White Rose Research Online

eprints@whiterose.ac.uk
https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk
Universities of Leeds, Sheffield and York

Deposited via The University of Sheffield.

White Rose Research Online URL for this paper:
https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/id/eprint/247235/

Version: Published Version

Article:
Utomo, W.P. (2026) Reconfiguring repression: violence against journalists in Indonesia under democratic backsliding (2014–2025). Journalism. ISSN: 1464-8849

https://doi.org/10.1177/14648849261497870

Reuse
This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial (CC BY-NC) licence. This licence allows you to remix, tweak, and build upon this work non-commercially, and any new works must also acknowledge the authors and be non-commercial. You don't have to license any derivative works on the same terms. More information and the full terms of the licence here:
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/

Takedown
If you consider content in White Rose Research Online to be in breach of UK law, please notify us by emailing eprints@whiterose.ac.uk including the URL of the record and the reason for the withdrawal request.

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS
University of Sheffield
UNIVERSITY of York

Check for updates

Original article

Journalism
2026, Vol. 0(0) 1–22
© The Author(s) 2026

Article reuse guidelines:
sagepub.com/journals-permissions
DOI: 10.1177/14648849261497870
journals.sagepub.com/home/jou
Sage

Reconfiguring repression: Violence against journalists in Indonesia under democratic backsliding (2014–2025)

Wisnu Prasetya Utomo[1,2]

Abstract

Violence against journalists in Indonesia has been reconfigured as a broader system of repression under democratic backsliding. This article examines how repression adapts under such conditions by conceptualizing violence as authoritarian innovation. Repression is redistributed across forms, perpetrators, and targets, preserving deniability while maintaining disciplinary effects. Analyzing 780 documented incidents (2014–2025) from the Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI), the study codes violence across forms (physical, digital, legal, obstruction), perpetrators (state actors, non-state actors, unknown), and targets (individual journalists, media organizations). The analysis traces violence's longitudinal reconfiguration under democratic backsliding. Three patterns emerge. First, physical attacks persist but increasingly coexist with digital harassment and obstruction. Second, perpetrator attribution becomes increasingly opaque, with unknown actors responsible for more incidents than police or non-state actors by 2025. Third, attacks targeting media organizations rise sixfold. The findings extend authoritarian innovation and press freedom scholarship, revealing how repression adapts temporally through accumulation and layering.

Keywords

violence against journalists, Indonesia, democratic backsliding, authoritarian innovation, press freedom, digital harassment

[1]School of Information, Journalism and Communication, University of Sheffield, Sheffield, UK
[2]Department of Communication Science, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Corresponding author:
Wisnu Prasetya Utomo, School of Information, Journalism and Communication, University of Sheffield, Western Bank, Sheffield, S10 2TN, Sheffield, UK; Department of Communication Science, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta, Indonesia.
Email: wputomo1@sheffield.ac.uk

Introduction

Violence against journalists has increasingly shifted into digital forms, including disinformation campaigns, coordinated harassment, and other modes of online intimidation (Carlsson and Pöyhtäri, 2017; Lewis et al., 2020; Waisbord, 2020). Such scholarship captures an important transformation and invites a further question about how violence adapts in post-authoritarian political contexts. In Indonesia, the post-authoritarian democratic period has not eliminated violence against journalists. It has instead reshaped the forms through which violence operates. Physical attacks and overt threats persist, but they now coexist with digital harassment and administrative pressure that disrupt journalistic work (Masduki, 2022; Masduki and Wendratama, 2025).

The reshaping forms matters because it unfolds alongside democratic backsliding. Indonesia's post-authoritarian transition after 1998 brought substantial political and media liberalization, and the country was widely regarded as a democratic success story (Aspinall, 2010). Over the past decade, however, Indonesia's democratic quality has eroded. Executive power has expanded, oversight institutions have weakened, civic space has narrowed, and digital infrastructures have been increasingly mobilized for political control (Hadiz, 2017; Power, 2018). The developments reflect a mode of governance that preserves democratic form while reshaping how power is exercised.

This article analyzes violence against journalists as adaptive governance. It treats repression as a set of practices that adjust to democratic constraints (Guriev and Treisman, 2019; Pearce, 2010). Violence operates through cumulative and often impersonal pressures that discipline journalism without relying on overt censorship or clear state attribution (Stern and Hassid, 2012). The process is conceptualized here as reconfiguration: a redistribution of coercion across different forms, actors, and targets. Through this redistribution, coercion adapts to democratic constraints while continuing to shape journalistic behavior in disciplinary ways.

Discussions of journalists' vulnerability in post-*Reformasi* Indonesia have often centered on identifiable actors and incident-based accounts (Adiprasetio, 2020; Wiratraman, 2017). Yet coercion has become increasingly mediated and fragmented. Violence has shifted away from overt confrontation towards dispersed and deniable practices. This article draws on longitudinal data documenting violence against journalists in Indonesia between 2014 and 2025 and asks two interrelated questions:

RQ 1: How has violence against journalists been reconfigured under conditions of democratic backsliding?

RQ 2: How do shifts in perpetrators and coercive tactics illuminate changing modes of governance over journalism within a formally democratic system?

Literature review

Democratic backsliding as gradual and adaptive governance

Democratic backsliding unfolds incrementally rather than through abrupt authoritarian rupture (Bermeo, 2016). Conceptualizations of backsliding distinguish it from classic

coups or regime breakdowns by showing how elected leaders undermine democratic institutions from within while preserving formal democratic procedures (Haggard and Kaufman, 2021b; Waldner and Lust, 2018). Such a strand of scholarship demonstrates that democratic regression is typically non-linear and contingent, rather than a single directional collapse (Abels et al., 2024).

Understood this way, backsliding shifts analytical focus from regime outcomes to governing mechanisms. Democratic regression operates through cumulative institutional weakening (Riedl et al., 2025). Druckman (2024) similarly foregrounds the interaction between actors and institutions over time. Ruling elites exploit institutional ambiguities to consolidate power gradually, while elite polarization and crisis politics create conditions in which exceptional measures become normalized (Haggard and Kaufman, 2021a; Meyerrose, 2020).

Within this framework, the implications of democratic backsliding's governing dynamics for journalism have not been systematically addressed. Media are frequently acknowledged as part of democratic ecosystems, yet analysis tends to prioritize institutional alignment or regime typologies over the everyday pressures faced by journalists (Druckman, 2024; Jee et al., 2022). Where journalism is examined more directly, the focus commonly falls on regulatory frameworks or role perceptions (Ferreira, 2025; Macaraig and Hameleers, 2022). While these approaches illuminate formal constraints on media, they provide limited insight into how democratic erosion is enacted through intimidation and other forms of pressure embedded in journalistic work.

A smaller body of work begins to address this gap by treating media freedom erosion as a signal of democratic backsliding. Kwode et al. (2024), for example, show how declining media freedom reflects broader democratic deterioration even in the absence of overt authoritarian takeover. Psychological and perception-based approaches further suggest that distorted understandings of media freedom among elites and citizens can sustain support for backsliding regimes (Abels et al., 2024; Druckman, 2024). Yet even here, violence against journalists tends to appear as an indicator or outcome of backsliding rather than as a mechanism through which democratic erosion is enacted (Al-Zaman, 2025).

In this context, media control and pressure are not peripheral side-effects but central sites of authoritarian innovation, ranging from regulatory harassment and ownership capture to targeted intimidation aimed at reshaping news production itself (Coşkun, 2020; Curran, 2019; Yeşil, 2018). Ferreira (2025) illustrates how soft, hard, and anticipatory forms of steering normalize self-censorship and align coverage with elite interests during democratic decline. Violence and intimidation, in this view, function as constitutive mechanisms operating alongside legal and institutional manipulation (Coşkun, 2020).

Collectively, the literature establishes democratic backsliding as a form of gradual and adaptive governance. What remains insufficiently specified is how coercion against journalists fits within this trajectory. If democratic erosion proceeds through routine, ambiguous practices rather than spectacular rupture, then violence against journalists cannot be understood solely as an exceptional breakdown. Instead, it must be analyzed as part of the governing repertoire through which power is exercised under democratic constraint (Ferreira, 2025).

Violence as adaptive repression: From authoritarian innovation to media control

The concept of authoritarian innovation provides a framework for understanding how repression adapts when overt authoritarianism is politically costly. Rather than dismantling democratic institutions, political elites selectively combine democratic procedures with illiberal practices, recalibrating control while maintaining the appearance of democratic rule (Curato and Fossati, 2020; Pepinsky, 2020). Authoritarian innovation thus operates through its institutional surface.

In this article, several terms may appear similar, or even interchangeable, but they operate at different analytical levels. Repression is used as the broadest category, the wider set of actions through which state and state-aligned actors (DeMeritt, 2016) seek to constrain journalism as a form of political control. Coercion refers to the practical repertoire through which repression is enacted (Petrović, 2025). Violence denotes the most direct subset of these practices with acts or credible threats that inflict physical, psychological, digital, or material harm on journalists and media organizations (Kim and Shin, 2025; Slavtcheva-Petkova et al., 2023). In this framing, violence is one mechanism of coercion, while coercion is the operational form through which repression becomes observable in journalistic life.

Repressive practices evolve in response to shifting political environments and societal expectations (Gohdes, 2020). In Southeast Asia, authoritarian innovation has been shown to operate through executive illiberalism that remains formally compatible with democratic governance (Mietzner, 2020). In Malaysia's reform period, democratic openings coincided with the emergence of new techniques of control rather than linear liberalization (Dettman, 2020). These cases underline that innovation is anticipatory, designed to manage dissent while minimizing political and legal risk.

Digital infrastructures have become particularly important to such adaptation. Early debates on "liberation technologies" identified the paradoxical role of digital media in expanding participation while enhancing surveillance and control (Krastev, 2011; MacKinnon, 2011; Morozov, 2011). Roberts and Oosterom (2025) show how authoritarian practices are embedded in algorithmic systems, producing indirect and difficult-to-contest forms of mediated power. This includes the cultivation of hostility and the amplification of delegitimizing narratives against journalists (Dovbysh and Wijermars, 2025).

Authoritarian innovation in the mediasphere similarly hinges on reorganizing responsibility and visibility for control. States rely on legal ambiguity and diffuse surveillance to outsource repression to platforms and media outlets, blurring the line between formal regulation and ostensibly organic pressure on newsrooms (Alashry, 2024; Earl et al., 2022; Lim, 2025). This means that harassment is often enacted by intermediaries or "patriotic" publics rather than security forces (Jamil, 2021; Sinpeng and Koh, 2022; Zhu and Fu, 2024). Such arrangements normalize control as risk management or content moderation while preserving plausible deniability for political authorities (Michaelsen, 2018).

Much existing research on violence against journalists, however, treats violence as an occupational hazard or as episodic repression linked to crisis moments. Incident-centered approaches document threats and harms but often isolate violence from the political

processes through which it is normalized (Belair-Gagnon et al., 2024; Slavtcheva-Petkova et al., 2023). Even studies of extreme violence, such as journalist killings, frequently frame attacks as consequences of state weakness or criminal capture rather than as elements of governance (Bartman, 2018; Hughes and Márquez-Ramírez, 2018).

Attacks function through their lingering effects as the anticipation of risk alters reporting decisions long after a specific incident has passed (Dorff et al., 2023). Harassment and discursive forms of intimidation extend this dynamic by redistributing the costs of violence onto journalists and newsrooms, requiring them to absorb emotional strain as part of routine work (Alashry, 2024; Dodds et al., 2024). Sustained exposure to such pressures further produces internalized constraints, as journalists recalibrate professional judgment and editorial boundaries (Kim and Shin, 2025).

Violence operates through impunity and deniability. The absence of accountability for attacks sustains fear and normalizes risk, particularly in hybrid and transitional regimes (Harrison and Pukallus, 2021). Discursive responses that frame violence as inevitable or collateral further depoliticize attacks and re-victimize journalists (Chambers and Henrichsen, 2025a, 2025b). Under these conditions, violence becomes selective and calibrated to produce compliance without provoking backlash. Seen through the lens of authoritarian innovation, violence against journalists can be read as a mechanism of adaptive governance. Such a perspective foregrounds reconfiguration and directs analytical attention to how violence is redistributed across forms, actors, and tactics over time. Its relevance becomes particularly clear in post-authoritarian contexts such as Indonesia (Sinpeng and Koh, 2022), where democratic institutions persist even as coercive practices are recalibrated.

Violence against journalists in post-authoritarian Indonesia: From documentation to process

Scholarship on violence against journalists in Indonesia has developed primarily through event-based documentation. Masduki (2017, 2022), for example, established that violence persisted after the end of authoritarian rule across both national and local contexts. These studies were important in demonstrating that democratic transition did not eliminate coercion against journalists. However, their analytical focus remained largely on the forms of threats, perpetrators, and motives, leaving underexamined how violence relates to broader transformations in political power. Tapsell (2015, 2017) shows how formal press freedom coexists with informal pressure and structural constraints linked to political and economic power, demonstrating how post-authoritarian media systems became embedded in unequal power relations.

A growing strand of scholarship foregrounds digital forms of coercion. Ong and Tapsell (2022), Ruijgrok et al. (2026), and Wijayanto et al. (2024) document how harassment and disinformation are mobilized against journalists through anonymous or semi-organized networks that blur the boundary between state and non-state actors. Sinpeng and Koh (2022) situate Indonesia within a broader pattern of digital autocracy, where repression is exercised through platforms and algorithms.

Alongside coercion, scholars document strategies of resistance and adaptation. Dewi (2025) and Masduki and Wendratama (2025) show how journalists and civil society

actors mobilize online campaigns and solidarity networks to defend press freedom. However, this form of adaptation also entails practices of self-censorship, which Wijayanto and Masduki (2024) describe as "polite watchdog" journalism, in which critical reporting is pursued through cautious framing designed to avoid antagonizing powerful actors. While such studies illuminate agency and resilience, they often frame violence as a challenge to be managed rather than as a constitutive feature of governance.

The Indonesian literature has documented specific incidents and tactics of violence extensively. What remains underexamined is how these forms of coercion relate to one another across time, and how they reflect broader reconfigurations of governance under democratic backsliding. The following section outlines the data and methods used to trace these dynamics longitudinally in Indonesia between 2014 and 2025.

Methods

This study draws on a longitudinal dataset compiled from publicly available documentation by *Aliansi Jurnalis Independen* or the Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI). Established in 1994 during the late New Order authoritarian period, AJI has played a central role in monitoring press freedom violations. AJI documents incidents of violence against journalists on its website, typically providing the date, location, type of violence, and a brief narrative description of each case.

A longitudinal approach, defined as repeated observation of the same phenomena over time (Primerano et al., 2025), is particularly suited to examining processes of reconfiguration, where change unfolds through accumulation and adaptation, not through discrete events (Davenport, 2007). The dataset used in this study covers the period from January 2014 to December 2025 and initially comprised 871 documented incidents. Due to sensitivity considerations, AJI did not make detailed information publicly available for 91 incidents (10.4% of the total). These cases were therefore excluded from the analysis. The final analytical sample consists of 780 incidents, retrieved from AJI's online archive between February 1 and 7 2026 and compiled for analysis using Microsoft Excel.

All incident data for the 12-year period were retrieved from this single source. AJI's published annual reports (2014 to 2025) were consulted for contextual information but not used as the incident-level data source. AJI's documentation is not produced as an analytical dataset, and the level of detail varies across incidents. Information on perpetrators or motives is often incomplete. Following Frank and Walton (2022) and Fujii (2012), this study treats ambiguity and partial attribution as analytically meaningful, not as methodological deficiencies. The analysis focuses on change over time rather than incident frequency (Bernard, 2021). A systematic coding scheme was developed along three analytical dimensions: forms of violence, perpetrators, and targets.

Forms of violence were coded as: (1) physical violence, including bodily assault or restraint; (2) threats and intimidation, including verbal or written warnings and in-person harassment; (3) legal or administrative action, such as arrests, prosecutions, or regulatory sanctions; (4) obstruction, including confiscation or destruction of equipment and denial of access; and (5) digital harassment, including coordinated online campaigns, doxing, and platform-based threats. Where incidents involved multiple forms, all applicable categories were coded.

Perpetrators were coded where identifiable and recorded as unknown where attribution was unclear. This decision reflects the study's interest in institutional distance and opacity rather than definitive actor classification. Narrative descriptions were reviewed iteratively (Saldaña, 2021), particularly where indirect involvement or proxy action was suggested. Targets were coded to distinguish whether violence was directed at individual journalists, media organizations, or both. Individual targeting refers to attacks on named reporters or editors, while organizational targeting includes acts aimed at newsrooms or media outlets as entities. These categories are not mutually exclusive and capture shifts in whether violence operates through individualized or structural pressure.

Findings

The findings trace how repression is reconfigured along three dimensions. Violence is treated throughout as the observable mechanism through which this reconfiguration proceeds: its changing forms (4.1), its increasingly opaque perpetrators (4.2), and its shifting targets (4.3) together reveal how coercion is redistributed under democratic backsliding.

Longitudinal reconfiguration of violence against journalists

Viewed over time, violence against journalists in Indonesia does not follow a linear trajectory of increase or decline. Total incidents fluctuate from a low of 47 in 2021 to peaks of 113 in 2016 and 101 in 2025, but these fluctuations do not align predictably with moments of political crisis or stability. More pronounced surges are visible around specific political episodes, most notably in late 2016 and early 2017, during the Jakarta gubernatorial election and the blasphemy controversy involving then-Jakarta governor Basuki Tjahaja Purnama. Another important moment emerges in 2020, marked by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the passage of the Omnibus Law on Job Creation, both of which triggered large-scale protests and coincided with a rise in violence against journalists. At the same time, the longitudinal pattern suggests that such political moments do not automatically translate into sustained increases in attacks, pointing to a more uneven and contingent relationship between political events and violence against the press.

What changes most clearly is not the displacement of physical violence, but its persistence alongside emerging forms of coercion. Table 1 shows that physical attacks remain the most frequent form of violence throughout the period, appearing in 300 of the 780 incidents recorded. The three highest annual counts of physical attacks, 37 incidents in 2016, 34 in 2017, and 34 in 2025, coincided with periods of large-scale protest. The 2016–2017 attacks occurred amid the anti-blasphemy protests discussed above. In 2025, physical violence again rose during mass protests against Prabowo Subianto's administration, including the *Indonesia Gelap* (Dark Indonesia) demonstrations and the unrest that followed the death of Affan Kurniawan, a gig-economy delivery driver who was killed in Jakarta after being run over by an armored police vehicle (Aspinall, 2025).

However, physical attacks no longer dominate alone. Digital harassment, virtually absent before 2020 with only 14 incidents across 2014–2019, emerges as a substantial

Table 1. Distribution of violence against journalists by type over time, 2014–2025.

Year	Physical violence	Threats and intimidation	Legal and administrative pressure	Obstruction	Digital harrassment	Total per year
2014	21	13	1	12	2	49
2015	25	11	1	12	0	49
2016	37	29	13	30	4	113
2017	34	17	8	23	1	83
2018	23	16	9	25	3	76
2019	23	3	7	27	4	64
2020	16	25	9	35	7	92
2021	12	15	5	6	9	47
2022	19	15	6	11	16	67
2023	28	20	9	25	15	97
2024	28	20	8	16	8	80
2025	34	23	6	8	30	101
Total per form	300	207	82	230	99	918

Note. Incidents involving multiple forms of violence were coded in all applicable categories. Totals therefore refer to coded instances of violence ($N = 918$) arising from the 780 incidents in the dataset, and yearly totals may exceed the number of incidents recorded in that year.

threat from 2020 onwards, rising to 85 incidents overall. By 2025, digital harassment accounts for 30 incidents, more than double the combined total of obstruction (8) and legal pressure (6) in that year. The pattern indicates layering rather than substitution. The year 2020 marks a visible pivot: physical violence reaches its lowest point in the dataset at 16 incidents, while obstruction peaks at 35 incidents and digital harassment begins its sustained ascent with seven incidents. From 2021 onwards, multiple forms of coercion operate simultaneously. Digital harassment rises sharply from 9 incidents in 2021 to 16 in 2022 and 15 in 2023, dips to 8 in 2024, then spikes to 30 in 2025. Over the same period, physical violence does not disappear but fluctuates between 12 and 34 incidents per year, demonstrating that older and newer forms of coercion coexist rather than replace one another.

The persistence of extreme violence complicates simplistic readings of this reconfiguration. Killings of journalists continue to occur throughout the period. In 2024, Rico Sempurna Pasaribu (47), a local journalist in North Sumatra died in an arson attack allegedly involving military personnel, following his reporting on military-linked gambling operations (Berindra et al., 2024). In 2025, Juwita (25), a female journalist in South Kalimantan was allegedly killed in a case suspected to involve femicide and the involvement of a military officer (Yulianus, 2025). These killings represent the most extreme form of violence against journalists. However, in Indonesia, they are not representative of the broader threat environment facing journalists, which is characterized more by routine and cumulative forms of coercion.

The defining feature of this reconfiguration is the coexistence and accumulation of varied coercive practices. Alongside rare but severe attacks, the dataset increasingly captures low intensity yet recurrent incidents: coordinated online harassment campaigns, anonymous threats delivered through digital platforms, and administrative pressures that disrupt journalistic work. Across 2020-2025, Table 1 shows all five forms of violence operating in tandem: physical attacks (137 incidents), digital harassment (85 incidents), threats (118 incidents), obstruction (101 incidents), and legal pressure (43 incidents). Individually, such incidents may appear minor or legally ambiguous. Viewed longitudinally, however, they create a sustained threat environment that narrows the space for critical reporting across multiple dimensions simultaneously.

By 2025, journalists work under layered and mutually reinforcing pressures: physical risk, legal jeopardy, digital harassment, and administrative obstruction operate at the same time. The final year shows 34 physical attacks, 30 digital harassment incidents, 23 threats, 8 obstructions, and 6 legal actions. Violence has not softened but diversified. Table 1 demonstrates that violence against journalists in Indonesia has adapted to changing political and institutional conditions. Coercion is redistributed across forms that vary in visibility and intensity, a pattern consistent with democratic backsliding.

Changing perpetrators and institutional distance

Across the period, the attribution of perpetrators becomes increasingly opaque, reflecting a shift toward institutional distance and plausible deniability. In the earlier years, incidents more frequently involve identifiable state actors. During 2014-2018, police, military personnel, and government officials account for 141 of 309 incidents, and these cases are typically linked to on-the-ground reporting involving direct confrontation during journalistic work. While such incidents continue throughout the period, their character changes. During 2020–2025, identifiable state actors are responsible for 207 of 433 incidents, even as the absolute number of incidents rises and the nature of state involvement becomes more selective.

What emerges in later years is a redistribution of responsibility and a dramatic growth in attribution ambiguity. Unknown perpetrators account for 21 incidents during 2014–2015, rising to 39 incidents in 2025 alone, almost double the total for the first 2 years combined. Across the full period, unidentified perpetrators are responsible for 152 incidents, making "unknown" the third-largest perpetrator category after police (214 incidents) and non-state/mob (198 incidents). This growth in anonymity is not evenly distributed. It accelerates sharply from 2021 onward, when unknown perpetrators account for between 10 and 39 incidents annually, compared between 0 and 11 incidents in most earlier years (Table 2).

This increasing opacity coincides with the rise of digital harassment. Anonymous online campaigns led by "buzzers," threats delivered through encrypted platforms and coordinated attacks using disposable accounts (Wijayanto et al., 2024) all contribute to the expansion of the "unknown" category. The pattern suggests a recalibration through practices that obscure institutional affiliation and evade accountability. Violence is more frequently enacted by actors operating at the boundary between state and non-state domains, making attribution uncertain or contested even when the intimidating effect is

Table 2. Perpetrators of violence against journalists by period, 2014–2025.

Year	Police	Military	Central government	Local government	Politician	Non-state/Mob	Corporate	Unknown	Total per year
2014	5	1	0	4	1	23	5	11	50
2015	10	1	0	6	1	15	3	10	46
2016	15	5	1	20	1	23	9	10	84
2017	17	3	0	15	2	26	3	0	66
2018	13	3	1	21	1	17	4	3	63
2019	32	0	2	2	1	13	2	3	55
2020	57	1	0	6	0	6	5	9	84
2021	9	1	2	6	0	6	2	15	41
2022	11	1	1	10	0	16	3	18	60
2023	13	3	0	14	2	23	9	24	88
2024	18	9	2	11	1	18	5	10	74
2025	14	5	3	10	0	12	3	39	86
Total per actor	214	33	12	125	10	198	53	152	797

Note. Incidents involving multiple perpetrators were coded in all applicable categories. Totals therefore refer to coded perpetrator instances ($N = 797$) arising from the 780 incidents in the dataset.

clearly registered. However, the dataset cannot establish a direct relationship between growing attributional ambiguity and the possible involvement of proxies or state-aligned actors, including "buzzers".

At the same time, identifiable state actors remain visible and active, particularly during moments of political mobilization. The temporal distribution of police violence reveals how direct state coercion is calibrated to political context. Police account for 89 incidents during 2019–2020 alone (32 in 2019, 57 in 2020), more than the combined police violence for any other 2-year period in the dataset. This spike corresponds directly with mass protests against the Omnibus Law on Job Creation and the imposition of pandemic-era emergency powers in 2020 (Wiratraman, 2020). The Omnibus Law on Job Creation introduced wide-ranging regulatory changes affecting labor protections and investment procedures. Its passage triggered nationwide demonstrations across major cities in Indonesia. During 2020, police were responsible for 57 of 84 total incidents, demonstrating that state repression remains available for direct deployment when large-scale mobilization threatens political stability.

Following this peak, police violence declines sharply to 9 incidents in 2021, then fluctuates between 11 and 18 incidents annually from 2022 to 2024. This pattern suggests a dual logic: state actors deploy overt coercion during crises, then recede to a baseline of lower intensity but persistent pressure once mobilization subsides. During periods of relative political calm, violence is increasingly delegated to non-state actors or enacted through channels that preserve deniability. Non-state and mob violence, while fluctuating, remains a consistent feature throughout the period with 198 total incidents. Corporate actors, though less frequent at 53 incidents, also persist as a category, reflecting how economic power intersects with political coercion in constraining journalism.

The symbolic intimidation directed at *Tempo* magazine in 2025 illustrates how deniability operates in practice. The delivery of a pig's head to the newsroom, an act carrying an unmistakable cultural and religious threat in the Indonesian context, disrupted journalistic work and signaled institutional vulnerability (Lamb, 2025). The journalists targeted subsequently went into hiding. Yet no actor claimed responsibility, and no institutional link was formally established. Cases such as this proliferate in the dataset, particularly in later years, where the absence of identified perpetrators can operate as a mechanism of governance.

Viewed alongside the diversification of violence forms documented in the previous section, this movement toward anonymity and proxy action marks a significant transformation in how coercion is enacted. By 2025, unknown perpetrators account for 39 of 86 incidents, the highest annual total in the dataset. Perpetrators become less visible and less easily attributable, even as intimidation remains a persistent and intensifying feature of journalists' professional environment.

Shifting targets and organizational vulnerability

Who bears the direct impact of violence also changes markedly. During the period 2014–2019, violence overwhelmingly targeted individual journalists. Organizational targeting, incidents directed at media institutions as collective entities rather than named individuals, remained marginal at only 13 of 348 incidents across this period. Newsrooms and

media companies were rarely the explicit objects of coercion. Violence was attached to individual reporters and enacted through confrontation during reporting activities or in response to specific published work.

From 2020 onward, this pattern shifts decisively. Table 3 shows organizational targeting rises to 78 of 432 incidents across 2020–2025, up from 13 incidents across the whole of 2014–2019. The timing of the shift is also revealing. The shift concentrates from 2021: organizational targeting doubles from the typical 2-5 incidents annually in previous years to 6 incidents and remains elevated thereafter at 10–14 incidents per year through 2024. In 2025, organizational targeting reaches 30 incidents, more than double the organizational attacks documented across the entire 2014–2019 period.

This shift can be interpreted as a recalibration in how coercion is applied. Targeting media organizations can extend intimidation beyond individual journalists by generating chilling effects that shape editorial decisions and risk calculations across newsrooms. A single act of organizational intimidation, such as the delivery of a pig's head to *Tempo*'s office, can therefore affect not one journalist but the newsroom more broadly. At the same time, organizational targeting changes the visibility of victimhood. When coercion is directed at a media institution rather than a named journalist, the individual victim becomes less central to how the incident is understood, even as intimidation may be experienced collectively across the newsroom.

The tactics associated with organizational targeting further illustrate this logic. While individual journalists remain targets throughout (689 incidents), organizational coercion increasingly operates through non-physical means: administrative obstruction and co-ordinated disinformation campaigns targeting outlets' credibility. These practices are layered and produce sustained institutional pressure that raises the cost of critical journalism without necessarily causing physical harm to individual journalists.

The later concentration of organizational targeting coincides with the rise of digital harassment and the growth in unknown perpetrators documented in previous sections.

Table 3. Targets of violence against journalists by year, 2014–2025.

Year	Individual journalists	Media organizations	Total per year
2014	40	0	40
2015	42	0	42
2016	78	3	81
2017	60	5	65
2018	60	3	63
2019	55	2	57
2020	79	5	84
2021	35	6	41
2022	51	10	61
2023	73	14	87
2024	60	13	73
2025	56	30	86
Total per target	689	91	780

Digital platforms enable simultaneous attacks on both individual journalists and their institutional affiliations. A coordinated online campaign can target a reporter's personal social media accounts while flooding an outlet's comment sections. The anonymity surrounding such attacks further produces attributional uncertainty, making it difficult for journalists and news organizations to determine whether threats originate from isolated individuals or actors with broader institutional connections.

By 2025, the coercive environment facing Indonesian journalists is fundamentally restructured. Violence no longer operates primarily through individualized confrontation but through a layered threat architecture in which personal and institutional targeting coexist and reinforce one another. Journalists must navigate physical risks to their own safety while simultaneously managing organizational vulnerabilities that affect their colleagues.

Discussion

The reconfiguration of repression documented in this study can be interpreted as one mechanism of adaptive governance, a calibrated instrument that disciplines journalism while preserving democratic form. The acceleration of digital harassment and organizational targeting after 2020 coincides with the period of democratic backsliding in which executive aggrandizement and narrowed civic space intensified in Indonesia (Hadiz, 2017; Power, 2018). The data therefore capture a mode of violence whose timing and logic correspond to backsliding scholarship. Violence, in this account, is not the whole of repression but its most legible trace. The patterns identified in the data, diversifying forms, opaque perpetrators, and shifting targets, are the surface expressions of a deeper redistribution of coercive capacity.

Three mechanisms, interpreted through the lens of authoritarian innovation, help explain this adaptation. First, diversification of coercive forms allows repression to be distributed across physical, legal, digital, and administrative domains. Second, institutional distancing through anonymous and proxy actors creates plausible deniability and makes accountability claims difficult to sustain. Third, the shift toward organizational targeting multiplies intimidation effects while diffusing individual victim narratives that might generate sympathy or solidarity. What distinguishes this pattern from classical repression is not simply the use of new tools, but the reorganization of responsibility and visibility. The 2019–2020 spike in police violence during mass protests demonstrates that direct state coercion remains available when mobilization threatens stability, and its withdrawal after 2021 reveals a calibration in which overt repression is replaced by lower-visibility practices.

These patterns align with arguments that contemporary democratic erosion proceeds through adaptation and institutional constraint (Curato and Fossati, 2020; Pepinsky, 2020). However, they extend this literature by demonstrating how adaptation unfolds in practice. Physical attacks do not disappear under democratic backsliding. What changes is their relationship to other forms of coercion. Violence becomes more routine and pervasive even as it grows less spectacular and less visible. These findings have implications for how press freedom is measured and defended. Event-based monitoring focused on physical attacks and killings, while essential, captures only a fraction of the

coercive environment. The digital harassment incidents during 2020–2025 may be more effective in producing long-term chilling effects than the physical attacks in the same period. Press freedom indices that weight severe violence more heavily than routine intimidation may miss the gradual but cumulative erosion of journalistic autonomy under democratic backsliding. Similarly, the shift toward organizational targeting suggests that institutional vulnerability is becoming a primary mechanism of control.

Beyond the incident-level dataset analyzed in this study, annual reports published by AJI and the Legal Aid Institute for the Press (LBH Pers) offer wider assessments of the state of Indonesian journalism each year. These assessments confirm the persistence of intimidation, criminalization, and harassment across electoral cycles, including periods without major political crises (AJI, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025; LBH Pers, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025). This continuity underscores that coercion is embedded in everyday political management and is not deployed only at moments of exceptional conflict.

The reconfiguration documented through the AJI archive raises questions about how coercion is experienced differently across journalists. Gendered patterns of violence emerge as particularly illustrative of the adaptive logic identified in this study. The discussion that follows is a complementary illustration, not a finding of the longitudinal analysis, because gender was not systematically coded in the dataset. It draws on external evidence to show how this logic identified in this study is experienced in gendered ways. Gender-specific and sexualized forms of violence directed at women journalists begin to appear only from 2022 onwards. Although these numbers remain small and are not analytically foregrounded within the longitudinal AJI data, they point to an important dimension of coercion that warrants closer examination.

Survey-based research conducted by the media monitoring organization PR2Media illustrates how women journalists in Indonesia are disproportionately targeted through sexualized insults and persistent online harassment that extends beyond specific reporting moments (Wendratama et al., 2023). These attacks rarely focus solely on journalistic content. Instead, they target personal credibility and safety across platforms and time. While this evidence does not derive from the AJI archive, it helps illuminate how the reconfiguration documented in this study is lived and negotiated in practice.

The significance of gendered intimidation lies not in its frequency within the AJI dataset, but in its fit with the broader adaptive logic of coercion. Digital harassment operates through ambiguity rather than escalation (Earl et al., 2022). Individual acts may appear minor when viewed in isolation. Cumulatively, they generate exhaustion and anticipatory self-limitation. Women journalists report modifying their online behavior and avoiding certain topics not because of formal censorship, but because the personal and professional costs of participation become unsustainable (Baloğlu, 2025; Stahel and Schoen, 2020; Winarnita et al., 2022).

Digital infrastructures intensify such pressures. Anonymity obscures perpetrators and complicates attribution (Ruijgrok et al., 2026; Wijayanto et al., 2024). Platform architectures enable repetition and coordination (Tapsell, 2015), allowing harassment to be sustained across multiple accounts and amplified through networks even after individual actors are blocked. The persistence and searchability of digital content further extend the

temporal reach of intimidation. Attacks do not end when reporting concludes but remain accessible and embedded in journalists' professional identities (Wendratama et al., 2023). These features transform discrete acts of harassment into ambient coercive environments that journalists must manage as a routine condition of work.

Gendered intimidation exemplifies the same mechanisms identified across the AJI dataset. This discussion underscores that violence against journalists under democratic backsliding is not only reconfigured across forms and actors, but also unevenly distributed in its effects. Although drawn from outside the main dataset, gendered digital intimidation sharpens the analysis. It shows how adaptive repression operates most effectively where coercion is normalized and embedded in everyday journalistic practice while remaining difficult to document through incident-based metrics alone.

Conclusion

This article has argued that repression against journalism in Indonesia has been reconfigured, not escalated, under democratic backsliding. The contribution is threefold. Empirically, the longitudinal analysis of 780 incidents across 2014–2025 shows that coercion changes through redistribution, accumulation, and layering: older forms of violence persist while newer forms are added. Conceptually, the article extends scholarship on authoritarian innovation and press freedom by specifying violence as a mechanism through which repression adapts to democratic constraint. Methodologically, it demonstrates that civil society documentation, when read longitudinally, can reveal governing patterns that incident-based monitoring obscures. These findings suggest that democratic backsliding in Indonesia is not a temporary regression but an ongoing reconfiguration of power. As violence adapts to preserve deniability while constraining journalism, the country's democratic trajectory depends not only on formal institutions but on whether civil society, press freedom organizations, and journalists themselves can develop adaptive resistance strategies that match the evolving nature of coercion.

The study has limitations that point toward what remains unexamined. The AJI archive does not capture unreported violence, particularly low-intensity harassment that journalists normalize or withhold from public documentation. Changes in AJI's documentation practices over time may also have shaped what the archive makes visible. Growing organizational attention to digital harassment after 2020 may have increased the recording of such incidents independently of changes in their underlying frequency. The trends reported here are therefore trends in documented violence, shaped in part by the evolving sensitivity of the monitoring itself. The dataset also lacks disaggregation by journalist ethnicity, beat, or newsroom type, preventing analysis of how violence is unevenly distributed across these dimensions. These absences reflect not only methodological constraints but the politics of documentation itself: whose experiences become visible, and whose remain undocumented. Understanding violence as adaptive governance, as this study argues, requires attending to what is rendered invisible as much as what is documented.

ORCID iD

Wisnu Prasetya Utomo https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2641-5795

Ethical considerations

There are no human participants in this article.

Consent to participate

Informed consent is not required.

Funding

The author disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: Financial support for this research was provided by the Indonesia Endowment Fund for Education Agency (LPDP; Lembaga Pengelola Dana Pendidikan) as part of the author's doctoral scholarship.

Declaration of conflicting interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are openly available in the Alliance of Independent Journalists' website at https://advokasi.aji.or.id/data-kekerasan.

References

Abels CM, Huttunen KJA, Hertwig R, et al. (2024) Dodging the autocratic bullet: enlisting behavioural science to arrest democratic backsliding. *Behavioural Public Policy*. 1–28. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1017/bpp.2024.43

Adiprasetio J (2020) Under the shadow of the state media framing of attacks on West Papuan students on Indonesian online media. *Pacific Journalism Review* 26(2): 242–260.

AJI (2014) *Catatan Tahunan 2014 (Annual Report 2014)*. https://aji.or.id/informasi/siaran-pers-aji-desak-jokowi-menjaga-kebebasan-pers

AJI (2015) *Catatan Tahunan 2015 (Annual Report 2015)*. https://aji.or.id/data/laporan-tahunan-aji-2015-di-bawah-bayang-bayang-krisis

AJI (2016) *Catatan Tahunan 2016 (Annual Report 2016)*. https://aji.or.id/berita-aji/catatan-akhir-tahun-aji-kekerasan-terhadap-jurnalis-meningkat-tajam

AJI (2017) *Catatan Tahunan 2017 (Annual Report 2017)*. https://aji.or.id/berita-aji/catatan-akhir-tahun-aji-2017-tingginya-kasus-kekerasan-dan-ancaman-phk

AJI (2018) *Catatan Tahunan 2018 (Annual Report 2018)*. https://aji.or.id/informasi/catatan-akhir-tahun-2018-jurnalis-dibayangi-persekusi-dan-kekerasan-fisik

AJI (2019) *Catatan Tahunan 2019 (Annual Report 2019)*. https://aji.or.id/informasi/catatan-akhir-tahun-aji-2019

AJI (2020) *Catatan Tahunan 2020 (Annual Report 2020)*. https://aji.or.id/informasi/catatan-akhir-tahun-aji-2020-tahun-kelam-bagi-jurnalis-indonesia

AJI (2021) *Catatan Akhir Tahun 2021 (End-of-Year Report 2021)*. https://aji.or.id/data/catatan-akhir-tahun-2021

AJI (2022) *Catatan Akhir Tahun 2022 (End-of-Year Report 2022)*. https://aji.or.id/system/files/2024-07/kkjlayoutcatahu2022indo_4.pdf

AJI (2023) *Catatan Tahunan 2023 (Annual Report 2023)*. https://aji.or.id/data/krisis-kebebasan-pers-di-tengah-darurat-iklim-dan-erosi-demokrasi-laporan-situasi-keamanan

AJI (2024) *Catatan Tahunan 2024 (Annual Report 2024)*. https://www.aji.or.id/data/catatan-tahunan-aji-indonesia-2024

AJI (2025) *Catatan Tahunan 2025 (Annual Report 2025)*. https://aji.or.id/data/catatan-tahun-2025-aliansi-jurnalis-independen-aji-pers-dalam-pusaran-otoritarian

Al-Zaman MS (2025) Democracy and political stability alone cannot reduce journalist killings without press freedom: a mediation analysis. *Journalism* 27(5): 1–20. https://doi.org/10.1177/14648849251347300

Alashry MS (2024) Arab journalists have no place: authorities use digital surveillance to control investigative reporting. *Communications Society* 37(1): 61–77. https://doi.org/10.15581/003.37.1.61-77

Aspinall E (2010) The irony of success. *Journal of Democracy* 21(2): 20–34. https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.0.0157

Aspinall E (2025, September 2) *Mass Protest and the Two Worlds of Indonesian Politics*. New Mandala. https://www.newmandala.org/mass-protest-and-the-two-worlds-of-indonesian-politics/

Baloğlu E (2025) The digitization of harassment: how it affects Turkish female journalists? *Journalism Practice* 0(0): 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2025.2577696

Bartman JM (2018) Murder in Mexico: are journalists victims of general violence or targeted political violence? *Democratization* 25(7): 1093–1113. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2018.1445998

Belair-Gagnon V, Searles K, Vraga EK, et al. (2024) Attacks on journalism as an occupational hazard. *International Journal of Communication* 18: 4603–4622. https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/22695/4803

Berindra MS, Sinaga N and Sastra Y (2024) *Who was Involved in the Murder of Tribrata TV Journalist Sempurna Pasaribu?* Kompas. https://www.kompas.id/artikel/en-siapa-yang-terlibat-dalam-pembunuhan-wartawan-tribrata-tv-sempurna-pasaribu

Bermeo N (2016) On democratic backsliding. *Journal of Democracy* 27(1): 5–19. https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2016.0012

Bernard R (2021) *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. 4th edition. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Carlsson U and Pöyhtäri R (2017) *The Assault on Journalism Building Knowledge to Protect Freedom of Expression*. NORDICOM.

Chambers E and Henrichsen J (2025a) Complicity and revictimization: discursive violence in Mexican and U.S. press coverage of Mexican journalist killings. *Journalism Studies* 26(10): 1169–1186. https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2025.2492731

Chambers E and Henrichsen J (2025b) Confronting anti-press violence in Mexico: strategies of resistance in Mexican and U.S. news coverage of journalist killings. *International Journal of Communication* 19: 159–179. https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/22362/4879

Coşkun GB (2020) Media capture strategies in new authoritarian states: the case of Turkey. *Publizistik* 65(4): 637–654. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11616-020-00600-9

Curato N and Fossati D (2020) Authoritarian innovations: Crafting support for a less democratic Southeast Asia. *Democratization* 27(6): 1006–1020. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2020.1777985

Curran J (2019) Triple crisis of journalism. *Journalism* 20(1): 190–193. https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884918807034

Davenport C (2007) State repression and political order. *Annual Review of Political Science* 10: 1–23. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.10.101405.143216

deMeritt JHR (2016) The strategic use of state repression and political violence. In: Hannah E (ed) *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/9780197851821.001.0001

Dettman S (2020) Authoritarian innovations and democratic reform in the "New Malaysia". *Democratization* 27(6): 1037–1052. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2019.1705791

Dewi S (2025) Student journalism as advocacy for gender-based violence survivors: the case of Indonesia. *Asian Journal of Women's Studies* 31(3): 337–351. https://doi.org/10.1080/12259276.2025.2541571

Dodds T, Geboers M and Boukes M (2024) "It became no man's land": the burden of moderating online harassment in newswork. *Journalism Practice* 20(3): 953–970. https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2024.2387664

Dorff C, Henry C and Ley S (2023) Does violence against journalists deter detailed reporting? Evidence from Mexico. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 67(6): 1218–1247. https://doi.org/10.1177/00220027221128307

Dovbysh O and Wijermars M (2025) Authoritarian algorithmic publics: conceptualising the nexus of authoritarianism and digital innovation uptake in Russian news media. *Digital Journalism.* 1–19. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2025.2592077

Druckman JN (2024) How to study democratic backsliding. *Political Psychology* 45(S1): 3–42. https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12942

Earl J, Maher TV and Pan J (2022) The digital repression of social movements, protest, and activism: a synthetic review. *Science Advances* 8(10): 1–5. https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.abl8198

Ferreira RR (2025) "It forces you to publish some shit": toward a taxonomy of de-democratizing journalistic practices. *International Journal of Press/Politics* 30(4): 931–955. https://doi.org/10.1177/19401612241266557

Frank B and Walton M (2022) Using imperfect longitudinal social science data for sound protected area management and governance. *Society & Natural Resources* 35(10): 1134–1149. https://doi.org/10.1080/08941920.2022.2105460

Fujii LA (2012) Research ethics 101: dilemmas and responsibilities. *PS: Political Science and Politics* 45(4): 717–723. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096512000819

Gohdes AR (2020) Repression technology: internet accessibility and state violence. *American Journal of Political Science* 64(3): 488–503. https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/KG2APR

Guriev S and Treisman D (2019) Informational autocrats. *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 33(4): 100–127. https://doi.org/10.2307/26796838

Hadiz VR (2017) Indonesia's year of democratic setbacks: towards a new phase of deepening illiberalism? *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies* 53(3): 261–278. https://doi.org/10.1080/00074918.2017.1410311

Haggard S and Kaufman R (2021a) *Backsliding*. Cambridge University Press.

Haggard S and Kaufman R (2021b) The anatomy of democratic backsliding. *Journal of Democracy* 32(4): 27–41. https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2021.0050

Harrison J and Pukallus S (2021) The politics of impunity: a study of journalists' experiential accounts of impunity in Bulgaria, Democratic Republic of Congo, India, Mexico and Pakistan. *Journalism* 22(2): 303–319. https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884918778248

Hughes S and Márquez-Ramírez M (2018) Local-level authoritarianism, democratic normative aspirations, and antipress harassment: predictors of threats to journalists in Mexico. *International Journal of Press/Politics* 23(4): 539–560. https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161218786041

Jamil S (2021) The rise of digital authoritarianism: evolving threats to media and internet freedoms in Pakistan. *World Medicine* 2021(3): 5–34. https://doi.org/10.30547/worldofmedia.3.2021.1

Jee H, Lueders H and Myrick R (2022) Towards a unified approach to research on democratic backsliding. *Democratization* 29(4): 754–767. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2021.2010709

Kim C and Shin W (2025) Harassment of journalists and its aftermath: anti-press violence, psychological suffering, and an internal chilling effect. *Digital Journalism* 13(2): 232–248. https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2022.2034027

Krastev I (2011) Paradoxes of the new authoritarianism. *Journal of Democracy* 22(2): 5–16. https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2011.0027

Kwode PAK, Asekere G and Ayelazuno JA (2024) The erosion of media freedom in Ghana: a signal democratic backsliding? *Media, Culture & Society* 46(1): 112–129. https://doi.org/10.1177/01634437231185933

Lamb K (2025, March 27) *A Pig's Head and Decapitated Rats: A New Era of Intimidation Dawns for Journalists in Indonesia*. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/mar/28/intimidation-journalists-indonesia-pig-heads-rats

LBH Pers (2014) *Catatan Tahunan 2014 (Annual Report 2014)*. https://lbhpers.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Pers-Release-LBH-Pers-Catahu-2014.pdf

LBH Pers (2015) *Catatan Tahunan 2015 (Annual Report 2015)*. https://lbhpers.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Catahu-LBH-Pers-2015-.pdf

LBH Pers (2016) *Catatan Tahunan 2016 (Annual Report 2016)*. https://lbhpers.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Catahu-2016.pdf

LBH Pers (2017) *Catatan Tahunan 2017 (Annual Report 2017)*. https://lbhpers.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Outlook-LBH-Pers-2018-1.pdf

LBH Pers (2018) *Catatan Tahunan 2018 (Annual Report 2018)*. https://lbhpers.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/2018-Tahun-Salah-Kaprah-UU-ITE-1.pdf

LBH Pers (2019) *Catatan Tahunan 2019 (Annual Report 2019)*. https://lbhpers.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Annual-Report-LBH-Pers2019.pdf

LBH Pers (2020) *Catatan Tahunan 2020 (Annual Report 2020)*. https://lbhpers.org/download/annual-report-lbh-pers-2020/

LBH Pers (2021) *Catatan Tahunan 2021 (Annual Report 2021)*. https://lbhpers.org/annual-report-2021-lbh-pers-pandemi-oligarki-dan-ketidakbebasan-pers/

LBH Pers (2022) *Catatan Tahunan 2022 (Annual Report 2022)*. https://lbhpers.org/annual-report-2022-melawan-kepungan-represi/

LBH Pers (2023) *Catatan Tahunan 2023 (Annual Report 2023)*. https://lbhpers.org/download/annual-report-2023/

LBH Pers (2024) *Catatan Tahunan 2024 (Annual Report 2024)*. https://lbhpers.org/download/annual-report-lbh-pers-2024/

LBH Pers (2025) *Catatan Tahunan 2025 (Annual Report 2025)*. https://lbhpers.org/annual-report-lbh-pers-2025-bayang-bayang-kuasa-di-balik-teror-tak-terurai-2/

Lewis SC, Zamith R and Coddington M (2020) Online harassment and its implications for the journalist–audience relationship. *Digital Journalism* 8(8): 1047–1067. https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2020.1811743

Lim L (2025) Foreign correspondence in China: authoritarian media control and journalistic responses. *International Journal of Press/Politics.* 19401612251379585. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/19401612251379585

Macaraig A and Hameleers M (2022) #DefendPressFreedom: Paradigm repair, role perceptions and Filipino journalists' counterstrategies to anti-media populism and delegitimizing threats. *Journalism Studies* 23(16): 2078–2096. https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2022.2138949

MacKinnon R (2011) China's "networked authoritarianism". *Journal of Democracy* 22(2): 32–46. https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2011.0033

Masduki (2017) Assessing Indonesian journalist threats: cases, actors and motives. *Media Asia* 44(1): 25–32. https://doi.org/10.1080/01296612.2017.1374627

Masduki (2022) Cyber-troops, digital attacks, and media freedom in Indonesia. *Asian Journal of Communication* 32(3): 218–233. https://doi.org/10.1080/01292986.2022.2062609

Masduki and Wendratama E (2025) Digital activism for press freedom advocacy in post-authoritarian Indonesia. *Journalism and Media* 6(3): 101. https://doi.org/10.3390/journalmedia6030101

Meyerrose AM (2020) The unintended consequences of democracy promotion: international organizations and democratic backsliding. *Comparative Political Studies* 53(10–11): 1547–1581. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414019897689

Michaelsen M (2018) Exit and voice in a digital age: Iran's exiled activists and the authoritarian state. *Globalizations* 15(2): 248–264. https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2016.1263078

Mietzner M (2020) Authoritarian innovations in Indonesia: electoral narrowing, identity politics and executive illiberalism. *Democratization* 27(6): 1021–1036. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2019.1704266

Morozov E (2011) Whither internet control? *Journal of Democracy* 22(2): 62–74. https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2011.0022

Ong JC and Tapsell R (2022) Demystifying disinformation shadow economies: fake news work models in Indonesia and the Philippines. *Asian Journal of Communication* 32(3): 251–267. https://doi.org/10.1080/01292986.2021.1971270

Pearce J (2010) Perverse state formation and securitized democracy in Latin America. *Democratization* 17(2): 286–306. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510341003588716

Pepinsky T (2020) Authoritarian innovations: theoretical foundations and practical implications. *Democratization* 27(6): 1092–1101. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2020.1775589

Petrović V (2025) Under pressure: the politics of clientelism and coercion in Serbia. *Democratization* 33: 876–901. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2025.2520349

Power TP (2018) Jokowi's authoritarian turn and Indonesia's democratic decline. *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies* 54(3): 307–338. https://doi.org/10.1080/00074918.2018.1549918

Primerano I, Marchesini N, Santelli F, et al. (2025) Secondary, longitudinal, and panel data in social science research. In: Taddei L and Paolucci M (eds) *Longitudinal Data Infrastructures in Europe*. Springer.

Riedl RB, Friesen P, McCoy J, et al. (2025) Democratic backsliding, resilience, and resistance. *World Politics* 77(1S): 151–177. https://doi.org/10.1353/wp.2025.a954440

Roberts T and Oosterom M (2025) Digital authoritarianism: a systematic literature review. *Information Technology for Development* 31(4): 860–884. https://doi.org/10.1080/02681102.2024.2425352

Ruijgrok K, Berenschot W, Gaw F, et al. (2026) Towards the comparative study of domestic influence operations: cyber troops and elite competition in Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand. *Political Communication* 43(1): 128–148. https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2025.2566098

Saldaña J (2021) *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. 4th edition. Sage Publications.

Sinpeng A and Koh Y (2022) Journalism in the age of digital autocracy: a comparative ASEAN perspective. *Journal of ASEAN Studies* 10(2): 247–262. https://doi.org/10.21512/jas.v10i2.9162

Slavtcheva-Petkova V, Ramaprasad J, Springer N, et al. (2023) Conceptualizing journalists' safety around the globe. *Digital Journalism* 11(7): 1211–1229. https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2022.2162429

Stahel L and Schoen C (2020) Female journalists under attack? Explaining gender differences in reactions to audiences' attacks. *New Media & Society* 22(10): 1849–1867. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444819885333

Stern RE and Hassid J (2012) Amplifying silence: uncertainty and control parables in contemporary China. *Comparative Political Studies* 45(10): 1230–1254. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414011434295

Tapsell R (2015) Platform convergence in Indonesia: challenges and opportunities for media freedom. *Convergence* 21(2): 182–197. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354856514531527

Tapsell R (2017) *Media Power in Indonesia: Oligarchs, Citizens and the Digital Revolution*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Waisbord S (2020) Mob censorship: online harassment of US journalists in times of digital hate and populism. *Digital Journalism* 8(8): 1030–1046. https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2020.1818111

Waldner D and Lust E (2018) Unwelcome change: coming to terms with democratic backsliding. *Annual Review of Political Science* 21: 93–113. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-050517

Wendratama E, Masduki, Aprilia MP, et al. (2023) *Sexual Violence Against Indonesian Female Journalists*. https://pr2media.or.id/publikasi/research-report-sexual-violence-against-indonesian-female-journalists/

Wijayanto and Masduki (2024) "Polite watchdog": Kompas and watchdog journalism in post-authoritarian Indonesia. *International Journal of Press/Politics* 29(3): 628–645. https://doi.org/10.1177/19401612231196155

Wijayanto, Berenschot W, Sastramidjaja Y, et al. (2024) *The Infrastructure of Domestic Influence Operations: Cyber Troops and Public Opinion Manipulation Through Social Media in Indonesia*. International Journal of Press/Politics. https://doi.org/10.1177/19401612241297832

Winarnita M, Bahfen N, Mintarsih AR, et al. (2022) Gendered digital citizenship: how Indonesian female journalists participate in gender activism. *Journalism Practice* 16(4): 621–636. https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2020.1808856

Wiratraman HP (2017) Legal reforms for improving the freedom of the press in Indonesia. *Journal of Southeast Asian Human Rights* 1(1): 80–108.

Wiratraman HP (2020) *Does Indonesian COVID-19 Emergency Law Secure Rule of Law and Human Rights?* https://www.tempo.co/abc/5597/ilmuwan-indonesia-merasa-tidak-dilibatkan-dalam-menangani-virus-

Yeşil B (2018) Authoritarian turn or continuity? Governance of media through capture and discipline in the AKP era. *South European Society & Politics* 23(2): 239–257. https://doi.org/10.1080/13608746.2018.1487137

Yulianus J (2025) *Justice Alliance Demands Murder Case of Journalist Juwita by Indonesian Navy Members be Thoroughly Investigated*. Kompas. https://www.kompas.id/artikel/en-aliansi-keadilan-tuntut-kasus-pembunuhan-jurnalis-juwita-oleh-anggota-tni-al-diusut-tuntas

Zhu Y and Fu K (2024) How propaganda works in the digital era: soft news as a gateway. *Digital Journalism* 12(6): 753–772. https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2022.2156366

Author biography

Wisnu Prasetya Utomo is a PhD Candidate at the School of Information, Journalism and Communication, University of Sheffield, UK. Wisnu is also a lecturer in the Department of Communication Science, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia.