

Country-wide Risk: Medium
West Papua Risk: High

In 2019, Indonesia experienced two widespread series of riots, some of the largest rioting seen in the country since the 1998 civil unrest that saw the end of President Suharto's reign.

Civil unrest occurred following the 17 April 2019 elections when a series of riots broke out in cities across Indonesia—though numbers were most prolific in Jakarta—which led to the deaths of eight people and injured hundreds more.ⁱ The riots were largely curbed when the two main political factions came to a truce as President Joko Widodo offered main opposition leader, Prubowo Subianto, the position of Defence Minister.ⁱⁱ This led to a de-escalation of both large-scale political rioting and the posting of online hate speech between the two party's followers.

Soon after being reinstated, the government proposed new legislation and some reworking of the country's criminal code, while also looking to remove the country's anti-corruption agencyⁱⁱⁱ. Large-scale student protests erupted across Indonesia cities, with the bulk of protest occurring in Jakarta. Five students died during the unrest, and many others were injured. The rioting temporarily halted the government's intentions to change the penal code, which "would have banned pre-marital sex and penalized insults against the government",^{iv} while also installing harsher laws against Indonesia's LGBTQI+ community.

What both cases of civil unrest reveal is the growing influence of hard-line and conservative Islam on Indonesian politics, law, and society and culture. The rioting also proves that Indonesians, especially the very politicised student body (a group known to be activists for some decades), realise the strength of protest and mass movement to express a democratic right, something many press agencies in Indonesia and abroad emphasise in their reporting of the two situations.

Of major concern for the country's large population living in cities such as Jakarta and other low-lying areas, were the recent onset of torrential monsoon rain in late 2019, early 2020, that flooded large parts of the country's capital, and were to blame for landslides in West Java and Banten.^v 66 people have been reported killed, while others risk death due to waterborne diseases. Already suffering due to a gradual sinking, in Jakarta the flooding displaced some 36,000 people, though this figure does not include many of those who were living "unofficially" in *kampung*s (small makeshift villages populated by the poorest Indonesians). Across the country it was estimated that up to 130,000 people were displaced due to this weather pattern.^{vi} *Channel News Asia* reported that 158 communities in the capital city had been affected by flooding.^{vii} The Indonesian government have stated that climate change will significantly affect the country, while *Time* reports that "Experts say the devastating floods are a reminder that the world's fourth-most populous country is highly vulnerable to climate change." The most affected are the poorest, exemplified by the wealthier pieces of infrastructure in Jakarta such as hotels and government buildings sitting some three feet higher than poorer districts, meaning all water flows into these poorer areas. While no violence was reported, this record downpour of water (the most recorded in over a century),^{viii} signals the potential risks of climate change as the population increases simultaneously.

West Papua

On 14 January 2020, Human Rights Watch released its *World Report 2020*^x that notes the trigger for the outbreak in violence in West Papua as the racist attacks against students in August 2019. It goes on to outline the disproportionate crackdown by Indonesian authorities who sent more than 6,000 military personnel to Papua and West Papua. Associated human rights abuses included the shutting down of the Internet to prevent footage and information getting out, restrictions on media and civil society access to West Papua, and an incident of shooting into a crowd of protesters.

Consolidating the evidence is a report by the International Coalition for Papua published in January 2020,^x which notes unique aspects of the situation in West Papua, including “unresolved political conflict, racism and serious development deficits.” The report notes recurring episodes since 2017 of human rights violations, coupled with growing aspirations among West Papuans for self-determination.

The exact number of those killed during the violence in 2019 is unclear, however the ICP report cites 189 civilian fatalities, including several children. In addition, the military crackdown also led to thousands of indigenous Papuans being displaced from Nduga.

One of the key indicators for a risk of atrocity crime is a lack of accountability, and the ICP report stresses that impunity for security force members who have committed human rights abuses has allowed a culture where political arrests and harsh crackdowns on freedom of expression are viewed as the appropriate responses.

In January 2020, two civil society organisations, The Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI) and the Southeast Asia Freedom of Expression Network (SAFE-net) filed a lawsuit over the actions of Indonesian authorities. They are suing President Widodo and the Communications and Information Ministry over the internet blackout imposed in Papua and West Papua, which they say were an example of government misconduct.^{xi}

The high rates of political arrests, transfer of prisoners, and use of treason charges has been raised in a November 2019 report by the Papuans Behind Bars organisation, which found that in 2019 there were 22 treason charges compared with five in 2018. They claim the vast majority of arrests were for participation in peaceful assembly and political protests.^{xii} The ICP report suggests that authorities also tend to use vague criminal provisions to arrest and prosecute protesters, such as the emergency law.

Further clashes occurred between Indonesian state forces and the West Papua National Liberation Army during December 2019, and several arrests made due to tensions around the West Papuan National Flag Day on the first of the month.^{xiii}

In the wake of the mid-2019 violence, the situation facing West Papua has gained more attention, and a number of bodies have issued statements in support of the protection of human rights. This includes a call by the Africa Caribbean Pacific Group to peacefully address the causes of the conflict and allow a mission to be conducted to produce a report on the West Papuan human rights situation in advance of the July 2020 meeting of the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders.^{xiv}

Leaders at the Pacific Islands Summit in Tuvalu in 2019 encouraged Indonesia to expedite the long-proposed visit to West Papua by the UN high commissioner for human rights, Michelle Bachelet, which remains stalled.^{xv} Also of concern in relation to potential risk for violence and atrocity crime is the reported presence in Papua of Islamic State linked groups, such as Jemaah Ansharut Daulah members (JAD). Eight suspected militants were arrested in December. Authorities believe the remoteness of Papua makes it attractive for extremist groups as a training location.^{xvi}

A positive development was the meeting held in January 2020 between civil society organisations and youth leaders in Papua. By facilitating open discussions on peaceful solutions to the conflict, local CSO initiatives such as these may help mitigate the risk of further violence.^{xvii}

Recommendations

The Indonesian Government should:

1. Appoint a senior official as National R2P Focal Point to coordinate national and international efforts to implement R2P.
2. Continue to ensure freedom of speech and freedom of protest.
3. Take positive steps to address entrenched racial discrimination, hate speech and incitement against all minority groups, including West Papuans.
4. Ensure human rights are protected during times of increased conflict and violence, prevent the use of torture and hold members of security forces who act outside of international law accountable.

Indonesia's international partners should:

1. Identify and take positive action to develop avenues for cooperation with the Indonesian government and society in the areas of combatting violent extremism and terrorism, preventing sectarian conflict, and reducing incitement and hate speech

ⁱ Erin Cook, "After the Riots: Indonesia's Post-Election Future," *The Diplomat* May 30, 2019, <https://thediplomat.com/2019/05/after-the-riots-indonesias-post-election-future/>

ⁱⁱ Erwin Renaldi, "Indonesia's President Selects Cabinet, Appointing Opposition Leader as Defence Minister," *ABC News*, October 23, 2019, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-10-23/indonesia-president-appoints-opposition-leader-to-cabinet/11631518>

ⁱⁱⁱ "Behind the Student Protests that Have Rocked Indonesia," *Reuters*, November 8, 2019, <https://nypost.com/2019/11/08/behind-the-student-protests-that-have-rocked-indonesia/>

^{iv} Ibid.

^v Hillary Leung, "66 People Have Died in Indonesia's Devastating Floods. Here's What You Need to Know," *Time*, January 8, 2020, <https://time.com/5761097/jakarta-indonesia-floods/>.

^{vi} Ibid.

^{vii} Siwage Dharma Negara, "Commentary: Jakarta, the Fastest Sinking City in the World Faces the Biggest Flooding Challenge," *CNA*, January 7, 2020, <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/commentary/jakarta-fastest-sinking-city-in-the-world-floods-challenge-river-12237202>.

^{viii} Joshua Berlinger, "66 People Now Killed by Flooding in Jakarta, and More Rain Appears to be on the Way," *CNN*, January 6, 2020, <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/01/06/asia/jakarta-floods-intl-hnk/index.html>

^{ix} Human Rights Watch World Report 2020: Events of 2019, https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/hrw_world_report_2020.pdf

^x HUMAN RIGHTS AND CONFLICT ESCALATION IN WEST PAPUA, <https://humanrightspapua.org/images/docs/HumanRightsPapua2019-ICP.pdf>

^{xi} Marchio Irfan Gorbiano, “Civil Groups Sue Government Over Papua Internet Ban,” *Jakarta Post*, January 23, 2020, <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2020/01/22/civil-groups-sue-government-over-papua-internet-ban.html>

^{xii} “Papua Behind Bars: An Online Resource About Political Prisoners in West Papua,” Jan 2018-Oct 2019, <https://www.papuansbehindbars.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/PBB-Jan-2018-Oct-2019-Nov2019.EN.web.pdf>

^{xiii} Hundreds of people were detained in Papua ahead to 1 December, 9 December 2019, <https://eng.jubi.co.id/hundreds-of-people-were-detained-in-papua-ahead-to-1-december/>

^{xiv} 79 ACP States call for human rights situation in West Papua to be addressed, 14 December 2019,

https://dailypost.vu/news/acp-states-call-for-human-rights-situation-in-west-papua/article_9e25a50a-1ebe-11ea-bd79-375821e25846.html

^{xv} Pacific leaders push for UN rights commissioner visit to Papua, 16 August 2019, <https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/396833/pacific-leaders-push-for-un-rights-commissioner-visit-to-papua>

^{xvi} Amy Chew, IS-linked Indonesian Militants Looking to Papua for Hideouts, Training Sites, 23 December 2019, <https://www.benarnews.org/english/news/indonesian/JAD-militants-Papua-12232019170920.html>

^{xvii} Local leaders are looking for conflict resolution in Papua, 27 January 2020, <https://eng.jubi.co.id/local-leaders-are-looking-for-conflict-resolution-in-papua/>