



Indonesian Press Freedom Situation Report 2024

A Report by The Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI)



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Foreword

The year 2024 marked a dark chapter for press freedom in Indonesia. Amid the national leadership transition from President Joko Widodo to President Prabowo Subianto, there were no clear signs of improved government attitudes toward the press. Instead, the environment for free expression and journalistic activity continued to deteriorate.

Under President Joko Widodo's administration, freedom of expression and press freedom were increasingly restricted. Although these freedoms appear to be legally protected, their practical implementation has been severely limited.

A major concern was the continued use of the Information and Electronic Transactions (ITE) Law, particularly its vague or "rubber" articles, to criminalize individuals for expressing dissent. Data from SAFEnet indicated 128 cases of ITE-related criminalization up to October 2024. Among them were the cases of labor activist Septia, who was reported by her employer, and environmental activist Daniel Tangkilisan in Jepara.

In addition to legal repression, the rise of digital "buzzers" (online influencers often linked to political agendas) severely damaged the democratic discourse. These actors distort facts, attack dissenting voices, and conduct coordinated harassment campaigns. Individuals with critical perspectives, particularly toward the government, frequently face digital persecution, including doxing and online threats. As a result, many users have been forced to close comment sections or delete their accounts altogether.

This troubling trend is reflected in the 2024 Press Freedom Index (Indeks Kemerdekaan Pers, IKP), released by the Indonesian Press Council, which recorded a score of 69.36—down from 71.57 in 2023.

The decline corresponds with several alarming incidents that took place in the final year of Joko Widodo's presidency. Most notably, the brutal murder of journalist Rico Sempurna and his family in Karo Regency, North Sumatra. The family perished in a deliberate arson attack, believed to be retaliation for Rico's investigative reporting on illegal gambling in the area. While several suspects have been arrested and are currently on trial, the alleged mastermind, identified by the initials HB, a military officer believed to own the gambling operation, has not yet been apprehended. This case underscores the enduring culture of impunity for state actors, even after being reported to the Commander of the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI) and the Military Police in Bukit Barisan.

Furthermore, many journalistic abuses continue to go unpunished. Journalists face physical violence from security personnel or unidentified attackers. In many cases, police reports are filed but investigations remain stagnant. Similarly, cases involving digital attacks on journalists and media outlets often end without meaningful follow-up, despite law enforcement's access to advanced cyber tools and technical expertise.

Third, there has been negligence regarding the mass layoffs of media workers. In 2024, waves of layoffs swept through the media industry. In several cases, these dismissals violated labor laws. Worse still, union busting occurred in at least one national media company. In these instances, the Ministry or Department of Manpower often turned a blind eye and instead persuaded victims to accept the company's decision without resistance.

The government also demonstrates a fundamental distrust toward the press. Rather than relying on professional journalism, the government places greater trust in buzzers—paid influencers who act as unofficial public relations agents. Whatever government officials say is echoed by these buzzers to their followers without critique or context. In contrast, inviting the press means opening the door to public scrutiny and critical questioning. This trend was evident when President Joko Widodo invited buzzers, not the media, to visit the new capital city project in Nusantara (IKN¹).

It is not just the executive branch sidelining the press, the legislative body is also attempting to do the same. A draft Broadcasting Bill (RUU Penyiaran)

1 IKN stands for Ibu Kota Nusantara, the planned new capital city of Indonesia in East Kalimantan.

initiated by the House of Representatives (DPR) in 2024 further undermined media freedom. One of the draft articles explicitly prohibited the broadcast of investigative journalism. Although strong public opposition forced a postponement, the bill is scheduled for further discussion in 2025.

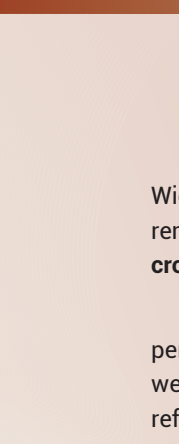
Throughout his ten-year presidency, Joko Widodo displayed no clear political will to improve press freedom. His silence and inaction toward the repressive conduct of his subordinates signalled passive approval of attacks on the press.

President Prabowo, in multiple speeches, described his administration as a continuation of the previous one, raising concerns that he may adopt a similar stance toward the media. This concern was reinforced during the presidential campaign when Prabowo refused to attend the media dialogue invitation organized by the Press Council, an event attended by the other two candidates either online or in person. His absence underscored the perception that Prabowo does not consider the press important.

Early in Prabowo's presidency, a plan was floated by the Presidential Communication Office to eliminate "doorstop" interviews—spontaneous press engagements with the president. Although later denied, public appearances of President Prabowo participating in such interviews remain exceedingly rare.

Reports received by AJI indicate growing self-censorship in newsrooms. These pressures often come from external parties calling editorial offices to demand the removal of certain news articles from online platforms. If left unchallenged, such practices threaten to return Indonesia to the New Order era, where media outlets feared and submitted to the whims of those in power.

In addition, the government is attempting to control the media through advertising or so-called "partnerships." While government advertisements are not inherently problematic, they must be clearly labeled as "advertisement," "sponsored content," "advertorial," or similar designations to distinguish them from editorial content. In practice, however, many such partnerships violate ethical boundaries. Government ads are disguised as news, and due to political and economic pressures, some media outlets compromise their integrity. In some cases, media outlets that publish critical content are threatened with the termination of government advertising deals. This raises serious questions about the government's commitment to press freedom.



Thus, although Indonesia witnessed a change in leadership from Joko Widodo to Prabowo Subianto, the overall condition of press freedom in 2024 remained grim. It was, in essence, a case of **“out of the tiger’s mouth, into the crocodile’s jaws.”**

AJI Indonesia has compiled this report as a reflection of 2024 from the perspective of journalists, highlighting issues of press freedom, journalist welfare, and the upholding of professional ethics. We invite you to read, reflect, and stand in solidarity.



Violence and Attacks on Press Freedom

AJI Indonesia documented 73 cases of violence against journalists and media outlets between January 1 and December 31, 2024.

The types of violations include one case of murder, 19 cases of physical violence, 17 cases of terror and intimidation, eight bans on news coverage, eight threats, six digital attacks, three police summonses for clarification, three cases of gender-based violence, two civil lawsuits against media outlets, five cases of equipment destruction or data deletion, and one case of self-censorship in a newsroom.

The perpetrators of these attacks were dominated by the police with 19 cases, followed by the military (TNI) with 11 cases, citizens including mass organizations with 11 cases, company staff with five cases, government officials with four cases, professionals with four cases, legislative officials with two cases, one court official, and one university rector.

AJI also noted 10 cases involving unidentified individuals, often related to digital attacks and acts of terror against journalists. Additionally, there have been several instances of self-censorship within editorial rooms of media organizations during 2024.

These incidents occurred in Jakarta and other provinces including East Java, Central Java, West Java, Bengkulu, Maluku, North Maluku, South Sulawesi, Central Sulawesi, Denpasar (Bali), Riau Islands, Jambi, West Nusa Tenggara, East Nusa Tenggara, North Sumatra, and East Kalimantan. Several cases were also reported in Papua, Central Papua, and Southwest Papua.

Of the 73 cases, seven involved attacks on journalists covering demonstrations monitoring the Constitutional Court (Mahkamah Konstitusi/MK) decision in the DPR RI complex and Regional People's representative Council (DPRD) offices in several cities on Thursday, August 22, 2024.

These simultaneous demonstrations were triggered by the Legislative Body (Baleg) of the DPR RI, which annulled the Constitutional Court's ruling on Law No. 10 of 2016 concerning Regional Elections (Pilkada Law). Protesters demanded that the DPR respect the Constitutional Court's decision on candidacy requirements. The protests turned chaotic, and some journalists became victims of police violence.

Ten of the recorded cases were linked to corruption-related issues, especially when journalists reported on suspected illegal fuel trading or hoarding, as well as after verdicts in corruption trials. Three cases were tied to environmental issues. Other attacks occurred during journalistic coverage of public protests, campaigns, discussions, and demonstrations criticizing legal, political, environmental, and health policies.

Several of the incidents were reported to law enforcement but remain unresolved. For example, Erwin Nayoan, a journalist from *Berantas Tipikor*, was assaulted on January 16, 2024, while documenting activities at a disputed plantation in Luwuk, Central Sulawesi. He filed a report with the local police, but no legal progress has been made.

Jenderal Louis Rehatta, a journalist with *Tribun Ambon*, was assaulted on January 16, 2024, while filming a rice truck accident belonging to Perum Bulog¹ in Maluku. He was intimidated and physically assaulted by Johar Isnain, head of Bulog's logistics division (JPLB - Jasa Prima Logistik Bulog) for North Maluku.

With support from AJI's local chapter in Ambon, the journalist filed a police report. The case proceeded to court, where prosecutors sought a six-month prison sentence under Article 351 of the Criminal Code. The Ambon District Court ultimately sentenced the perpetrator to only three months. The victim criticized the court for not applying the Press Law.

¹ Perum Bulog or Perusahaan Umum BULOG is a state-owned enterprise. Their responsibility is to safeguarding prices, manage, procure and distribute as well as importing the staple food in Indonesia.

Gidion Siswadi Haromang of *Bantenmore.com* faced intimidation and a coverage ban at the Tolitoli District Court on February 1, 2024, during a protest rejecting the verdict in a rape case involving a village chief. The case was reported to the police but remains unresolved.

Bodhiya Vimala, a Kompas TV journalist, was attacked on July 11, 2024, while covering the verdict hearing of former Minister of Agriculture Syahrul Yasin Limpo at the Jakarta Corruption Court. He filed a police report with the Polda Metro Jaya (Jakarta Metropolitan Police), but no further legal action has been reported.

Hussein Abri Dongoran, a journalist with *Tempo*, was terrorized twice when his car was vandalized in August and September 2024. He reported the incidents to the police, but no resolution has been achieved.

Herry Kabut, editor-in-chief of Flores, experienced physical assault and intimidation on October 2, 2024, while covering a protest by residents of Poco Leok against a geothermal project in Manggarai, East Nusa Tenggara. He reported the case to the East Nusa Tenggara police, but there has been no progress.

On October 16, 2024, the office of Jubi² in Jayapura was attacked with a Molotov cocktail. The case was reported to the Papua police, but no progress was made by the end of the year.

Aliasar, a journalist with Radar Kepri, was intimidated by Safaruddin, the aide of the Secretary of the Lingga District Parliament, over a report on a bonsai procurement corruption case on October 23, 2024. The case was reported, but remains unresolved.

Nesta Makuba, a journalist from *para-paratv.id*, was attacked while covering a protest against a transmigration program in Jayapura, Papua, on November 15, 2024. The case was reported to the police, but no legal resolution has followed.

In the early hours of December 28, 2024, at 00:30 local time WIB, the editorial office of Pakuan Raya in Bogor was set on fire by two unidentified individuals. The management reported the case, which has since entered the police investigation stage.

2 Jubi is local media in Papua

Lastly two civil lawsuits were filed against two online media outlets in South Sulawesi over coverage deemed defamatory toward former Special Staff (Stafsus) to the Governor of South Sulawesi, Andi Sudirman Sulaiman. The article in question was published on September 19, 2023.

The case proceeded to court, where the panel of judges at the Makassar District Court ruled to reject the civil claim against the two Makassar-based media outlets, *Herald.id* and *Inikata.co.id*. The verdict was delivered in an open court session on Tuesday, May 21, 2024.

On appeal, the higher court upheld the Makassar District Court's decision, affirming that the lawsuit lacked sufficient legal basis.

A1. Advocacy Case

1. Makassar Media Sued for IDR 700 Billion in Civil Lawsuit

At the end of 2023, two online media outlets based in Makassar—*Herald.id* and *inikata.co.id*—were sued in a civil lawsuit for damages amounting to IDR 700 billion. The trial commenced in early 2024.

The plaintiffs were five former special staff members of the former Governor of South Sulawesi, Andi Sudirman Sulaiman. Their names are Muh. Hasanuddin Taiben, Andi Ilal Tasma, Andi Chidayat Abdullah, Arif, and Arman.

They filed the lawsuit against the two media outlets, a source quoted in the news article, and two journalists who authored reports containing allegations that numerous civil servants (ASN) within the South Sulawesi provincial government were demoted, transferred, or left without official roles due to interference from these special staff members during the governor's tenure.

The reports in question, published on September 19 and October 1, 2023, cited a civil servant who claimed that the demotions and transfers were strongly influenced by the actions of the governor's special staff.

Although the plaintiffs had already been offered the right of reply, they still pursued legal action, claiming that the reports had caused reputational damage. One of the plaintiffs stated after a court hearing that "the right of reply should have been granted before publication, not after the Press Council issued a recommendation."

The case was taken up by the South Sulawesi Journalists' Advocacy Coalition in collaboration with LBH Pers Makassar (Legal Aid Institute for the Press), with litigation support from AJI Indonesia. AJI and the legal defense team presented an expert witness from the Press Council, Herlambang P. Wiratraman, who testified during a hearing at the Makassar District Court on Thursday, April 25, 2024.

Herlambang, a law lecturer at Gadjah Mada University (UGM) in Yogyakarta, emphasized that any party objecting to a news report must follow the legal mechanisms provided under Indonesia's Press Law No. 40 of 1999, including the right of reply, the right to correction, or mediation via the Press Council. Speaking to journalists covering the trial, Herlambang said that the civil lawsuit was excessive and counterproductive.

He also referenced a prior case involving a similar lawsuit against a media outlet in Makassar, arguing that civil lawsuits against press institutions do nothing to strengthen democracy. Instead, they burden newsrooms and hinder their responsibility to serve the public with accurate and timely information.

The Makassar District Court ultimately ruled to reject the IDR 700 billion civil lawsuit. In its verdict on Civil Case No. 3/Pdt.G/2024/PN.Mks, the court not only dismissed the plaintiffs' claims but also ordered them to pay court fees totaling IDR 362,000.

The decision was made in a deliberative session of the judges on Tuesday, May 14, 2024, presided over by Chief Judge R. Mohammad Fadjarisman, with associate judges Halidja Wally and Burhanuddin. The ruling was publicly read during an open court session on Tuesday, May 21, 2024.

The plaintiffs filed an appeal, which was also rejected by the appellate court. The judges concluded that the plaintiffs had not presented any new evidence or legal arguments, and that the dispute had already been settled through the Press Council's mediation process. Following the failed appeal, the plaintiffs filed a cassation appeal to the Supreme Court (MA), and the case is currently awaiting a final ruling.

2. Arson Attack Kills Tribrata TV Journalist and Family in North Sumatra

On Thursday, June 27, 2024, the home of Rico Sempurna Pasaribu, a journalist with Tribrata TV, was set ablaze in Karo Regency, North Sumatra. The fire killed Rico, his wife Elparida Boru Ginting, their child Sudi Investasi Pasaribu, and their grandchild Loin Situkur.

An investigation by the North Sumatra Journalist Safety Committee (KKJ Sumut³) revealed that the attack followed Rico's coverage of illegal gambling on Kapten Bom Ginting Street, Padang Mas Subdistrict, Kabanjahe, Karo Regency. His report allegedly implicated a TNI (Indonesian National Armed Forces) member, identified only by the initials HB, as being involved in managing the gambling operations.

"The issue began when a member of the mass organization (*ormas*) Ikatan Pemuda Karya (IPK), who usually hangs out at a gambling place, asked the victim to include him to get the weekly gambling money allocation from military officers. The victim had frequently received this gambling money allocation from HB.

Though the IPK member eventually accepted the allocation, he was offended and angry because he had been neglected previously, causing a delay in receiving the gambling money. He then provoked Sempurna Pasaribu to write about the gambling activities located near the headquarters of Battalion Infantry 125/Simbisa in Karo Regency, North Sumatra.

The victim then wrote about the gambling activities and included the full name of HB, who was suspected to be managing the gambling. The victim even made a post on his Facebook account, sharing the news.

After the news was published, a military officer contacted the editor-in-chief of Tribrata TV, requesting that the article be removed immediately. A police officer also contacted the media company where Sempurna Pasaribu worked, asking for the news about the religious organization's protest in Karo Regency, demanding the dismissal of the

3 KKJ Sumut stands for Komite Keselamatan Jurnalis Sumatera Utara or a coalition of civil society organization to protect Indonesian journalists. This coalition was established in several regions in Indonesia including the North Sumatera.

Karo Police Chief due to rampant gambling, prostitution, and drugs, to be taken down.

Following the publication of the article, Edrin Adriansyah, the Editor-in-Chief of Tribrata TV, contacted Sempurna Pasaribu to check on his well-being. At that time, Sempurna assured him that he was safe. However, later on, Sempurna confided in a friend, expressing his concerns about his safety due to the article he had written.

The victim also received a warning from the leader of a local community organization (*ormas*) in Karo Regency, advising Sempurna not to return home as someone was allegedly following him. As a result, Sempurna stayed away from his house for several days.

It is also believed that Sempurna met with HB, who demanded that the article on gambling and the Facebook post be removed. However, Sempurna did not comply with the request.

After staying away for several days, Sempurna Pasaribu returned home on the night of Wednesday, June 26, 2024. Tragically, on Thursday, June 27, 2024, at 3:00 AM, his house was destroyed by fire. The flames quickly engulfed the wooden and plywood structure, killing all its occupants.

Prior to the fire, witnesses reported seeing five unidentified men near the victim's house around 2:30 AM on Thursday, June 27, 2024.

Two suspects involved in the arson attack on the home of Tribrata TV journalist Sempurna Pasaribu have been apprehended by the police. Yunus Syahputra Tarigan, also known as Selawang, and Rudi Apri Sembiring, are reportedly members of a local youth community organization. During a press conference at the Karo Police Department, the alleged mastermind of the murder, Bebas Ginting (also known as Bulang), was notably absent.

The North Sumatra Journalists' Safety Committee (KKJ Sumut) has been assisting Eva Pasaribu, the daughter of Sempurna Pasaribu, since she filed a report with the North Sumatra Police Department (Polda Sumut) on Monday, July 6, 2024. The initial report referred to a case of premeditated murder under Article 340 of the Indonesian Criminal

Code (KUHP⁴). However, the police later classified the case under Article 338 of the KUHP, dealing with homicide. Following the report, KKJ Sumut visited the Witness and Victim Protection Agency – Lembaga Perlindungan Saksi dan Korban (LPSK) on Tuesday, July 7, 2024.

At LPSK, Irvan Saputra, Director of LBH Medan⁵, presented the police report as part of the process for LPSK's involvement. KKJ Sumut expressed hope that Eva Pasaribu would soon receive assistance from LPSK, especially given the growing number of individuals approaching her for various reasons.

Meanwhile, the legal process at the Pomdam Bukit Barisan⁶ (Bukit Barisan Military Police Command) has stalled, remaining at the investigation stage with no significant developments. Despite earlier indications that investigators would name a suspect, no progress has been made to date.

LBH Medan, LBH Pers, and the Journalists Safety Committee (KKJ), along with the victim's daughter, Eva, have filed a report with the Puspom AD⁷ (Army Military Police Center). Eva's legal counsel suggests that there may be involvement of military personnel in the premeditated and deliberate arson attack, linking the case to possible charges of premeditated murder or arson involving military personnel.

The family is urging authorities to thoroughly investigate the case, including accessing the victim's communication records, as they suspect that the suspect known as "B" may not be the true mastermind behind the fire.

The first trial for the murder of journalist Rico Sempurna Pasaribu and three of his family members was held on Monday, November 25, 2024, at the Kabanjahe District Court, Karo Regency, North Sumatra. The defense attorneys stated that the suspects charged with setting the fire and killing the Tribrata TV journalist and his family are suspected of violating Article 340 of the KUHP, Article 28 of the 1945

4 KUHP stands for Kitab Undang-Undang Hukum Pidana or Indonesian Criminal Code.

5 LBH Medan stands for Lembaga Bantuan Hukum or Legal Aids in Medan. LBH has several law office in the region, including Medan.

6 POMDAM stands for Polisi Militer Daerah or Military Police Command.

7 PUSPOM AD stands for Pusat Polisi Militer Angkatan Darat or Army Military Police Center.

Constitution, the Human Rights Act, DUHAM⁸, ICCPR⁹, and the Child Protection Act.

The continuation of the trial, with the agenda of reading the indictment by the Prosecutor's Office (JPU¹⁰) of Karo, will be a significant moment in the pursuit of justice for the family's tragedy. The next hearing in the premeditated murder case is scheduled for December 16, 2024. The hearing will focus on the prosecutor's response to the defendants' exceptions.

3. Arrest and Assault of Floresca Journalist Herry Kabut in East Nusa Tenggara

On October 2, 2024, Herry Kabut, editor-in-chief of Floresca, was arrested and assaulted by police while covering a community protest in Poco Leok, Satar Mese District, Manggarai Regency, East Nusa Tenggara. The protest was staged by local residents opposing a geothermal project in their customary land area. Herry was arrested at 2:37 PM local time and released around 6:00 PM local time the same day.


Herry had received information that three indigenous Poco Leok residents had been arrested during the protest and decided to travel from Ruteng to the protest site in Lingko Tanggong, arriving at approximately 2:00 PM WITA. Upon arrival, the situation had calmed; residents were seated, appearing relaxed after lunch. Nearby, police vehicles were present, including one holding the detained residents and four female officers (*polwan*).

Herry began taking photographs of the scene, capturing around ten images, including one showing the detained residents and officers inside the police vehicle. At no point was he warned or stopped by law enforcement or PLN (state electricity company) officials while taking photos.

8 UDHR stands for Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a UN-approved declaration containing human rights principles.


9 ICCPR stands for International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, an international treaty that is binding on ratifying countries and lays out more specific civil and political rights.

10 JPU stands for Jaksa Penuntut Umum or Attorney General.



However, as he took photos, one of the female officers called him over and asked him to board the vehicle. She questioned his intent in taking the photos. Herry identified himself as a journalist from Flores. When asked to show his press ID, he explained that he was not carrying one but had an assignment letter and proof that he was the editor-in-chief.

While he was explaining, several uniformed and plainclothes officers approached and ordered him out of the vehicle. One of them immediately grabbed him by the neck. The officers then dragged him roughly 50 meters east from the vehicle and 60 meters away from the villagers, continuing to demand a press ID.




Herry repeated his explanation and urged them to check the Flores website, where his name and photo were publicly listed as editor-in-chief. "Compare my face with the photo there and see if there's any difference," he told them. He emphasized that an ID card was just one form of identification and not the only valid one.

Despite his explanation, the officers continued to demand the ID and dragged him beside a TNI (Indonesian national military) vehicle, where they physically punched and kicked him. Another person, a journalist identified only by the initials TJ, also participated in the assault.

As Herry screamed in pain, some Poco Leok residents approached and discreetly recorded the incident on their phones from behind bushes. When police noticed, they chased and threatened the residents, preventing them from filming further.

In addition to being beaten, Herry's phone and laptop were seized. Police inspected the devices, checking for files, photos, and videos. After confirming his editorial position, they released him but under one condition: Herry was forced to record a video statement saying he had not been arrested, only "secured." He complied under police pressure.



The case is currently being handled by AJI Indonesia and the Journalist Safety Committee (KKJ) of East Nusa Tenggara. Herry, along with his legal team and KKJ, has filed both a criminal report with Polda NTT (East Nusa Tenggara Regional Police) and an ethics complaint with Propam (Police Internal Affairs) in Kupang. However, as of this writing, the case remains stagnant with no progress reported from the police.

4. Molotov Bomb Terror at Jubi Newsroom in Jayapura, Papua

On Wednesday, October 16, 2024, the newsroom of Jubi, an independent media outlet in Jayapura, Papua, was attacked with a Molotov cocktail bomb. The incident resulted in the burning and damage of two operational vehicles parked in the office compound located on SPG Taruna Street, Waena, Jayapura City. The attack is considered a serious threat to journalist safety and press freedom in the region.

Jean Bisay, Jubi's editor-in-chief, reported that the bombing occurred in the early hours of the morning, around 3:15 AM local time. The Molotov was believed to have been thrown by two individuals riding a motorcycle, who launched the incendiary device from the street in front of the Jubi office. The device ignited flames between the two parked vehicles. The Heram City Police who conducted a crime scene investigation confirmed the object used was indeed a Molotov cocktail.

This attack is seen as part of a broader threat to media organizations reporting on human rights violations and controversial national strategic policies that adversely affect Indigenous Papuan communities. Jubi is known for its critical coverage, including reports on the national food estate program and alleged abuses by state security forces. The bombing took place shortly after Jubi published several pieces criticizing government policies.

The Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI) and the Journalist Safety Committee (KKJ) reported the case to the Polda Papua (Papua Regional Police). The police collected CCTV footage from the newsroom's porch and garage area and have questioned seven witnesses located near the scene.

The investigation was eventually handed over by the Polda Papua to the Military Police Command of the Cenderawasih Regional Military Command (Pomdam XVII/Cenderawasih). Jubi's legal support team was scheduled to meet with Pomdam XVII/Cenderawasih on January 30, 2025. However, three months after the attack, the legal process remained stagnant.

In response, the Coalition for Justice and Journalist Safety in Papua staged a solidarity protest on December 17, 2024, at 10:00 AM local time at Polda Papua, urging police to identify and prosecute the perpetrators. Another protest took place on October 19, 2024, organized by Papuan Youth Against Terrorism at Abepura Roundabout, condemning the attack and rejecting terrorist acts against the press in Papua. Student organizations affiliated with the Cipayang Group¹¹ also joined calls for police to reveal who was behind the bombing.

Meanwhile, AJI and KKJ filed a formal request for protection with the Witness and Victim Protection Agency (LPSK) for three Jubi editorial staff and three eyewitnesses who had seen the perpetrators during the attack. As of the end of 2024, the case remained stuck at the investigation stage.

AJI and the Coalition for Justice and the Protection of Journalists in Papua have called for the dismissal of the Papua Police Chief, citing the stalled investigation as a failure to protect press freedom and ensure accountability for violence against journalists.

On January 23, 2025, a formal notification (SP2HP – Notice of Investigation Progress) revealed that police had officially handed over the case file to the Military Police Detachment of the Cenderawasih Regional Command (Denpomdam XVII/Cenderawasih). The letter did not identify any suspects, but the handover to military authorities strongly suggests that the perpetrators may be military personnel.

5. *Tempo* Journalist's Car Vandalized Twice by Unknown Assailants

Hussein Abri Dongoran, a journalist with *Tempo*, became the target of intimidation when his car was vandalized on two separate occasions in August and September 2024 by unidentified perpetrators.

The first incident occurred on Monday, August 5, 2024, at approximately 9:50 PM (local time), as Hussein was driving home after meeting a source at a mall in Senayan, Jakarta. He was passing along Pattimura Street, Kebayoran Baru, South Jakarta, near the National

¹¹ Cipayang group is a group of student mass organization that was established since 1972.

Police Headquarters and in front of the Ministry of Public Works and Housing (PUPR), when he heard a loud crash at the rear of his vehicle while making a U-turn toward the Antasari flyover.

Upon inspection, he discovered that the rear windshield of his car had been shattered. However, he saw no vehicles directly behind him at the time, only two men riding a motorcycle in the direction of Senayan. Due to the dark surroundings, Hussein did not stop immediately but later parked on Senjaya Street, near the Police Museum, and returned to the location to check for nearby surveillance cameras. Security personnel at the Ministry of PUPR claimed there were no CCTV cameras in the area.

On Tuesday, August 6, 2024, Hussein, accompanied by Tempo Media Group's legal team, filed a police report about the vandalism with the South Jakarta Resort Police. As of the time of reporting, there had been no updates on the case or identification of suspects.

One month later, a second act of vandalism occurred. On Tuesday, September 3, 2024, while renewing his driver's license (SIM) in Beji, Depok, West Java, Hussein parked his car near the Kukusan Police Office. After completing the paperwork, he returned to find that the front passenger-side window had been shattered.

Hussein and a parking attendant at the location found fragments of ceramic spark plug shards, a common tool used to quietly break car windows. His dashboard camera (dashcam) recorded the incident at 12:05 PM local time, showing two men on a motorcycle passing by moments after a cracking sound was heard.

This was the second act of vandalism targeting the same journalist, prompting serious concern. The Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI), in coordination with *Tempo's* editorial board, helped relocate Hussein to a safe house for several weeks for his protection.

Hussein filed another police report regarding the second attack. However, as with the first case, there has been no progress or official statement from the police identifying the perpetrators or explaining the motive behind the attacks.

6. Self-Censorship Still Common in Indonesian Newsrooms

Despite protections under Indonesia's Press Law No. 40 of 1999, which guarantees freedom of the press, self-censorship remains a prevalent issue within Indonesian newsrooms. According to testimonies from journalists and monitoring by AJI (the Alliance of Independent Journalists), editorial decisions are still being influenced, either by external pressures or internal caution, leading to the suppression or modification of public-interest news that contradicts journalistic principles.

AJI has identified two primary conditions under which self-censorship occurs. First, direct political or governmental interference. In these cases, state actors—often government institutions—pressure senior editors or media executives to take down articles or rewrite headlines and content deemed harmful to the image of the state or specific officials. This form of suppression typically involves behind-the-scenes phone calls to top media management.

The second form of self-censorship stems from internal editorial decisions, often driven by a desire to maintain favorable relations with power holders or advertisers. Media executives may preemptively alter or soften news content for fear that it might offend political institutions or high-level figures—ultimately jeopardizing the outlet's financial stability or strategic relationships.

Both methods share a common motive: to serve the interests of political elites, media owners, or advertisers. AJI documented a case of self-censorship at the end of 2024 involving Indonesian media outlets that reported on President Joko Widodo being named a finalist in the 2024 Corrupt Person of the Year list by the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP).

The original article was based on an official report published on OCCRP's website under the title *Corrupt Person of the Year 2024*, and was initially covered by several Indonesian media outlets on Tuesday, December 31, 2024. However, shortly afterward, many of these reports were taken down, rendering the pages inaccessible and replaced with standard error messages such as "404 Oops! Page not found."

In another case, censorship occurred between media outlets themselves. A senior editor at one outlet reportedly pressured another media organization to withhold coverage of a labor dispute involving employees at the editor's own media company. This act of suppression was framed as a gesture of “mutual understanding” within the industry.

AJI regards such acts, including political interference, self-censorship, article deletion, and editorial manipulation as forms of violence against press freedom. The organization calls on the Press Council and media associations to take decisive action against these practices, which fundamentally undermine the spirit of journalistic independence and the public's right to information.

7. Marine Personnel Pressured Tribun Sorong to Take Down Assault Report

Safwan, a journalist with Tribun Sorong, faced intimidation on Sunday, November 10, 2024, when approximately six members of the Indonesian Marine Corps (Pasmars 3 Sorong) visited the newsroom of Tribun Sorong in Sorong City, West Papua. The Marines demanded that the newsroom remove an article that alleged physical assault by members of the Indonesian Navy.

The article in question, titled “6 TNI AL Members Allegedly Beat Civilian in Sorong, Victim's Eye Bleeds”, was published on the Tribun Sorong website on Friday, November 8, 2024, at 4:15 PM local time. The report, authored by Safwan, recounted the alleged assault of a local resident, Mustaqim, who had been spending his weekend near Suprau Beach in Maladu Mes District, Sorong City, on Sunday, November 3, 2024.

According to the report, a group of Navy Marines approached Mustaqim, questioned whether he was affiliated with the military, and despite his denial, proceeded to interrogate, physically assault, and threaten to drown him. Mustaqim was reportedly rescued by members of the Mobile Brigade (Brimob) deployed in the area.

Elly Naulu, the victim's legal counsel, stated that Mustaqim sustained severe bruising on his face and body, and bleeding was visible in one of his eyes. The legal team confirmed they had reported the assault to

the Navy Military Police (PM AL¹²) and demanded that the perpetrators be held accountable.

Upon receiving the Marines' visit, the editorial representatives at *Tribun Sorong* firmly stated that they would not take down the article and invited the military to exercise their right of reply instead. The Marines insisted that Safwan be called in to explain the source of his report.

Safwan complied and arrived at the office to clarify that the information had come from the victim's lawyer, accompanied by photographic evidence. He also informed the Marines that he had previously verified the report with Major (PM) Anton Sugiharto, Deputy Commander of the Navy Military Police at Lantamal XIV Sorong, who confirmed that the case had been internally reported and was under preliminary investigation. Following Safwan's explanation, the Marine personnel agreed to submit a formal rebuttal, asserting that no assault had been committed by members of their unit against Mustaqim.

8. CNN Indonesia Journalist Accused of Intervening in Case of High School Student Shot by Police

Gamma Ryzkinata Oktafandy, a 17-year-old vocational high school student from SMK 4 Semarang, was fatally shot by Aipda Robig Zaenuddin, a member of the Semarang City Police Narcotics Unit (Satreskoba Polrestabes Semarang¹³) in the early morning of Sunday, November 24, 2024. Controversy erupted when Damar Sinuko, a journalist from CNN Indonesia, was accused by the victim's family of accompanying Semarang Police Chief (Kombes Pol - Komisaris Besar Polisi) Irwan Anwar to meet with Gamma's relatives.

During the visit, Damar allegedly attempted to convince the family to record a video statement declaring that they had accepted Gamma's death and urging the public not to amplify the story. The family refused to comply. In several news reports, Agung, Gamma's uncle, stated that the video was requested as a means to prevent the incident from gaining further public attention.

12 PM AL stands for Polisi Militer Angkatan Laut or Navy Military Police

13 Satreskoba Polrestabes Semarang stands for Satuan Reserse Narkotika, Psikotropika dan Obat Berbahaya, Kepolisian Respor Kota Besar Semarang

Aris Mulyawan, Chair of AJI Semarang, criticized the journalist's conduct, describing it as a serious ethical violation and an effort to cover up the truth behind Gamma's killing. Aris also indicated that Damar may have attempted to obstruct other journalists from covering the case.

He emphasized that this intervention should not be viewed in isolation, but rather as part of a broader pattern of manipulation in how the incident was being handled by authorities. According to AJI, the biggest harm falls on the victim's family, who are seeking justice, and the public, which has the right to know the facts of the shooting.

The attempt to suppress reporting is considered a violation of Article 18 of Indonesia's Press Law, which states: "Any person who deliberately hinders the lawful work of the press may face imprisonment of up to 2 years and a fine of up to Rp500 million."

Titin Rosmasari, Editor-in-Chief of CNN Indonesia, confirmed that Damar Sinuko is an employee of the media outlet. She announced that the newsroom had suspended Damar from his duties and launched an internal investigation into the allegations.

A2. Policy Advocacy by AJI Indonesia

1. Police Bill (RUU Polri)

The Draft Law on the National Police (RUU Polri) was initially included in the 2024 Priority National Legislative Program (Prolegnas¹⁴) alongside the Draft Law on the Military (RUU TNI) during the final term of Indonesia's House of Representatives (DPR RI) in October 2024. However, it was excluded from the 2025 priority list.

The bill raised serious concerns due to proposed expansions of police authority that critics feared would turn the institution into a "superbody," without addressing the core issues of professionalism and accountability in the Indonesian National Police (POLRI – Polisi Republik Indonesia). Civil society and press freedom advocates, including AJI Indonesia, have flagged the bill as a serious threat to

¹⁴ Prolegnas stands for program legislasi nasional or Priority National Legislative Program.

human rights, particularly freedom of expression and privacy, which directly affects journalists in an already deteriorating media climate.

Key problematic points identified in the draft:

- 1) Expanded authority over cyberspace, granting the police powers to disrupt or throttle internet access in the name of national security, including ordering content, site, app, or internet shutdowns without transparent mechanisms or oversight.
- 2) Wiretapping powers granted to the police without the existence of a human rights-based legal framework on surveillance. The bill lacks clear limits or transparent procedures.
- 3) Weak accountability mechanisms. The bill fails to reinforce supervision and legal enforcement for violations committed by police officers, even though numerous cases involve police targeting journalists through intimidation, physical assault, equipment destruction, and deletion of documentation during coverage.

AJI, in collaboration with the Civil Society Coalition for Police Reform, continues to monitor and oppose the draft, advocating for transparent reform in line with human rights principles.

2. Broadcasting Bill (RUU Penyiaran)

Simultaneously, The Indonesian House of Representatives (DPR) has quietly attempted to limit press freedom by revising the Broadcasting Law No. 40 of 2002. Signals of this restriction on press freedom have been evident in several problematic articles found in the draft revision of the Broadcasting Law, dated March 27, 2024. Some of these articles are even in direct conflict with Law No. 40 of 1999 on the Press.

The effort to revise the Broadcasting Law has been ongoing since 2012. During the 2019-2024 DPR period, discussions on the law revision gained momentum. However, several provisions in the draft are seen as potentially stifling press freedom, with minimal meaningful public participation in the process.

Key problematic elements of the draft Broadcasting Law include:

1. Ignoring the Press Law: The bill's preamble fails to reference the existing Press Law, despite dealing with broadcast journalism content. This omission undermines the legal authority of the press law.
2. Ban on Investigative Journalism: Article 50B(2)(c) prohibits broadcasting exclusive investigative journalism content. This contradicts Article 4(2) of the Press Law, which protects journalistic endeavors, including investigative reporting that often exposes legal violations.
3. Overlapping Ethical Oversight: Article 50B(1)(i) assigns ethical enforcement to the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission (KPI – Komisi Penyiaran Indonesia), encroaching upon the jurisdiction of the Press Council as mandated by the Press Law. This creates legal redundancy and potential conflict between institutions.
4. Vague and Broad Clauses ("Rubber Articles"): Article 50B(2)(k) lists content restrictions on issues like false news, defamation, religious blasphemy, violence, and terrorism. These provisions are open to multiple interpretations and could be used to criminalize journalists.
5. Legalization of Media Conglomerates: The revised bill eliminates provisions that restricted media ownership concentration and dropped the requirement for networked broadcast systems (SSJ). This rollback undermines media diversity and paves the way for monopolistic ownership in the broadcasting sector.

AJI Indonesia, alongside other press and civil society organizations, organized public protests opposing the bill. The pressure resulted in the DPR postponing deliberation on the revision of Broadcasting Law No. 32 of 2002 in June 2024. However, in November 2024, the same bill reappeared on the National Legislation Program (Prolegnas) 2025–2029 priority list, signalling ongoing legislative risk.

A3. Digital Attacks Against Journalists in 2024: Fewer Cases, Persistent Threats

The Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI) Indonesia recorded 10 digital attacks and incidents involving journalists and media outlets as of the third week of November 2024. While the number decreased compared to 2023, the nature and impact of these attacks continue to pose serious threats to press freedom and the digital safety of media practitioners.

Table 1 Digital Attacks on Journalists and Media (2024)

Year	Number of Cases/Reports	Types of Attacks	Notes
2020	7 cases	Doxing, Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS)	
2021	5 cases	DDoS, Hacking	
2022	15 cases	Hacking, DDoS, Community Guidelines Violation Reports	The hacking case involving <i>Narasi's</i> staff and ex-editors covered 37 people but was recorded as one case.
2023	16 cases	Hacking, DDoS, Website Defacement, Social Media & WhatsApp Account Takeovers, Website/Media Suspension, Social Media Suspension, Doxing	
2024	10 cases	Social Media Account Suspension by Platforms, Email Hacking, WhatsApp Hacking, Doxing, Phishing	

Various digital attacks recorded in 2024 highlight the ongoing vulnerability of journalistic work. On the other hand, media managers and journalists often remain reluctant or find it difficult to implement mitigation measures related to digital violence.

AJI identified recurring patterns in these attacks, which include email hacking, social media account suspensions by *platforms*, *doxing*, and *phishing*. These attacks commonly share one characteristic, the perpetrators remain unidentified. Some cases of email breaches are also suspected to have originated from data leaks.

However, many incidents remain unreported or undocumented by AJI for several reasons. Some were resolved independently, others were reported and documented by different organizations, while some were simply left unaddressed.

Specifically targeting journalists, AJI recorded at least three digital attacks on individual journalists or media staff throughout 2024. These included: email hacking in relation to the People Water Forum event in Bali; a journalist's WhatsApp account being hacked after refusing to take down an election-related news article; and doxing by netizens who perceived the journalist's reporting as being pro-Israel. One case involved the suspension of an account by platform X after a reply to content related to the Palestine issue, citing a breach of community guidelines.

AJI documented nine incidents of digital attacks and disruptions in total throughout 2024, involving four individual journalists and four media organizations (with one media outlet being targeted more than once).

The most frequent types of digital attacks were social media and WhatsApp account takeovers (four cases), followed by email hacking (two cases), doxing (two cases), and one instance of social media account suspension.

Table 2. Description of Digital Attack Cases in 2024

No	Date	Victim	Description	Context	Perpetrator	Category
1	27 February 2024	Tempo	On Tempo's social media account on platform X, the display suddenly showed that the account belonged to Wormhole, featuring white lines forming a hole. Meanwhile, the word TEMPO along with its red circular "T" icon disappeared. At the bottom of the screen appeared the text: Wormhole is the leading interoperability platform powering multichain applications and bridges at scale. The web of web 3. Learn more: wormhole.com. Beneath that, Google Translate displayed: Wormhole is a leading interoperability platform that supports multi chain applications and bridges on a large scale. Web Web 3. Learn more at: wormhole.com linktr.ee/wormhole		Unknown	Account Hacking (X)

2	20 May 2024	Rofiqi Hasan (Kanal Bali)	<p>A journalist fell victim to a digital security breach on Monday night, May 20, 2024, at approximately 11:00 PM local time. The incident began when the journalist was suddenly locked out of their WhatsApp account, with a "Sign-in" prompt appearing on their device. Efforts to restore access by reinstalling the app and using the same number failed, as the system flagged the number as already being in use on another device.</p>	<p>During the series of events coinciding with the World Water Forum 2024 in Bali, the People Water Forum (PWF) also took place. Journalist Rofiqi Hasan served as a liaison for fellow reporters covering the PWF activities. However, the forum faced disruption when a group identifying themselves as Patriot Garuda Nusantara (PGN) forcefully disbanded the PWF 2024 event. According to PWF event coordinator Muhammad Reza, participants had been subjected to a series of intimidations leading up to the disruption. Reza reported that since April 2, 2024, individuals involved with PWF had been visited at their homes by alleged intelligence officers in an apparent effort to suppress the event.</p>	Unknown	WhatsApp Account Hacking
3	25 June 2024	Ni Luh Angela (pseudonym) Indonesia Business Journalist)	<p>On Tuesday, June 25, 2024, a social media account under the name "greschinov" publicly posted the full name and media affiliation of a journalist. The account cited the journalist's article titled "Indonesia's Imports from Israel Surge, Climbing by 1204%", which was published on Thursday, June 20, 2024. The user questioned the article's accuracy and claimed to provide counter-data labeling it as hoax.</p> <p>In one of their posts, Greschinov wrote, "Funny how this article is being sensationalized by flat-nosed Zionists, as if it's some kind of good news." The user then added, "The May 2024 data isn't even available on the BPS (Statistics Indonesia) website—did the journalist fabricate the numbers?"</p> <p>Greschinov also included the journalist's LinkedIn profile, demanding: "Here's the writer's LinkedIn. Come out and clarify—where did you get your data from? If you faked it, you should be fired or resign for producing false data in the name of BPS."</p>	<p>A journalist recently published a report highlighting the surge in Indonesia's imports from Israel, citing data from Statistics Indonesia (BPS). However, the report drew skepticism from some social media users, who questioned the data's authenticity after failing to locate the same information through public sources. These users went on to accuse the journalist of data manipulation, sparking a broader online debate about data transparency and the credibility of journalism.</p>	Account 'greschinov'	Doxing

			<p>Following the post, many netizens echoed the accusation, calling the report a hoax. Some even called for legal action against the journalist for allegedly spreading false information. Others suggested that the journalist should have conducted deeper research before publishing the article.</p>			
4	21 July 2024	Kediripedia	<p>On July 21, 2024, the administrator of Kediripedia.com discovered a password change on the site's primary email account. Despite having two-factor authentication (2FA) and a recovery email in place, all access had already been taken over. The verification number had been altered to a U.S.-based number, which affected not only the email but also the YouTube and Instagram accounts associated with Kediripedia.com.</p> <p>The admin contacted the web hosting provider to recover the email. While the Instagram account's primary email was successfully updated, restoring access to the YouTube account proved more difficult. Further investigation revealed that the compromised email credentials had previously appeared in a data leak posted to a Combolist on Telegram dated May 28, 2024, which included email, password, and username information. The administrator has since reported the issue to Google's support services.</p>		Unknown	Email Hacking
5	2 August 2024	Abdul Manan (<i>Tempo</i>)	<p>The X account belonging to @abdulmanan became inaccessible starting Thursday/Friday, August 1–2, 2024. The account owner received a notification from the platform stating that the account had been suspended for violating X's terms of service, as conveyed via email.</p> <p>Details about the suspension only came to light on Wednesday, August 7, 2024, when the user contacted the platform by email regarding recovery, citing case number 0374408580. The Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI) and SAFEnet¹⁵ then stepped in to assist the user and agreed to escalate the issue.</p> <p>An official escalation email was submitted to the platform at approximately 5:00 PM WIB on the same day. Following this joint action by AJI and SAFEnet, the account was successfully restored on August 8, 2024.</p>	The account @abdulmanan was flagged for allegedly violating X platform's community guidelines. The suspension was believed to be triggered by posts related to the Palestine-Israel conflict, which the platform reportedly categorized as spam. The account was eventually restored in August 2024.	Platform X	Account Suspension

15 SAFEnet stands for Southeast Asia Freedom of Expression Network

6	7 September 2024	Balebengong	<p>BaleBengong (@BaleBengong) was targeted in a phishing attack on Saturday, 7 September 2024. That day, the account which had around 13,000 followers, received an email notification stating that the account's email address had been changed. Upon checking, the admin found the account had disappeared.</p> <p>About 30 minutes later, an unknown number called and sent a WhatsApp message to the admin's contact, asking if they were the rightful account owner. The admin did not respond, suspecting the inquiry was part of an extortion attempt.</p>	BaleBengong is a local media organization based in Bali, focusing on reporting citizen-driven information and critical opinions on various social, cultural, and environmental issues. The outlet has a significant following on Instagram.	Unknown	Phishing / Account Takeover
7	8 October 2024	Balebengong	The Balebengong portal became inaccessible, and visitors were redirected to an online gambling site. The issue was investigated by Balebengong's IT team, who discovered that several WordPress plugins needed fixing.	BaleBengong is a local media organization based in Bali, focusing on reporting citizen-driven information and critical opinions on various social, cultural, and environmental issues. The outlet has a significant following on Instagram.	Unknown	Website Defacement / Redirect
8	16 October 2024	AJI Surabaya / Radar Madura	The Head of the Labor Division of AJI Surabaya, who is also a journalist at Radar Madura, had their WhatsApp account hacked on October 16, 2024, at 19:30 local time. A notification appeared requesting a transfer of the WA number to another device branded Sony. The request came in repeatedly but was ignored. However, at 19:55 local, the account owner was suddenly logged out of their WhatsApp account. The victim had already enabled 2FA on their WA account. The account was eventually recovered independently with the help of the internet division, and control was regained on October 18, 2024.	Previously, the account owner had written a report regarding the vulnerability of 56 polling stations (TPS ¹⁶) in Sampang. Two days after the publication, the Public Relations Officer of Sampang Police requested the news coordinator of Radar Madura to take the article down. The request was directed at the coordinator/victim, who also refused to remove the content.	Unknown	WhatsApp Account Hacking

16 TPS stands for Tempat Pemungutan Suara or Poling Station.

9	8–10 November 2024	Murianews	On the night of November 8, the Murianews website began experiencing a Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attack. The attack intensified toward midnight and peaked in the early hours of November 9. Although it subsided around 3:00 PM local time, the attack continued on November 10 at around 12:00 PM local time. The media outlet's IT team recorded that the perpetrators allegedly used VPNs from Indonesia and spoofed IP addresses from various countries, including India, Brazil, Colombia, and Bangladesh. A few days later, on November 19, 2024, the website experienced another DDoS attack while it was hosting an open polling session for the regional elections (Pilkada) in Kudus, Jepara, Pati, Rembang, and Blora.	Murianews editorial team launched a poll on October 25, 2024, following the first debate of the Kudus regional election (Pilkada ¹⁷), which focused on the topic of which candidate best understood strategic issues presented during the debate. The poll was conducted from October 25 to 31, 2024, and received responses from 29,586 participants.	Unknown	DDoS
10	18 November 2024	Antara Kalbar	The email account of Antara Kalimantan Barat on Google experienced a password change, with the recovery email and recovery phone number also being changed.		Unknown	Email Hacking

In 2024, Balebengong, a citizen journalism outlet (local media organization), faced two separate digital attacks. The first was a phishing attempt targeting its Instagram account, and the second involved a cyberattack on its news portal, which redirected readers to online gambling websites. These attacks against independent, non-mainstream news organizations like Balebengong are seen as a threat to press freedom and freedom of expression, as such outlets often prioritize reporting that serves the public interest.

Additionally, incidents linked to the Israel-Palestine conflict highlighted the challenges faced by journalists in the digital realm. One journalist was doxxed, while another's account on platform X was suspended after their posts were flagged as spam or violations of community guidelines.

Digital platforms play a critical role in the digital safety of journalists and content creators. They are responsible not only for assisting with recovery after an attack but may also contribute to the issue through content takedowns or account suspensions due to alleged policy violations. These platform decisions can significantly affect journalists' ability to report freely and access the public's right to information.

¹⁷ Pilkada stands for Pemilihan Kepala Daerah or Regional Election.

This issue was discussed during a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) on Digital Security for Content Creators held in Jakarta on Monday, July 29, 2024, in collaboration with PR2Media (Media Regulation & Regulator Watch). The FGD highlighted challenges such as content deletion, reduced reach, and account limitations often referred to as "shadow bans."

Syarifah Ainun Jamilah, a content creator and community activist from "Cadar Garis Lucu," shared her experience of having her Instagram account restricted for allegedly violating community guidelines. She reported difficulty in gaining followers and viewers, noting that while five new followers would register, only two would appear, and her follower count had dropped drastically.

A well-known case among journalists was the suspension of @abdulmanan's account, which was flagged for violating X's community guidelines. The suspension was reportedly triggered by posts about the Palestine-Israel issue, which the platform considered spam. The account was restored in August 2024.

Such unilateral actions by digital platform providers limit freedom of expression and hinder the public's access to information, especially when it affects journalistic content.

In collaboration with PR2Media, AJI conducted two studies on digital attacks against media companies and content creators. The results were published in two separate books and presented at public discussions.

One study focused on 116 online media organizations in Indonesia, evaluating their digital security based on three main factors: experience with digital attacks, security practices, and perceptions of digital safety. The overall security index score was 19.71 out of a possible 31, indicating a poor condition. Digital security practices scored only 5.03 out of 11, reflecting a lack of attention to essential measures like SOPs for handling attacks, staff training, and security audits.

The second study surveyed 312 content creators, assessing their digital security using four factors: (1) perceptions of digital security, (2) experiences with digital attacks, (3) the impact of attacks, and (4) response practices. The overall index score was 2.41 out of 4, indicating fairly good conditions, but substantial challenges remain.

The most concerning aspect was the impact of digital attacks, which scored only 1.14 out of 4, falling into the “poor” range. These attacks severely affected creators' physical and emotional security, privacy, and income. Additionally, 30.5% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with how social media platforms responded to their attack reports.

These findings underscore the urgent need for greater transparency and accountability from digital platforms, as well as stronger regulatory support from the government to protect freedom of expression and prevent malicious reporting.



B

Wave of Layoffs Hits Indonesian Media Industry

The Indonesian Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI) reported a notable increase in labor-related issues within the media sector in 2024, shedding light on the economic struggles faced by media workers. Despite the growth of digital media outlets, especially at the regional level, improvements in journalist welfare have not kept pace. Many journalists continue to work for wages that fall below the minimum wage set by municipal or provincial regulations.

The shifting dynamics in the media industry, driven by changing business models, have led several media companies to implement cost-cutting measures, with layoffs being the most prominent. While layoffs are not inherently illegal, AJI points out that numerous cases in 2024 involved violations of labor laws and humanitarian standards. These violations include unilateral salary reductions, wages that fall below the legal minimum, and severance packages that do not meet statutory requirements.

A particularly concerning incident in 2024 involved a union-busting episode at a major media group. AJI identified deceptive employment practices, where journalists were hired under fixed-term contracts (PKWT¹⁸), in direct violation of labor laws that require permanent employment for journalism positions.

The following are key cases of layoffs and union busting documented by AJI Indonesia:

1. CNN Indonesia:

The employment dispute at CNN Indonesia began when management imposed unilateral pay cuts. After workers formed the legally protected union, "Solidaritas Pekerja CNN Indonesia" (SPCI), union leaders were

¹⁸ PKWT stands for Perjanjian Kerja Waktu Tertentu or fixed term contract.

handed termination letters. It was later uncovered that several staff members were earning less than Jakarta's provincial minimum wage (UMP). Following bipartite negotiations, CNN agreed to adjust the wages, but the union, SPCI, filed a criminal complaint regarding union busting with the Polda Metro Jaya.

2. PT Portal Media Nusantara (pinusi.com):

Workers at PT Portal Media Nusantara (*pinusi.com*) were initially recruited without formal contracts and were later dismissed after the editorial board was considered politically misaligned with the company's interests. Despite fulfilling their duties, including content production and audiovisual materials, some employees were abruptly let go. The case entered a second round of bipartite mediation, but management insisted on resolving the dispute through court proceedings.

3. Voice of America (VoA) Indonesia:

VoA Indonesia dismissed Sasmito, a journalist who had publicly criticized Israeli aggression in Palestine, without a legal basis. In response, Sasmito filed a formal protest and reported the incident to the local labor office. The case remains unresolved and may be brought before the Industrial Relations Court (PHI) if it progresses further.

4. PT Parboaboa Media Utama (parboaboa.com):

Kurnia Syahdan, a senior-certified journalist, was terminated before the company's media verification status was confirmed by the Press Council, despite using his certificate for accreditation. Although he was promised two months' severance pay, he only received the equivalent of one month's salary on August 30, 2024, after signing an exit permit on August 19. His complaint is currently being reviewed by the labor sub-department.

5. Jawa Pos:

AJI received reports that the newspaper laid off 60 employees in August 2024. The matter remains in the bipartite stage, and the company's union is not yet receiving legal assistance.

6. PT Era Media Informasi (*Gatra Magazine*):

Gatra ceased operations on July 31, 2024. Although management promised to fulfill employee rights, several staff are still awaiting unpaid salaries and severance. The case is currently supported by LBH Pers.

7. Kompas Media Nusantara (*Kompas.id*):

In 2024, *Kompas* offered early retirement packages to several employees. The number of staff who accepted the offer and details of compensation remain undisclosed.

8. MNC Group:

Layoffs at MNC Group were carried out discreetly through individual summons. AJI observed that at least 30 employees were affected. Three of the employees contested their dismissals and sought legal recourse, with support from AJI Jakarta and LBH Pers.

9. Media Indonesia:

The company reduced the salaries of older employees to half of their usual pay, affecting around 80 workers across different departments. Furthermore, salary deductions were implemented with a promise of reimbursement in December 2024.

10. Liputan 6 (Emtek Group):

Mass layoffs at Liputan 6 reportedly affected dozens, possibly even hundreds of workers. The terminations proceeded smoothly as most employees accepted the conditions without dispute.

11. *Suara.com*:

The company was reported to have delayed BPJS Ketenagakerjaan social security payments. Furthermore, management imposed unreasonable Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) on 26 editors and contributors in Yogyakarta. Employees were asked to sign notarized letters stating that failure to meet these KPIs would be considered voluntary resignation. Some signed under pressure; others refused.

12. *Republika* (PT *Republika Media Mandiri*):

In May 2024, *Republika* laid off 60 employees, including 29 from the editorial team. It remains unclear whether the terminations have led to any legal dispute.

13. *Tribun Group*:

Tribun Lampung terminated three journalists on August 5, 2024, offering only one month's salary, despite one journalist having over four years of service.

Bangka Pos dismissed around 30 staff including editorial, printing, and marketing employees in February/March 2024. No legal action has followed.

Across the group, staff were subject to annual renewable contracts with no prospects for permanent employment.



Ethical Violations and Fading Firewalls: A Warning Sign for Indonesia's Press Freedom

In 2024, the Indonesian media landscape continued to struggle with widespread ethical violations, unprofessional journalism practices, and the breakdown of the editorial-business divide, often referred to as the “firewall.” Against a backdrop of political and economic instability, these breaches have further damaged the credibility of the press and hampered efforts to safeguard press freedom.

One of the most glaring examples came on July 3, 2024, following the ruling of the Election Organizer Ethics Council (DKPP¹⁹) against Hasyim Asy'ari, the Chair of the General Elections Commission (KPU²⁰). He was dismissed for sexually harassing a complainant identified only by the initials CAT. While the media had a responsibility to report on the misconduct of public officials, many outlets violated journalistic ethics by disclosing the identity of the sexual violence survivor. This not only revictimized her but also portrayed her in a demeaning and discriminatory manner.

This incident underscored a larger trend in the media industry: an increasing tendency for media outlets to prioritize sensationalism and clicks over sensitivity, particularly in their reporting on women, children, and marginalized groups. In the politically charged year of 2024, both national and local media outlets often acted more as mouthpieces for political candidates rather than impartial watchdogs, particularly during the February presidential and legislative elections and the November regional elections.

¹⁹ DKPP stands for Dewan Kehormatan Penyelenggara Pemilu or Election Organizer Ethics Council.

²⁰ KPU stands for Komisi Pemilihan Umum or General Elections Commission.

Even more troubling was the increasing overlap between editorial content and commercial interests. In some cases, journalists were explicitly tasked with selling advertisements, directly violating the core principles of journalism.

AJI Indonesia continues to advocate for journalists and media organizations to uphold journalistic ethics and professional standards. It also calls for media companies to re-establish the firewall between editorial and business functions, emphasizing that journalism must serve the public interest above all else.

C1. Ethics Violations in Sexual Violence Coverage

AJI Indonesia has raised significant concerns about the widespread violations of ethical codes in reporting on sexual violence throughout 2024. A number of media outlets published the identities of victims or sensationalized incidents with explicit detail, breaching Article 5 of the Journalistic Code of Ethics, which prohibits revealing the identities of victims in cases of sexual crimes.

The coverage was also rife with bias, including gender stereotyping, victim-blaming, and objectification. Common examples included labelling survivors as "sexy" or "temptresses," implying that they "enjoyed" the assault, or portraying them as homewreckers. Some reports even included detailed descriptions of survivors' physical appearances, exposing them to further harm and violating their right to privacy and dignity.

In addition to this, AJI draws attention to cases of sexual violence experienced by media workers themselves. To address this, AJI calls on media organizations to establish a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for handling cases of sexual violence, ensuring that media companies have clear, effective guidelines in place to prevent and respond to sexual violence within their workforce. Gender-based violence remains a pervasive issue. According to the National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan), there were 289,111 cases of violence against women reported in 2023.

C2. Protection of Vulnerable Groups

AJI continues to advocate for the eradication of all forms of violence against women, including physical, psychological, and sexual violence, which threaten their safety and well-being. According to the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), 128 journalists were killed worldwide in 2023, with 14 of them being women. This statistic highlights the significant risks female journalists face.

AJI has urged governments and international organizations to champion gender equality, freedom of expression, and the safety of journalists. Media organizations must also implement gender-sensitive editorial policies and ensure safe working environments.

In line with its commitment, AJI has published a book titled "*Journalism Guide to Counter Hate Speech Against Gender and Sexual Minority Groups*."²¹ The book was produced out of concern over the escalating hate speech targeting these groups. Such harmful rhetoric is still prevalent in mainstream media reporting on minority groups, particularly those based on gender and sexual orientation.

Mass media narratives wield significant influence in shaping public opinion, but unfortunately, this power is often misused to create stigma and prejudice against certain groups. This book explores how mass media narratives can be used as a tool to stigmatize, blame victims, enforce repressive actions against them, and instill fear of seeking help among the marginalized communities.

The book not only provides technical strategies for combating and transforming hate-driven narratives, especially during political events such as elections and regional head elections, but also serves as a call to action for change. It emphasizes the role of mass media in shaping public perceptions and advocating for justice and fairness in the face of bias.

AJI Indonesia, in collaboration with civil society organizations, has also been actively critiquing the Draft Presidential Regulation on the Maintenance

²¹ The book can be downloaded at: <https://aji.or.id/system/files/2024-08/panduan-jurnalisme-untuk-melawan-ujaran-kebencian-terhadap-kelompok-minoritas-gender-dan-seksual.pdf>

of Religious Harmony (PKUB), which they argue discriminates against religious and belief-based minority groups. Human rights advocates focused on freedom of religion and belief are calling on the government to remove the 90/60 requirement in the regulation for the establishment of places of worship, as it is perceived to harm minority groups. Through this policy, the state is accused of facilitating religiously motivated violence.

AJI has criticized the draft for its failure to properly accommodate followers of belief systems, as religious activities of these groups, which are not explicitly addressed in the draft regulation, could face disbandment. In response, the Civil Society Coalition to Reject the PKUB²² Presidential Regulation draft initiated an online petition in October 2024, calling for greater protection of religious freedom.

C3. Research on Journalistic Professionalism

In 2024, AJI conducted three major research initiatives:


1. Professionalism of Journalists and Media in Indonesia

This research, supported by the International Fund for Public Interest Media (IFPIM), aims to assist in funding and governance for independent media in Indonesia. In this study, AJI Indonesia was tasked with mapping the state of journalistic media throughout the country.

The research was conducted from August to September 2024. Before starting the mapping process, AJI Indonesia's Research Division held focused discussions with experts, academics, and relevant institutions, such as the Indonesian Press Council (Dewan Pers), to define the criteria for identifying independent and high-quality media. Key criteria included newsroom independence, the separation of business and editorial operations, the absence of political affiliations, adherence to journalistic ethics, and professional business practices.

For this study, AJI engaged enumerators from various regions across Indonesia. These senior journalists were tasked with providing an objective evaluation of the media conditions in their respective areas.


²² PKUB stands for Pusat Kerukunan Umat Beragama or Center for Religious Harmony



The focused discussions with enumerators revealed several key insights, including the difficulty of finding truly independent and professional media outlets in regional areas. The challenges faced by these media organizations have led to a list of recommended outlets, though most still fall short of the ideal standards.

2. Journalist Demographics and Digital Literacy Study

Supported by Google, this research aims to map the demographics of journalists, focusing on aspects such as their affiliations, work culture, digital literacy, and digital security. The study seeks to identify the primary challenges journalists face in the digital age, particularly in areas such as digital literacy, online security, and the evolving work culture within journalism. Additionally, the research will examine how journalists' affiliations with media outlets have shifted in the digital era and assess their self-capacity, including their digital skills and security measures.

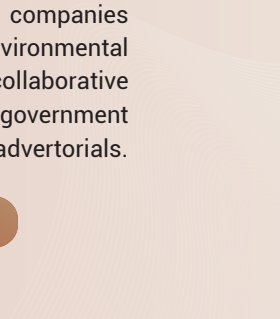


To initiate the study, AJI organized a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with academics, civil society organizations (CSOs), and experts to gather insights that would guide the development of research instruments and methodologies. Following the FGD, quantitative data was collected, and further discussions took place. The research remains ongoing as of now.

3. Environmental Journalist Safety Study

This research, supported by Kemitraan-Partnership, addresses the vulnerability faced by environmental journalists in Indonesia. While still ongoing, the study aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the conditions surrounding environmental journalists, serving as a crucial reference for ensuring their safety and supporting their journalistic work.

During the preparation of the research design, focused discussions uncovered several key insights, particularly the growing prevalence of self-censorship within the media. This trend has intensified as media outlets become increasingly reliant on advertising revenue from the government and extractive industries. Media organizations that have formed partnerships with government entities or extractive companies often pressure their journalists to avoid critical reporting on environmental issues. Additionally, many media outlets are engaging in collaborative content, where publications are funded by corporations or government institutions but are not clearly labeled as advertisements or advertorials.



Common Thread of The Research Findings

The three studies conducted have drawn a clear thread regarding the deteriorating condition of journalism and media in Indonesia, which demands urgent attention. The research mapping *Journalistic Professionalism and Media in Indonesia* uncovered key findings, one of which is the difficulty in finding truly independent media outlets in regional areas that uphold journalistic codes of ethics.

Many regional media outlets are heavily reliant on advertisements and financial support from local governments, which significantly hampers their independence. Moreover, many of these outlets are either owned by or affiliated with political interests, local government officials, or companies in the extractive industries. As a result, these media outlets struggle to maintain editorial independence. On top of that, many regional media still fail to provide their employees with proper wages.

AJI's research team also noted an increase in the practice of self-censorship, particularly on environmental issues. This has led to fewer instances of violence against environmental journalists compared to other topics, such as politics. However, amidst the ongoing environmental degradation driven by policy decisions, critical reporting on these issues remains scarce—partly due to self-censorship. Many environmental stories remain untold because journalists face significant restrictions from within their own media institutions.

Preliminary data also reveals internal pressure placed on journalists attempting to report critically on environmental issues in their regions. There have even been cases where stories were retracted due to internal censorship.

While much of the conversation surrounding violence against journalists has focused on external threats, be it physical or digital violence from security forces, thugs, or others, it is equally important to address internal threats: editorial self-censorship. This issue, which suppresses critical journalistic work, has not been sufficiently discussed and warrants greater attention, especially as we work toward creating effective advocacy strategies in the future.

