

Islam as a Solution Amid the Political Crisis and Media Suppression in Indonesia

News:

Indonesian journalist organizations have raised alarms over proposed amendments to the country's broadcasting law, arguing that the changes threaten press freedom and investigative journalism. The Press Council highlighted concerns that the amended bill, debated since October 2023, contradicts the press law by prohibiting investigative journalism, which is vital for professional reporting. Press Council Chairwoman Ninik Rahayu emphasized that this restriction undermines the 1999 press law's protections against censorship.

The bill, aimed at revising the 2002 Broadcasting Law to address challenges from new media platforms, has sparked criticism for potentially expanding the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission's (KPI) authority in journalistic disputes, a role traditionally held by the Press Council. Critics argue this shift could create jurisdictional overlap and weaken the Press Council's authority.

The drafting process has also been criticized for lacking public participation, ignoring a 2020 Constitutional Court decision that mandates community involvement in legislative processes. Minister of Communication and Informatics Budi Arie Setiadi questioned the rationale behind the ban on investigative journalism, emphasizing its necessity for a developing society.

In response to the backlash, legislative members, including Chairman Supratman Andi Agtas and Commission I member TB Hasanuddin, stated that the bill is not finalized and remains open to public and journalistic input. They assured that contentious issues would be addressed and emphasized the need for press freedom to serve the public interest responsibly. (Source: <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/asia/indonesia-broadcasting-bill-press-freedom-4340676>)

Comment:

The issue of media restrictions in Indonesia indicates a continuation of the democratic erosion process under President Joko Widodo's administration during his two terms from 2014 to 2024. Organizations like Freedom House and the Economist Intelligence Unit have classified Indonesia as a country with declining democratic quality, primarily due to the government's actions that facilitate the criminalization of critical opposition groups. This includes the disbandment of the Islamic organizations Hizb ut Tahrir / Indonesia in 2017 and the Islamic Defenders Front in 2020.

Further potential damage looms with the prospect of regime change, which appears to have been orchestrated by the current administration by promoting and supporting Prabowo Subianto and President Joko Widodo's son, Gibran Rakabuming Raka, for the vice-presidency. This follows constitutional changes at the Constitutional Court, where the chief justice is the president's brother-in-law.

Poor political quality ultimately affects the quality of life for the people, leading to increased poverty, unemployment, moral decay, crime, and other widespread damages that have plagued Indonesia for years. Meanwhile, political elites are preoccupied with power struggles, sharing positions, and siphoning off the country's wealth through state development projects and corruption.

In the midst of Indonesia's worsening political crisis, public dissatisfaction with the regime and state system is likely to grow, leading to political change. However, the key point here is that political change alone is not sufficient, as Indonesia has experienced in 1965 and 1988 without significant quality improvements. As only the political elites changed, but the secular and pragmatic state paradigm remained unaltered.

Therefore, it is appropriate for the Indonesia, as a Muslim-majority country, to consider a shift towards Islam. Together with scholars, Islamic organizations, and other Islamic figures, the nation should strive for the implementation of Sharia law within the framework of the state. Insha Allah, this would create a healthier Indonesia in terms of politics, morality, economy, and other dimensions, benefiting both its leaders and citizens.

Written for the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir by

Abdullah Aswar