

False Hope and Broken Promises: Jokowi’s Human Rights Agenda – A Commentary

Current Debates

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Contrary to many observers’ expectations, the human rights situation in Indonesia has deteriorated tremendously during the ten years of Jokowi’s administration. The World Justice Project’s Rule of Law Index has consistently ranked Indonesia below the global average for the last ten years. At the start of Jokowi’s presidency in 2014, Indonesia ranked 46th globally, but by 2023 it had declined to 66th place out of 140 countries (World Justice Project 2023). The country is still categorised as “partly free” by the Freedom House Index, with a declining score from 2021 to 2022 and poor ratings due to persisting systemic corruption, ongoing conflict and unlawful killings in Papua, discrimination against minority groups and continuous politicised use of defamation and blasphemy laws (Freedom House 2022). Amnesty International’s most recent country report on Indonesia also highlighted, among other issues, the use of excessive force in breaking up protests, online and physical attacks on social justice leaders and journalists, and the denial of effective access to justice for rape victims despite the passing of a new law criminalising various sexual violence offences (Amnesty International 2023).

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This situation contrasts sharply with Jokowi's promises to uphold the human rights agenda and address past human rights violations. The latter, dubbed as "historical baggage", was even translated into *Nawacita* or "The Nine Hopes", a set of nine programmes considered urgent for improving human rights when Jokowi took office in 2014.¹ He pledged to eradicate all forms of impunity within the national legal system, including a revision of the 1997 Military Justice Law that prevents the military from being held accountable by civilian courts. Moreover, the National Mid-Term Development Plan (RPJMN 2015–2019) also stipulated a similar programme to resolve past human rights violations.

Why did Jokowi initially pay so much attention to the human rights agenda? Was it just to obtain votes? Or did he underestimate the difficulties entailed in addressing past human rights abuses, effectively protecting minorities and allowing foreign journalists access to Papua? In this commentary, I engage with these questions from my positionality as a long-term human rights activist at Amnesty International Indonesia. By offering a mix of personal observations and encounters within the political arena under Jokowi, as well as an objective analysis of the human rights legal situation, I demonstrate how Jokowi's human rights promises have been far from realised. From the beginning, Jokowi's prioritisation of economic and investment policies, coupled with his political compromises with old elites – including army elites, business oligarchs and political parties – has sidelined his human rights promises (Warburton 2016).

He appointed several former army generals previously involved in human rights abuses to strategic posts. He weaponised laws and their enforcement agencies in order to tame political opposition (Power 2018) and increased restrictions on civil liberties (Amnesty International 2022). His pledges to resolve past human rights violations are almost nowhere to be seen (Yosephine 2015). Additionally, there are other neglected promises: protecting minority groups, reforming the police and allowing foreign journalists access to Papua.

I will compare each of these promises with their realisation, beginning with the first one regarding past human rights violations. I start by revisiting my encounters with Jokowi, his ambiguous views and attitudes, and the misplaced optimism of many fellow activists and academics about his presidency. These aspects are relevant to understanding how and why Jokowi continues to sideline human rights during his two terms of presidency. It is also important to note that this situation is related to the previous condition during the administration of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (2004–2014), when Freedom House downgraded Indonesia to "partly free" in 2013 from a rating of "free" since 2006 (Freedom House 2014).

1 Aritonang / Widhiarto 2014. On *Nawacita* in the 2019 poll see also Heriyanto 2018.

Jokowi: A (false) hope for human rights?

I first met Jokowi in 2011 when he was still the mayor of Surakarta (Solo) in Central Java. We were both invited to speak at an annual gathering of pro-democracy activists. I saw Jokowi wearing his signature white shirt and slicked-back hair, giving a very structured presentation. It was a no-brainer for the activists to invite Jokowi, given his positive track record in handling city development and human rights issues in relatively democratic ways – at least, that was how the media framed him. His unique method of relocating hundreds of street vendors in Solo amazed the attendees: he simply had dinner with them to listen to their needs and discuss possible solutions.

However, one thing that disturbed me was that he repeatedly stated his dislike for the activists advocating for the rights of street vendors. According to him, these activists held underlying interests that had skewed the “pure interests” of street vendors. Instead, he chose to “interact directly with street vendors” because of this. This reminded me of the typical character of a populist leader – seeking power through direct, unmediated and uninstitutionalised tactics – something that I and some prominent activists such as Hilmar Farid and Wilson Obrigado then discussed in depth at the post-event dinner.

In a report on the event published by Indonesia’s prominent leftist media outlet *Indoprogess*, Wilson expressed optimism over what he called Jokowi’s “direct democracy” approach (Wilson 2012). Another example detailed in the report that reflected this approach, aside from his unmediated approach to street vendor management, was his openness towards public demonstrations. He once even told his staff to provide the protesters with food and meet with them in person. Scenes of Jokowi doing *blusukan* – going to the field to see things with his own eyes and talking directly to poor people – were widely circulated in the media around that time. For the first time in a long time, the public was convinced that there was hope for the bleak socio-political situation in Indonesia. He won a prestigious anti-corruption award in 2010 (Rejeki / Daeng 2010), further reinforcing his reputation as the best mayor in Indonesia.

The next time I met him was in December 2013, when he had already become the governor of Jakarta. I had been invited by the popular Indonesian rock band SSlank to their concert which Jokowi also attended. By this time, many pundits had already predicted that he would become the new president, even though no political party had officially endorsed him as a candidate. One of my fellow activists Teten Masduki, a prominent anti-corruption activist who since 2012 had previously entered politics (Dia 2013) and joined Jokowi’s campaign team, insisted that I meet with Jokowi to raise key issues on human rights and security sector reform. We managed to secure a time and a place for me to meet Jokowi in private, in a tent near the concert stage.

As I expected, it felt like I was talking to a brick wall. My lengthy explanations seemed to elicit no response from him, other than a weird smile that he kept flashing. It was a stark contrast to when he was asked to talk about the problems of city management in Jakarta. There he had been able to talk in length about the lack of benches in some of Jakarta's public spaces, and how he had replaced them and improved the quality of the materials. He also promised to improve public transport by increasing the number of buses and removing old bus routes from service.

My scepticism continued while I was studying in Australia. In February 2014, I was asked by two colleagues, Marcus Mietzner and Andi Widjajanto, both academics at the Australian National University and the University of Indonesia – the latter became Jokowi's campaign manager – to return to Indonesia and join Jokowi's "Team of 11" as a human rights advisor. Apart from me, they approached Rizal Sukma (Centre for Strategic and International Studies, CSIS) to be Jokowi's foreign policy advisor. This advisory team had included, Sukardi Rinakit (Soegeng Sarjadi Syndicate, SSS) and Jaleswari Pramodhawardani (Indonesian Institute of Science, LIPI, now the National Research and Innovation Agency, BRIN). His presidential rival was Prabowo, a former commander of the army's special forces, who was involved in the kidnapping and disappearance of activists during the 1997–1998 fall of Suharto. He was also involved in the New Order and the 1996 military operation in Papua during the *Mapenduma* hostage crisis.

My colleagues managed to get me thinking about the future of Indonesia if Prabowo won the election. They asked me to, again, brief Jokowi about human rights, including to accompany him visiting Aceh and Papua, where support for Jokowi, backed by Megawati and the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan, PDI-P), was lacking. During Megawati's presidency from 2001 to 2004, these regions faced human rights violations during the implementation of martial law and the massive deployment of the military.² More requests came from other activists and artists, who had increasingly expressed their support for Jokowi. Andi had even told me that I must be ready to have my passport being revoked or unable to come back to Indonesia if I don't join them. Alexandra Retnowulan, who was working for Jakarta based think tank CSIS, called up and informed me that she was asked to book flights tickets and accommodation for my travel from Canberra to Jakarta and the two provinces mentioned above.

But it was still not enough to convince me to return home. As I was leaning towards supporting Jokowi, I found out that A. M. Hendropriyono, an ex-military general who was allegedly involved in past human rights violations, including the mass violence in Talangsari, Lampung in 1989 and the murder

2 See Human Rights Watch 2003 and International Crisis Group 2003.

of my fellow human rights lawyer Munir Said Thalib in 2004, would be leading the Jokowi victory team. Some colleagues at the time justified this as a logical political move, suggesting that this should not be an obstacle to maintaining support for Jokowi in order to prevent Prabowo from becoming Indonesia's next president. Still, I found it difficult to accept this manoeuvring and it solidified my decision to stay in Australia. In the end, the least I could do to respond to this turmoil was to write a piece for *New Mandala*, an online platform covering Southeast Asia's socio-political issues.

In this article, I traced the circles of both Jokowi and Prabowo, highlighting how conservative military figures from the past continue to shape the future of democratic Indonesia. I not only doubt Prabowo and his fellow generals, such as Muchdi Purwopranjono, due to their notorious human rights records, but I also lack confidence in Jokowi, whose close allies include former generals like Lieutenant General (ret.) A.M. Hendropriyono, General (ret.) Wiranto, and General (ret.) Ryamizard Ryacudu, all of whom have blemished reputations. The 2014 election saw both camps empower human rights abusers, maintaining their influence at the center of politics. In other words, it was a depressing choice for voters concerned about human rights. So, instead of returning to Jakarta to accept Jokowi's offer, I decided to stay in Canberra and continue my studies.

Unlike many of my fellow activists and academics, I felt a strong reluctance to support Jokowi. A significant factor that had led to this sentiment was Jokowi's consistent and convincing responses to questions about past human rights violations and what he would do about them if he became president. From promising to find Wiji Thukul (Miller et al. 2023) – a well-known, allegedly kidnapped, poet critical towards the government during the later period of the New Order – to protecting religious freedom, opening up access to Papua for foreign journalists and strengthening the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), Jokowi presented himself as the light at the end of the tunnel that was Indonesia's bleak human rights situation. This was very appealing to many activists and academics.

From the campaign period to his election, Jokowi brought in activists and academics from anti-corruption, environmental and security reform movements as supporters and subordinates, and it was common to find them in strategic roles in the government. This appeared to be part of a broader co-optation strategy of the civil society organizations. A month after inauguration, he appointed Andi Widjajanto, his campaign team manager who once asked me to be one of Jokowi's advisors, became the cabinet secretary. In April 2015, Sukardi Rinakit was appointed as special staff to state secretary and later special advisor to the president on communication and cultural affairs. In September 2015, Jokowi appointed Teten Masduki, who once asked me to go to Slank's concert and speak with Jokowi, as the Head of Staff at the President's

Office, before appointing him as Coordinator of the President's Special Staff and later as Minister of Cooperatives and Small and Medium Enterprises. In December 2015, while Rizal Sukma became Indonesia's ambassador to the UK, another colleague, Hilmar Farid, who once shared my opinion on the risks of Jokowi's populism, became Director General of the Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs.

A year later, Jaleswari Pramodhawardani became Deputy V for Politics, Law and Security at the Presidential Staff Office. In 2018, Todung Mulya Lubis, one of Indonesia's human rights lawyers, became Indonesia's ambassador to Norway and Iceland. There are many others who were brought into the government.³ These people believed that there was an alignment between their visions and those of Jokowi, particularly in the areas of anti-corruption, environmental protection, human rights and security reform. They also had faith in change "from within", although they later argued that they had difficulties dealing with the technocrats and bureaucracy in the government and became disillusioned with Jokowi.

Jokowi's ambiguity and the decline of human rights

While the previous section detailed my experience-based observations about Jokowi and the dynamics among former activists and Jokowi's supporters, this section elaborates on his ambiguity during the two periods of his presidency. It explains why none of his promises on human rights have turned out to be relevant policies and instead have led to the deterioration of the human rights situation in Indonesia.

Handling of past human rights violations

As mentioned in the introduction, addressing past human rights violations was one of Jokowi's key promises, and was even included in his flagship National Priority Set of Agendas (Nawacita) and the government's National Development Plan (RPJMN). In his first presidential speech on World Human Rights Commemoration Day in 2014 at the Yogyakarta Residential Palace, Jokowi stated:

³ Such as Johan Budi, ex-spokesman of the KPK, who became the president's spokesperson. Other examples include ex-head of the Indonesian Forum for the Environment (Walhi) Abetnego Tarigan, agrarian reform activist Nur Fauzi (KPA), ex-head of the National Human Rights Commission Ifdhal Kasim, and ex-commissioner of the National Women Rights Commission and one of the currently serving commissioners of the National Commission of Child Protection, Sylvana Apituley. After Jokowi's re-election in 2019, activists such as Mugiyanto, Mufti Makarim, Siti Ruhaini Djuhayatin and Rumadi Ahmad joined Jokowi's office.

[...] as President, I must uphold and operate within the realm of the constitution. Our constitution clearly shows that the recognition, respect and protection of human rights have been used as a guideline in the nation and state (Cabinet Secretary, 9 December 2014)

He further claimed that the government had worked hard in resolving past human rights violations (Republic of Indonesia Cabinet Secretariat 2014). The following year, he expressed similar sentiments, although he admitted that resolving these cases was difficult and that “we” – leaving open to whom this referred – needed to “have courage” to organise and undergo reconciliation and to seek judicial and non-judicial paths (Republic of Indonesia Cabinet Secretariat 2015). It should be noted that Jokowi has not yet elaborated a clear policy statement on this particular issue. Worse still, some former army generals with tainted human rights records in Indonesia now have Jokowi’s ear. These include retired Lieutenant General A. M. Hendropriyono, retired General Ryamizard Ryacudu, retired General Try Soetrisno, retired General Wiranto and retired Lieutenant General Prabowo Subianto. Jokowi has even promoted several officers involved in human rights abuses to command positions in the army.

Entering his first year, in April 2015, the government planned to form an ad hoc committee to address at least seven past human rights violations: the events of 1965/1966, which involved the anti-communist purge resulting in mass violence from 1965 to 1968; the Talangsari incident of 1989, a violent military crackdown on an Islamic community in Lampung; extrajudicial killings during the 1980s, where numerous individuals were summarily executed; enforced disappearances in 1997/1998, targeting pro-democracy activists; the Wasior incident in Papua (2001), where security forces were implicated in human rights abuses; the Wamena incident in Papua (2003), marked by violence and military operations against civilians; and the May riots of 1998, characterised by widespread violence and racial attacks during a period of political and economic turmoil.

The second year of his administration brought shocks to the human rights. In July 2016, Jokowi appointed Wiranto, a New Order general, as Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal and Security Affairs, a senior ministerial position overseeing the coordination of dozens of ministries. Wiranto was condemned as responsible for crimes against humanity by a UN-formed tribunal in Timor Leste. In 1999, Komnas HAM (the Indonesian National Human Rights Commission) also suspected him of committing serious human rights crimes during the East Timor referendum. A public statement condemning this appointment was issued by two prominent human rights NGOs Amnesty International and TAPOL – a London-based NGO working on Indonesian political prisoners (TAPOL 2016).

This policy, seen as an insult to human rights, shows that Jokowi’s indifference to issues of past human rights violations, whether intentional or uninten-

tional, has perpetuated impunity. These moves have made it more difficult to address the main challenge in resolving past human rights violations, which is the military itself. In many cases the Indonesian military has been, and continues to be, directly responsible for numerous human rights violations (Marzuki / Ali 2023). In addition, in May 2017, he appointed General (ret) Try Sutrisno, who was allegedly responsible for the massacre in Tanjung Priok 12 September 1984, as one of the chairs of the Pancasila Ideology Coaching Unit (Badan Pembinaan Ideologi Pancasila, BPIP). .

That said, there have been ups and downs in how Jokowi has addressed past human rights violations. In May 2018, I was one of around ten experts in law and human rights invited by Jokowi to meet him at the palace. During the meeting, while other law experts such as Mohamad Mahfud MD (who then became Jokowi's Minister for Politics, Law, and Security) talked about corruption, I raised my critique related to the lack of Jokowi's cabinet performance in resolution of past abuses and worsening human rights situation in Papua. I challenged him to meet Jokowi received an audience of victims, survivors and the families of victims of human rights violations at the palace to hear their aspirations and hopes. In the same year, an Integrated Joint Team was formed to resolve allegations of past serious human rights violations (Jingga 2023). In 2019, discussions began on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Bill, after Law No. 27 of 2004 on the Commission was annulled by the Constitutional Court in 2006. Three years later, there seemed to be no progress, with Jokowi saying that the bill was still at the discussion stage.

In August 2022, Jokowi issued the Presidential Decree (*keppres*) No. 17 of 2022 on the formation of a non-judicial resolution team for past serious human rights violations. Around three weeks before, when Minister Mahfud called me to join the team consist of senior human rights and law expert figures, I asked him to send me the draft of presidential decree so I could review the team's mandate and scope of work. Among other people invited to join the team, he said that I was the only one asking for it. After consulted the draft given by him internally with in-house experts at Amnesty International such as Beatrice Vaugrante I told Mahfud that I had to reject the offer due to its lack of international human rights standard. Other than our concerns to the given mandate, I raised my concerns about two people at the team that include a conservative former army general, Kiki Syahnakri, and a allegedly suspected human rights violator, As'ad Said Ali, who was deputy director of the State Intelligence Body (BIN) at the time of Munir's murder and a prime suspect in the case.⁴ I circulated the document and shared my concerns among human rights activists resulted in their opposition against Jokowi's decree as it remains the same with its initial draft. There were concerns that judicial means or even a full reparation means were not being discussed within the government.

4 See Easton 120, Fact Finding Team on The Death of Munir 2005, Amnesty International Indonesia 2022.

Despite this opposition, the team continued with its task and submitted its findings to Jokowi in January 2023, which led to his acknowledgement and expression of official regret for twelve past human rights violations, including the anti-communist massacre in the 1960s. However, to date, this acknowledgment has not been accompanied by any steps to bring the perpetrators to justice. Victims and their families will only experience further pain if past human rights atrocities are acknowledged without attempts to prosecute those responsible. Simply put, this acknowledgment is meaningless without addressing accountability and ending impunity. Furthermore, Jokowi did not mention other important cases where the investigation process, according to Amnesty International, was “half-hearted”, such as the 2014 extrajudicial killings of civilians in Paniai, the executions and tortures in Abepura in 2000, the raid of Indonesian Democracy Party (PDI) in 1996, the 1984 killings in Tanjung Priok and the violations in East Timor from 1975 to 1999 (Amnesty International Indonesia 2023).

Protection of minority groups

In the *Nawacita*, Jokowi promised that the state would address attacks on the rights of minority citizens by vigilante groups. During his ten years of presidency, not only that there has been no significant progress in policy reform to protect both religious and sexual minority, but also there were unprecedented hostilities by state officials against the latter.

The strengthening of vigilante groups is a significant challenge inherited from the previous government. As noted by Human Rights Watch, the government of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono failed “to confront militant groups whose thuggish harassment and assaults on houses of worship and members of religious minorities have become increasingly aggressive” (Human Rights Watch 2013). Amnesty International’s report *Prosecuting Beliefs: Indonesia’s Blasphemy Laws* highlights how Indonesia’s blasphemy laws violate international human rights law. Despite the country’s Constitution and public commitments to promote religious tolerance and pluralism, freedom of religion is severely restricted in Indonesia. Amnesty finds that the laws are incompatible with freedom of expression, conscience and religion, equality before the law, and freedom from discrimination (Amnesty International 2014). However, Jokowi’s disbanding of Islamist organisations (Hizb ut-Tahrir in 2017, Front Pembela Islam in 2020) appears more as an attempt to secure his own power from oppositional groups rather than to protect the rights and freedoms of minorities.

During the 2014 electoral year, attacks against religious minorities continued. In May 2014, one month after the legislative elections and two months before the presidential election, the Bekasi district government closed the Ahmadiyah Al-Misbah mosque, accusing it of spreading prohibited teachings. The following month, the Ciamis district government closed the Ahmadiyah Nur Khilafat

mosque in the name of “maintaining religious harmony”, although the decision appeared to be in response to pressure from hundreds of hardline Muslims who urged the regional government to disband the Ahmadiyah.

In the month following Jokowi’s inauguration, a protesting mob violently shut down the Ahmadiyah mosque Al-Hidayah in Depok, West Java. Such groups justify their actions with ministerial regulations that prohibit Ahmadiyah citizens from practicing their religion and beliefs. Events like this often result in Muslim minorities, such as the Ahmadiyah and Shia, facing forced relocation due to state discrimination. In November 2014, Jokowi’s Minister of Religious Affairs and the Minister of Home Affairs declared that the government would make the protection of religious minority groups a priority.

Ten years of Jokowi’s rule have done little to change the reality of harassment, intimidation and violent attacks against religious minority groups. In the last several years, between January 2021 and July 2024, Amnesty has recorded at least 123 cases of religious intolerance, including physical attacks and the rejection, closure, or destruction of places of worship. According to Amnesty, those responsible come from “various backgrounds, including government officials, residents, and civil society organizations.”⁵

Entering Jokowi’s first year, nine houses belonging to Gafatar residents in West Kalimantan were burned in January 2016. Accused of holding deviant beliefs, around 2,000 Gafatar members were expelled and temporarily housed in camps supervised by the West Kalimantan Provincial Government before being forced to return to Java. In his second year, February 2016, a Joint Decree (*Surat Keputusan Bersama*, SKB) was issued by the Minister of Religion, the Minister of Home Affairs and the Attorney General’s Office, banning the religious movement Millah Ibrahim, to which Gafatar members adhere, and declaring the Gafatar community a prohibited organisation. Furthermore, the government continued to consider Ahmadiyah’s teachings heretical. Its followers, who continue to face intimidation and attacks by the Sunni majority, remain unprotected.

Contrary to this, the Setara Institute, one of the leading NGOs focused on researching and advocating for religious freedom, noted a “constant decline” in the number of religious freedom violations since 2019, when Jokowi began his second presidency term (Silvia 2023). Nevertheless, the numbers were still considered high and did not reflect his official pledges to protect religious minority groups. Amnesty International continued to receive credible reports of violations of religious freedom. On 30 June 2024, a Sunday service at a Pentecostal church in Sidoarjo, East Java was stopped by local authorities. On 5 May 2024, a number of Catholic students who were holding a Rosary Prayer event at a house in South Tangerang was attacked by a group of people led by a neigh-

5 Amnesty Indonesia, <https://www.amnesty.id/kabar-terbaru/siaran-pers/pope-francis-must-urge-indonesia-to-respect-human-dignity-and-social-justice-in-development/09/2024/> (accessed 25 June 2024).

bourhood head. On 2 July 2024, the Garut Regency government in West Java sealed off a place of worship for Ahmadiyah Muslims.

Meanwhile, the rights of Indonesian sexual and gender minorities have not only been neglected but attacked vigorously. Entering Jokowi's first year, Human Rights Watch described such a depressing trend on the protection of sexual minorities as "unprecedented", citing government officials' comments that developed into "a cascade of threats and vitriol" against the Indonesian LGBTQI+ community (Human Rights Watch 2016). From city mayors warning young mothers to feed their children nutritious food so they don't grow up gay, to LGBTQI+ rights activism being labelled a proxy war waged by Western countries – the LGBTQI+ community has been demonised and targeted not only by the government and hardline conservative and/or Islamist groups but, due to the circulation of hateful speech and figures, also by their own family members and friends.

One event that stood out was the raid on the Atlantis gym in Jakarta in 2017. The police arrested 141 people, most of whom were gay or bisexual. What the public did not understand at the time was that the club was an outreach space for public health, especially in relation to HIV (Human Rights Watch 2018). However, the media portrayed the gathering as just another "LGBTQI+ incident", further perpetuating the view, shared by many government officials and some vigilante groups, that the LGBTQI+ community has no place in Indonesia.

At the end of the year, the Constitutional Court rejected a petition to broaden the scope of the adultery article to criminalise acts of moral offences (*delik kesusilaan*) in the Indonesian Criminal Code, targeting the LGBT community. Such acts include consensual sexual relations. One of the reasons for this request was to provide a sense of security against several social phenomena that were considered disturbing, including homosexuality.

In 2022, several attacks against sexual and gender minorities took place, including the disbanding of a transgender fashion week in West Kalimantan, the forced cancellation of a gathering of transgender women in Makassar by the police, the death of a transgender man from Peru in Bali at the hands of the police, the dismissal of two sergeants and a sailor for same-sex conduct after a military tribunal in Jakarta, and the continued use of the 2008 Anti-pornography Law to prosecute LGBTQI+ people (Human Rights Watch 2023).

Attacks against LGBTQI+ people have been most severe in the province of Aceh. With its special autonomy status, the province of Aceh issues regional regulations, or *Qanun*, based on Islamic Sharia law. Several articles are discriminatory and contain criminal provisions against LGBTQI+ people, such as forbidding consensual same-sex intercourse, which is punishable by a maximum sentence of 100 months or 100 strokes of the cane (Amnesty International Indonesia 2019). Even worse, these canings are open to the public, with

several canings recorded in the last six years, including the first in 2017 and the most recent in 2021.

Reformation of the police

During the 2014 presidential campaign, Jokowi and his deputy, Jusuf Kalla, promised to reform the police to improve public trust. One of their ideas was to reform the police, including to put the police institution under the Ministry of Internal Affairs (RMOL.ID 2015). This was necessary, in part, to rearrange the power of the institution and to mitigate the conflict between the police and the military. While Jokowi acknowledged that the police's track record had been blemished by human rights violations (Maharani 2015), he had failed in reforming the police extra ordinary powers in the areas of law enforcement and internal security. Promises of police reform have been made since the police and the military were separated in 1998 after the fall of Suharto. Although the police have undergone some changes, including the creation of *Kompolnas* (the National Police Commission, an oversight body to improve accountability), there is plenty of evidence that indicates the opposite.

In the second half of 2022, Indonesia witnessed two major incidents involving the police: the death of a junior police officer at the hands of two-star General Ferdy Sambo, head of Police Internal Affairs, whose defence lawyer is a former KPK spokesman (2016–2020) and former Indonesian Corruption Watch (ICW) activist; and the unprofessional handling of the Kanjuruhan Stadium stampede, which left hundreds injured and 135 dead, including 40 children. The current development agenda, which revolves around large infrastructure projects and extractive industries, has also led to excessive use of force by the police and the military against farmers, indigenous peoples, social justice leaders, or other marginalised groups (YLBHI 2023). The Civil Alliance for Police Reform highlighted a number of other cases, such as seven police officers and one civil servant suspected of involvement in extortion in the admission of candidates for police brigadier in 2016 and the Bachelor Police Inspector School 2017 in South Sumatra, as well as the murder of two students at Halu Oleo University by a police officer. The latter only received an ethics trial with a verbal warning and a postponement of his promotion in 2019 (Aliansi Jurnalis Independen 2023).

The impunity and the political contestation within the police force itself has been highlighted as “the nature of police power” (Baker 2022), which is reflected in these two instances, and perhaps others before them. The extortion case mentioned above has been cited as an example of the consequences of the Police Law (No. 2 of 2002), which placed the police directly under the President, granting the force autonomy and removing the need for it to be accountable as part of a ministry. Even the creation of *Kompolnas* ended up being in

vain: the body has been co-opted by the police executives and now works for “their public relations needs” (Baker 2022).

In Jokowi’s last year, the bill on the national police had triggered controversies due to extra ordinary powers given to the police. Once it’s passed the police would have powers beyond its traditional role and that includes powers to intercept anyone without judicial authorisation, tracking financial transactions, and more power to control the cyber space.

Opening access for foreign journalists in Papua

Another promise that Jokowi made during his 2014 presidential campaign was to open access to the provinces of Papua and West Papua for foreign journalists and international human rights NGOs (Amnesty International 2015). It was only some eight months after his inauguration that journalists were finally allowed into West Papua, a historic but long-overdue policy, as access had never been opened since the beginning of Indonesian rule in the province in the early 1960s (Mitchell 2015). The few journalists who were previously permitted access had to seek special permits, which were often prohibitively expensive and time-consuming to obtain. Security personnel also closely monitored these few individuals.

However, this positive manoeuvre and subsequent reactions were short-lived. In November 2015, Human Rights Watch (2015) reported that restrictions continued to persist. Journalists and others interviewed by the organisation still described “an opaque and unpredictable permit application process”, despite Jokowi’s announcement a few months earlier. Even after that, the NGO reported a backlash from senior government and security officials. The lack of a “specific written directive [...] opened space for non-compliance” by government bodies and security forces, especially those who opposed to the decision to open access (Human Rights Watch 2015).

In 2016, when Indonesia was appointed to host World Press Freedom Day in 2017, this obstacle was still in place (Dipa 2016). It is also important to note that restrictions and harassment were imposed not only on foreign journalists, but also on locals. Yance Wenda, a Papuan journalist who attempted to cover a demonstration by the National Committee for West Papua (KNPB) in 2017, was beaten and arbitrarily detained for four hours by police.⁶

In 2018, a BBC journalist was detained and interrogated for more than fifteen hours after reporting via tweets from Papua, despite possessing the required travel permit (Harsono 2018). She shared a photo of supplies on a river dock intended for malnourished communities in the region, consisting of instant noodles, soft drinks, and biscuits. The military said that she “hurt” their feel-

6 See <https://www.benarnews.org/indonesian/berita/kebebasan-pers-papua-05012017172400.html> (accessed 22 June 2024).

ings and claimed that the supplies were from the military itself, rather than donations or aid. Head of Information for the XVII/Cenderawasih Military Command, Colonel (Inf) Muhammad Aidi, said that Rebecca's tweet "has defamed and hurt our feelings, because it has created fake news or slander, and has the potential to damage our good name and the TNI institution and the state."⁷

According to Reporters Without Borders (RSF), Indonesia's global press freedom score averaged 59.28 between 2014 and 2023, based on a score of 0 to 100 assigned to each country, with 100 being the best and 0 being the worst. In 2023, Indonesia scored 54.83, placing the country 108th out of the 180 countries surveyed. This represents a rise from the 117th position in 2022, but is still considered low, especially compared to countries in Europe and North America. Papua and West Papua provinces have been described as an "information black hole" where the security forces limit the media from reporting on its excessive use of force to dampen separatist movements (Reporters Without Borders 2023). This has further demonstrated that Jokowi is far from fulfilling his promise to open up access to Papua for foreign journalists, while at the same time threatening media freedom.

Conclusion

Through my personal and close observations and the analysis of Jokowi's four key political promises, this assessment shows that Jokowi has fallen far short of fulfilling his pledges to uphold human rights. Jokowi's promises to address past human rights violations were a cornerstone of his political agenda and featured prominently in his professed national priorities. However, his actions have often spoken louder than his words, as he formed controversial alliances with former military figures and politicians linked to human rights abuses. Furthermore, Jokowi's failure to provide a clear and comprehensive human rights policy, coupled with his assignment of individuals with questionable human rights records to key positions, has generated scepticism among human rights advocates. Despite his promises to resolve cases like the Munir murder, there has been little progress, leaving a significant burden of unfulfilled expectations.

The protection of religious minority groups and sexual and gender minorities remains a pressing concern, with incidents of violence, intimidation and forced relocations persisting. The government's failure to take meaningful steps to protect the rights of minorities has allowed the spread of hateful rhetoric and persecution to continue, from both government officials and conservative mili-

7 See <https://tirto.id/kasus-rebecca-bbc-dan-gelapnya-kebebasan-pers-di-papua-cEho> (accessed 22 June 2024).

tary groups. Regarding the promise of police reform, the excessive use of force by the police against marginalised groups, and conflicts between the police and other national institutions, as well as within the force itself, reflect a lack of substantial improvements in police accountability and behaviour. Meanwhile, Jokowi's promise to open access to Papua and West Papua to foreign journalists and international NGOs has fallen short. Restrictions and obstacles placed on journalists and NGOs persist, hindering their ability to report freely and independently.

Despite some significant strides in addressing a few human rights issues, Jokowi's ambivalence in state policies towards fulfilling his promises, often influenced by army conservatives and oligarchs, has raised domestic and international concerns about his commitment to human rights. His initial attention to the human rights agenda seems to be driven by his personal desire to obtain votes given his rival's reputation in the 2014 and 2019 divisive presidential elections. Furthermore, his ambitious economic development strategies have often overshadowed human rights issues due to its excessive use of force in the context of land grabbing and a low-level standard for labour. This dual approach has created a complex and sometimes contradictory landscape in which Jokowi's administration operates. Approaching the end of his term, Jokowi has not only failed to achieve a balance between economic development and human rights protection, but also has indisputably deteriorated human rights and undermined the rights of the victims of human rights violations.

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