJL), Indonesia
28. Indonesian Civil Society Association for Refugee Rights Protection (SUAKA),
Indonesia
29. Kelompok Kerja Anti Disinformasi Digital Indonesia (KONDISI), Indonesia
30. Lingkar Keadilan Ruang, Indonesia
31. Pusat Inovasi Kecerdasan Artifisial dan Teknologi untuk Demokrasi (PIKAT),
Indonesia
32. PurpleCode Collective, Indonesia
33. Tifa Foundation, Indonesia
34. Yayasan Lembaga Bantuan Hukum Indonesia (YLBHI), Indonesia
35. Centre for Independent Journalism, Malaysia
36. KRYSS Network, Malaysia
37. Burmese Atheists, Myanmar
38. Human Rights Myanmar, Myanmar
39. Myanmar Internet Project, Myanmar
40. Body & Data, Nepal

41. Digital Rights Nepal, Nepal
42. Digicivic Initiative, Nigeria
43. Human Rights Journalists Network (HRJN), Nigeria
44. DAKILA, The Philippines
45. Foundation for Media Alternatives, The Philippines
46. Human Rights Online Philippines (HRonlinePH), The Philippines
47. Movement Against Disinformation (MAD), The Philippines
48. Sigla Research Center, The Philippines
49. UP Internet Freedom Network, The Philippines
50. Open Net, South Korea
51. South Sudan Human Rights Defenders Network (SSHRDN), South Sudan
52. Factum, Sri Lanka
53. Professional Web Journalist Association, Sri Lanka
54. Digital Rights Kashmir, Kashmir
55. Dulanjaya Mahagamage, Individual/Sri Lanka
56. Rachmat, Individual/Indonesia