



Acid Attack on KontraS Activist Andrie Yunus: A Portrait of Threats Against Indonesian Human Rights Defenders During the Presidency of Prabowo Subianto

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Abstract

Prabowo Subianto was elected as the 8th President of the Republic of Indonesia for the period 2024 to 2029 is feared by some people to bring the role of the Indonesian Armed Forces (TNI) back into the political, social, and economic arena, considering that during the New Order era (1966-1998), Prabowo was known as President Suharto's son-in-law who supported the ABRI's (The Indonesian Armed Forces) Dwi Fungsi policy (social and political functions) and Military General who was suspected of committing serious human rights violations, including the kidnapping of activists in 1997-1998. These concerns were proven when massive attacks on activists occurred during Prabowo's first year in office, allegedly carried out by state and non-state actors with state support. Recently, Andrie Yunus, Deputy Coordinator of KontraS—a leading human rights organization in Indonesia—was doused with acid by a group of unknown people, who were later identified by the police as members of the TNI's Strategic Intelligence Agency (BAIS). KontraS is known as member of the Civil Society Coalition on the Security Sector Reform in Indonesia that very vocal to criticize the revision of the TNI Law, rejecting the TNI holding civilian positions, rejecting the TNI from doing business, and demanding a revision of the Military Court Law so that TNI members who commit crimes can be tried in the district courts. Andrie Yunus was also a member of the Fact-Finding Commission for the August-September 2025 Riot Case and found allegations of military involvement in the riots. This article summarizes the common thread between Prabowo's leadership, the strengthening of the TNI's role in the political, social, and economic arenas, and its impact on society and human rights defenders, and the efforts of civil society groups who are urging further TNI reform, especially with a revision of the Military Court Law so that there is no longer impunity for TNI members who commit crimes.

During Prabowo's administration, a red carpet seemed to be rolled out to welcome the return of the Indonesian Armed Forces (TNI) to the government stage. It started with the revision of the TNI Law, which was actually considered to endanger civilian supremacy, the placement of 4,472 active TNI members into civil positions, the establishment of 6 new Regional Military Commands (Kodam), 20 Territorial Development Infantry Brigades (Brigif TP), and 100 Development Infantry Battalions (Yonif TP). The 2025 state budget allocated a high amount of IDR 165.16 trillion (around 14,3 billion Won), higher than the Ministry of Health's 2025 budget of IDR 105.6 trillion (around 9,2 billion Won). The most recent protest from the Civil Society Coalition is that the TNI has been authorized to guard the Parliament building, after previously being assigned to guard the District Attorney, High Prosecutor, and Attorney General offices.

The TNI is also involved in civil tasks such as preparing rice fields, participating in the management of MBG (Free Nutritious Meals), participating in the establishment and management of the Red-White Village Cooperatives in every village/sub-district, as well as other government programs. The involvement of the TNI in the civilian sphere raises concerns that it could revive the dual function of the Armed Forces (ABRI) during the New Order¹⁾ era, especially since certain TNI members who were previously implicated in serious human rights violations, especially the activist kidnapping case,²⁾ have now obtained strategic positions in the Prabowo administration.

1) The New Order (1966–1998) was a period of governance under President Suharto, who was Indonesia's second president. Suharto was an Army General who ruled for 32 years, replacing Sukarno, a civilian president and Founding Father who governed during the Old Order (1945–1966). During the New Order, Suharto led the country by utilizing the TNI and Polri, which were unified under ABRI, to strengthen and maintain his position. Suharto also enforced the unification of organizations to make them easier to control, for example the consolidation of labor unions into SPSI, the merging of political parties so that only two political parties and one functional group remained to support Suharto's politics, as well as creating regulations that benefited Suharto, his family, and his cronies. His administration was marked by numerous human rights violations in Indonesia carried out by ABRI, the government, and Suharto's supporters, including violations in Aceh, East Timor, and Papua. During the transfer of power from Sukarno to Suharto, there was also a struggle for ideological influence between the Communist Party and the TNI, which resulted in the killing of 6 Army generals and the retaliation in the form of the G30S incident, which is estimated to have led to massacres claiming between 500,000 and 3 million members and sympathizers of the Indonesian Communist Party. The New Order was replaced by the Reform Era after Suharto stepped down from office under public pressure on May 20, 1998.

President Prabowo has on several occasions also issued warnings to his critics, including demonstrators, activists, mass media, students, academics, and others, that they are foreign agents who are unhappy with the government's success in development, are not patriotic, and seek to destroy Indonesia. Prabowo stated that he obtained this information from intelligence sources and ordered intelligence agencies to continue monitoring. These warnings in his speeches are considered to be intimidating the public and endangering democracy.

| Acid Attack against Andrie Yunus

On Thursday night, March 12, 2026, the External Affairs Deputy Coordinator of KontraS, Andrie Yunus, became the victim of an acid attack while riding his motorcycle on Salemba I Street, Central Jakarta, at 11:37 PM. Prior to the incident, Andrie had just finished a podcast interview at the YLBHI (Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation) office, where he discussed remilitarization and the judicial review of the Indonesian Armed Forces Law (UU TNI) at the Constitutional Court. As a result of the attack, Andrie suffered burns covering more than 20% of the right side of his body, including his eyes, face, chest, and hands, and had to receive intensive treatment at Cipto Mangunkusumo Central General Hospital.

2) The Activist Kidnapping case occurred in the period between 1997 – 1998. There was a youth group that were critical of Soeharto's Government. Around 13 activists are still missing to this day. Several activists who are now safe have stated that they were also kidnapped by the Kopassus (Indonesia Special Force) Mawar Team who at that time were under the leadership of TNI Lieutenant General Prabowo Subianto. The activists were kidnapped and taken to a place that was marked as the Kopassus Head Office in Cijantung. Whilst they were being held captive the activists experienced terror, intimidation and torture at the hands of the Kopassus apparatuses.



Figure 1. Andrie Yunus, External Affairs Deputy Coordinator of KontraS

Source: kontras.or.id

Before this attack, back to 2025, on March 3, Andrie, together with the Civil Society Coalition for Security Sector Reform (hereafter ‘Civil Society Coalition’), submitted a public information request regarding the draft amendment to the Indonesian Armed Forces Law (UU TNI)³⁾ prepared by Commission I of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia (DPR RI). However, the request received no response until the amendment to the UU TNI was eventually passed.

3) The revision of the TNI Law criticized by civil society groups includes, first, the expansion of civilian positions that can be occupied by active TNI personnel. This raises concerns about reviving the ABRI dual function (social and political function) and damaging the career structure of the State Civil Apparatus. At the time this law was revised, there were already 2,569 active TNI members holding civilian positions. Second, the removal of the prohibition on the military engaging in business, which clearly contradicts TNI reform. Third, the Military Court Law has not yet been revised, so military personnel who commit general criminal offenses still cannot be tried in civilian courts, and the Law on TNI Assistance Tasks has not yet been established, while instead the Territorial Command is being revived.

On March 15, 2025, Andrie was among the activists who participated in a protest together with the CSC at the Fairmont Hotel, Central Jakarta. The protest criticized a closed-door working committee meeting of Commission I of the DPR RI with government representatives regarding the revision of the UU TNI. Although it was forcibly dispersed by security personnel, the protest received public support from those concerned about the possible return of militarism in Indonesia. On the same day, the Fairmont Hotel security unit (satpam) filed a report against Andrie on charges of “disturbing public peace, tranquillity, and order” to the Metro Jaya Regional Police.

Furthermore, during the judicial review process of the TNI Law at the Constitutional Court (MK), Andrie revealed a series of intimidation incidents he experienced after carrying out a protest at the Fairmont Hotel. Among them, in the early hours of March 16, 2025, he received a series of phone calls from various unknown numbers and found that the KontraS office had been approached by three well-built, short-haired men claiming to be journalists. At 02:00 PM, the number of unknown individuals visiting the KontraS office increased to 5–6 with similar characteristics. The KontraS office was also terrorized by the movement of TNI tactical vehicles, and at the same time, the TNI also deployed combat tactical vehicles at the Fairmont Hotel. Throughout the controversy over the revision of the TNI Bill, Andrie continued to be a target of terror and intimidation, including on the social media platform X, where the narrative of “foreign stooge” was widely circulated by various accounts bearing the names of military institutions such as Babinkum (Law representative of the military), Kodim (Military office at the regent/municipality), and Koramil (Military office at the sub-district). Andrie’s family was also reportedly subjected to terror by unknown individuals in their home.

Following the protest events and unrest throughout August and September 2025 in major cities in Indonesia, KontraS together with LBH Jakarta (Jakarta Legal Aid Institute) and YLBHI formed a civil society’s Fact-Finding Commission (Komisi Pencari Fakta/KPF). Andrie also became a member of the KPF, which produced a report titled “The Largest Silencing Operation Against Youth Since the Reform Era” and announced its findings on February 18, 2026. The report, among other things, confirmed that the death of Affan Kurniawan (online motorcycle driver) triggered the escalation of demonstrations into riots and found indications of provocation allegedly carried out by military personnel.

The attacks experienced by Andrie drew attention both domestically and internationally. Strong condemnations and calls for a thorough investigation were expressed by the Civil Society Coalition, the Indonesian House of Representatives (DPR RI), the National Police Commission (Kompolnas), the National Human Rights Commission (Komnas HAM), and the United Nations. These were promptly responded to by the National Police Chief, who ordered the formation of a joint team consisting of the Criminal Investigation Agency (Bareskrim Polri), the Metro Jaya Regional Police, and the Central Jakarta Metro Police to immediately enforce the law. President Prabowo Subianto also instructed the National Police Chief to thoroughly investigate the case.

Based on an investigation grounded in scientific crime investigation, the National Police team successfully obtained statements from witnesses, gathered evidence and clues in the field, and managed to identify individuals suspected as perpetrators, announcing updates periodically to the public as a form of professionalism, transparency, and accountability of the Police. In this regard, the Police have taken appropriate steps and deserve recognition.

However, in handling this case, there are at least two issues that have disrupted the work of the Police. *First*, the circulation of a photo on social media, later cited by mass media, claimed that based on CCTV screenshots there were two individuals identified as perpetrators of an acid attack on Andrie Yunus, riding a motorcycle without wearing any facial coverings, making their faces clearly visible. A striking caption in the photo stated that the perpetrators' faces were very clear, but questioned why the police had not yet arrested them, even sarcastically asking whether the police investigators need assistance from the fire department. This photo shaped public opinion as if they were indeed the perpetrators. In fact, after verification by the Police, the image was reportedly AI-generated, not an authentic photo, and is suspected to have been deliberately spread by parties connected to the perpetrators to mislead the public and create division between the public and the Police.

Second, when the Police team on Wednesday afternoon, March 18, 2026, announced the initials and photos of individuals suspected as perpetrators based on CCTV footage and the Police's Satu Data (One Data) tracing, namely Mr. BHC and Mr. MAK, and informed that there were still two perpetrators yet to be identified and that the total number of perpetrators in this case was suspected

to be more than four people, at the same time but in a different place, the Indonesian National Armed Forces Headquarters, through the Military Police Center, also held a press conference in Cilangkap. The TNI explained that they had arrested four personnel from the Headquarters Detachment (Denma) of the Strategic Intelligence Agency (BAIS) of the TNI, namely Captain NDP, Chief Private SI, First Lieutenant BHW, and Sergeant ES. Unlike the Police data, which is based on scientific crime investigation, it is unclear on what basis the TNI's findings were obtained, yet they immediately carried out arrests, detentions, and appeared to "take over" the investigation and inquiry of the case. Furthermore, the Head of BAIS, Lieutenant General TNI Yudi Abrimantyo, on Wednesday, March 25, 2026, resigned, citing it as a form of leadership accountability.

With the announcement from the TNI that the perpetrators of the acid attack are suspected to be TNI members, the National Police investigators no longer have a legal basis to continue the investigation, because under the Military Court Law, it is the TNI, through Puspom TNI (Center of the Military Police), that is authorized to conduct investigations. Moreover, President Prabowo has ordered the Chief of Police to transfer the handling of this case from the Police to the TNI.

After the TNI took over the investigation from the Polri, the Civil Society Coalition, which does not trust that the handling of the case involving Andrie Yunus will be carried out transparently, accountably, and upholding justice and legal certainty by the TNI, then urged President Prabowo to immediately establish an Independent Fact-Finding Team. So far, there has been no response from the President and the Palace regarding the demands of the Civil Society Coalition, but several members of the DPR RI, including Benny Kabur Harman from the Democratic Party faction, agree with the formation of the TGPF.

The Struggle of Human Rights Defenders from the New Order Era to the Prabowo Administration

Human rights defenders in Indonesia face high risks while carrying out their duties, both during the New Order era, which was full of pressure from the military, and in the present era, which should be better due to the Reformasi of 1998. However, human rights defenders still experience physical and psychological violence, including threats, financial breaches, criminalization, hacking of communication channels, and even murder. During the New Order, many human rights defenders suffered physical violence through arrests and detention, as well as abduction and murder, such as Marsinah, a labor activist allegedly killed by the military in 1993,⁴⁾ and who was posthumously awarded the title of National Hero by President Prabowo Subianto in 2025.

Human rights defenders in conflict areas such as Aceh, East Timor (when it was still part of Indonesia), and Papua experienced the most brutal treatment while peacefully advocating for human rights in their regions.

In 2004, after the Reformasi, human rights activist Munir Said Thalib, the founder of KontraS and Imparsial, became a victim of murder by arsenic poisoning on a Garuda Indonesia flight to the Netherlands. In the efforts to fully investigate Munir's death, the Indonesian National Police successfully prosecuted several individuals involved in the conspiracy, including the alleged mastermind, Major General (Ret.) Muchdi Purwoprandjono—former Deputy V/Intelligence Mobilization of the State Intelligence Agency (BIN) and former Commander of Kopassus (Special

4) Marsinah was an activist working for PT Catur Putra (CPS) in Porong, Sidoarjo, East Java. She died in 1993 as a result of brutal maltreatment, allegedly inflicted by the apparatus of the District Military Command 0816 Sidoarjo at its office. After the death of Marsinah, the military apparatus and police made a scenario as if the killing of Marsinah was arranged by the leaders of PT CPS. The leaders of PT CPS were then captured and detained by police apparatus, accused of planning the murder of Marsinah. Whilst in detention the leaders of PT CPS, amongst others Yudi Susanto the Chief Director and Mutiari the Head of Personnel were brutally tortured. Yudi Susanto as well as being beaten was forced to drink the urine of military apparatus and lick the toilet floor. While Mutiari was subjected to physical and psychological torture until the fetus she was carrying aborted.

Force of the Army). Unfortunately, the judges in Muchdi's case acquitted him in the South Jakarta District Court ruling of 2008, allowing him to remain free to this day. Only the field operatives, namely Pollycarpus Budihari Prijanto, co-pilot of Garuda (Indonesia Airlines), Garuda Director Indra Setiawan, and Garuda staff Rohainil Aini, were found guilty in the Munir murder conspiracy.



Figure 2. "From Arsenic to Acid"

Victims of arsenic poisoning and acid attack, Munir (left) and Andrie (right).

Source: Greenpeace Indonesia Instagram @greenpeaceid

Although human rights defenders in Indonesia are protected by Article 28 of the Indonesia Constitution,⁵⁾ Human Rights Law Number 39 of 1999,⁶⁾ and Komnas HAM Regulation Number 5 of 2015,⁷⁾ the implementation is still very weak, resulting in many human rights defenders becoming victims while carrying out their duties in advocating for human rights.

In one year of the Prabowo administration, Amnesty International Indonesia recorded 268 attacks on human rights defenders, consisting of police reports (46 cases), arrests (17 cases), criminalization (35 cases), attempted murders (6 cases), physical attacks (153 cases), and attacks on human rights defenders' workplaces (11 cases). Journalists and indigenous rights activists experienced the most attacks, with 112 cases and 81 cases respectively, including a Molotov bomb attack on the JUBI media office in Jayapura-Papua involving TNI members, yet the case was never pursued. There were 14 cases of digital attacks and 20 cases of criminalization violating the ITE Law.

Military Justice Reform

Meanwhile, the mandate of the 1998 Reform was to return the TNI to the barracks, dissolve the Territorial Command (Kodam, Korem, Koramil), revise the Military Court Law to ensure TNI members who commit criminal acts are tried in Civil Courts, and regulate TNI Assistance Duties through legislation—none of which has yet been implemented.

Article 30, paragraph (3) of the Indonesia Constitution states that the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI), consisting of the Army, Navy, and Air Force, are tasked with defending, protecting, and maintaining the integrity and sovereignty of the state. However, the ongoing issue remains that in law enforcement against its members who commit general criminal offenses, the TNI has still not implemented the Reform mandate as emphasized in Article 65, paragraph (2) of Law No. 34 of

5) Article 28 letters a to j of the 1945 Constitution contain regulations and the state's respect for human rights.

6) Law Number 39 of 1999 concerning Human Rights provides respect for human rights and gives space for the public to actively strive for the implementation and respect of human rights in Indonesia.

7) Regulation of the National Human Rights Commission No. 5 of 2015 on Protection Procedures for Human Rights Defenders.

2004 concerning the Indonesian National Armed Forces, which states that soldiers are subject to the authority of the Military Court for military law violations and subject to the authority of civil courts for violations of general criminal law as regulated by legislation. Twenty-two years later, the mandate to revise the Military Court Law has still not been carried out, meaning TNI members remain exempt from civil court jurisdiction for general criminal offenses. The public strongly criticizes the Military Court as a haven of impunity for TNI members. Therefore, the public is highly sceptical that the Military Court will be able to fairly adjudicate cases of violence against Andrie Yunus.

Article 65 paragraph (2) of Law No. 34 of 2004 concerning the TNI asserts that soldiers are subject to the authority of military courts in cases of military criminal offenses and to the authority of general courts in cases of general criminal offenses as regulated by law. This emphasizes the principle of equal treatment before the law; however, this article cannot be implemented because the revision of the current military judiciary law has never been carried out. According to the transitional provisions in Article 74 paragraphs (1) and (2) of Law 34/2004, the application of Article 65 can only be carried out if there are regulations governing a new military judiciary. This means that until such new regulations are created and enacted, the military judicial system must still follow Law Number 31 of 1997.

This has become a controversial issue among the public. On one hand, civil society groups, including victims of violence cases committed by TNI personnel, strongly protest the takeover of case handling from Police investigators, because they consider the Military Court a fostering a culture of impunity for military members. Many TNI members commit crimes categorized as general criminal offenses, ranging from minor to serious cases, including assault, mob violence, murder, drug trafficking, and so on, which are then tried in Military Courts; however, the verdicts handed down by Military Courts are very lenient and far from a sense of justice and legal certainty. The following cases demonstrate this:

Case 1.

On Thursday, November 11, 2010, the Military Court III-19 Jayapura - Papua sentenced four TNI members involved in the abuse of several indigenous Papuan residents in Tingginambut –

Puncak Jaya Regency, which resulted in the victims' deaths. They recorded the abuse on video, which went viral and drew international condemnation against Indonesia. The perpetrators were First Lieutenant Infantry Cosmos and his three members, namely Private First-Class Syaminan Lubis, Private Second Class Joko Sulistyono, and Private Second Class Dwi Purwanto. The panel of judges sentenced First Lieutenant Cosmos to only 7 months in prison, while his three members were sentenced to only 5 months in prison. The four members of the Pam Rawan (Security of the Vulnerable Conflict Area) unit of Infantry Battalion 753/Arga Vira Tama were found guilty of committing a military offense, namely insubordination (disobeying orders) against their superior while carrying out duties in Puncak Jaya Regency, Papua, thereby violating Article 103 paragraph (1) of the Military Criminal Code.⁸⁾ The actions of the defendants were contrary to the soldier's oath and the eight obligations of the TNI, damaging the foundations of social life and tarnishing the reputation of the TNI in the eyes of the public and the world. The sentence for First Lieutenant Cosmos was three months heavier than the demand of the Military Prosecutor, who had only demanded a four-month prison sentence, while the three members had previously only been demanded three months in prison.

Case 2.

The Military Court Law has currently been submitted for judicial review to the Constitutional Court by Indonesian citizens, namely Mrs. Lenny Damanik and Mrs. Eva Meliani Boru Pasaribu.

Mrs. Lenny Damanik is the biological mother of the late Michael Histon Sitanggang (15 years old), who was a victim of a criminal act of assault that led to his death on May 25, 2024 at 03:30 WIB, with the perpetrator being Sergeant Reza Pahlevi on May 24, 2024, while dispersing a brawl on the railway tracks at the border of Tegal Sari Mandala II Subdistrict, Medan Denai District, and Tembung Subdistrict. After the victim's death, Mrs. Damanik filed a report on May 25, 2024, at the Medan Sunggal Police Sector. However, the police directed her to file a report at Denpom I/5 BB Medan (The Military Police), due to the involvement of a member of the Indonesian National Armed Forces in the victim's death. Mrs. Damanik followed up by filing a report on May 28, 2024 to the Denpom I/5 BB Medan, based on the Report Receipt Letter

8) Article 103 paragraph (1) of the Military Criminal Code: A member of the military who refuses or intentionally fails to obey a service order, or arbitrarily exceeds such an order, shall be punished for intentional disobedience with a maximum imprisonment of two years and four months.

Number: TBLP-58/V/2024 dated May 28, 2024. However, the report was only responded to on January 7, 2025, by naming Sergeant Reza Pahlevi as a suspect. Nevertheless, the suspect was not detained by Denpom I/5 BB Medan.



Figure 3. Petitioners Lenny and Eva reading a statement at the solidarity rally for Andrie Yunus in front of the Constitutional Court.

Source: Poengky Indarti (2026.04.08.)

On July 9, 2025, the defendant was examined at Military Court I-02 Medan. Regarding the criminal act committed by the defendant against Michael Histon Sitanggang, the Military Prosecutor charged the defendant with alternative charges. First, under Article 76 letter c in conjunction with Article 80 paragraph (3) of Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 35 of

2014 concerning Child Protection, or second, under Article 359 of the Criminal Code. Despite being charged with a criminal act of child abuse, the defendant was not detained at all during the trial process and even continued serving in his unit.

During the trial process, the Military Prosecutor did not seriously prove the indictment. This was indicated by the absence of a key witness, Ismail Saputra Tampubolon, in court, even though the witness directly saw the criminal act experienced by the victim. In relation to the crime, the Military Prosecutor then demanded a sentence of 1 year in prison and a fine of IDR 500,000,000 (approximately KRW 43,516,100) with a subsidiary of 3 months' imprisonment, as well as restitution to the victim's mother in the amount of IDR 12,777,100 (KRW 1,112,019).

The panel of judges at Military Court I-02 Medan then handed down a verdict of 10 months' imprisonment and ordered the defendant to pay restitution to the victim's mother in the amount of IDR 12,777,100, which if not paid would be substituted with 3 months' imprisonment.

The victim's mother stated that the principle of equality before the law—that all people are equal before the law—was not upheld, and that there was discrimination in the form of privilege granted to the defendant, namely the fact that the defendant was not detained from the investigation process through the trial at Military Court I/02 Medan. The Military Prosecutor's demand was also considered not to provide justice to the victim, as it only sought 1 year of imprisonment, whereas the maximum penalty under Article 76C⁹⁾ in conjunction with Article 80 paragraph (3) of Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 35 of 2014 concerning Child Protection is 15 years in prison. The sense of injustice felt by the victim's family was further aggravated by the judges' decision, which was lower than the prosecutor's demand, namely a sentence of 10 months' imprisonment for the loss of their child's life.

Next, there is Mrs. Eva Meliani Boru Pasaribu, who is the biological child of the late Rico Sempurna Pasaribu, a journalist/victim who died along with his wife, child, and grandchild as a result of a premeditated murder by arson that occurred due to the deceased's journalistic activities, namely reporting on a gambling business owned or managed by a TNI soldier Koptu

9) Article 76C of the Child Protection Law: Everyone is prohibited from placing, allowing, committing, ordering to commit, or participating in committing violence against children. Article 80 paragraph (1) of the Child Protection Law: Anyone who violates the provisions as referred to in Article 76C shall be punished with imprisonment for a maximum of 3 years and 6 months and/or a fine of up to IDR 72,000,000 (KRW 6,266,318).

(First Corporal) Herman Bukit. The tragic incident experienced by the victims occurred on June 27, 2024. At that time, the victims' house was burned down, killing four people: the father (Rico Sempurna Pasaribu), the mother (Elparida), the child (Sudi Investi Pasaribu), and the grandchild (Louin Situngkir).

The initial statement from the police said that the fire at the victims' house was a purely accidental fire. However, after an investigation was conducted by the Committee for the Safety of Journalists, which then reported it to the Press Council, it was found that this incident was not a natural fire but an intentional arson involving members of the TNI. Only then did the Karo Police follow up and name three civilians as suspects: Bebas Ginting, Rudi Sembiring, and Yunus Tarigan. One of these three suspects is known to be the right-hand man of a TNI individual responsible for securing gambling operations from mass organizations and the media, providing strong grounds to suspect the involvement of a TNI member, namely Koptu Herman Bukit of Yonif (Infantry Battalion) 125 Simbisa, in carrying out the premeditated murder.

The victim's family reported the case to Puspomad (Center of the Military Police of the Army) on July 12, 2024, and subsequently filed a report with Pomdam (Center of the Military Police of the Military office in the province level) I/Bukit Barisan (BB) on July 18, 2024, based on Puspomad's direction. However, until the judicial review was filed, Pomdam I/BB had not taken significant investigative steps, even though various pieces of evidence supporting the alleged involvement of Koptu Herman Bukit had been submitted. Pomdam I/BB has never provided updates regarding the family's report.

The case against the three civilian defendants has now obtained permanent legal force, namely a sentence of life imprisonment. However, Koptu Herman Bukit, who is strongly suspected of being involved and allegedly the owner and operator of the gambling business, has still not been named a suspect to this day.

Case 3.

Thursday, July 3, 2025, the panel of judges of the Military Court I-02 Medan, chaired by Djunaedi, handed down a light sentence to two TNI members who smuggled a very large quantity of pangolin scales, namely 1.2 tons, in Asahan Regency. The smuggling was carried out together with a member of the Asahan Police, Second Police Inspector Alfi Hariadi Siregar, and a civilian Amir Simatupang in November 2024. The two perpetrators, Chief Sergeant

Mohammad Yusuf Harahap and Second Sergeant Rahmadani Syahputra, were only sentenced to 1 year in prison each and fined IDR 100 million (KRW 8,703,220) or replaced with 1 month of confinement. Meanwhile, Amir Simatupang, who was tried at the Kisaran District Court, was sentenced to 3 years, three times the punishment of the two soldiers who were the main perpetrators, even though Amir's role was only to pack the pangolin scales, and the police Alfi Hariadi Siregar was sentenced to 9 years in prison.

The trade of 1.2 tons of pangolin scales is a very large ecological crime. As state apparatus, the punishment for the two TNI members should have been heavier than that of the civilian. They should have helped protect wildlife safeguarded by the state, but instead became part of a protected wildlife trafficking syndicate.

Case 4.

On November 11, 2024, a dozen members of the Indonesian from the Medan-2/Kilap Sumagan Artillery Battalion were also on trial at the Military Court I-02 Medan. They were being tried for attacking a civilian village near their base in Sibiru-Biru District, Deli Serdang Regency. The conflict began with an argument on the road when they encountered a motorcycle. The TNI members then swept through the village, breaking into houses, dragging, and assaulting residents. Several residents were injured, and one person, Raden Barus (60 years old), was killed. Of the dozen TNI members on trial, two have already been sentenced: Chief Private Saut Maruli Siahaan received 7 months and 24 days, and Private Dwi Maulana Kusuma received 9 months in prison. The court's ruling wounded the public sense of justice. The light sentences given to TNI members who committed violence and murder demonstrate the impunity of TNI personnel under the law. Weak law enforcement against perpetrators of violence within the TNI further strengthens impunity and hinders TNI reform. The military justice system is also considered highly opaque. For example, in the Case Tracking Information System at sipp.dilmil-medan.go.id, the indictment letters containing details of the criminal events are not displayed. In some cases, the names of the defendants are also anonymized, making it difficult for the public, especially victims/families of victims and the media, to obtain clear information regarding the progress of the trial.

Reflecting on these cases, civilians have once again urged a revision of Law No. 31 of 1997 on Military Courts, after a mandate for TNI reform was issued following the Reform era, with one of its obligations being to revise the Military Court Law. However, the revision undertaken by the House of Representatives together with the Government from 2004 to 2009 reached a deadlock and has not been continued to this day. In fact, general criminal acts committed by TNI soldiers should be tried through the general judicial system, not the military judicial system. This is to ensure that the principle of equality of all citizens before the law can be realized without discrimination.

In the discussion of the revision of the Military Court Law carried out by the Indonesian House of Representatives (DPR RI) and the Government from 2004 to 2009, a deadlock occurred because the TNI refused to be investigated by the Police and prosecuted by the Attorney General's Office. The TNI requested to continue being investigated by the Military Police and prosecuted by the Military Prosecutor. The TNI's reasoning was that the Police would not dare to investigate soldiers due to psychological reasons, as they are seen as senior brothers. Similarly, the Attorney General's Office would not dare to prosecute and charge soldiers due to the civil-military psychological barrier. Therefore, then-President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono provided a middle ground by granting a five-year trial period until the TNI was ready to be investigated by the Police and prosecuted by the Attorney General's Office. Meanwhile, the DPR RI, which represents the people, remained steadfast and refused to grant a trial period. As a result, the discussion reached a deadlock and has not progressed to this day.

The principle of equality before the law is one of the fundamental pillars of a legal system that upholds justice and equal treatment for all citizens. In a legal context, it means that every individual, including military members, must be subject to the same law and have equal rights in judicial proceedings.

However, there has been a refusal to process TNI members in the general judiciary when they are involved in criminal acts unrelated to military duties, resulting in cases involving TNI members not being investigated. This creates special treatment or immunity for TNI members and undermines the accountability they should face in the general judiciary. In contrast, the principle of equality before the law emphasizes that law enforcement must be carried out fairly and equally, without special treatment or immunity for certain groups, including TNI members.

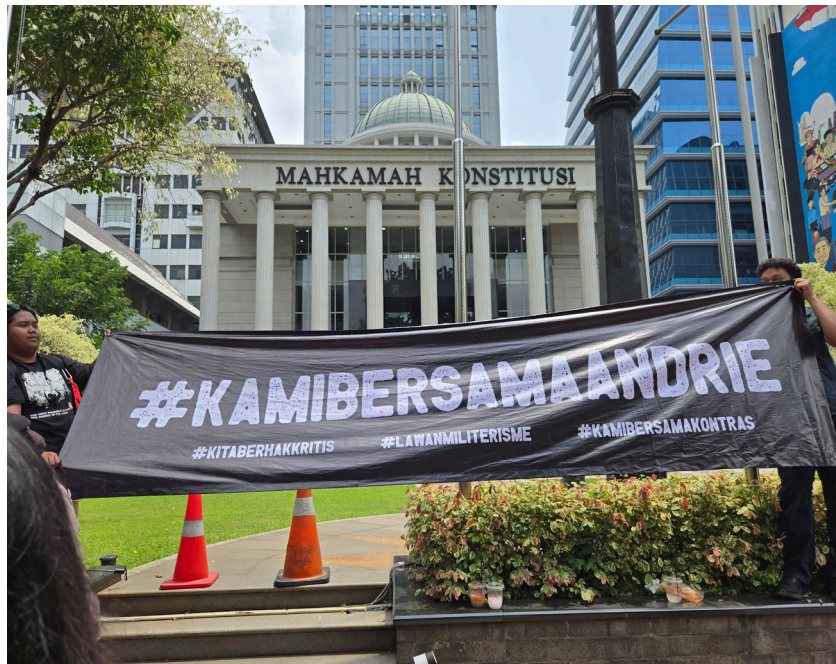


Figure 4. Solidarity Rally for Andrie Yunus in front of the Constitutional Court
Source: Poengky Indarti (2026.04.08.)

The lack of focus on military justice reform proves that there are several issues such as insufficient oversight, irregularities, violations, and crimes occurring within the military justice system and law enforcement in Indonesia as a whole. Oversight of military bodies should be carried out by Commission I of the Indonesian House of Representatives (DPR RI), but unfortunately, its role has not been fully effective. This situation results in inadequate supervision of institutions such as intelligence agencies and the TNI. The corruption cases that have emerged have hindered efforts for effective oversight of important sectors within the country.

The lack of oversight also causes the TNI to be overly engaged in activities that are not in line with the duties of professional TNI soldiers and deviate from their main responsibilities. Such actions create a situation prone to violence or threats against civilians, as a manifestation of military interference in civil affairs, which should be under the control of a democratic government.

Therefore, it is quite reasonable for the public not to trust the handling of the violence case against Andrie Yunus by the TNI Military Police (POM TNI) and for the case to be tried in Military

Court. This is currently a moment for civil society to once again voice the importance of revising the Military Court Law and to evaluate whether TNI Reform has truly been properly implemented.

The police need to continue deepening their investigation into the violence suffered by Andrie Yunus and prepare supporting evidence for the investigation of this case, including when President Prabowo Subianto requires information updates, because with the investigation in the military being closed off due to the perpetrators being TNI members, there is a high likelihood that the President will not receive information that aligns with the facts.

The police also need to maintain good coordination and cooperation with civil society groups to oversee the handling of Andrie Yunus's case and to push for the momentum of revising the Military Justice Law and evaluating TNI Reform.

Civil society groups and the media must continuously monitor and oversee the investigation and inquiry process of this case all the way to the courts, and continue to involve networks from the local to the international level so that oversight becomes tighter, thereby reduce the risk of manipulation in case handling and the perpetuation of impunity.



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