

# Indonesia: Institute for Criminal Justice Reform

## Why Indonesia's democracy needs support

Indonesia's democracy is under growing pressure from an increasingly repressive legal environment. Civil society actors describe patterns of intimidation, digital and physical harassment, surveillance, and defamation lawsuits to silence critics. Large segments of the population report a heightened sense of repression, particularly regarding freedom of expression and the right to protest. These pressures reflect a broader trend of securitising dissent by treating political opposition and criticism as criminal threats rather than democratic expression.

Addressing the shortcomings of Indonesia's legal frameworks – and two new legal codes in particular – is essential to halting further democratic backsliding.

## What to support

Evidence from Indonesia and comparable contexts demonstrates how civil society-led legal monitoring and advocacy can effectively contribute to evidence-based lawmaking by pushing for rights-protective reforms. Civil society organisations in Indonesia have been instrumental in shaping landmark legislation: they have secured amendments to defamation and blasphemy provisions, limited the scope of treason charges to physical acts, and introduced safeguards on the death penalty – all through sustained research, coalition-building, and strategic engagement with lawmakers and the courts.

## New legal codes

The enactment in January 2026 of Indonesia's new Criminal Code – *Kitab Undang-Undang Hukum Pidana* (KUHP) and Criminal Procedure Code – *Kitab Undang-Undang Hukum Acara Pidana* (KUHAP) is a window of opportunity and 'democratic opening' in which to mount an effective civil society response in Indonesia. In this phase, enforcement patterns are established, precedents set, and the gap between the laws on paper and in practice becomes evident.

Both new laws contain provisions that risk formalising existing patterns of repression, criminalising dissent, restricting freedom of expression, and enabling police corruption and abuse. Coordinated efforts across civil society to monitor and engage in evidence-based advocacy increase the likelihood that both laws are applied in line with human rights principles and that their problematic provisions, which may violate human rights, are challenged through the courts or the legislature.

## Who to support

The Institute for Criminal Justice Reform (ICJR) is one of Indonesia's most credible and strategically well-positioned civil society actors in criminal law reform. Founded in 2007, ICJR has spent nearly two decades at the intersection of legal research and advocacy, earning recognition from both the Government of Indonesia and the international donor community for its work.

ICJR has led the National Alliance for Criminal Code Reform – a 41-member coalition – since 2015 and been the primary civil society voice on the Criminal Code for more than a decade of legislative deliberation. Additional to its advocacy efforts with the national alliance, ICJR has also been granted funding through international partnerships (e.g. with the Kingdom of the Netherlands) to engage more formally with the Indonesian government. In these instances, it served as technical assistant in preparing the implementation framework for the new Criminal Code, where ICJR could successfully advance some of the goals advocated by the alliance.

ICJR and the National Alliance's advocacy has succeeded in securing the inclusion of many protection mechanisms to the codes. But several potentially abusive provisions remain, making this phase of their evolution even more critical. The recommended ICJR initiative comprises two mutually reinforcing projects: one monitoring the implementation of the new Criminal Code (KUHP) across three regions and using the findings to advocate for constitutional or legislative reform; the other researching and challenging the specific provisions of the Criminal Procedure Code (KUHAP) that enable corrupt police practices during the pre-investigation phase before trial, such as entrapment and/or termination of examinations without sufficient judicial oversight.

Both projects build directly on ICJR's existing research and advocacy and draw on the National Alliance's infrastructure and the institutional relationships ICJR has developed over years of engagement with the Constitutional Court, the legislature, and civil society networks across Indonesia.

By funding this initiative, donors will support an organisation with the credibility, the networks, and the legal expertise to lead a coordinated civil society response to Indonesia's new legislation towards a fairer, more rights-based criminal justice system. Thus, donors will help safeguard freedom of expression and protect civic space in Indonesia as pillars of democracy and human rights.

**About us**

Power for Democracies strengthens and protects democracy by identifying, researching, and recommending highly effective civil society initiatives for donors to support. It is non-profit and non-partisan. The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of Power for Democracies.

**Registered office**

c/o UES – Gemeinnützige GmbH für Effektiv Spenden  
Müllerstrasse 138D  
13353 Berlin  
Germany

Responsible: Markus N. Beeko

© 2026 Power for Democracies gGmbH  
All rights reserved.