

Komnas Perempuan Condemns State Violence Against Demonstrators

Jakarta, 31st August 2025

The National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan) strongly condemns the acts of violence committed by the police during the demonstrations on 25 and 28 August 2025. The expression of public aspirations through peaceful protest is explicitly guaranteed under Article 28E(3) of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, which affirms the right to freedom of association, assembly, and expression. These protections are reinforced by Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which Indonesia ratified through Law No. 12 of 2005 and Law No. 39 of 1999 on Human Rights.

Komnas Perempuan regrets and demands accountability for the repressive actions, including beatings, mob assaults, and the alleged use of expired tear gas that caused injuries to demonstrators and bystanders. Police forces deployed tactical vehicles in violation of their own standard operating procedures, resulting in the death of Affan Kurniawan, an online motorcycle taxi driver. Komnas Perempuan extends its deepest condolences to the victim's family.

These violent actions clearly contradict constitutional guarantees, including the right to be free from violence and torture under Article 28I(1) of the 1945 Constitution, as well as Regulation No. 8/2009 of the Chief of Police on the Implementation of Human Rights Principles and Standards in Policing Duties.

Komnas Perempuan has coordinated with the Joint Cooperation Team for the Prevention of Torture (KuPP), comprising the National Human Rights Commission (Komnas HAM), Komnas Perempuan, the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI), the Witness and Victim Protection Agency (LPSK), the Ombudsman, and the National Disability Commission (KND) to respond to this violence. According to Komnas HAM, police arrested 351 people during the 25 August demonstration and approximately 600 on 28 August, alongside arrests in several provinces. Komnas Perempuan notes with particular concern that violence extended to bystanders, including women, one of whom sustained injuries and damage to her work equipment as a result of tear gas.

State violence against demonstrators not only harms individuals but also erodes democracy and public trust in government. Against the backdrop of growing public discontent with worsening social, economic, and political conditions, such as rising taxes, economic hardship, and dismissive statements from members of parliament, demonstrations remain a legitimate channel for the public to express their concerns. The violent dispersal of such demonstrations constitutes not only a grave violation of Indonesia's own constitutional guarantees but also a breach of its binding international human rights obligations. As emphasized by the Human Rights Committee in General Comment

No. 34, freedom of expression is indispensable for the full development of the person and essential for any society. At the same time, the Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association has consistently affirmed that states must protect, not suppress, demonstrations, particularly where marginalized groups, including women, are directly affected.

The police must return to their core mandate: to protect citizens, ensure peace, and safeguard the exercise of fundamental freedoms. The excessive use of force not only violates domestic and international standards but also spreads fear among the public. This situation demands urgent attention from the Government of Indonesia, the House of Representatives, and local authorities to strengthen accountability and ensure state institutions act in accordance with the people's mandate.

Komnas Perempuan underscores the need for strict accountability for police officers who commit violence, with no space for impunity, and for comprehensive remedies for victims. Furthermore, Komnas Perempuan calls for the immediate release of detained demonstrators, including minors arbitrarily arrested, and guarantees that no further intimidation will occur.

Komnas Perempuan is closely monitoring the escalation of demonstrations across various regions, including Depok, Yogyakarta, Semarang, Surabaya, Makassar, Mataram, and others, where the risks of unrest and wider violence persist. Komnas Perempuan urges the Government and police to refrain from repressive approaches or extreme measures that restrict civil liberties or instill fear. All state actions must remain proportionate and consistent with international human rights standards, including the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials (1990) and the recommendations of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association.

In light of these grave concerns, Komnas Perempuan recommends:

1. The President and the House of Representatives (DPR RI) must be responsive and not turn a blind eye to the root causes underlying the demonstrations, while also taking strategic steps and implementing policies that prioritize a sense of justice. This includes a review of DPR allowances and facilities that undermine public trust, the cancellation of irrelevant awards or celebrations, as well as the practice of holding dual or distributive positions among political elites. These measures are crucial to prevent the Government and DPR RI from further worsening the public trust crisis amid difficult economic conditions caused by austerity, layoffs, rising taxes, and the heavy burden of living costs faced by society.
2. The Chief of the Indonesian National Police must reaffirm a human rights-based approach in carrying out the mandate of protecting the people, especially in the midst of the recent escalation of demonstrations, and immediately stop arbitrary arrests while releasing protest participants who were detained in Jakarta and other regions. In addition, ensuring that every arrested citizen has access to legal assistance that is accessible, fair, and free from discrimination.

3. The House of Representatives (DPR RI) must immediately enhance the accountability of its performance and conduct, while also fostering meaningful dialogue with the public to realize the reforms demanded by society.
4. Civil society members who experience or witness acts of violence, arbitrary arrests, and the loss of family members during demonstrations must promptly report them to civil society complaint channels and national human rights institutions.

Komnas Perempuan also encourages the public to exercise their right to protest wisely, by fostering solidarity, protecting one another, avoiding the destruction of public facilities, and refraining from actions that divide communities or invoke ethnic, religious, racial, or sectarian sentiments. Only through responsible and collective action can the people's aspirations be transformed into a genuine force for justice.