

G20 Summit Closes Civic Space on Freedom of Speech

Indonesian civil society issues a joint statement condemning the crackdown on expression at the G20 Bali Summit

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*The [Group of 20 \(G20\) Summit](#) in Indonesia kicks off today where leaders of the world's major economies are gathering with this year's theme, "**Recover Together, Recover Stronger.**"*

However, groups have reported harassment and closure of civil society events in Bali by the authorities.

The summit's theme doesn't seem to make sense when the Indonesian people are being deprived of their basic rights to express themselves freely and to assemble peacefully at a time when these world leaders need to hear people's voices more than ever. These people are the most impacted by a manifold of crises – economic, health, and climate.

Here's the joint statement of the Indonesian Civil Society:

Jakarta – The G20 summit will soon take place in Bali. Instead of allowing civic space for meaningful public involvement and participation, the Provincial Government of Bali and the Central Government have issued various policies to limit public activities during the G20 in Bali, including the Governor of Bali Circular No: 35425/SEKRET/2022 regarding the Enforcement of Restrictions on Community Activities in the Implementation of the G20 Presidency. Moreover, the Central Government previously stated that it did not want other narratives other than those considered to be represented by the countries that were members of the G20.

The policy issued by the Provincial Government of Bali and supported by the Central Government is an utter disappointment, which shows the government's failure to understand the Constitution, the highest legal umbrella in the life of the nation and state, namely democracy. Expressing aspirations, opinions, and thoughts is a

constitutional right of citizens and part of citizens' efforts to play an active role in the life of the nation and state, including development. The government should open various channels for civic aspirations and citizens' voices should be respected and protected.

This policy even has an impact on various activities to convey aspirations in various forms of religious events and activities that civil society organizations and Balinese people will hold, as well as limiting the daily activities of Balinese people.

Moreover, our records show further enclosure of civic space where civil society activities were unilaterally restricted and canceled, which includes:

- The eviction of Greenpeace cyclist team by a group of people in Probolinggo
- One-sided event cancellation by venue through a sudden circulation letter from the indigenous village (desa adat) in Kesiman
- Threats to disband discussions at the university by the chancellor himself
- Forced disbandment of YLBHI's internal event in Sanur by means of intimidation and attempts to control and search personal gadgets
- Disbandment of a youth community art workshop in Denpasar on grounds that there was a banner that read "from Pollution to Solutions"
- Intimidation by local thugs entering hotels where activists are staying

Not only that, several hotel managers where environmental activists were staying also received intimidation from parties who claimed to be intelligence officers from the local Kodim. The party claiming to be intelligence agents, persistently asked the hotel manager for the personal phone number of activists staying at the hotel. The hotel did not provide the telephone number to protect customers personal data. Moreover, we also noted that there was surveillance and attempts to hack the activists' devices before and during the executions of this Summit.

We, civil society organizations, view these restrictions on public activities as an effort to silence the critical voices of the public towards the global and national economic system which has a direct causal impact on multidimensional crises. Economic crisis, climate crisis, health crisis, and many others. We see these state efforts to reflect the government's anti-democratic and anti-criticism attitude, which does not want a different public voice from the narrative built by the government so far.

The Government of Indonesia as the holder of the mandate of the G20 Presidency, should take the lead by opening the widest possible democratic space for the public, to allow us to take an active role in the implementation of the G20. As an economic forum whose policies will majorly impact society, the G20 should understand the diversity of community needs and interests as the bare essentials in making decisions. Especially in the experience so far, it is the independent initiatives built by the people that are able to survive & are more resilient in the face of crises. The voices of the people and communities at the grassroots should be heard and given space, not silenced.

The principles of democracy and human rights are prerequisites to achieving a just and sustainable life. We also urge the leaders of the G20 member countries to see the issue

of democracy as a crucial issue for executing the G20 Summit. Without meaningful involvement or participation from citizens who will be affected by the agreements produced in the G20 forum, then the forum and the communique produced will have no meaning at all for citizens. Furthermore, this will also go down in history as other G20 member countries support the suppression of democracy in Indonesia.

Twelve organisations, including our very own team in Asia, signed this joint statement. [You can see the list here.](#)

Let's stand in solidarity with the Indonesian people who are doing their best right now to have their voices heard at the G20 summit – [take action with us.](#)

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