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# **Indonesia: Responding to the demonstration on August 28 and violent and brutal actions by police**

written by Struggle - La Lucha  
September 8, 2025



Photo: GSBI

## **Statement by Gabungan Serikat Buruh Indonesia (GSBI) [the Federation of Indonesian Labor Unions]**

### **Responding to the Demonstration on August 28, 2025 and Violent and Brutal Actions by Police**

#### **Democracy Greetings!**

Gabungan Serikat Buruh Indonesia (GSBI) strongly condemns the brutal actions, repression, and arrests carried out by police against demonstrators in front of the DPR-RI building in Jakarta on August 28, 2025. The police's decision to direct a Brimob (police) tactical vehicle into the midst of the demonstrators, which crushed and killed a platform driver named Affan Kurniawan (21 years old). This incident is

clear evidence of the brutality and barbarity of the authorities in handling every demonstration and public outcry. And this is yet another time the government has shown its fascist side, choosing to harm its own people to serve elite interests, rather than listen to and meet their demands.

Affan's death was not a mere incident or the work of "individuals," but rather part of the state's repression of its own people. From cities to villages, those defending their rights have consistently faced batons, tear gas, guns, bullets, armoured vehicles, arrests and imprisonment, and even loss of life.

This is not the first time that violence has led to killings by authorities during demonstrations. According to YLBHI (Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation) records, 55 people died in the past year (July 2024-June 2025), including 10 deaths from torture, 37 from extrajudicial killings, and 8 from mistaken arrest.

Meanwhile, the National Commission on Human Rights (Komnas HAM) recorded 739 cases of violence by authorities against demonstrators, farmers, indigenous peoples, and labourers between 2019 and 2023. According to the Agrarian Reform Consortium (KPA), more than 2,300 agrarian conflicts occurred between 2015 and 2023, with the disputed land area reaching over 5 million hectares. Data from the Institute for Policy Research and Advocacy (ELSAM) shows that since 2020, more than 400 activists have been arrested, intimidated, or criminalized.

However, GSBI believes the actual number of victims is even greater. The constitutional mandate that assigns the police and military (TNI) to protect the people has been thrown away.

The claim that Indonesia is one of the largest "democracies" in the world seems to be just a figment of the imagination. In fact, the quality and practice of Indonesian democracy has continued to decline (de-democracy), especially since the 10 years of the Jokowi era.

Restrictions on freedom of expression and opinion have fuelled violence. Over the past six years, data shows that two to three people are victims of state-led violence perpetrated by the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI) and the Indonesian National Police (Polri). This confirms the official release of the Early Warning Project, an initiative run by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) in Washington, DC, which ranked Indonesia as the 14th country in the

world at risk of committing mass murder of its citizens.

### **The People Are Getting Poorer, the Rulers Are Getting Richer.**

From the time of Suharto's leadership until today, Indonesia has fallen into the clutches of a global monopoly capitalist system, or imperialism. Indonesia has been treated purely as a supporting country for the success of the superpowers, especially those in the G7: the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Japan, Russia, and Italy. Indonesia functions only as a provider of raw materials, an abundant source of cheap labour (both domestic and international), and a market for foreign-made products. The state is no longer a representative of the people but a profit-making machine tasked with smoothing out policies that benefit a small elite. World Bank data (2024) shows that the richest 1% of Indonesians control 50% of the nation's wealth, and nearly 195 million Indonesians live below the poverty line. At the same time, the majority of the population is being strangled by detrimental policies, including rising prices of basic necessities; a 12% increase in VAT; the removal of subsidies for energy, food, education, and health; an increase in the Land and Building Tax (PBB), and much more. Nearly all natural resources and public services have been privatized.

The gap between the rich and the poor in Indonesia is getting wider, more severe and more obvious. The Central Statistics Agency (BPS) announced Indonesia's Gini ratio at 0.379 in March 2024, and 0.381 in September 2024. In a study by the Centre of Economic and Law Studies (Celios), titled "Indonesia's Economic Inequality Report 2024: Jet Planes for the Rich, Bicycles for the Poor," the Centre found that the wealth of the 50 richest people in Indonesia is equivalent to the wealth of 50 million Indonesians. The wealth tax on the top 50 billionaires in Indonesia is equivalent to 2.45 percent of the 2024 Indonesian State Budget (APBN). Meanwhile, various policies were issued, one of which was Law - The Omnibus Law- on Job Creation, was legalized as a tool to serve, facilitate business efficiency, and facilitate foreign investment, comprador entrepreneurs, and big landowners. It also provides forgiveness for the crimes of big business owners and landlords who have plundered natural resources and oppressed and exploited cheap labour. It also ensures that low wages, contract work, outsourcing, and more flexible labour flows smoothly. Land,

rice paddies, fields, and forests are being displaced for large-scale investment and national projects. By 2023, 60% of nickel mines will be controlled by foreign companies, primarily China, while thousands of indigenous villages will lose their land to palm oil and smelter expansion. What remains for the people? Poverty, hunger, and underdevelopment.

### **Officials enrich themselves from public money.**

The state budget, which should be an instrument for improving the people's welfare, has instead become a breeding ground for corruption, exploited by officials for personal enrichment. In addition to their salaries, every official, especially high-ranking officials, receives various allowances and benefits. The monthly income of central officials can reach hundreds of millions of rupiah. These central officials are even exempt from paying taxes.

This reality clearly demonstrates that the Prabowo-Gibran regime is not much different from the Jokowi era. Today, the state is not run to serve the interests of the people, but rather to accumulate wealth for officials and protect the interests of landlords, big businessmen, and foreign capitalists. All of this is done by pawning the nation's sovereignty, which was so painstakingly fought for by the heroes of independence.

### **Affan Kurniawan's Death: A Symbol of the Flame of Resistance**

Affan Kurniawan is not just a victim; he is a symbol of the millions of people who are oppressed daily. Affan's blood is the most concrete evidence that this regime will not hesitate to sacrifice the lives of its people to defend its interests and its masters.

The death of Affan Kurniawan should not be seen as just an ordinary event. This must be a turning point for the people's struggle. If we remain silent, more and more victims will fall. But if we unite, the death of Affan and other victims will become the fire of struggle that burns the people's consciousness, expands the resistance, and forces the state to side with the people, with us, the workers.

GSBI stated that it stands and walks with the people, taking the stance that the people's actions and demonstrations defend and demand their democratic rights for genuine democracy, national sovereignty, a clean country free from collusion, corruption and nepotism, for the welfare and justice, that is currently continuing to occur and develop must be supported as widely as possible.

Therefore, at this moment, GSBI calls on all workers, labour unions, and all oppressed people in Indonesia to build strength and close ranks. Let us rise together and raise our demands from all corners of Indonesia and even abroad, wherever Indonesian citizens may be.

1. Stop Repressive Actions, Terror, and Intimidation against the People Who Fight for Their Democratic Rights! Uphold Justice and Thoroughly Investigate the deaths of Affan Kurniawan and all victims of brutal violence by the authorities and other deceased, bring the perpetrators to justice, end the impunity of the authorities and provide a guarantee of a decent living (clothing, food, shelter, education, health, savings, employment, etc.) to all families of the deceased, and provided until an unspecified time limit.
2. The President of the Republic of Indonesia and the Chief of Police must be held accountable for the violence and brutality of the authorities, which resulted in the deaths of civilians. Stop Fascism! Remove the Chief of Police and implement total police reform: end its role as a tool of repression of power.
3. Fulfil all the people's demands. And immediately stop all forms of violence, arrests, intimidation, shootings, and criminalization against all elements of the people who defend and fight for their rights.
4. Release all demonstrators arrested and detained throughout Indonesia. Obstruction of demonstrations, intimidation, violence, arrests, and detention violate the people's constitutional right to express their opinions in public.
5. Cancel all tax increases and subsidy cuts that burden the people. Tax the rich, not the poor.
6. Cancel the salary and allowance increases for members of the Indonesian House of Representatives. Dismiss all government officials and members of the House of Representatives who insult and demean the people.
7. Immediately pass and enforce the Asset Forfeiture Act.
8. Repeal the omnibus law on Job Creation, the National Strategic Projects

(PSN), the Mineral and Coal Mining Law, and large-scale mining and plantation expansion. Immediately enact and ratify a new Employment Law.

9. Repeal the new TNI Law, return the TNI to the barracks!
10. Review all national and international cooperation in the economic, political and military fields that is detrimental to the people, results in dependency and mortgages the nation's sovereignty.

Let us strengthen unity and solidarity against repression, seize democracy and realize the people's welfare.

Long live the people's struggle!!

Long live the struggle of the Indonesian working class!!

Jakarta, August 29, 2025

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(DPP. GSBI)

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Source: [GSBI](https://www.struggle-la-lucha.org/2025/09/08/indonesia-responding-to-the-demonstration-on-august-28-and-violent-and-brutal-actions-by-police/)

