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Indonesia: Marking Human Rights Day, Kontras highlights attacks on freedom of expression

Wednesday 16 December 2020, by [ADITYA Nicholas Ryan](#) (Date first published: 10 December 2020).

Jakarta — Commission for Missing Persons and Victims of Violence (Kontras) researcher Danu Pratama has spelled out critical notes on violations of freedom of expression in the framework of commemorating International Human Rights Day on Thursday December 10.

The first note mentioned by Pratama was the many violations of freedom of expression which occurred during the protests against the Draft Omnibus Law on Job Creation.

“[During the] Omnibus Law [protests] there were 87 incidences of muzzling freedom of expression. Including among these were 232 people who were injured and 4,555 others who were arrested,” said Pratama during an event which was held virtually along with the media on Thursday.

Pratama highlighted the many people that were injured when expressing their views on the Omnibus Law. According to Pratama, this was because of the wave of mass actions in October 2020 in various parts of Indonesia.

“This was responded to with massive repression and violence by the police and other state security forces,” he said.

Pratama is of the view that this was able to happen because the state has allowed freedom of expression to be muzzled. He added that violence against people expressing themselves by police was not something which only occurred in 2020.

“The climax was in 2019, there were several big incidents between May and September. These incidents were repeated in 2020 and even worse still were legitimised by the state,” he said.

The form of this legitimisation, he explained, was through the lack of any efforts to correct policies which had been issued. Second, it was shown by the lack of firmness by the government related to police brutality.

“We never saw any response from government officials or even from the president himself on what the states’ position actually was on the excessive violence by security forces. Very rarely was there a response like for example, that the police must in a certain time frame act firmly against officers who are proven to have committed excessive violence,” he said.

Pratama believes that the president in fact legitimised the violence by declaring that the people demonstrating had been influenced by fake news or were taken advantage of for political interests.

The impact of this, he said, was that Kontras did not see any police officers who were held legally

responsible for this excessive violence.

“The long term impact is, of course if this continues then it is certain that the violence that occurred this year and last year, will be repeated next year, over different issues,” said Pratama.

Nicholas Ryan Aditya

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P.S.

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