

Students rally across Indonesia against election postponement, cost of living

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Student demonstrations have been held simultaneously in various parts of the country — from the west to the east — rejecting the discourse on postponing the 2024 elections and President Joko “Jokowi” Widodo serving a third term in office, and against fuel prices hikes, valued added tax increases and the scarcity of cooking oil.

And it was not just students. Demonstrations were also held by a number of other groups from right-wing groups, to housewives and workers.

During the demonstrations there were a number of notable incidents from clashes with police to a mob attack on social media activist Ade Armando in front of the parliamentary complex in Jakarta.

The following is a roundup of protest actions which took place on Monday April 11.

Clashes and chaos in several cities

Several protest actions are known to have been held in various big cities in Indonesia which ended in chaos. One of these was in the South Sulawesi provincial capital of Makassar where a demonstration on Jalan AP Pettarani underneath the Makassar City flyover ended in chaos.

The chaos was triggered after stones were thrown at the South Sulawesi Regional House of Representatives (DPRD) offices. Police responded by breaking up the protest. Teargas was fired several times.

The latest reports say that the demonstration in Makassar continued into the night and ended in a clash with police.

Chaos also broke out during an action by students in front of the Sumenep DPRD offices in East Java. Protesters even managed to break down the DPRD’s front gate.

Aside from this, chaos also occurred in the capital city in front of the House of Representatives (DPR) building in Senayan, Jakarta. Initially the action proceeded peacefully but later on it ended in chaos when police tried to break up the protest.

The demonstrators, which were dominated by high-school students, threw stones in the direction of the DPR fence after they joined up with a group of university students.

The demonstration finally ended late in the afternoon after it began raining and the demonstrators disbanded voluntarily.

Police post torched, officers injured

A police post in the Pejompongan area of Central Jakarta, located not far from the parliamentary

complex, was torched by unknown protesters. The incident occurred at around 7 pm. Police have yet to reveal who the perpetrators were.

Aside from the police post, demonstrations which turned chaotic also resulted in police officers being injured. In Jakarta, Metro Jaya Regional Police Chief Inspector General Fadil Imran said that at least six officers were injured.

“There were six of our members who were injured. It occurred when there was resistance from a group of non-student protesters”, said Imran during a press conference yesterday.

The other victim was a traffic police officer who was assaulted near the DPR building by a group of unidentified people when they were evacuating a vehicle trapped on the inner-city toll road. The officer is currently undergoing intensive treatment at the Kramat Jati Police Hospital.

Police officers were also injured during demonstrations in other areas. One of these was an officer who was hit by an arrow when chaos broke at the Bosowa University in Makassar. It was reported that the officer was hit in the thigh by an arrow during a clash with students and rushed to hospital.

Following the incident police conducted a sweep and arrested one university student, a vocational school student and a local resident. Two arrows and a motorcycle were also seized.

Not only that, a police officer was reported to have died while guarding a demonstration in Kendari, Southeast Sulawesi.

Indonesian police spokesperson Inspector General Dedi Prasetyo said that the officer died not because of a clash with students but rather during a car accident while guarding the action.

“They died because there was an accident which resulted in an officer being physically hit by a car”, Prasetyo told journalists on Monday.

Prasetyo said that the officer was rushed to a hospital but was beyond help and died.

Pro-Widodo social media influencer assaulted

Social media activist Ade Armando, who was at the protest action in front of the DPR building in Jakarta, was assaulted by protesters. He was repeatedly hit and even stripped naked. Armando has since been taken to a emergency care unit suffering injuries and burses to his body.

Police reportedly arrested a number of people who are alleged to infiltrated the demonstrations. This has been confirmed by Indonesian police chief General Listyo Sigit Prabowo.

Prabowo said that they will investigate sharp weapons found on several people who were arrested at the demonstrations today. “There were some who brought sharp weapons which we have secured. It’s currently being looked into”, said Prabowo near the National Monument (Monas) in Central Jakarta.

Police arrested scores of people during the demonstrations including 80 people who were arrested at Monas and 10 people at the rally in Makassar.

Protests near location of new capital city

Aside from Jakarta, April 11 demonstrations were also held in several other parts of the country, including East Kalimantan, which will become the location of the country’s new capital city in a

project currently being pursued by President Widodo.

During an action at the East Kalimantan provincial capital of Samarinda, students protesting against Widodo serving a third term gave speeches until late afternoon, after which they disbanded voluntarily.

The East Kalimantan Social Challenge Alliance (Mahakam) decided to end the rally after East Kalimantan DPRD Speaker Makmur HAPK left the building and met with the students.

The Golkar Party politician sat down with the students to listen to their demands and agreed to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) which was witnessed by thousands of students.

"We expressed our thanks for watching over our aspirations", Mahakam public relations officer told CNN Indonesia following the protest action on Monday.

Furthermore, he explained that the contents of the MoU was that the DPRD and the Mahakam agreed to oppose the increase in fuel prices and value added tax (PPN) as well as rejecting an extension of the president's term in office by postponing the 2024 elections. If a difference in understanding occurs, it will be resolved institutionally through legal channels.

"We will continue to monitor this until the DPRD conveys the MoU to the central government", he said.

He also said that they want to ensure that the agreement reaches the central government and a notification of receipt has to be received by the students within one week at the latest. "We confirmed it will be reconfirmed and will monitor this agreement", he said.

Speaking separately, Makmur HAPK said that the DPRD fully supports the students' wishes and this support has been proven by the signing of the MoU which will of course be forwarded to the DPR in Jakarta.

"What's clear is that we are the people's representatives. This afternoon we will arrange it with the secretariat to deliver their letter", he said.

Rallies held at 25 different points in West Java

In West Java meanwhile, the police said that protest actions by students which were held at dozens of points around the province ended without rioting. None of the potential causes of rioting or people taking advantage of the demonstrations transpired.

West Java regional police spokesperson Senior Commissioner Ibrahim Tompo said that student protests on Monday occurred at 25 different points in West Java.

"Throughout West Java there were 25 points in regencies and cities. The protesters who came began their actions before 12 noon, although there were also protesters who finished before 12 noon", said Tompo at the Gedung Sate building (governor's office) in the West Java provincial capital of Bandung.

Tompo did not deny that there was friction between protesters and police at several demonstrations but as a whole and in general the situation remained secure.

"There were several small [incidents] of friction such as pushing and shoving, but it remained under control. In general the situation was secure and orderly", he said.

In Bandung city student protests took place into late afternoon at the Gedung Sate building and the West Java DPRD on Jalan Diponegoro but no incidents of rioting took place.

The students protested against the discourse on postponing the 2024 elections and extending the president's term in office. In addition to this, they also criticised the government over its economic policies including the hikes in the price of fuel and cooking oil.

Despite the heavy rainfall, the students continued protesting with police giving them permission to continue until 6 pm. As the time limit approached, the hundreds of demonstrators began disbanding voluntarily.

Tompo said that the police have expressed their thanks to the students in West Java for conveying their wishes in an orderly fashion. "We are thankful that the protest actions in the West Java region were secure and orderly", he said.

Rizieq Shihab followers join rally in Madura

A number of protesters who united under a social organisation (ormas) calling themselves the Madura United Islamic Community Forum in Sampang regency, Madura Island, who are known to be followers of imprisoned Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) leader Habib Rizieq Shihab, also took to the streets to support student demonstrations opposing a third term for the president at the Sampang DPRD offices.

They called on regional and central government officials to think about the fate of the ordinary people, particularly those burdened because the price of sembako (basic commodities) is out of control and has become a big problem.

Forum coordinator Jakfar Shodiq said they were making at least 12 demands including opposing the discourse on the president serving a third term and asking for the price of sembako and fuel to be stabilised.

In addition to this, they also asked for people to fight against communist ideas, the destruction of the oligarchy's power and for the word madrasah (Islamic boarding school) to be included in the national education system.

They also called for a halt to the entry of foreign workers because they are an insult, and end to the criminalisation of ulama and habaib (Islamic leaders) and the immediate arrest and trial of religious blasphemers.

Sampang DPRD Speaker Fadol meanwhile said that they have taken note of the protests' aspirations and promised to convey them to the regional and central governments.

"God willing we will schedule the demands of the kiai [Islamic teachers] and will convey them to the DPR later. Soon, we will take this document to Senayan, Jakarta, to represent the interests of the Sampang community and Indonesia in general", he said.

Housewives, ride-hailing drivers rally in Padang

Protests against Widodo serving a third term on Jalan Khatib Sulaiman in front of the West Sumatra DPRD offices in Padang were also enlivened by emak-emak (urban housewives) and online ojek (motorcycle taxi drivers).

Hundreds of ride-hailing motorcycle drivers from various different applications also took to the

streets to enliven the action. They emphasised that the government should listen to their voices, particularly over high fuel prices which the drivers find difficult to afford.

During the action the drivers also brought various banners, many of which were made of simple cardboard with messages on them such as "Bring down prices, fuel impacts badly on us," "Gojek drivers can also express their aspirations."

At around 2 pm scores of emak-emak joined the students who were giving speeches on the left side of the parliamentary building. Their arrival was greeted by cheers and claps from the students giving speeches.

The emak-emak also took the opportunity to give speeches and convey the aspirations of their group. One of the group's representatives called on the DPRD members to fulfill the demands of their members.

She also said that they do not want an election postponement and do not want the current administration to continue because of their children and an economic situation which is becoming increasingly difficult.

"We don't want Jokowi to be president anymore, Pak [Mr]. Me, my children, university students, their laptops are broken, [my goods] aren't selling, I can sell anymore, Pak. Please pay attention. We're not emak-emak who are provocateurs," said one of the emak-emak in a speech.

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