

# **Waves of demonstrations against fuel price hike sweep across Indonesia over last week**

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**Jakarta — A wave of demonstrations against the recent fuel (BBM) price hike have been held by students, trade unions and online motorcycle taxi drivers (ojek) in various parts of Indonesia over the last week since the policy was announced by President Joko “Jokowi” Widodo on September 3.**

Demonstrations in Jakarta were held near the Presidential Palace on Tuesday September 13 and were followed by actions in other regions from the west to the east of Indonesia including Banda Aceh (Aceh), Medan (North Sumatra), Palembang (South Sumatra), Bandung (West Java), Semarang (Central Java), Surabaya (East Java), Mataram (West Nusa Tenggara), Makassar (South Sulawesi) and Gorontalo province.

The demands by the protesters have been similar, namely rejecting the fuel price hike and demanding a reduction in the price of basic commodities. The following is a summary of demonstrations around the country compiled by CNN Indonesia.

## **Workers, students, PA 212 rally in Jakarta**

The Labour Movement with the People (Gebrak) alliance together with a number of student groups held a demonstration against fuel prices near the State Palace in Central Jakarta on September 13. The action was blocked by police on Jalan Medan Merdeka Barat right next to the Arjuna Wiwaha or Horse Statue which provides access to the Presidential Palace on Jalan Medan Merdeka Utara.

At least five demands were made by the protesters including rejecting the fuel price increase and demanding a reduction in the price of basic commodities. Second, revoking the Omnibus Law on Job Creation and its derivative regulations.

The day before workers and Islamic protesters from the 212 Alumni Brotherhood (PA 212) also held an action at the same location with similar demands.

Prior to this, on Tuesday September 6, workers held a demonstration in front of the House of Representatives (DPR) building around seven kilometres from the State Palace and the presidential complex in Central Jakarta.

## **Kaltim students reject price hike**

Thousands of students from a variety of campuses held a demonstration in front of the East Kalimantan (Kaltim) Regional House of Representatives (DPRD) on Tuesday September 13.

The action, by students from the Kaltim Smoldering Social Alliance (AMKM), demanded that DPRD members reject the central government’s policies on fuel prices.

They had also held a demonstration earlier on September 6. Aside from opposing the increase in the price of Peralite, Solar (diesel) and Pertamina fuels which was signed off by President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo on September 3, they also expressed sharp criticisms of the Downstream Oil and Gas Regulatory Agency BPH Migas because its performance has been dissatisfactory and can even be categorised as poor.

Yet East Kalimantan — which will become the site of the new capital city (IKN) — is one of the provinces which produces oil and makes a big contribution to the central government. The irony however is that scarcities of Solar fuel often occur with transportation drivers in particular suffering greatly.

"We also urge the Jokowi government to safeguard the stability of basic commodity prices," said AMKM public relations officer Said Farhad.

### **Marathon student demo in Makassar**

The Makassar branch of the Islamic Students Association (HMI) in South Sulawesi protested again against the price hike in front of the regional office offices of the state-own oil and gas company Pertamina on September 13.

The action was marred by students and police pushing and shoving each other. A short time later the demonstrators set fire to tyres in front of the Pertamina office.'

Protest actions in Makassar have continued every day since President Widodo announced the increase in subsidised fuel prices.

### **Defend the people action in Medan**

Protesters from the group Action to Defend the People held a demonstration in front of the North Sumatra governor's office on Monday September 12.

North Sumatra Governor Edy Rahmayadi came out and met with the demonstrators and spoke from atop of the protesters' command vehicle saying he would convey their demands to President Widodo.

According to the former commander of the Army Strategic Reserves Command (Kostrad), the situation in Indonesia and in particular North Sumatra, is not okay. Rahmayadi warned the public to be prepared to face a worsening economic situation.

On September 13, demonstrations resumed again at the governor's office, this time organised by online motorcycle taxi drivers. Once again Rahmayadi met with the demonstrators and promised to pass on their aspirations to the central government.

### **Ojol drivers demonstrate in Yogyakarta**

Online motorcycle taxi drivers from the Yogyakarta Ojol Forum descended upon the Yogyakarta DPRD in the Central Java city of Yogyakarta on September 12.

The striking drivers, who represented an alliance of various driver associations from across Yogyakarta province, opposed the fuel price hike and demanded the enactment of a legal umbrella to protect ojol drivers.

Last week, protesters in Yogyakarta blockaded the Jalan Malioboro shopping district in the centre of the city. Calling themselves the People's Movement Alliance (ARB), they gathered in front of the

Yogyakarta DPRD building near Malioboro on Wednesday September 7 to articulate their opposition to the fuel price increases.

Upon arriving at the location, they immediately blockaded the road in front of the DPRD and started giving speeches. "Reject, reject, reject BBM, reject the BBM increase now", shouted one of the speakers from the command vehicle.

### **Rally in Aceh ends in chaos**

Demonstrations also took place in Indonesia's northern-most province of Aceh. One of the protest actions in West Aceh regency ended in chaos on September 12 with a demonstrator left sprawled in the middle of the road after being hit in the chest by a teargas canister.

Action spokesperson Nauval said that the chaos happened when the protesters were blocked by police in the middle of the road as they were heading towards the DPRD. "They fired teargas at us, it was fired in the direction of the protesters," Nauval told journalists.

West Aceh district police chief Assistant Superintendent Pandji Santoso confirmed that his officers fired teargas and water cannon in the direction of the protesters accusing them of anarchy.

Protest actions did not just occur in the places mentioned above. Over the last week many student, labour and other groups have taken to the streets in other areas such as Palembang, Semarang, Gorontalo, Surabaya and Pamekasan.

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