

Indonesia – Anti-Government Demonstrations

September 3, 2025



Summary

Widespread unrest broke out across Indonesia after parliamentarians' benefits were raised last month while the cost-of-living crisis deepened, leading to public outrage and mass protests that turned deadly following police violence in Jakarta on August 28th. Even though authorities apologised and the government backtracked some perks, the discontent has widened, including longstanding grievances over inequality, corruption, and governance, escalating pressure on President Prabowo's leadership.

Recent events and developments

On August 13, tens of thousands protested the Regent of Pati Sudewo's 250% increase of urban and rural land and building taxes (PBB-P2), marking the region's largest demonstration, which escalated to violent clashes, injuries, and a council inquiry. On August 15, a viral video showed lawmakers dancing joyfully to the Papuan folk song "Sajojo" in Parliament, sparking criticism for insensitivity amid economic hardship and deepening frustration over politician's disconnect from citizens. On August 25, thousands protested outside Jakarta's House of Representatives (DPR) building over a raised monthly housing allowance for lawmakers to 50 million rupiah (2,618 EUR), nearly 10 times Jakarta's minimum wage. This occurred amid public anger over a national debt nearing 40% of GDP, government lavish spending, and corruption worsening economic strains. On August 28, tensions turned violent when an armoured police vehicle struck and killed 21-year-old rideshare driver Affan Kurniawan in the capital. His death was a catalyst that transformed initial protests into a nationwide movement that quickly reached West Java, Bali, and Lombok. Demonstrators targeted the capital's government buildings and houses of politicians, many set ablaze or looted, while riot police deployed tear gas and water cannons to disperse protestors, resulting in at least seven deaths and serious property damage. President Prabowo responded by cutting some lawmaker's perks and deploying security forces nationwide, ordering visible crackdowns and heightened patrols. Despite these, anger persists, with multiple groups pausing demonstrations mainly due to heavy security and to avoid increased violent escalations by authorities, not due to meeting demands. Although student organisations began the initial movement, additional groups have subsequently joined, including women's groups, making it challenging to pinpoint a single leader or overarching goal.

Impact assessment

The ongoing unrest in Indonesia has led to several impacts relevant to travellers in major urban centres, with government buildings set on fire and widespread looting. Several large-scale demonstrations near the House of Representatives and key government sites have resulted in road closures, particularly around Jakarta's political centre, disrupting traffic flow and complicating travel plans. Security forces maintain active checkpoints and patrols in protest-prone areas, such as Central Jakarta, Bandung, Denpasar, Surabaya, Makassar, and Yogyakarta, necessitating caution for travellers moving around these cities. Hotspots include the immediate surroundings of regional police headquarters and local legislative council offices. While international airports across Indonesia remain open, travellers should anticipate likely traffic delays from roadblocks, diverted routes near protest sites, and intensified security checks. New entry procedures at key airports, including the mandatory "All Indonesia" digital arrival card linked with an e-Visa on Arrival system, began on September 1 and will extend nationwide by October 1, adding procedural requirements for inbound travellers. Despite protests recently subsiding due to heavy security, tensions remain high, with ongoing risks of sporadic unrest posing threats to traveller safety and mobility. No government has issued a ban on visiting Indonesia as the country has not been classified as unsafe under current travel advisories. Nevertheless, calls for fairer governance and police accountability reflect deep public frustration and pose a critical test for Prabowo's presidency. The likelihood of further demonstration and localised unrest becoming violent without warning remains significant. Finally, the unpredictability of the security situation means there is a roughly even chance of terrorist threats targeting tourist areas amid the unrest.

Advice from Forth Global

- Avoid all demonstrations, government buildings, police facilities, and known protest hotspots in major cities, particularly around Jakarta's House of Representatives building.
- Follow official instructions, keep emergency contacts accessible both digitally and on paper, and register for crisis alerts at your home country's embassy.
- Have sufficient cash, charged power banks, and supplies for potential short-term hibernation due to sudden unrest or travel restrictions.
- Monitor verified local news and embassy updates for modifications to security conditions and seek security advice from local authorities and hotel staff before traveling outside major urban centres or near protest areas.

Customized advice

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