

REPORT

*Tapol*

# West Papua 2025 Freedom of Expression and Freedom of Assembly Report

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*Students protest the government's Free Nutritious School Meals Programme, demanding the resources to be spent on education instead, during a protest in Yahukimo, 3rd February 2025 |*

*Photograph: [Jubi.co.id](https://www.jubi.co.id)*

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# Introduction

Prabowo has been in power as President of Indonesia since October 2024, and the marks of his regime have been increasingly felt across civil society. The atmosphere has turned colder, with greater power going to the security services, a tightening of laws that criminalise dissent, a return of New Order-esque policies, and a sense that the civil rights fought for during the period known as Reformasi are being eroded away.

Freedom of Expression and Assembly (hereby shortened to FoE/A) has faced particular turbulence this year, with mass protests across the country and struggles for justice for political prisoners in West Papua<sup>1</sup> underlying the increasingly difficult situation being faced. Here's a rundown of the big events that serve as a background to what is going on:

## One Year of Prabowo's Regime

Militarisation, a shrinking civil space and increasing authoritarianism have appeared as the key markers of Prabowo's government policy in the first year it has been in power. This has had an impact on freedoms more generally, and there is a deep sense of weakening of rights and danger on the horizon for the future.

The military has been heavily prioritised, which has been facilitated by the new TNI Law passed in March 2025. This has opened up the number of civilian posts in which the military is allowed to take part and expands its role in non-combat tasks,<sup>2</sup> as well as having a military presence in the Prosecutor's offices, thus weakening judicial independence.<sup>3</sup> This act strengthens its influence and reduces transparency, and was then rejected by a large number of civil society organisations, including TAPOL.<sup>4</sup> It will facilitate the trend towards increased power through equipment purchases and weaponry "modernisation"<sup>5</sup> that has allowed the Indonesian military to be the 13th strongest in the world in 2025 and the strongest in Southeast Asia.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In the context of this report, West Papua refers to the region of the western half of the island of New Guinea. This comprises the Indonesian-administered Papua province, West Papua province, Central Papua province, South Papua province, Highland Papua province and Southwest Papua province.

<sup>2</sup> Ng K & Hajid, S., BBC News "Anger as Indonesia law allows military bigger role in government", 20th March 2025, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c8x4217npppo>

<sup>3</sup> TAPOL, "TAPOL's First Quarterly Update Released", 6th June 2025, <https://tapol.org/news/tapols-first-quarterly-update-released>

<sup>4</sup> TAPOL et al., "Indonesia: Rejection of the Problematic and Rushed Amendments to Law No. 34/2004 on the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI Law)", 20th March 2025, <https://tapol.org/publications/indonesia-tni-law-revision>

<sup>5</sup> TAPOL, "Mounting sources of discontent: inequality, democratic decline and militarisation", 15th January 2026, <https://tapol.org/publications/mounting-sources-of-discontent>

<sup>6</sup> Republika.id "TNI di Tangan Presiden Prabowo: Senjata Canggih Plus Kemanunggalan Rakyat" 8th November 2025, <https://news.republika.co.id/berita/t5einw451/tni-di-tangan-presiden-prabowo-senjata-canggih-plus-kemanunggalan-rakyat>

Even Prabowo's flagship social project, the Free and Nutritious Meals (*Makan Bergizi Gratis*-MBG) programme, has seen strong military involvement. Designed to provide free meals for school children and pregnant women, Prabowo claimed in August that it was providing meals for at least 20 million people.<sup>7</sup> However, the military has ensured that its influence in the running of the programme is entrenched, with plans underway to be involved in 15 per cent of its kitchens, about 2,000 in total.<sup>8</sup> Protests have also broken out against the programme, of which more will be mentioned later, as they involved Papuan students and subsequent repression by the security forces.

Beyond this, the military has established new territorial commands and expanded its roles in food estate projects. This has occurred in South Papua, where the food estate planned for Merauke is targeted to eventually cover 2 million hectares,<sup>9</sup> prompting nine UN Special Rapporteurs to send a joint letter to the Indonesian Government expressing their deep concern.<sup>10</sup> The Ministry of Defence and military actors are being put in line to protect and securitise on the ground, but they also stand to benefit from direct lucrative business ownership as well.<sup>11</sup>

More broadly, there has been a clear picture of democratic backsliding over the course of Prabowo's term in power. CIVICUS Monitor has put the country on its Watchlist, citing the silencing of human rights defenders, stifling of protests and legal revisions as the reasons.<sup>12</sup> Independent journalists have expressed fears that New Order-style authoritarianism is creeping back, with the army empowered, and mechanisms to reform the police and army out of politics becoming increasingly weak.<sup>13</sup> The Government's actions have clearly been driven more by an agenda towards economic development and infrastructure, rather than promises to promote

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<sup>7</sup> Kompas.com, "MBG Layani 20 Juta Orang Per Hari dalam 8 Bulan, Prabowo Bandingkan dengan Brazil", 15th August 2025,

<http://www.msn.com/id-id/ekonomi/bisnis/mbg-jangkau-20-juta-penerima-dalam-tujuh-bulan-prabowo-bandingkan-dengan-capaian-brasil/ar-AA1KyTOD>

<sup>8</sup> Tempo.co, "Peran Tentara di Dapur Makan Bergizi Gratis", 23rd October 2025,

<https://www.tempo.co/politik/peran-militer-di-dapur-mbg-2082387>,

<sup>9</sup> TAPOL, "TAPOL's first Quarterly Update released", 06th June 2025,

<https://tapol.org/news/tapols-first-quarterly-update-released>

<sup>10</sup> Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food; the Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises; the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights; the Special Rapporteur on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment; the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; the Working Group on the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas; the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences and the Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation, Ref.: AL IDN 1/2025, 7th March 2025, <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gld=29741>

<sup>11</sup> TAPOL, "Prabowo: 100 days of Militarism, Agriculture, and Amnesties", 30th January 2025,

<https://tapol.org/publications/prabowo-100-days-militarism-agriculture-and-amnesties>

<sup>12</sup> CIVICUS Monitor, "Indonesia on Watchlist as President Prabowo's Government Crushes Civic Freedoms", 30th July 2025, <https://monitor.civicus.org/watchlist-july-2025/indonesia/>

<sup>13</sup> Project Multatuli, "Editorial: Bibit Otoritarianisme yang Perlu Kita Cegah Bersama", 8th September 2025, <https://projectmultatuli.org/editorial-bibit-otoritarianisme-yang-perlu-kita-cegah-bersama/>

democracy, justice and human rights.<sup>14</sup> Attacks on journalists and activists and intimidation, including by sending them dead animals,<sup>15</sup> are another hallmark of this worrying development in 2025.

## Mass Protests Erupt Across the Country

One of the most tangible responses to this declining situation has been the unprecedented round of mass protests that broke out across the country in August, which continued sporadically over the following months. These protests initially focussed on the difficult economic situation, including high unemployment and inflation rates, austerity, corruption<sup>16</sup> and housing allowances for parliamentarians, and later towards wider issues of militarisation and anti-democratic repression.<sup>17</sup> This was spelled out in the demands of the 17+8 movement,<sup>18</sup> which encompass a set of common demands by the protestors that amalgamated over the course of the uprising. The protests particularly escalated after the death of motorcycle taxi driver Affan Kurniawan as a result of police action, leading to protests across the country, including in West Papua.<sup>19</sup>

In and of itself, the Government's worst acts of repression have been in its response to these protests. The security forces conducted mass arrests under the crackdown, with the police making 5444 arrests between 25th and 31st August. In addition, up to 24th September, at least 11 people died<sup>20</sup> and more than 560 people were subjected to intimidation and physical violence.<sup>21</sup> These startling numbers display the scale of the demonstrations and strength of emotions on the streets, as well as the comprehensiveness of the crackdown by the security forces.

The police and army have been working together to clamp down on the protests, and have resorted to underhand tactics to smear protestors' reputations. This has included plainclothes

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<sup>14</sup> Kurawal Foundation, "Perjalanan Demokrasi Indonesia di Satu Tahun Pertama Prabowo–Gibran", 29th October 2025, <https://www.kurawalfoundation.org/publikasi/perjalanan-demokrasi-indonesia-di-satu-tahun-pertama-prabowogibran>

<sup>15</sup> TAPOL, "In bed with a (pig's) head - packages of dead animals intimidate media and activists", 4th July 2025, <https://tapol.org/news/bed-pigs-head-packages-dead-animals-intimidate-media-and-activists>

<sup>16</sup> BBC Indonesia, "Mengapa aksi demonstrasi berujung perusakan dan penjarahan?", 2nd September 2025, <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/articles/czxp99z02gdo>

<sup>17</sup> TAPOL, "Mounting sources of discontent: inequality, democratic decline and militarisation"

<sup>18</sup> Tempo, "Kronologi Pembentukan Gerakan 17+8 Tuntutan Rakyat", 4th September 2025, <https://www.tempo.co/politik/demonstrasi-gerakan-17-8-tuntutan-rakyat-2066523>

<sup>19</sup> TAPOL, "TAPOL September–November Quarterly Update", 28th November 2025, <https://tapol.org/publications/tapol-september-november-quarterly-update>

<sup>20</sup> Ervana Trikarinaputri, Tempo, "Pemerintah Didesak Bentuk Tim Pencari Fakta Demonstrasi Berujung Kekerasan", 5th September 2025, <https://www.tempo.co/politik/pemerintah-didesak-bentuk-tim-pencari-fakta-demonstrasi-berujung-kekerasan-2066864>

<sup>21</sup> Amnesty International UK "Indonesia: Activists Face Criminal Charges for Peaceful Protests", 25th October 2025, <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/urgent-actions/activists-face-criminal-charges-peaceful-protests>

military intelligence personnel arresting protestors. These intelligence personnel were accused of provoking demonstrators, and even allegedly of attacking the houses of some Members of Parliament.<sup>22</sup> The use of these various tactics highlights the authorities' determination to suppress dissent through mass arrests and mistreatment of protestors, thereby taking the focus off the Government. It has also provided ready scapegoats, for example in the cases where politicians' houses were ransacked.

These are among the most serious and widespread demonstrations since the New Order fell in 1998.<sup>23</sup> The scale of the protests, the sheer numbers that have been attracted to the streets, as well as the severity of the crackdown, all point to an unprecedented crisis of confidence that civil society feels towards the current regime, and its determination to take out the old playbook to try and crush any discontent. Where this might go in the next few years of the Prabowo regime will tell us if they eventually do fall, or if they continue to deploy these tactics to survive.

## Whitewashing History

President Prabowo has made a concerted effort to try to whitewash the New Order regime, thereby legitimising repressive tactics that harken back to those days. This has been most evident in the proclamation on 10th November of former President Soeharto as a National Hero, sparking huge controversy and protests, given the legacy of grave human rights violations associated with the New Order regime,<sup>24</sup> including the mass killings of 1965 and invasion of Timor-Leste in 1975.<sup>25</sup> What is even more cunning is that, in its desperation to try and placate critics of this move, it also declared former President Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) and labour activist Marsinah as National Heroes, both of whom were directly and negatively impacted by Soeharto's repressive policies. For example, Marsinah was killed by the security services.<sup>26</sup> Gus Dur's daughter, Alissa Wahid, has declared that the recognition of Soeharto as a National Hero is a "betrayal of democracy".<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Tempo, "Sinergi Semu TNI-Polri Menangani Demonstrasi", 9th September 2025, <https://www.tempo.co/politik/sinergi-tni-polri-setelah-demonstrasi-massa-2067881>

<sup>23</sup> Alvino Kusumabrata, [katadata.id](https://katadata.id), "Kriminalisasi Warga sebagai Reaksi Alamiah Kekuasaan Negara", 30th October 2025, <https://katadata.co.id/indepth/opini/6901787099440/kriminalisasi-warga-sebagai-reaksi-alamiah-kekuasaan-n-negara>

<sup>24</sup> BBC Indonesia, "Soeharto resmi jadi pahlawan nasional – Mengapa Prabowo menetapkannya di awal pemerintahannya?", 10th November 2025, <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/articles/c364281j94no>

<sup>25</sup> Amnesty International Indonesia, "Batalkan gelar pahlawan nasional Soeharto dan Sarwo Edhie Wibowo", 10th November 2025, <https://www.amnesty.id/kabar-terbaru/ Pernyataan-sikap/batalkan-gelar-pahlawan-nasional-soeharto-dan-s-arwo-edhie-wibowo/11/2025/>

<sup>26</sup> BBC Indonesia, "Kontradiksi gelar pahlawan nasional untuk Marsinah dan Soeharto – "Ini manipulasi politik dan sejarah yang luar biasa", 27th October 2025, <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/articles/c24l9eep2y5o>

<sup>27</sup> Kompas.com, "GUSDURian: Gelar Pahlawan untuk Soeharto adalah Pengkhianatan Demokrasi", 10th November 2025, <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2025/11/10/14375491/gusdurian-gelar-pahlawan-untuk-soeharto-adalah-pengkhianatan-demokrasi>

Meanwhile, the Government has initiated a process of rewriting the country's history textbooks, claiming that it will “boost people's confidence in the nation's historical legacy”.<sup>28</sup> However, civil society actors are concerned that the resulting history will sideline Papuan and women's history and downplay or exclude human rights violations.<sup>29</sup> This latter concern was brought into sharp focus when the Minister of Culture, Fadli Zon, who has spearheaded the project, dismissed the evidence of violence, including the rape of women, at the end of Soeharto's reign. He has claimed that these incidents have “never appeared in the history books”,<sup>30</sup> which contradicts extensive documentation on the subject. It furthermore throws into stark relief that this project is not interested in history as such, when it comes to uncomfortable truths of events that the Government would rather are forgotten, given the role played by now President Prabowo at the time. Rather, it seems to be massaging them in a way that can try to indoctrinate through the educational system a view of the past that puts the current regime in the best possible light.

## International: Trade Deals and UN Visit

Indonesia has been at great pains to burnish its international image with a flurry of diplomatic activity in 2025. At the beginning of the year, it became the first Southeast Asian nation to join BRICS, proclaiming non-alignment, which could be regarded as a greater turn towards China and Russia.<sup>31</sup> Despite that, it has balanced this tilt with a flurry of trade deals with the Global North, including a comprehensive agreement with the EU, eliminating most tariffs on Indonesian goods entering Europe,<sup>32</sup> but with weak safeguards on one of the prime causes of mass deforestation in Indonesia: palm oil.<sup>33</sup> In addition, a tariff deal with the US was agreed, after facing steep tariff increases due to President Trump's policies.<sup>34</sup> A “hot mic” moment between the two leaders at the Gaza Peace summit in October highlighted Prabowo's muddying of business, cronyism and national interests, by asking President Trump to have one of his sons contact him regarding a property development<sup>35</sup>. Speaking of Gaza, Indonesia seemed keen to

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<sup>28</sup> Jakarta Post, “Govt to revise nation's history, Culture Minister Fadli says”, 19th December 2024, <https://www.thejakartapost.com/indonesia/2024/12/19/govt-to-revise-nations-history-culture-minister-fadli-says.html>

<sup>29</sup> BBC Indonesia, “Penulisan ulang sejarah Indonesia – Rawan dijadikan alat legitimasi, meminggirkan perempuan dan sejarah Papua”, 14th May 2025, <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/articles/c1j5l41nlywo>

<sup>30</sup> Civil Society Coalition Against Impunity, “Civil Society Coalition Against Impunity Strongly Condemns the Statement by the Minister of Culture on the May 1998 Tragedy”, 24th June 2025, <https://tapol.org/news/civil-society-coalition-condemns-minister-of-culture>

<sup>31</sup> Lauren Mai, CSIS, “The Latest on Southeast Asia: Indonesia joins BRICS”, 16th January 2025, <https://www.csis.org/blogs/latest-southeast-asia/latest-southeast-asia-indonesia-joins-brics>

<sup>32</sup> BBC Indonesia, “Indonesia dan Uni Eropa teken kesepakatan IEU-CEPA — Apa keuntungan yang didapat Indonesia?”, 24th September 2025, <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/articles/cly19wj4vzvz>

<sup>33</sup> Fern, “Press release: EU-Indonesia trade agreement will perpetuate social and environmental injustice”, 23rd September 2025, <https://www.fern.org/publications-insight/press-release-eu-indonesia-trade-agreement-will-perpetuate-social-and-environmental-injustice-1/>

<sup>34</sup> Natalie Sherman, BBC News, “US and Indonesia reach tariff deal”, 15th July 2025, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cwyq0ln6z6lo>

<sup>35</sup> Jonathan Yerushalmy, Guardian, “Indonesia's President heard on hot mic asking Trump if he can meet son Eric”, 14th October 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/oct/14/indonesia-president-prabowo-subianto-hot-mic-asking-meet-eric-trump-egypt-gaza-peace-summit>

highlight its peacebuilding potential in Prabowo's speech to the UN in September<sup>36</sup>, but then watered down the country's traditionally strong commitment to Palestine with a softer tone to the Israelis, despite what is going on in Gaza, linked to an increased desire for Israeli military equipment and intelligence capabilities.<sup>37</sup>

The UN has also been the forum where Indonesia has been under intensifying international scrutiny. It began in March, where nine UN Special Rapporteurs sent a joint letter alleging that the Merauke food and energy estate project had caused environmental damage, citing threats of criminalisation of indigenous communities and the "high military presence" involved,<sup>38</sup> though the Indonesian Government's response continues to claim that there has been "inclusive dialogue" with those affected.<sup>39</sup> This cycle of UN interventions followed by aversive Indonesian Government responses happened again after the UN Special Rapporteur for Indigenous Rights, Albert K. Barume, made an informal visit to Jayapura in July. He was able to meet local organisations and indigenous groups,<sup>40</sup> who explained the nature of the 'systematic and structured violence' that they had faced.<sup>41</sup> Barume's statement afterwards even went as far as to suggest that 'some Indigenous Peoples in Indonesia are being pushed to a slow-phased extermination'.<sup>42</sup> He further highlighted at a side event of the 60th Session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva how indigenous peoples' lack of recognition was one of the biggest issues that he had heard during his visit to West Papua.<sup>43</sup> At the same UN side event, the Indonesian

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<sup>36</sup> United Nations, "General Debate, General Assembly, Indonesia: His Excellency Prabowo Subianto, President", 23rd September 2025, <https://gadebate.un.org/en/80/indonesia> (Accessed 21st January 2026)

<sup>37</sup> CNA, "Indonesia's Prabowo adopts softer tone on Israel, but can he balance domestic sentiments with geopolitical gains?", 4th November 2025, <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/asia/indonesia-prabowo-subianto-softer-tone-israel-palestinians-diplomatic-ties-5437466>

<sup>38</sup> United Nations, "Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food; the Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises; the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights; the Special Rapporteur on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment; the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; the Working Group on the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas; the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences and the Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation", 7th March 2025, <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gld=29741>

<sup>39</sup> United Nations, No:61/POL-II/2025, 6th May 2025,

<https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadFile?gld=38999>

<sup>40</sup> Anggi Sagita, Jubi, "Pelapor Khusus PBB: Orang Papua seharusnya diperlakukan setara dan tidak menderit", 7th July 2025,

<https://jubi.id/headline/2025/pelapor-khusus-pbb-orang-papua-seharusnya-diperlakukan-setara-dan-tidak-menderita/>

<sup>41</sup> Human Rights Monitor, "Indonesian Indigenous rights groups brief UN Special Rapporteur on systematic criminalisation and land seizures", 26th June 2025,

<https://humanrightsmonitor.org/news/indonesian-indigenous-rights-groups-brief-un-special-rapporteur-on-systematic-criminalization-and-land-seizures/>

<sup>42</sup> OHCHR, "Indonesia must recognise Indigenous Peoples and consider them partners for national development: UN experts", 4th November 2025,

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/11/indonesia-must-recognise-indigenous-peoples-and-consider-them-partners>

<sup>43</sup> World Council of Churches, "WCC focuses on human rights in Indonesia", 25th September 2025, <https://www.oikoumene.org/news/wcc-focuses-on-human-rights-in-indonesia>

delegation bluntly dismissed the recognition of indigenous peoples, saying, "The term Indigenous peoples... simply cannot be applied and more than semantic hurdles [exist], simply due to our country's unique history of colonialism and anthropological context [sic]".<sup>44</sup> This stunning lack of self-awareness and accountability shows that the Indonesian Government's commitment to indigenous rights does not even reach the low bar of recognising their existence.

Within the UK, the London Mining Network (LMN), with support from the Global Legal Action Network (GLAN), brought a case to the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) against the London Metal Exchange, for complicity in the dealing of copper extracted from Freeport's Grasberg mine in West Papua. This follows LMN and GLAN's High Court action against the London Metal Exchange last year.<sup>45</sup> The new case was brought to the FCA, as the London Metal Exchange's activities could constitute "criminal property" under the Proceeds of Crime Act, because the Grasberg mine is having harmful effects on the environment and communities in the area.<sup>46</sup> Beyond this case, the role of British banks in bankrolling the Grasberg mine and the destructive Merauke project, as well as BP's fossil gas exploitation and the British Government's positive response to the Indonesian military's hunger for guns,<sup>47</sup> was also brought into greater awareness.

## West Papua

The unleashing of Strategic National Projects (PSN, *Proyek Strategis Nasional*) across the country has had particularly devastating consequences for West Papua, where projects have displaced and damaged the livelihoods of those who live on the land.<sup>48</sup> The Merauke Food Estate has not garnered attention internationally, lacking a concerted string of activism by campaigners on the ground. Twenty-eight per cent of the announced 2 million hectares of the project have already been deforested, and have proven to be an existential threat for the indigenous Malind Anim, Maklew, Khimaima, and Yei peoples.<sup>49</sup> This is set to accelerate after an

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<sup>44</sup> TAPOL, "TAPOL September-November Quarterly Update"

<sup>45</sup> GLAN & LMN, "Press Release: London Exchange to be taken to High Court for trading in "dirty metals" in unprecedented legal action", 6th February 2024, <https://tapol.org/news/press-release-london-exchange-be-taken-high-court-trading-dirty-metals-unprecedented-legal>

<sup>46</sup> GLAN & LMN, "Press Release: "Dirty copper": Financial Conduct Authority alerted that "London Metal Exchange has knowledge of potential money laundering"", 3rd February 2025, <https://tapol.org/news/press-release-dirty-copper-financial-conduct-authority-alerted-london-metal-exchange-has>

<sup>47</sup> Samira Homerang Saunders & David Whyte, Centre for Climate Crime and Climate Justice, Queen Mary's University of London "Bringing it All Back Home: the role of British companies in the destruction of West Papua", September 2025, <https://cccjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/BIWP-Digital.pdf>

<sup>48</sup> Hans Nicholas Jong, Mongabay, "Indigenous communities in Indonesia demand halt to land-grabbing government projects", 26th March 2025, <https://news.mongabay.com/2025/03/indigenous-communities-in-indonesia-demand-halt-to-land-grabbing-government-projects/>

<sup>49</sup> Pusaka, "PSN Merauke II: Land Grabbing, Deforestation and the Threat of Ethnocide", April 2025, [https://pusaka.or.id/en/riset\\_investigasi/brief-paper-psn-merauke-ii-land-grabbing-deforestation-and-the-threat-of-ethnocide/](https://pusaka.or.id/en/riset_investigasi/brief-paper-psn-merauke-ii-land-grabbing-deforestation-and-the-threat-of-ethnocide/)

announcement by the Coordinating Minister for Food Affairs, Zulkifi Hassan in September.<sup>50</sup> These pressures have transformed the landscape for indigenous communities and support organisations, who came together as Solidaritas Merauke (Merauke Solidarity) and agreed to the Merauke Declaration, calling for the total halt of PSNs and full justice for all communities affected.<sup>51</sup>

In addition, the Raja Ampat islands have also been at the heart of an intense dispute between mining companies and the Indonesian Government on the one hand, and the indigenous communities whose livelihoods are being negatively affected on the other. The Government has awarded nickel mining licenses in the islands, leading to significant damage to local reefs and the health of the marine ecosystem in the area<sup>52</sup> as well as local forests.<sup>53</sup> Mining areas increased between 2020 and 2024, driven by huge international demand for the metal for products such as EV batteries.<sup>54</sup> Despite the announcement of four of the five permits being cancelled by the Government in response to protests by the local community and campaign groups,<sup>55</sup> one of the mines was reopened in September.<sup>56</sup> Greenpeace, whose campaigning had helped bring about the original cancellation, has objected to this restart.<sup>57</sup> Nevertheless, this indicates the Government's desire to push ahead with its extractivist agenda, when and if public pressure and awareness eases off.

Beyond the extractive industries, West Papua has been hit with a whirlwind of other pressures, particularly from increased militarisation, but also from Prabowo placing a renewed emphasis on the transmigration of people from other parts of Indonesia to West Papua, which increases the

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<sup>50</sup> Pusaka, "Condemning the Serakahnomics Project Policy and the Tolerance of Human Rights and Environmental Violations in the Merauke National Strategic Project", 22nd September 2025, <https://pusaka.or.id/en/news/condemning-the-serakahnomics-project-policy-and-the-tolerance-of-human-rights-and-environmental-violations-in-the-merauke-national-strategic-project/>

<sup>51</sup> Pusaka, "Solidaritas Merauke Declaration", 27th March 2025, <https://pusaka.or.id/en/news/solidaritas-merauke-declaration/>

<sup>52</sup> Erwin Renaldi and Hellena Souisa, ABC News, "Battle to save Indonesian "paradise" as nickel industry expands into Raja Ampat in Papua", 21st June 2025, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-06-22/the-battle-to-save-raja-ampat-from-nickel-mining/105431838>

<sup>53</sup> Hans Nicholas Jong, Mongabay, "Pushback grows against nickel mining in Indonesian marine paradise of Raja Ampat", 9th June 2025, <https://news.mongabay.com/2025/06/pushback-grows-against-nickel-mining-in-indonesian-marine-paradise-of-raja-ampat/>

<sup>54</sup> Victoria Gill, BBC News, "Race to mine metals for EV batteries threatens marine paradise", 15th June 2025, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c0k36v50zvro>

<sup>55</sup> Greenpeace, "Full and permanent protection for Raja Ampat", 10th June 2025, <https://www.greenpeace.org/southeastasia/story/67009/full-and-permanent-protection-for-raja-ampat/>

<sup>56</sup> Hans Nicholas Jong, Mongabay, "Indonesia reopens Raja Ampat nickel mine despite reef damage concerns", 12th September 2025, <https://news.mongabay.com/2025/09/indonesia-reopens-raja-ampat-nickel-mine-despite-reef-damage-concerns/>

<sup>57</sup> Greenpeace, "Raja Ampat Terancam: Kembalinya Operasi PT Gag Nikel adalah Bencana bagi Rakyat Indonesia dan Alam Papua", 10th September 2025, <https://www.greenpeace.org/indonesia/siaran-pers/65071/raja-ampat-terancam-kembalinya-operasi-pt-gag-nikel-adalah-bencana-bagi-rakyat-indonesia-dan-alam-papua/> (Accessed 16th March 2026)

pressure and conflict with indigenous Papuans.<sup>58</sup> Military and police operations have led to an upsurge of cases of torture experienced by West Papuans, with shocking incidents occurring in areas of intensified military operations and conflict between the military and the West Papua National Liberation Army (*Tentara Pembebasan Nasional Papua Barat*, TPNPB), such as in the Central Highlands.<sup>59</sup> With numbers of displaced people passing 100,000 for the first time since records began,<sup>60</sup> it is clear that militarisation and increased extractivism are having disproportionate impacts on the indigenous civilian population of the region.

Overall, governmental prioritisation of development projects and a military-first approach have created an atmosphere of intense securitisation and a concomitant decline in how rights are respected by the current regime, and this has had devastating consequences for the free exercise of FoE/FoA with regards to West Papua.

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<sup>58</sup> Early Warning Project, "Major Developments and Worsening Risks for Mass Atrocities in Papua, Indonesia", 7th November 2025, <https://earlywarningproject.ushmm.org/reports/major-developments-and-worsening-risks-for-mass-atrocities-in-papua-indonesia>

<sup>59</sup> TAPOL, "Torture in Detention in West Papua: Impunity, Secrecy and Silence", 22nd July 2025, <https://tapol.org/publications/torture-detention-west-papua-impunity-secrecy-and-silence>

<sup>60</sup> Human Rights Monitor, "IDP Update January 2026: Humanitarian crisis deteriorates as Indigenous communities bear brunt of expanding security operations", 7th January 2026, <https://humanrightsmonitor.org/reports/idp-update-january-2026-humanitarian-crisis-deteriorates-as-indigenous-communities-bear-brunt-of-expanding-security-operations/>

# Scope of Report, Definitions and Methodology

The scope of this report includes incidents which took place in 2025 relating to violations of the right to freedom of expression and freedom of assembly in and related to West Papua. The key types of violations that we document are: arrests, dispersals (forced and arbitrary), intimidation and harassment (including of human rights defenders and the media), killings, excessive force (including torture, ill treatment and killing), and internet freedoms.

In using the terms "freedom of expression" and "freedom of association and assembly", this report adopts definitions used in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Article 19 states that "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers." Article 20 defines Freedom of Assembly and Association as universal, furthermore affirming that "No one may be compelled to belong to an association." These broad definitions apply to all states which are signatories to this Declaration, including Indonesia. Furthermore, Article 28 of Indonesia's Constitution affirms that its citizens hold rights in respect of freedom of expression and association/assembly.

Furthermore, Article 5 of the UDHR states that "No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment." Article 1 of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment defines Torture as "any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity...". This report also adopts these definitions and uses the terms Torture and Ill-treatment to refer to these categories of violations.

Arbitrary Dispersals involve mainly the dispersal of assemblies that are in action, whilst Restrictions to Freedom of Assembly involve attempts by the local authorities to prevent demonstrations before they start.

Meanwhile, there are also arbitrary arrests, a more specific form of violation which criminalises those who are exercising their rights to expression and assembly. Arbitrary arrests mainly take place during or immediately following dispersals of assemblies and demonstrations.

While the majority of those attending assemblies and demonstrations were not charged with offences, some of those arrested had treason charges levelled against them. Convictions on charges of treason or other such charges against imprisoned activists represent weaknesses within the legal system.

Intimidation and harassment are directed at many different groups, be they activists and citizens, but also human rights defenders, as well as the media. Violations of the right to freedom of expression can also occur through attacks on internet freedom, whether through direct intimidation online, spreading hoaxes on activists, real world actions caused by online activity or actions that constrict or cut off internet connectivity.

## Domestic Accountability Mechanisms

There is no independent, effective, and impartial mechanism in Indonesia to deal with public complaints about police and military misconduct, including criminal offences involving the right to freedom of assembly.

Human rights organisations have documented that the numbers of violations with regards to the exercise of the right to freedom of assembly committed by Indonesia's security forces are the highest in West Papua compared with other regions.<sup>61</sup> West Papua is now the only region in Indonesia that has both peaceful and armed pro-independence movements. Human rights NGOs continue to receive reports of unlawful killings and unnecessary and excessive use of force and firearms by police or military personnel during peaceful political protests and gatherings. The central government has consistently failed to make a distinction between violent armed groups and peaceful activists. Furthermore, Papuan political activists and others accused of links to pro-independence groups have been tortured or otherwise ill-treated during arrest and detention.

This leaves many victims and their families without access to justice and reparations. While there are independent state institutions that can receive complaints on abuses by security apparatus, such as the National Human Rights Commission (Komnas HAM), the National Ombudsman (ORI) or, specifically for the police, the National Police Commission (Kompolnas), their findings cannot be submitted to the Public Prosecutor.

They also cannot carry out official autopsies or examine autopsy reports, death certificates and other medical certificates in suspected human rights violations involving the police or military personnel. In terms of the police, the Commissions can only send the findings of their inquiry on police abuses to the police, which forwards them to the Propam unit (the police's internal oversight mechanism) for internal investigation. The main concern of the police internal mechanism under Propam is that most of the allegations of police misconduct in the context of

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<sup>61</sup> Some examples of these are in Amnesty International's Report, "Don't Bother, Just Let Him Die": Killing with Impunity in Papua, July 2018, available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa21/8198/2018/en/>; Human Rights Watch's Report, "Out of Sight; Endemic Abuse and Impunity in Papua's Central Highlands", July 2007, available at: <https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/papua0707webwcover.pdf>. See also ICP (International Coalition for Papua), Human Rights Quarterly Update West Papua – April 2021, available at: [https://humanrightspapua.org/images/docs/Human\\_Rights\\_Update\\_West\\_Papua\\_April\\_2021.pdf](https://humanrightspapua.org/images/docs/Human_Rights_Update_West_Papua_April_2021.pdf); Human Rights Quarterly Update West Papua – October 2020, available at: [https://humanrightspapua.org/images/docs/Human\\_Rights\\_Update\\_West\\_Papua\\_October\\_2020.pdf](https://humanrightspapua.org/images/docs/Human_Rights_Update_West_Papua_October_2020.pdf); Human Rights in West Papua, the seventh Biannual Report (2019 – 2020), September 2021, p.108, available at <https://humanrightspapua.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/HumanRightsPapua2021-ICP.pdf>.

human rights violations end up only receiving internal disciplinary sanctions,<sup>62</sup> although under Indonesia's Police Law (No. 2/2002) any police officer who is suspected of committing a criminal offence should face prosecution in a civilian court.<sup>63</sup> On paper, Propam can forward cases of police misconduct to the police's Criminal Investigation Department (CID), who would initiate a criminal investigation and bring it to the Prosecutor. It is very rare both in Indonesia and West Papua for police officers accused of committing human rights violations to be tried in a civilian court.<sup>64</sup>

In the case of the military, such findings can only be submitted to the military police and cases can never be tried before a civilian court, because under Indonesia's Military Criminal Code, military personnel can only be tried in military courts, even for criminal offences. This includes serious human rights violations, such as unlawful killings, torture and enforced disappearances. All parties in the military criminal justice system - judges, prosecutors, legal defence - are military officials. The main concerns about the military court mechanism are the lack of transparency from the investigation process to the prosecution stage, light sentences compared with the gravity of the crimes, only implicating low-rank personnel and excluding from prosecution those with command responsibility, and convictions not being taken into consideration when vetting personnel.<sup>65</sup>

Human rights monitoring groups share a common conclusion that most cases of security forces abuses in West Papua or elsewhere in Indonesia are dealt with through internal mechanisms, if the allegation of rights violations are ever reported to the police or military, with a significant number of cases not investigated at all.<sup>66</sup> If the police or military decided to proceed with a report, most of the police and military personnel accused of committing abuses in West Papua have only received disciplinary sanctions and very few face criminal proceedings. These mechanisms were established under Indonesia's outdated Criminal Procedure Code (KUHAP).

A special criminal accountability mechanism is available in Indonesia, but only for specific crimes. This external accountability mechanism was set up under Law No. 26/2000 on Human Rights Courts to address allegations of "gross violations of human rights" and the criminal

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<sup>62</sup> The most common disciplinary sanctions are disciplinary detention, suspended promotion, salary deduction, removal from the current police structure or post, re-education and dismissal.

<sup>63</sup> The technical guideline on how to process any police misconduct to the civilian court mechanism is further regulated by Government Regulation No. 3/2003.

<sup>64</sup> Amnesty International, "Don't Bother, Just Let Him Die": Killing with Impunity in Papua, p. 54; see also ICP, Human Rights in West Papua 2021, 2019 and 2017 on the section of Civil and Political Rights.

<sup>65</sup> ICTJ (International Center for Transitional Justice) and KontraS (the Commission for the Disappeared and Victims of Violence), *Derailed: Transitional Justice in Indonesia Since the Fall of Soeharto*, March 2011, p. 50-51, available at:

<https://www.ictj.org/publication/derailed-transitional-justice-indonesia-fall-soeharto-report>.

<sup>66</sup> See footnote No. 9.

proceeding can override the police internal mechanism and the military court system.<sup>67</sup> However, the HR Court jurisdiction is limited to acts of genocide and crimes against humanity and does not include other crimes recognised internationally such as torture, extrajudicial executions, enforced disappearances or war crimes.

Under the Human Rights Court mechanism, the body that can carry out preliminary judicial investigations into alleged “gross human rights violations” is the National Human Rights Commission (Komnas HAM). However, the full judicial investigation, including to collect evidence in preparation for prosecutions, is carried out solely by the Attorney General's Office (AGO) which is under the direct control of the executive body. The AGO is not, therefore, an impartial body.<sup>68</sup> Komnas HAM has carried out 15 preliminary judicial investigations into allegations of gross human rights violations, including three cases in West Papua.<sup>69</sup> To date, the Attorney General has refused to open a full judicial investigation and to proceed with prosecution of 11 cases, and there is no available avenue to review the Attorney General's decision.

Outside of the judiciary, the Non-Judicial Settlement Team of Past Human Rights Violations (Pelaksana Penyelesaian Non-Yudisial Pelanggaran Hak Asasi Manusia Masa Lalu, PPHAM) was recently established by a Presidential Decree issued on 26th August 2022,<sup>70</sup> ostensibly to speed up the process of delivering compensation and support to victims of government-recognised serious human rights violations. There are concerns, however, that the creation of this new team may lead to a bypassing of the judicial mechanisms and may become a way for the Government to draw a line under serious human rights violations without justice being meted out.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> The Human Rights Court mechanism was set up by Indonesian lawmakers to deflect the international community call to set up an international tribunal to address the serious human rights violations surrounding the 30 August 1999 referendum in East Timor. See International Crisis Group (ICG), *Indonesia: Impunity Versus Accountability for Gross Human Rights Violations*, February 2001, p. 13-15, available at:

<https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-east-asia/indonesia/indonesia-impunity-versus-accountability>.

<sup>68</sup> See the Guideline on the Role of Prosecutors, Adopted by the Eight United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, Havana, Cuba, 27 August– 7 September 1990, available: [https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/RoleOfProsecutors.aspx\\_para\\_28](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/RoleOfProsecutors.aspx_para_28); Report of the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention on its visit to Indonesia (13 January – 12 February 1999), August 1999, para 28, UN Doc. E/CN.4/2000/4/Add.2; Amnesty International's Comments on the Law on Human Rights Courts (Law No.26/2000), February 2001, p. 5, available at:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa21/005/2001/en/>.

<sup>69</sup> For the complete list, see Komnas HAM's *Merawat Ingatan Menjemput Keadilan; Ringkasan Eksekutif Peristiwa Pelanggaran HAM yang Berat* [Preserving Memory Getting Justice; Executive Summary of Cases of Gross Violations of Human Rights], November 2020. The list includes cases of 1965 Mass Atrocities, mass killings against Muslim groups in Tanjung Priok, Jakarta 1984 and Talangsari Lampung 1989, May 1998 Riots, three cases in Aceh, etc. The four cases in West Papua are: Abepura 2000; Wasior 2001-2 and Wamena 2003 (combined in one dossier); and Paniai 2014.

<sup>70</sup> The full text of Presidential Decree No 17/2022, which governs the establishment and functions of this team, can be found here:

[https://humanrightsmonitor.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Keppres-No-17-Tahun-2022-Pembentukan-Tim-PPHAM-2-8\\_220920\\_204337.pdf](https://humanrightsmonitor.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Keppres-No-17-Tahun-2022-Pembentukan-Tim-PPHAM-2-8_220920_204337.pdf)

<sup>71</sup> Human Rights Monitor, “Jokowi issues Presidential Decree 17/2022 on the formation of a team for non-judicial settlement of past serious human rights violations”, 26 September 2022,

Finally, the recognition by President Joko Widodo on 11th January 2023 of 12 gross human rights violations that occurred across Indonesia between the 1960s and early 2000s, has been given a cautious response by numerous human rights groups. This is because hope does now exist that this would inhibit the closing or impunity of these cases in the judiciary against the perpetrators in these incidents.<sup>72</sup>

## International Legal Context<sup>73</sup>

Besides the already mentioned UDHR, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and her own Constitution, there are numerous instruments relevant to the protection of Freedom of Assembly and Freedom of Expression that Indonesia has signed and acceded to. An example of this is the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which Indonesia had acceded to in February 2006<sup>74</sup>, Article 19 and 21 respectively guarantee the protection of freedom of expression and opinion and freedom of peaceful assembly, whilst 9 and 14 protect civilians from being arbitrarily arrested and detained, and give them the right to an impartial trial<sup>75</sup>.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2007 and affirmed by Indonesia,<sup>76</sup> has numerous articles protecting their right to self-determination, including political status and economic, social and cultural development (Article 3), autonomy in local affairs (Article 4), and rights to life, liberty and security of person (Article 7)<sup>77</sup>.

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<https://humanrightsmonitor.org/general/jokowi-issues-presidential-decree-17-2022-on-the-formation-of-a-team-for-non-judicial-settlement-of-past-serious-human-rights-violations/>

<sup>72</sup> Stranio, S., The Diplomat, "Indonesia's Jokowi Admits to Serious Past Human Rights Abuses", 12 January 2023,

<https://thediplomat.com/2023/01/indonesias-jokowi-admits-to-serious-past-human-rights-abuses/>

<sup>73</sup> For a list of international human rights treaty that Indonesia has signed and ratified, please visit:

[https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=80&Lang=EN](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=80&Lang=EN)

<sup>74</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> Full text of the ICCPR can be found at:

<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/ccpr.pdf>

<sup>76</sup> OHCHR Joint Statement of the Rapporteurs, Reference: AL IDN 4/2021, 22 February 2021,

<https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gld=26029>

<sup>77</sup> Full text of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples:

[https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2019/01/UNDRIP\\_E\\_web.pdf](https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2019/01/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf)

## Methodology

TAPOL records and compiles incidents of violations related to the rights to freedom of expression and assembly in West Papua. We collect information from many sources: first-hand accounts from victims as well as secondary sources such as news reports, and local and national human rights and civil society organisations' reports, which we corroborate with reports of victims so as to provide balance and accuracy.

For the purposes of our analysis, we have broken down incidents of rights violations into several different categories. In each category, we review the incidents on a case-by-case basis. Each case, even if the initial report comes from social media, is also strictly verified by trusted sources on the ground.

In many cases of single "incidents", we have established that multiple violations of the rights to freedom of expression and assembly had taken place. For example, an incident that began with an arbitrary arrest may later have led to treason charges. Although we strive to provide a picture of violations of rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly that is as complete as possible, there are local human rights defenders, community activists and organisations in West Papua with whom we have not been able to corroborate data. Therefore the numbers of violations that we report here may actually be fewer than those committed.

The continuing deficiencies of the legal system have been analysed in a specific category, as the number of incidents and the clear intention to criminalise and deny activists the right to a fair hearing and trial need to be highlighted.

# An Overview of Freedom of Expression and Assembly Violations in 2025

Considering the scope of events, we reported 96 separate violations of Freedom of Expression and Assembly occurring within West Papua, or connected to West Papua-related issues, over the course of 2025. This report will break down analysis of these events by type, before looking at the locations and involved groups. Finally, longer-term trends will be investigated, taking into account the trends since 2019.

## Event Type

Over the course of 2025, we recorded a total of 96 incidents, covering 27 incidents of arbitrary dispersals (including restrictions on freedom of assembly and excessive use of force), 13 incidents targeting media and human rights defenders, 20 incidents of arbitrary arrests, 28 incidents of intimidation, torture or ill treatment and killing, 4 incidents relating to internet freedom and freedom of expression online and 4 incidents related to weaknesses in the legal system. These can be seen in Figure 1.

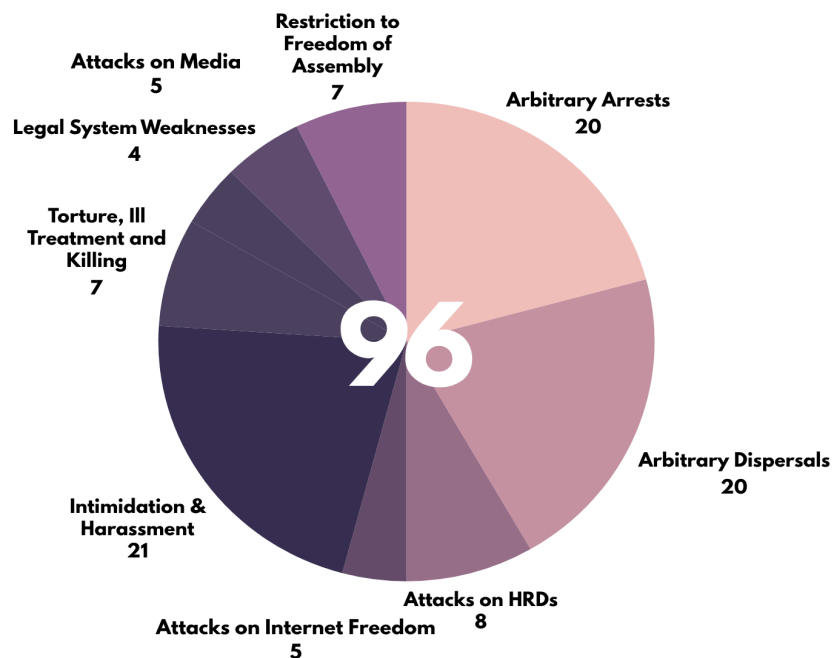


Figure 1: 2025 Freedom of Expression and Assembly Incidents as compiled by TAPOL, by event type.

The most prominent individual types of incident were intimidation and harassment, as well as arbitrary arrests and arbitrary dispersals. In comparison to other years, the occurrence of incidents had lower variance over the course of the year for most types of events, with intimidation and harassment incidents experiencing a sharp increase in recent years, which tend to be more evenly spread out during the year. In addition, major events of arrests and detention also happened outside of the traditional anniversaries that usually mark the calendar, such as against the Government's Free and Nutritious Meals (*Makan Bergizi Gratis* (MBG)) programme and regarding the transfer of the Sorong Four to Makassar (see below).

## Arrests, Dispersals, Restrictions and Trials

In comparison to previous years, despite the mass protests across Indonesia between August and September, the number of arrest incidents related to West Papua has been down, as well as the number of people arrested during these incidents. A number of overlapping factors are at



play here concerning the general patterns of militarisation in West Papua and acts of intimidation (of which more later) which are having a chilling effect on the population and their ability to protest.

Despite this, at least 24 people were arrested and more than 60 were affected in total in numerous incidents following the detention, trial and conviction of the Sorong Four, one of the more notable cases of the year. On 28th April, the police arrested four activists from the Federal State of West Papua (Negara Federal Republik Papua Barat (NFRPB)) organisation on suspicion of treason.<sup>78</sup> They had delivered letters to government institutions calling for a dialogue on peace in Sorong City since mid-April,<sup>79</sup> which led to them becoming the target of an extensive search operation by the police that seized NFRPB materials.<sup>80</sup> This was a clear breach of their

rights to free expression and represents the continued repression by Jakarta of pro-independence speech, even when trying to enter into peaceful discussions with the Government.

The story continued in August with the transfer of the four from Sorong to Makassar to face trial there. The Government claimed that this was done due to "security concerns" and "natural

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<sup>78</sup> Antara News, "Polisi tetapkan empat anggota NFRPB tersangka makar", 5th May 2025, <https://papatengah.antaraneews.com/amp/berita/64429/polisi-tetapkan-empat-anggota-nfrpb-tersangka-makar>

<sup>79</sup> TAPOL, "The Supreme Court Must Halt the Transfer of Four Political Prisoners from Sorong to Makassar", 28th August 2025, <https://tapol.org/publications/supreme-court-must-halt-transfer-four-political-prisoners-sorong-makassar>

<sup>80</sup> Human Rights Monitor, "Ongoing detention of four activists in Sorong raises concerns over criminalisation, health, and due process", 25th June 2025, <https://humanrightsmonitor.org/case/ongoing-detention-of-four-activists-in-sorong-raises-concerns-over-criminalisation-health-and-due-process/>

disasters".<sup>81</sup> However, the head of the Sorong Four's legal team, Yan Christian Warinussy, said that the transfer of the four would mean members of their family and legal team would have reduced access to them.<sup>82</sup> This would deprive them of their rights to a fair trial and humane conditions, particularly with regard to raising costs for the legal team to defend their clients. This transfer is not without precedent, as a similar strategy occurred in 2022 with a group of six prisoners, called the Sorong Six, who were also transferred from Sorong to Makassar in secrecy to face trial there.<sup>83</sup> It seems to be a recurring tactic used by the security services and law and order institutions to try and disorientate defendants and deprive them of support, in order to convict them and maintain its grip over West Papua.

The response to the Sorong Four case, however, was a string of mass protests that led to more incidents of arbitrary arrests. Groups across Sorong felt the injustice of the decision to move the prisoners, and came out onto the streets on 27th August. At least 23 people were arrested during these events.<sup>84</sup> One person was shot by the police.<sup>85</sup> Injustice breeds more injustice, which has led to more incidents, as the security forces try to keep a lid on further expressions of disapproval towards their actions.

On 4th November, the Prosecutor asked for eight months in prison in a court session in Makassar which had restricted access to the public and had been guarded closely by the security forces. During protests outside the courtroom, five people trying to get access to the courtroom were briefly detained, before eventually being allowed to attend the session.<sup>86</sup> The Sorong Four were eventually found guilty of treason and sentenced to seven months in prison on the 19th.<sup>87</sup> Warinussy suggested that the evidence against the four was flimsy and not objective, and that the judges were simply following the whims of the Public Prosecutor.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Human Rights Monitor, "Fabricated security concerns used to justify transfer of trial against Papuan activists from Sorong to Makassar", 15th August 2025, <https://humanrightsmonitor.org/case/fabricated-security-concerns-used-to-justify-transfer-of-trial-against-papuan-activists-from-sorong-to-makassar/>

<sup>82</sup> Jubi, "Sidang Aktivist Papua dipindah ke Makassar, Penasihat Hukum nilai sarat kepentingan politik", 25th August 2025, <https://jubi.id/domberai/2025/sidang-aktivis-papua-dipindah-ke-makassar-penasihat-hukum-nilai-sarat-kepentingan-politik/>

<sup>83</sup> TAPOL, "The Supreme Court Must Halt the Transfer of Four Political Prisoners from Sorong to Makassar"

<sup>84</sup> Jubi, 27th August 2025, "Polresta Sorong Kota bebaskan 16 warga, 8 masih ditahan", 30th August 2025, <https://jubi.id/domberai/2025/polresta-sorong-kota-bebaskan-16-warga-8-masih-ditahan/>

<sup>85</sup> Instagram, Lensa Rakyat, <https://www.instagram.com/reels/DN2GQ1zZJK7/> (Accessed on 24th March 2026)

<sup>86</sup> Jubi, "Empat Tapol Papua dituntut delapan bulan, sidang dijaga ketat aparat", 4th November 2025, <https://jubi.id/nasional-internasional/2025/empat-tapol-papua-dituntut-delapan-bulan-sidang-dijaga-ketat-aparat/>

<sup>87</sup> BBC Indonesia, "Empat tahanan politik Sorong divonis tujuh bulan penjara – "Mereka cuma antar surat, tapi dituduh berencana makar", 20th November 2025, <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/articles/ckgj94mg0jgo>

<sup>88</sup> Jubi, "Vonis 7 bulan penjara untuk Kasus Makar "Sorong Empat", PH kritik putusan Hakim", 19th November 2025, <https://jubi.id/nasional-internasional/2025/vonis-7-bulan-penjara-untuk-kasus-makar-sorong-empat-ph-kitik-putusan-hakim/>

Finally, the verdict prompted another round of demonstrations, which was watched over by around 500 police personnel who restricted their movements.<sup>89</sup> They were also faced with intimidatory actions by a local militia group, Laskar Mandala.<sup>90</sup> This has shown compounding injustice and attempts to silence free expression at every stage, against people promoting independence as well as those trying to fight for justice. Security force repression, coupled with a judiciary that is not prioritising justice, is working in lockstep with the authorities to silence dissent, showing the system is rigged against activists who hope to challenge police brutality in suppressing protests.

Another incident involved the mass protests that broke out against Prabowo's MBG programme in February by school children, arguing that the Government's financing and prioritisation of this scheme would have been much better spent on providing free education instead, to address the root causes of poverty in West Papua.<sup>91</sup> Despite the participants being mainly teenagers and younger children, the police still acted repressively to quash some of the protests. In Nabire, 48 students were arrested by and were labelled by the police as provocateurs at the protest.<sup>92</sup> The police injured four students in Jayapura, and groups of protestors were intercepted by the police, including in an incident leading to the arrest of another 15 students. Live ammunition and tear gas were allegedly used against student protests in Elelim, Yalimo. In Wamena, the students were blocked by security forces from getting to the local parliaments, whilst in Timika, police arrived at a school to prevent students from joining the protests in the first place.<sup>93</sup> The police tried to paint the protestors as being manipulated by the National Committee for West Papua (*Komite Nasional untuk Papua Barat*, KNPB), which was strongly denied by the group, who argued that they had



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<sup>89</sup> IDN Times, "Demonstrasi Warnai Sidang Putusan Empat Terdakwa Tapol Sorong di Makassar", 19th November 2025,

<https://sulsel.idntimes.com/news/sulawesi-selatan/aksi-demo-warnai-sidang-putusan-empat-terdakwa-tapol-sorong-c1c2-01-c4zw1-9qphq3>

<sup>90</sup> Facebook, Solidaritas Rakyat Papua Pro-Demokrasi Sorong Raya, <https://www.facebook.com/solidaritas.rakyat.papua.pro.demokrasi.sorong.raya/posts/pfbid0QHBGpYVx1E2jxEWvZaDc5QFvWUJS76ZD92rzZnsp1N6NKi63edJ7aZ1wpFx795w9l> (Accessed 24th March 2026)

<sup>91</sup> Mambor, V., Benar News, "President Probowo's free lunch program triggers protests in West Papua: Police officers intimidate, arrest and ill-treat pupils", 25th February 2025, <https://humanrightsmonitor.org/news/president-probowos-school-lunch-program-triggers-protests-in-west-papua-police-officers-intimidate-arrest-and-ill-treat-protesters/>

<sup>92</sup> Santoso, B., Suara.com, "Aksi Pelajar Nabire Tolak MBG: 48 Siswa Diamankan Polisi, Kapolres Sebut Ada Provokator", 17th February 2025, <https://www.suara.com/news/2025/02/17/185732/aksi-pelajar-nabire-tolak-mbg-48-siswa-diamankan-polisi-kapolres-sebut-ada-provokator?page=1>

<sup>93</sup> Human Rights Monitor, "President Probowo's free lunch program triggers protests in West Papua: Police officers intimidate, arrest and ill-treat pupils", 25th February 2025, <https://humanrightsmonitor.org/news/president-probowos-school-lunch-program-triggers-protests-in-west-papua-police-officers-intimidate-arrest-and-ill-treat-protesters/>

been often used as scapegoats whenever there were protests in the region.<sup>94</sup> The fact that the security forces felt able to arrest and use violence against children, and then blame someone else for "provoking" them, shows just how ruthless they are when it comes to maintaining one of the President's flagship policies.

Beyond these multi-locational protest movements, a string of arrests occurred at an event commemorating the eleventh anniversary of the foundation of the United Liberation Movement for West Papua (ULMWP). Six activists from the KNPB were arrested and taken into custody,<sup>95</sup> and at least seven others received blows from melee weapons during attempts to negotiate with the police.<sup>96</sup> These arrests added to a relentless campaign by the authorities against pro-independence groups, including attempts to insert themselves into demonstrations and meetings, and clamp down on peaceful events with violence.

## Torture, Ill-Treatment and Intimidation

Cases of intimidation, torture and ill treatment in detention have seen a sharp increase in 2025, revealing a pattern that seems to be an intentional targeting of government critics and their families in order to create a chilling atmosphere that intimidates the population and tries to prevent protests from arising to begin with.

Papuan students have been one of the groups that have borne the brunt of intimidatory tactics, as well as suffering mistreatment whilst in prison. In February, Wene Karunggu, a Papuan student at Mataram University, who had been giving speeches around campus criticising the university faculty and security regarding free expression and academic freedom and the treatment of Papuan students on campus, faced intimidation by the university authorities, being forced off campus with such force that his clothes were torn.<sup>97</sup> Police officers were conducting intimidatory patrols around dormitories in Manokwari to ensure that students knew they were being closely monitored.<sup>98</sup>

Students were also targeted with deliveries of dead animals from unknown senders to student dormitories. In June alone, students outside West Papua connected with the Alliance of Papuan

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<sup>94</sup> Mambor, V., Benar News, "President Prabowo's free lunch program triggers protests in West Papua: Police officers intimidate, arrest and ill-treat pupils"

<sup>95</sup> Jubi, "Enam aktivis KNPB ditangkap, tujuh lainnya terluka", 6th December 2025, <https://jubi.id/rilis-pers/2025/enam-aktivis-knpb-ditangkap-tujuh-lainnya-terluka/>

<sup>96</sup> Noken Live, "6 Anggota KNPB Ditangkap, Beberapa Aktivis lainnya Diduga Dipukul Polisi di Sentani Jayapura", 7th December 2025, <https://www.nokenlive.com/2025/12/07/6-anggota-knpb-ditangkap-beberapa-aktivis-lainnya-diduga-dipukul-polisi-di-sentani-jayapura/>

<sup>97</sup> Facebook, Koran Kejora, [https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=pfbid02bXZZfewRirpurzRQo1ay2ku3TSNKuqifm4jHg4e8TqZgme9oJRhf6WzC8Zw57LfAI&id=100006533198554&mibextid=wwXlfr&\\_rdr](https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid02bXZZfewRirpurzRQo1ay2ku3TSNKuqifm4jHg4e8TqZgme9oJRhf6WzC8Zw57LfAI&id=100006533198554&mibextid=wwXlfr&_rdr), 7th March 2025 (Accessed 26th March 2026)

<sup>98</sup> Human Rights Monitor, "Police officers intimidate students at Jayawijaya dormitory in Manokwari", 7th March 2025, <https://humanrightsmonitor.org/case/police-officers-intimidate-students-at-jayawijaya-dormitory-in-manokwari/>

Students (*Aliansi Mahasiswa Papua*, AMP) were sent packages: in Bali on the 6th, Yogyakarta on 18-19th, and Surabaya also on the 19th.<sup>99</sup> For the Yogyakarta incident, four different packages arrived, some including dead chickens and with intimidatory notes, threatening students for their activism.<sup>100</sup> Papuan student dormitories in Gorontalo in Sulawesi had stones thrown through the window in April in the early hours of the morning,<sup>101</sup> whilst Hidayat Musa, former head of the Indonesian Student League for Democracy (*Ketua Liga Mahasiswa Indonesia untuk Demokrasi* (LMID)), was attacked by unknown perpetrators.<sup>102</sup> This wave of intimidatory activities by the security services and other aligned groups against students is clearly designed to silence those who have been most vocal at speaking out against human rights abuses and discrimination.



Beyond the targeted intimidation campaign against students, we note that people and organisations that have protested against securitisation and the disregard of indigenous rights across the region have also faced harassment and threats. One case involved Archbishop Petrus Canisius Mandagi of Merauke, who has been criticised by civil society, including indigenous rights and Catholic groups, for defending the food estate programme against local indigenous communities who are facing deforestation and displacement, and for appointing lawyers.<sup>103</sup> In February, he threatened legal action against those who had criticised him,<sup>104</sup> which has been met with shock and disappointment by local Catholics who see it as contradicting church teachings.<sup>105</sup> Such an act represents a desire to avoid debate and scrutiny.

In July, an indigenous community in Sorong faced direct intimidation by the Police's Mobile Brigade (Brimob) for protesting against a palm oil company sending security forces nearby.

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<sup>99</sup> TAPOL, "In bed with a (pig's) head- packages of dead animals intimidate media and activists", 4th July 2025, <https://tapol.org/news/bed-pigs-head-packages-dead-animals-intimidate-media-and-activists>

<sup>100</sup> Instagram, koran\_kejoraa, <https://www.instagram.com/p/DLHdsX9SzzC/?igsh=eW1vbmNIMGpjbThw>, 20th June 2025 (Accessed 26th March 2026)

<sup>101</sup> Human Rights Monitor, "Escalating intimidation campaign against Papuan students across Indonesia: A recurring pattern of systematic rights violations", 13th August 2025, <https://humanrightsmonitor.org/news/escalating-intimidation-campaign-against-papuan-students-across-in-donesia-a-recurring-pattern-of-systematic-rights-violations/>

<sup>102</sup> Kontras.id, "Satu Lagi Aktivis Mahasiswa Gorontalo Penentang PETI Diserang Orang Tak Dikenal", 16th May 2025, <https://kontras.id/2025/05/16/satu-lagi-aktivis-mahasiswa-gorontalo-penentang-peti-diserang-orang-tak-dikenal/>

<sup>103</sup> Wartaplus.com, "Kuasa Hukum Uskup Agung Merauke, DR. Pieter Eli: Pihak-Pihak Yang Menyerang Uskup Agung Merauke Secara Verbal Segera Hentikan", 11th February 2025, <https://m.wartaplus.com/read/19404/Kuasa-Hukum-Uskup-Agung-Merauke-DR-Pieter-Eli-Pihak-Pihak-Yang-Menyerang-Uskup-Agung-Merauke-Secara-Verbal-Segera-Hentikan>

<sup>104</sup> UCA News, "Indonesian prelate warns of legal action against critics", 17th February 2025, <https://www.ucanews.com/news/indonesian-prelate-warns-of-legal-action-against-critics/107899>

<sup>105</sup> Weak, J., UCA News, "Is an Indonesian prelate using legal action to silence dissent?", 25th February 2025, <https://www.ucanews.com/news/is-an-indonesian-prelate-using-legal-action-to-silence-dissent/107968>

Threatening messages were sent by local officers to a member of the community, and they labelled the villagers as "provocateurs".<sup>106</sup>

Organisations also have faced intimidatory actions, with the KontraS office being terrorised by three unknown individuals on 16th March after they had been campaigning against a closed door meeting of the Army (TNI) Bill in Parliament.<sup>107</sup> Attempts to close down avenues of dissent, wherever it may come from, have been on the increase this year, as Prabowo has tried to impose his agenda on the country.

There have also been documented cases of torture and even deaths as the result of severe repression on the part of the security forces. In July, seven individuals, including Joshua Rumbiak, a lawyer and the head of the Religious Affairs Working Group in Central Papua Province's Parliament, Wenior Pakage, and five others, were assaulted by TNI soldiers in front of the TNI base in Timika, which included severe damage to the vehicle the seven were in.<sup>108</sup> The action was unprovoked,<sup>109</sup> and the attack on these passengers in particular seemed to raise questions about whether an ulterior motive was at play.

The military went a step further in another case when they executed Obert Mirip, a student, who had been wearing a shirt displaying the Morning Star Flag on it, which led to the officers accusing the student of being a member of the TPNPB, although "multiple" sources confirmed this not to have been the case.<sup>110</sup> In November, another student, Yoas Pigai, died following a police assault on the convoy he was in when they used force far in excess of what would be

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<sup>106</sup> Human Rights Monitor, "Police officers intimidate indigenous community in Sayosa Timur, Sorong", 15th October 2025,

<https://humanrightsmonitor.org/case/police-officers-intimidate-indigenous-community-in-sayosa-timur-sorong/>

<sup>107</sup> Putra, N., Tempo English, "After Storming TNI Bill Meeting, KontraS Office Gets Terrorized by Unknown People", 16th March 2025,

<https://en.tempo.co/read/1987074/after-storming-tni-bill-meeting-kontras-office-gets-terrorized-by-unknown-people>

<sup>108</sup> Human Rights Monitor, "Battalion 754 members allegedly assaulted civilians and destroyed vehicle in Timika", 11th August 2025,

<https://humanrightsmonitor.org/case/battalion-754-members-allegedly-assaulted-civilians-and-destroyed-vehicle-in-timika/>

<sup>109</sup> Rum, S., Jurnal Mamberamo Foja, "Pengacara Joshua Rumbiak dan Rekannya Dianiaya Diduga oleh Anggota TNI di Timika", 17th July 2025,

<https://www.jurnalmamberamofoja.com/pengacara-joshua-rumbiak-dan-rekannya-dianiaya-diduga-oleh-anggota-tni-di-timika/>

<sup>110</sup> Human Rights Monitor, "Military members accused of fatally torturing Papuan youth in Intan Jaya for wearing a t-shirt with Morning Star", 25th July 2025,

<https://humanrightsmonitor.org/case-news/military-members-accused-of-fatally-torturing-papuan-youth-in-intan-jaya-for-wearing-a-t-shirt-with-morning-star/>

proportionate.<sup>111</sup> They were travelling back from a graduation ceremony,<sup>112</sup> and the police claimed that Morning Star flags were present in some of the vehicles, and that the damage was a result of a vehicle collision.<sup>113</sup> These incidents highlight the extent of the militarisation of the territory, and the brutality that can be inflicted by the security forces to contain even small acts of self-expression and dissent.

## Media and Human Rights Defenders

Media and Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) have faced extensive challenges during 2025, reflecting broader patterns of intimidation faced by civil society in general, but also highlighting regime attempts to silence particularly troubling voices.

At certain events throughout the year, journalists have faced intimidation for just trying to carry out their job of reporting the news. In September, a journalist for *Tribun Papua* was covering the demonstration by students at Cendrawasih University. As the demonstration was being dispersed, the journalist had been recording a livestream for the newspaper and was questioned by the police as to what he was doing.<sup>114</sup> He was then accosted and grabbed by police who asked for his credentials.<sup>115</sup> Later in October, several journalists from *Papuanewsonline.com* faced intimidation in Mimika. The website had covered findings by the national financial watchdog of irregularities in government spending in the area.<sup>116</sup> The journalists faced verbal intimidation by the police, intimidating phone calls, police turning up at night, physical and psychological intimidation, and police extracting forced confessions from them.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> NadiPapua.com, “KNPB Wilayah Nabire Keluarkan Himbuan dan Pernyataan Sikap Jelang 1 Desember”, 30th November 2025, <https://nadipapua.com/post-knpb-wilayah-nabire-keluarkan-himbuan-dan-pernyataan-sikap-jelang-1-desember-669>

<sup>112</sup> Human Rights Monitor, “Death of theology student following alleged Police abuse in Nabire, Central Papua”, 12th January 2026, <https://humanrightsmonitor.org/case/death-of-theology-student-following-alleged-police-abuse-in-nabire-central-papua/>

<sup>113</sup> PapedaNews.com, “Pertemuan secara terbuka, pihak keluarga korban ,para kepala suku dan Kapolres Nabire terkait korban Lakalantas”, 29th November 2025, <https://papedanews.com/pertemuan-secara-terbuka-pihak-keluarga-korban-para-kepala-suku-dan-kapolres-nabire-terkait-korban-lakalantas/>

<sup>114</sup> Aliansi Jurnalis Independen, “Meliput Demonstrasi, Jurnalis Papua Alami Serangan”, 30th September 2025, <https://advokasi.aji.or.id/aktif/meliput-demonstrasi-jurnalis-papua-alami-serangan>

<sup>115</sup> Suara Papua, “Oknum Polisi Intimidasi Jurnalis Tribun Papua Saat Liput Aksi Mahasiswa di Uncen”, 30th September 2025, <https://suarapapua.com/2025/09/30/oknum-polisi-intimidasi-jurnalis-tribun-papua-saat-liput-aksi-mahasiswa-di-uncen/>

<sup>116</sup> Tempo, “Empat Jurnalis Papuanewsonline Diduga Diintimidasi dan Dianiaya Kasat Reskrim Polres Mimika”, 7th October 2025, <https://www.tempo.co/hukum/empat-jurnalis-papuanewsonline-diduga-diintimidasi-dan-dianiaya-kasat-reskrim-polres-mimika-2077145>

<sup>117</sup> Aliansi Jurnalis Independen, “KKJ Kecam Keras Persekusi dan Intimidasi Kasat Reskrim Mimika dan Anggota Polisi terhadap Empat Jurnalis”, 7th October 2025, <https://aji.or.id/informasi/kkj-kecam-keras-persekusi-dan-intimidasi-kasat-reskrim-mimika-dan-anggota-pol>

Certain journalists covering stories uncomfortable for the authorities have faced attempts to intimidate them into silence. Two incidents within a month of each other took place in Sorong against the same person. On 20th January, a reporter from *Tribun Sorong*, Safwan, found that one of the tyres of his motorbike had been slashed, and this occurred on the same day that he had released a report on the killing of a member of the Navy close to the city.<sup>118</sup> Meanwhile, in February, he met with an informant covering developments on the same story. On the way home, he was deliberately run over by a 4x4 vehicle, causing severe injuries.<sup>119</sup> It seems clear that unknown actors were frustrated with Safwan's probing into what are clearly sensitive military affairs, and hoped to intimidate him into removing the story from the media spotlight.

Dead animals were also sent to intimidate high profile journalists and HRDs. Francisca Christy Rosana, an editor of national media outlet *Tempo* and host of the popular *Bocor Alus Politik* Podcast, was sent a pig's head without ears on 19th March, whilst another package was found full of dead mice.<sup>120</sup> Meanwhile, on 30th December 2025 a dead chicken was sent to a campaign manager at Greenpeace, accompanied by a note saying "Be careful about what you say, if you want to keep your family safe".<sup>121</sup> In both incidents, the perpetrators are unknown, and it is clear that this hiding in the shadows and sending animal corpses is intended to stoke fear among people speaking up against abuses by the authorities.



The authorities are directing a broader pattern of intimidation against HRDs across the region who speak up for their communities in different ways. In January, HRD Tineke Rumkabu, who was a survivor of the 1998 Biak Massacre perpetrated by the Indonesian military, was pulled aside and questioned by security force personnel whilst she was attending a church service, on suspicion of a potential connection with the Free Papua Movement. Later on that day, her house was visited by military personnel without a warrant or permit.<sup>122</sup> She has shared her testimony in

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[isi-terhadap?fbclid=IwY2xjawNSNIdleHRuA2FlbQlxMAABHjd0HzwvF61ZSf0kvL0RkkCXY-Z5Ff2GNOXkMROggCownsaEyhVhjlzlvvis\\_aem\\_JqQCOEuU7pEmUSNShKCZsA](https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/articles/cvg5lxnzzv4o)

<sup>118</sup> Aliansi Jurnalis Independen, "Menulis Berita, Jurnalis Tribun Sorong Alami Intimidasi", 20th January 2025, <https://advokasi.aji.or.id/aktif/menulis-berita-jurnalis-tribun-sorong-alami-intimidasi>

<sup>119</sup> Aliansi Jurnalis Independen "Jurnalis Tribunnews Sorong Alami Teror", 26th February 2025, <https://advokasi.aji.or.id/aktif/jurnalis-tribunnews-sorong-alami-teror>

<sup>120</sup> BBC Indonesia, "Jurnalis Tempo diteror paket berisi bangkai tikus yang dipenggal dan kepala babi – "Kondisi pers nasional tidak sedang baik-baik saja"", 21st March 2025, <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/articles/cvg5lxnzzv4o>

<sup>121</sup> Greenpeace, "Rumah Aktivis Greenpeace Mendapat Kiriman Bangkai Ayam, Hentikan Teror terhadap Masyarakat Sipil!", 31st December 2025, <https://www.greenpeace.org/indonesia/siaran-pers/65680/rumah-aktivis-greenpeace-mendapat-kiriman-bangkai-ayam-hentikan-teror-terhadap-masyarakat-sipil/>

<sup>122</sup> Human Rights Monitor, "Human rights defenders in West Papua under surveillance: Security force members again intimidate activist Tineke Rumkabu", 13th February 2025,

numerous fora, and it seems the local security force personnel want her voice to be silenced by making false accusations against her and trying to intimidate her. In Yahukimo in March and April, Marcho Pahabol, who had been speaking up about the execution of Tobias Silak by security forces in 2024, was assaulted in a knife attack by a police officer, and faced nightly disturbances outside his accommodation.<sup>123</sup> Indigenous activists speaking up against PSN which are driving communities from their land, have also faced intimidation. Vincen Kwipalo was subjected to an attack on his home by a man who broke the windows in his house, in retribution for his and his tribe's activism against the arrival of a PSN in the area, which had been seizing their land.<sup>124</sup> This highlights the evolving challenges that people campaigning against government projects face, such as Prabowo's PSN prioritising better returns for investors in the resource economy in the face of the desires and needs of local communities, and how security forces try and continue to force them through despite the determined opposition of HRDs.

## Internet Freedom

Concerns over freedom of the Internet took a new turn in 2025, with targeted intimidatory actions against news outlets and journalists. These included authorities demanding that different articles be taken down from the websites of reputable media outlets covering uncomfortable topics for the Indonesian Government in relation to West Papua. *Suara Papua* published an article on 22nd March regarding the protests against MBG that had taken place across West Papua. An unknown number then phoned the journalist who had written the article, demanding a meeting. Two days later, the article was no longer available on the website.<sup>125</sup> The writer of an article covering military figures working in civilian roles on *Detik's* website on 22nd May also faced intimidation after the article went viral, including two physical attacks by unknown perpetrators where he was pulled to the ground, as well as online attacks in an effort to take the article down,<sup>126</sup> which was then done the following day.<sup>127</sup> These show clear tactics on the part of the security services to suppress free expression online by intimidating reporters and their organisations to take down articles that they don't agree with.

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<https://humanrightsmonitor.org/case/human-rights-defenders-in-west-papua-under-surveillance-security-force-members-again-intimidate-activist-tineke-rumkabu/>

<sup>123</sup> Human Rights Monitor, "Escalating intimidation against human rights defender in Yahukimo", 9th April 2025,

<https://humanrightsmonitor.org/case/escalating-intimidation-against-human-rights-defender-in-yahukimo/>

<sup>124</sup> Tempo, "Warga yang Tolak PSN Tebu di Merauke Diserang, Rumahnya Dirusak", 7th October 2025, <https://www.tempo.co/lingkungan/warga-yang-tolak-psn-tebu-di-merauke-diserang-rumahnya-dirusak-2077173>

<sup>125</sup> Aliansi Jurnalis Independen, "Artikel Hilang di Website [SuaraPapua.com](https://suarapapua.com)", 24th March 2025, <https://advokasi.aji.or.id/index.php/aktif/artikel-hilang-di-website-suarapapua.com>

<sup>126</sup> Tempo, "Serangan Berulang terhadap Pengkritik UU TNI, Kenapa Tak Pernah Tuntas?", 28th May 2025, <https://www.tempo.co/hukum/intimidasi-pengkritik-uu-tni-1568718>

<sup>127</sup> PBHI, "Siaran Pers Koalisi Masyarakat Sipil untuk Reformasi Sektor Keamanan

Praktik Intimidasi dan Teror Terhadap Masyarakat Merupakan Ancaman Serius bagi Demokrasi dan Kebebasan Sipil", 24th May 2025,

<https://pbhi.or.id/praktik-intimidasi-dan-teror-terhadap-masyarakat-merupakan-ancaman-serius-bagi-demokrasi-dan-kebebasan-sipil/>



There was also a disturbing event where a human rights defender had false statements on social media attributed to him. Theo Hese gem, Executive Director of the Papuan Justice and Human Integrity Foundation (*Yayasan Keadilan dan Keutuhan Manusia Papua* (YKKMP)), had his image used on Facebook posts by numerous other Facebook accounts, purportedly calling for action against the TPNPB after a shooting in a hospital in Wamena by unknown individuals.<sup>128</sup> These posts were even used by the media in quotes attributed to him for an article on this event.<sup>129</sup> These sorts of actions severely undermine the credibility of HRDs like Theo, who strive to maintain neutrality in order to call out abuses by any actor in West Papua. Articles and posts which misattribute statements to HRDs are intimidatory and undermine HRDs' ability to carry out their work.

Finally, issues around internet connectivity continued, with some leading to protests that were then suppressed by the authorities. For example, damage to the Sulawesi-Maluku-Papua undersea cable disrupted broadband services in South Papua in August.<sup>130</sup> Frustrations regarding reduced internet connectivity and its effect on people's livelihoods spilled over into demonstrations against the Telkom company on 21st August in Merauke, with protestors demanding compensation. This protest escalated when a fight broke out between a member of the security services and a demonstrator, before the police finally forcefully dispersed the demonstration.<sup>131</sup> Internet freedom requires constant connectivity, and there had been examples in previous years of connectivity being deliberately degraded during times of mass protest to try and prevent the public getting information that would bring them to the streets. Even if that is not the case here, the fact that a demonstration was suppressed for calling attention to connectivity issues shows that it is still able to prompt restrictions to internet freedom, but potentially in a new and unexpected way.

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<sup>128</sup> YKKMP, "Teror Terbuka Terhadap Theo Hese gem (Pembela HAM Paoua)", 3rd June 2025

<sup>129</sup> Wartaplus.com, "Penembakan di Area Rumah Sakit Umum Wamena Melanggar Hukum Humaniter Internasional", 31st May 2025, <https://wartaplus.com/read/19963/Penembakan-di-Area-Rumah-Sakit-Umum-Wamena-Melanggar-Hukum-Humaniter>

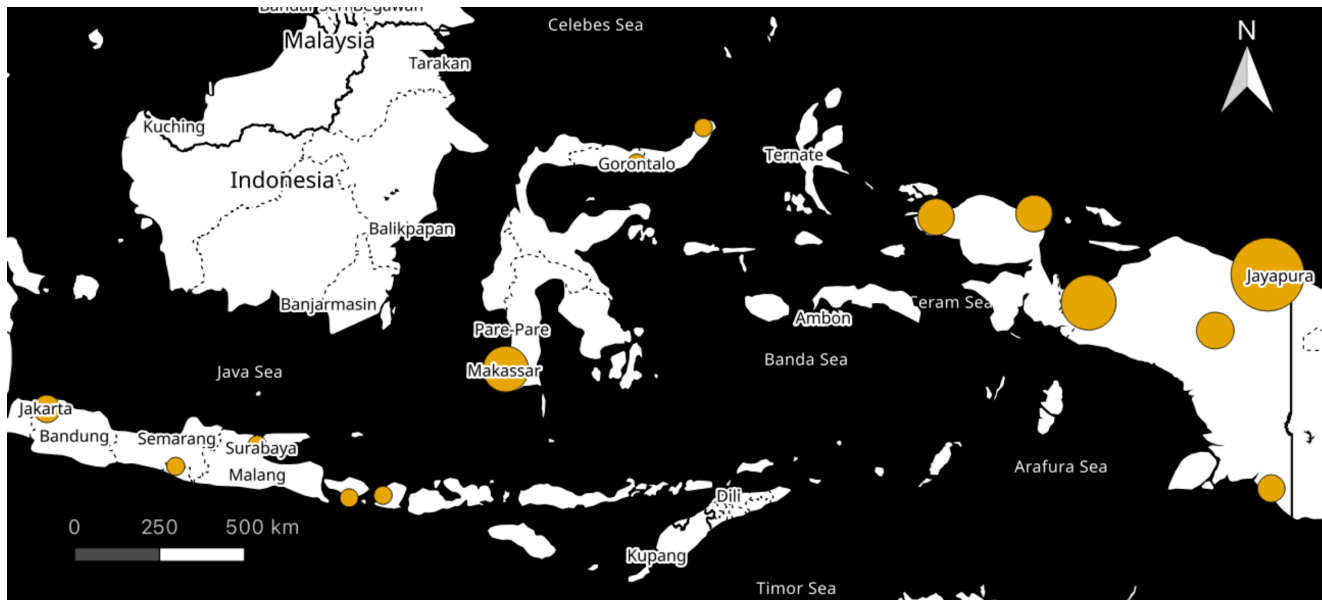
<sup>130</sup> Antara, "Telkomsel says double shunt fault disrupts broadband services in Papua", 16th August 2025, [https://en.antaranews.com/news/373845/telkomsel-says-double-shunt-fault-disrupts-broadband-services-in-papua?utm\\_source=antaranews&utm\\_medium=desktop&utm\\_campaign=popular\\_right](https://en.antaranews.com/news/373845/telkomsel-says-double-shunt-fault-disrupts-broadband-services-in-papua?utm_source=antaranews&utm_medium=desktop&utm_campaign=popular_right)

<sup>131</sup> BBC Indonesia, "Pelaku usaha hingga ojol merugi akibat gangguan internet di Merauke", 24th August 2025, <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/articles/cy0829kx4reo>

# Trends

## Locations

Figure 2 below shows the map with regard to the locations of West Papua-related Freedom of Expression and Assembly incidents in 2025.



*Figure 2: Incident map of 2025 Freedom of Expression and Assembly incidents. The size of the circle indicates the number of incidents that took place in each province.*

In total, 14 provinces had incidents regarding Freedom of Expression and Assembly in West Papua in 2025. In addition, incidents also took place online, though none took place internationally over the course of 2025. Papua remains the province with the largest number of incidents, followed by Central Papua and then South Sulawesi. Unlike in previous years, the number of incidents wasn't as concentrated in Papua Province, but was more widely distributed across West Papua and Indonesia, with a noticeable hotspot being South Sulawesi, which is the first time that a province outside of the West Papua region has appeared in the top three. Most of Papua Province's incidents happened in Jayapura and the surrounding areas and heavily leaned towards arrest and dispersal events. Central Papua's events were more widely distributed across the province and included a substantial number of intimidatory events in the province, whilst all of South Sulawesi's events were centred on the provincial capital Makassar, and included intimidation and violations of freedom of expression against the Papuan student population of the city.

Incidents also occurred in Jakarta, Bali, Yogyakarta, Mataram, and Gorontalo and Manado, located on the northern tip of the island of Sulawesi, affecting more provinces than in 2024. Many of these provinces faced at least one intimidation event, showing the widespread nature of the clampdown on free expression in 2025, and often specifically targeted Papuan students who had been speaking up in solidarity campaigns in their respective cities and universities. Smaller scale arrest and dispersal events also took place in these areas, as well as other provinces in West Papua but, with a few notable exceptions, they tended to be targeted at leadership figures in the student or activist movements.

## Number and Groups Affected

Figure 3 looks out how the figures for the number of incidents are broken down by each month.

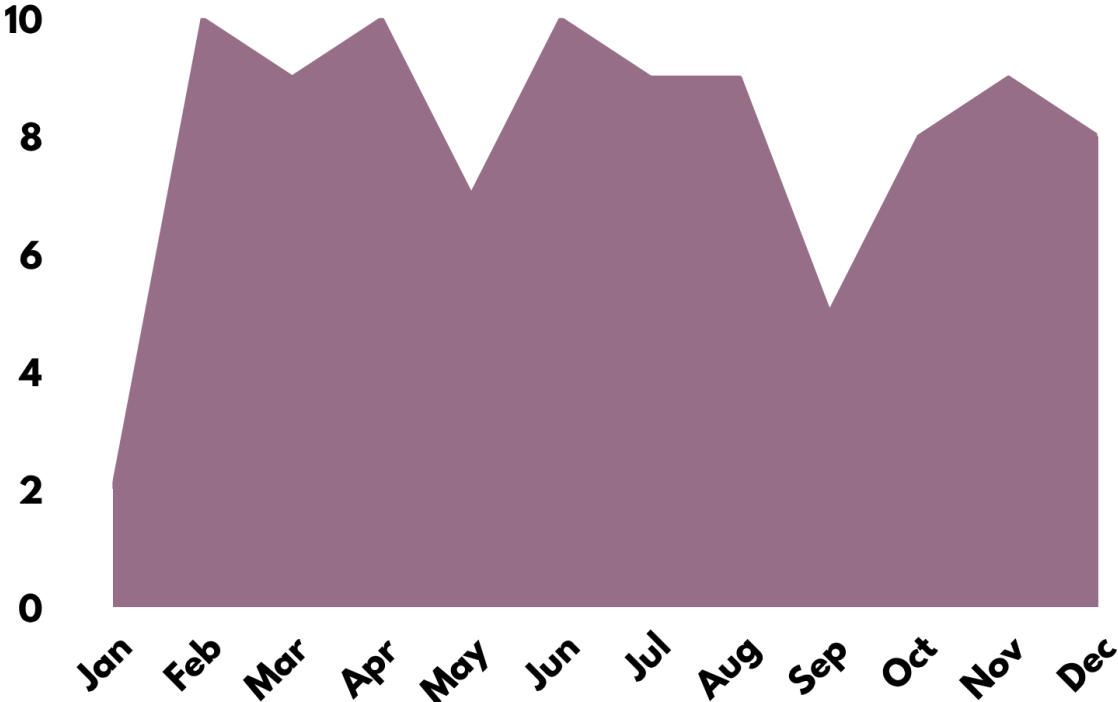


Figure 3: Number of incidents by month

In contrast to previous years, there has been a more evenly distributed event profile throughout the year, though the number of events has remained the same as in 2024. The trend has traditionally been that higher event regularity is seen around the big anniversaries in Papuan history which are in August and December, as well as whenever there are big national policy pushes. There were still events in these months, but the number of mass protest events was down from 2024, especially in August. This has been balanced by an increased number of

incidents in June, which included a greater number of intimidation incidents. With there being significantly more intimidation incidents in 2025, these are more evenly distributed throughout the year, and are not limited in the same way as mass protests can be to particular dates. It is interesting to look at this data alongside that in Figure 4, to compare the number of incidents per month with the number of people affected by incidents each month:

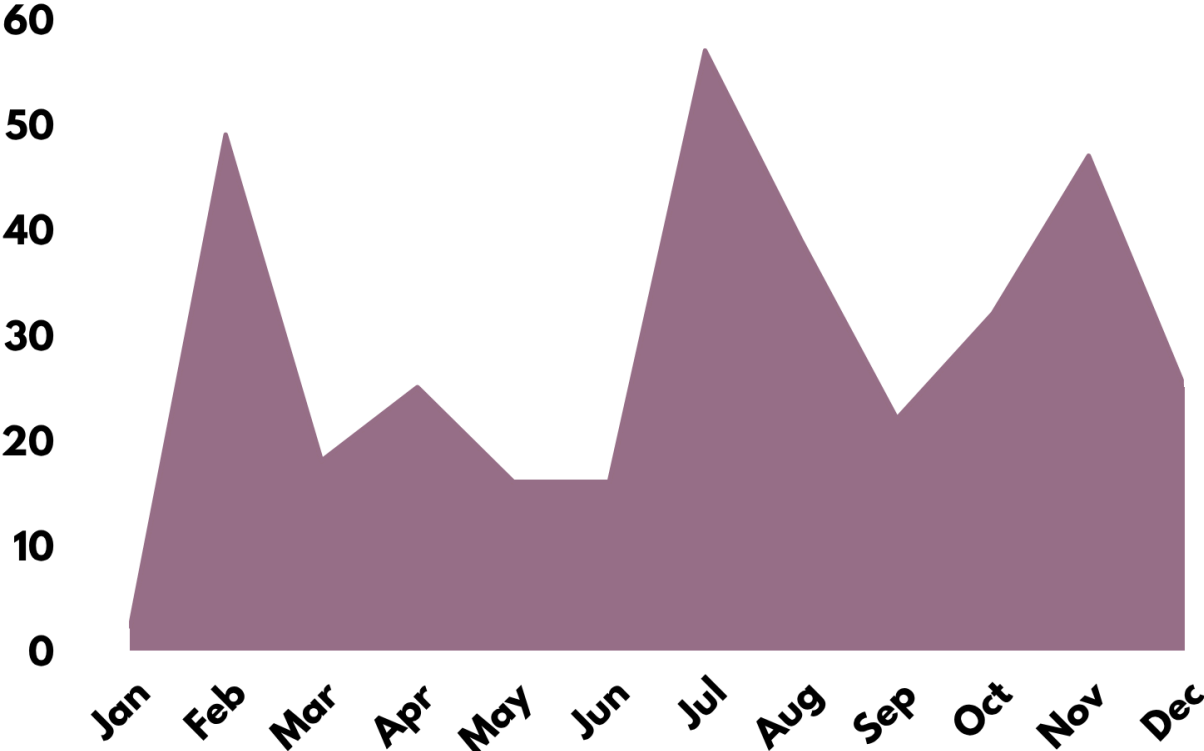


Figure 4: Number of people affected by Freedom of Expression and Assembly in 2025, by month

In the same way as the events had fewer peaks in 2025, so the peaks in the number of people confirmed affected in the events across the year have also been fewer. The overall number is down on last year, including the loss of the usual high peaks in August and December, replaced by lower peaks in February, July and November. February saw the protests against MBG in numerous cities around West Papua and July saw a mass arrest of ULMWP representatives at an event, whilst November saw intimidation of activists protesting against the indictment of the Sorong Four. The peaks of the mass protests in August and December are much more prominent, as well as the protests against militarism in April. People affected by the pre-election events in February led to a higher number of people being seen in the figures for this month. At least 348 people were affected by the incidents over the course of 2025. The actual number is likely to be higher, but this report only incorporates figures where the numbers at each event could be verified. This includes at least 210 people arrested, 74 injured and 3 deaths during the year.

In addition, we can see that a broader number of groups in total were targeted in 2025, with a breakdown of these seen in Figure 5.

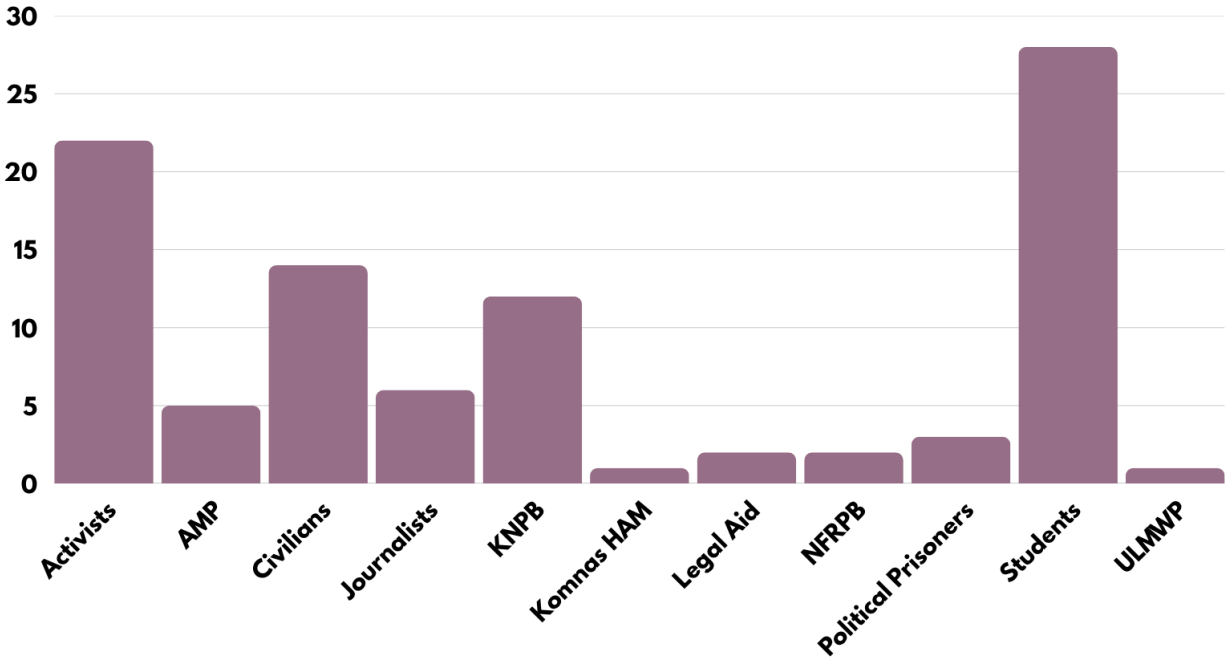
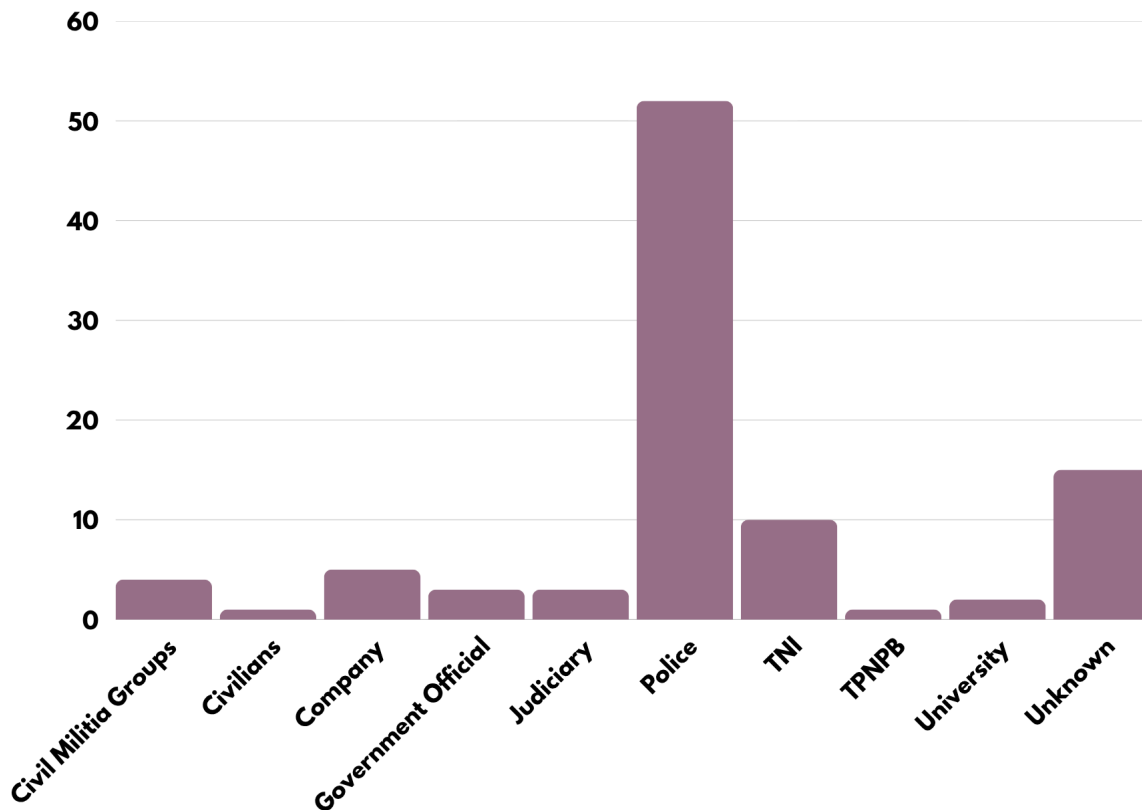


Figure 5: Number of incidents by each group affected by Freedom of Expression and Assembly Incidents in 2025

The majority of those affected is consistent with previous years, but does also include attempts at intimidating Komnas HAM personnel, who ended up being shot at by the TPNPB. The total impact on campaign groups on West Papua hit 42 per cent of all incidents, which is lower than previous years, as students were the group that ended up being the most affected in 2025, bearing the brunt of intimidatory activities in particular, as well as dispersal events. Intimidatory actions against individuals and smaller groups shows a return to the proclivity towards these sorts of tactics in 2023, which contrasts to the election year of 2024, but also the climate of fear that Prabowo seeks to create against those who might oppose his policies.

## Perpetrator Groups

Figure 6 breaks down the incidents that occurred with the group which perpetrated it:

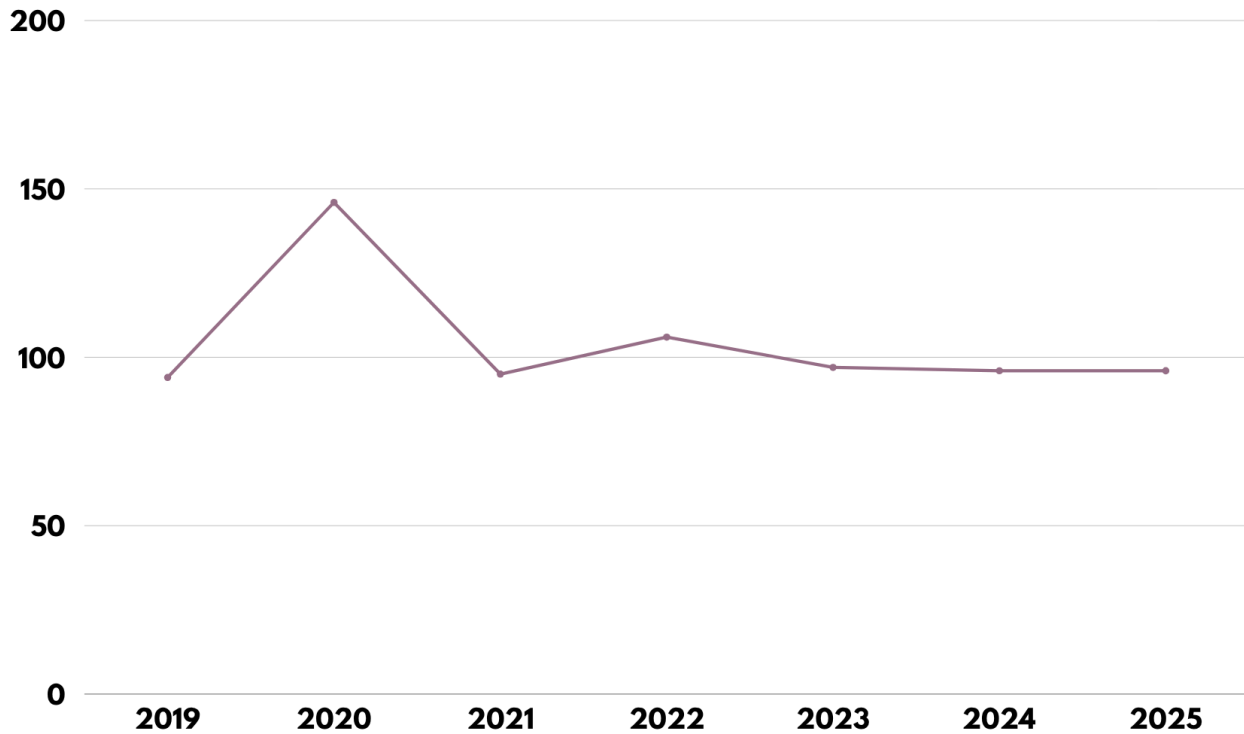


*Figure 6: Number of incidents by each group perpetrating Freedom of Expression and Assembly Incidents in 2025*

The picture in 2025 appears to continue to show a preponderance of security force personnel, including police, carrying out or being involved in incidents, which together cover around 65 per cent of reported incidents. This is consistent with levels seen in previous years. The high number of cases committed by unknown perpetrators has been a cause of concern during 2025, and points to a large number of intimidation incidents where no actor involved could be identified. Moreover, companies have come into more and more conflict with local indigenous communities that are speaking up to protect their land, explaining companies' relatively strong involvement in silencing local protests against their plans and intimidating local leaders in order to compel communities into acquiescence.

## Longer-term Trends

Looking at long term trends, the first thing to look at is how the number of incidents has changed over the years. Figure 7 shows the following:



*Figure 7: Number of incidents each year between 2019 to 2025*

It seems that the number of events has been relatively stable since 2021, showing a continuation of a similar intensity of repression of free expression that has been prevalent in West Papua over a number of years, which contrasts with the drop in how many people these incidents affect. This adds weight to a shift in strategy from both the security forces and those trying to express their opposition in an increasingly hostile climate, with fewer large-scale actions and more targeted police operations to intimidate people.

This can then be broken down by how each event type has changed, as can be seen in Figure 8.

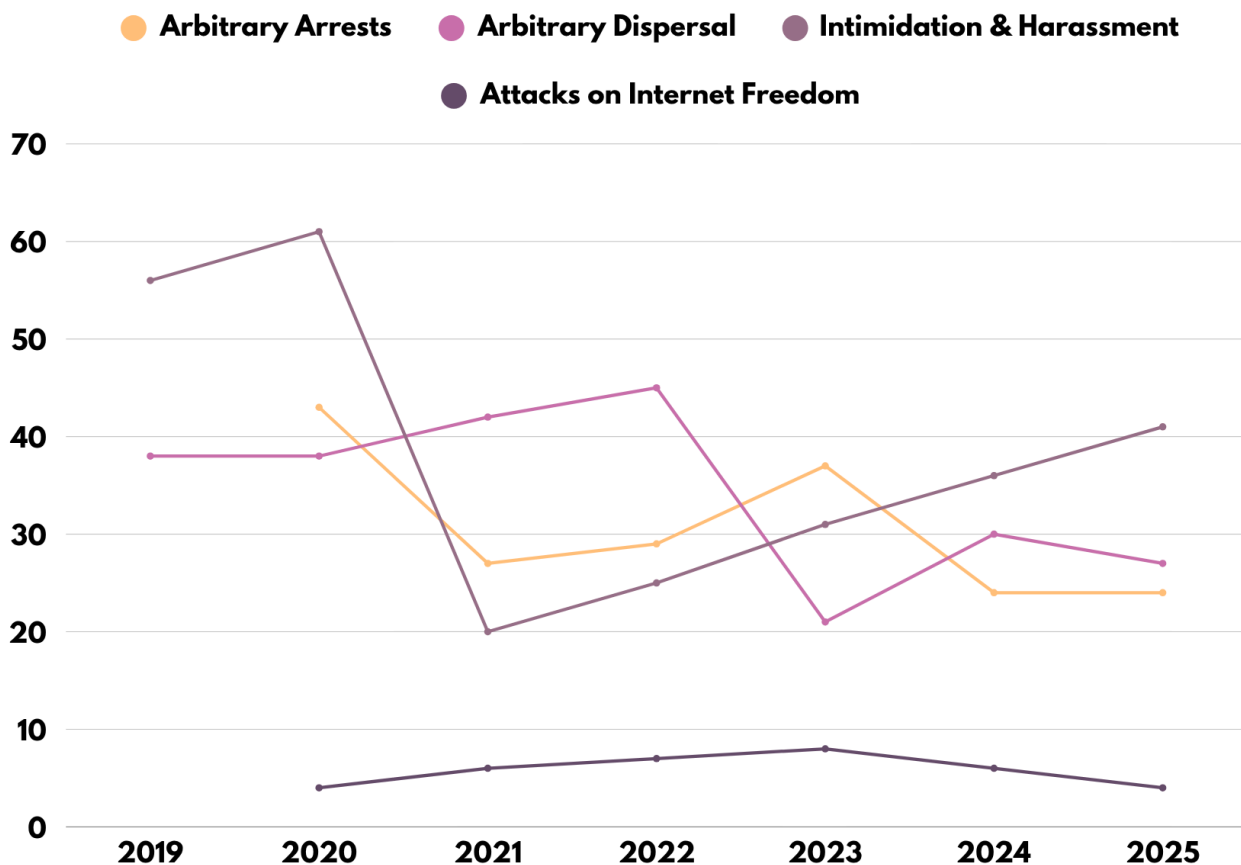


Figure 8: Number of incidents broken down by type each year between 2019 to 2025. To note, before 2022, Arbitrary Dispersals had included events now further categorised by Excessive Use of Force and Restrictions on Freedom of Assembly. Arbitrary Arrests before 2023 included Legal System Weaknesses. Intimidation before 2022 included Torture & Ill Treatment, Killing, Human Rights Defenders and Media Freedom.

In this graph, we can see that Arbitrary Dispersal and Intimidation and Harassment levels have continued a pattern of increasing since 2023, with the latter facing a steady increase over the past four years. The number of arbitrary arrest events have remained stable, as have attacks on internet freedom. However, figure 9 shows a more complicated picture with regard to this change as the number of people who were arbitrarily arrested has changed over the years:

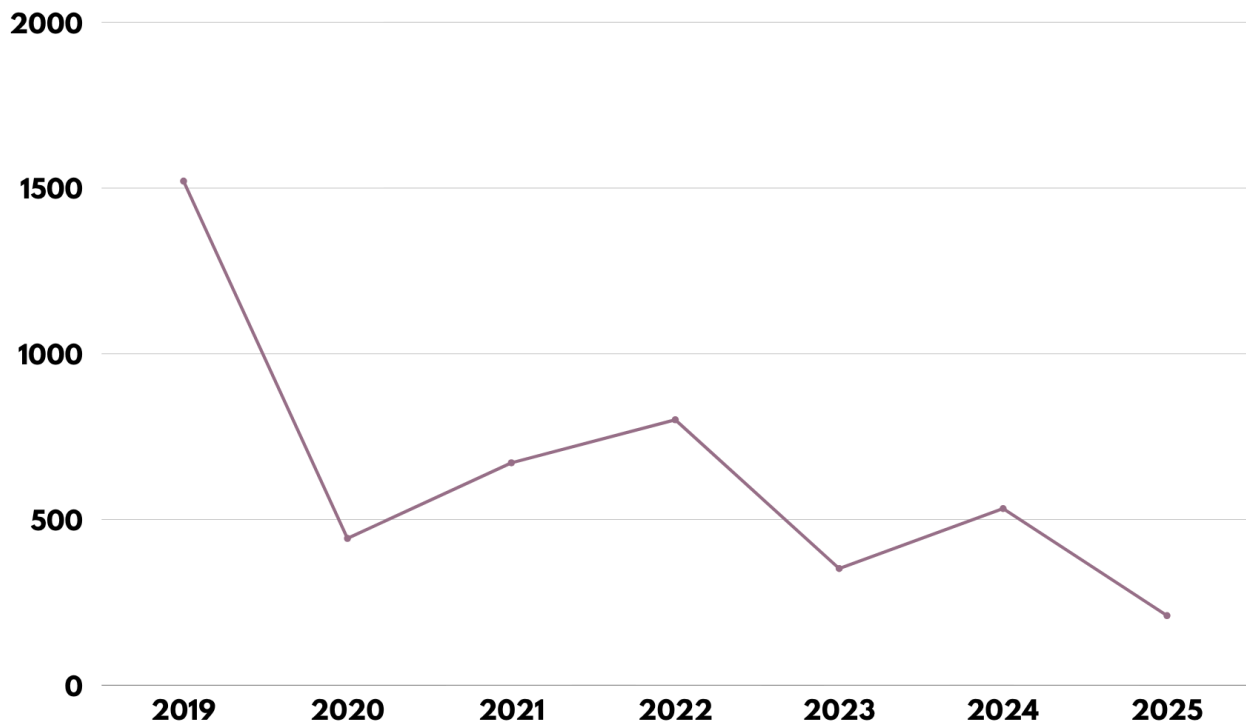


Figure 9: Number of people arrested each year between 2019 to 2025

In Figure 9, we can see more of a return to the pattern we saw in 2023 with regards to more targeted arrest incidents, as the number of incidents remained stable from 2024, but the numbers affected are down. This points to the spike in 2024 being more down to an increased number of mass arrest events, which may have been prompted by the fact that it was a general election year and more mass protest events, as well as intensive police responses, were reported. It is critical to continue to monitor these trends, especially to assess whether 2023 and 2025 represent a continued push for targeted arrests of people that the Government regards as particularly troublesome rather than mass arrests, or whether fewer arrests of this kind are due to a climate of fear prevailing, meaning that fewer people are taking to the streets more generally.

# Conclusion

The year 2025 has revealed much about Prabowo's continuing priorities. A desire to steam ahead with an agenda of economic populism and crony capitalism in the face of economic tailwinds has led to mass discontent, and repression where dissent is found. However, a toxic cocktail of the work of PSNs, repression and intimidation has led to a climate of greater fear and uncertainty when it comes to West Papua, which the mass protests of August did not touch to any great extent. Whilst not precluding the strong community organisation on display through initiatives such as Solidaritas Merauke, which is forming a front of activists and indigenous communities to fight against the displacement and destruction of peoples from their land, this chilling effect more generally across the region is a significant development. This report notes three important trends that can be discerned which may go some way towards an explanation:

Firstly, there has been a general trend since 2023 of strong-arm and targeted arrest tactics to create a climate of fear, with 2025 showing a continuation of this pattern in West Papua. 2024 was somewhat anomalous due to the fact that it was a general election year. There has been a noticeable downturn in mass protest events in West Papua (and those arrested in them), which shows the dire atmosphere of free expression that these conditions are creating. Whilst the tactics are a continuation of those used by the security services under Jokowi, Prabowo's reputation as a belligerent military man, his prioritising and deepening the involvement of the military at all levels of government and the political establishment rallying behind him has shrunk the space of the political opposition, particularly as there is a lack of viable alternatives at the highest level of the political establishment. This allows a sense of fear and hopelessness to develop, thus making people think twice before criticising government policy.

Secondly, mirroring Prabowo's desire to intensify PSNs throughout West Papua during his term as President, there has been a noticeable uptick of intimidation, arrests or attack incidents against those speaking up for indigenous communities affected by these policies. This shows an intensification of tactics that began in 2024. Prabowo has doubled down in comparison with Jokowi, by making sweeping regulatory changes through his PSN policy that affect vast tracts of rainforest in West Papua, including two million hectares for the Merauke food estate alone. Mining is being carried out with no consideration of the environment and people in Raja Ampat. HRDs and communities have suffered for speaking up against this existential threat to the communities and livelihoods of people living in these areas. This represents something new, and shows that the Government is increasingly seeing different forms of speech and resistance as threats to its plans, particularly as indigenous and environmental rights directly challenges its flagship policies around PSNs. Therefore, it is not just speech in support of independence that the Government sees as threatening, but also that which could threaten the Government's desire to increase elites bankrolling these projects.

Thirdly, intimidation targeted at Papuans across Indonesia has meant the greater geographic spread of incidents recorded this year across the country. Whilst there were no international incidents recorded this year, the fact that a province outside of West Papua (that of South

Sulawesi) managed to get into the top three of provinces affected by incidents this year shows a definite increased frequency and proportion of overall events now occurring outside of the region. This has not simply arisen this year, as South Sulawesi, and Makassar in particular, has been the preferred destination of the authorities to surreptitiously transfer and then try West Papuan political prisoners from their region, obscuring the judicial process and making it harder for those accused to receive legal and familial support. Intimidation campaigns, such as the sending of dead animals to prominent activists, students and journalists across Indonesia who are covering issues regarding West Papua show plainly the greater geographical spread across the country. It also indicates how the increased activism of Papuan students in particular, including demonstrations and campaigning, have made them more prominent and therefore more targeted than in previous years. How this may evolve in upcoming years, particularly if the situation within West Papua tends to be even more tightly controlled, could mean that activism and subsequent repression outside of the region may become more prominent, especially if operationalised by a greater push by intelligence services to identify and silence people who are regarded as particularly troublesome.

# Recommendations

## Indonesian Government

- To end the campaign of targeted arrests and intimidation carried out against activists and leaders of pro-independence groups which is meant to create an atmosphere of fear, and to end collusion with non-state actors carrying out attacks on demonstrations. We furthermore call on the Government to bring promptly to justice cases of torture, as well as to thoroughly investigate the sending of dead animals with threatening messages to various activists and journalists during 2025.
- To take note and act on the negative impacts of PSNs. We note in particular that PSNs have led to increasing securitisation around these projects and human rights violations against indigenous groups and those who speak out against them, both in Indonesia and internationally..
- To stop the needless transfer of those imprisoned for political reasons from their home communities to court sessions thousands of miles away, under trumped up reasons of national security and natural disasters concerns, depriving them of their rights to a fair trial and their legal team, as well as contact with their friends and family. In addition, to end the practice of repression and mass arrests against those protesting against verdicts, and ensure the judiciary upholds the rights of supporters of the accused to enter the courtroom to observe the trial.

## International Community

- To pressure the Government of Indonesia to urgently accept the visit of the UN High Commissioner of Human Rights to West Papua. To reiterate UN calls regarding concerns over human rights violations surrounding the Merauke food estate PSN, as well as the findings of the UN Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Rights highlighting the struggles of indigenous communities across West Papua. To bring Indonesia to account over these issues, particularly during its Chairmanship of the UN Human Rights Council in 2026.
- To call out abuses of environmental and human rights standards in Indonesia, especially regarding the involvement of foreign corporations and investment in projects in West Papua, including the case of Freeport. To strengthen monitoring of the EU's Deforestation Regulation and Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive in light of the recent trade deal signed between the bloc and Indonesia including PSNs which clearly fall short on meeting its standards. For the UK Government, to monitor compliance with the Economic Growth Partnership with Indonesia, which purports to protect primary forest, but which PSNs expressly contradict as these areas are targeted for deforestation and conversion into food and energy estates.