



Law Enforcement Against Anarchist Protesters And Looting In Indonesia

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ARTICLE HISTORY

Received: 26.10.2025

Accepted: 05.12.2025

Published: 29.12.2025

ARTICLE LICENSE

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ABSTRACT

Law enforcement against anarchist demonstrations and looting in Indonesia is a crucial issue in maintaining public order and strengthening the principle of the rule of law. Demonstrations are constitutionally recognized as the citizens' right guaranteed by the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia as a form of freedom of expression. However, when demonstrations escalate into anarchist actions, including destruction of public facilities, violence against law enforcement officers or civilians, and looting of private property, they can no longer be regarded as democratic expression but rather as criminal acts. This study aims to examine the form and mechanism of law enforcement against anarchist demonstrators and looters in Indonesia by analyzing the legal framework, the implementation by law enforcement agencies, and the obstacles encountered in practice. The research method applied is a normative juridical approach through the analysis of statutory regulations, court decisions, legal doctrines, and relevant literature. The findings indicate that although the regulatory framework is relatively comprehensive, law enforcement continues to face significant challenges, such as limited infrastructure and resources, potential human rights violations in handling mass actions, and political or social pressures. Therefore, the enforcement of law must be conducted in a proportional, transparent, and accountable manner to ensure deterrence for offenders without disregarding the protection of citizens' constitutional rights. This study underlines the importance of collaboration among law enforcement institutions, government, and civil society in realizing fair, effective, and socially just law enforcement against anarchist actions and looting.

Keywords: Law enforcement, anarchist demonstration, looting, human rights, Indonesia

1. Introduction

Demonstrations are one of the important pillars in democratic life which marks the existence of space for people's participation in the process of state administration. In Indonesia, freedom of opinion through demonstrations is constitutionally guaranteed in the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, especially Article 28E paragraph (3) which affirms that everyone has the right to freedom of association, assembly, and expression. This right is seen as an important instrument to ensure that the public can voice their aspirations, make criticisms, and submit demands for various public policies that are considered detrimental. However, the reality on the ground shows that the practice of demonstrations often leads to anarchist actions that go beyond the limits of freedom of opinion itself. Destruction of public facilities, attacks on officials, looting of property belonging to the community and government, and other acts of violence are the ugly faces of some demonstrations that should have taken place peacefully. This phenomenon presents serious problems because it not only harms the essence of freedom of opinion, but also causes a wide social, economic, and psychological impact on society.

Law enforcement against demonstrators who commit anarchist acts and looting poses a complex dilemma for the state. On the one hand, law enforcement officials are obliged to guarantee the constitutional rights of citizens to express their opinions in public. However, on the other hand, the state also bears the responsibility of maintaining order, security, and protecting the rights of the wider community so that they are not harmed by destructive actions. This often puts law enforcement officials in a dilemma: if they act decisively, allegations of human rights violations arise; But if they are too permissive, the potential for riots and losses will be wider. Therefore, the problem of law enforcement in the context of anarchist demonstrations is not only related to normative aspects, but also concerns

the political, social, and even morality sensitivity of law enforcement in Indonesia. This is further exacerbated by the existence of certain interests that often ride on demonstrations, thus increasing the potential for chaos in society.

The various demonstrations that led to major riots in Indonesia show how weak the crowd control mechanism and the unpreparedness of the authorities in dealing with emergency situations are. For example, in a number of demonstrations that took place in Jakarta and several major cities at important political moments, riots often ended in the burning of public facilities, looting of shops, and physical clashes that claimed lives. These cases show that behind the noble purpose of demonstrations as a means of conveying the aspirations of the people, there is the potential for abuse that can destroy the joints of social life. Furthermore, the riots also resulted in significant economic losses, as public infrastructure had to be repaired, trade activities stopped, and investment was disrupted. This incident causes collective trauma that reduces people's sense of security, and can even damage public trust in the democratic mechanism itself. It is in this context that law enforcement is faced with the serious challenge of balancing respect for freedom of opinion with the enforcement of public order.

Another obstacle that complicates law enforcement against anarchist demonstrations is the limited facilities and infrastructure of law enforcement officials. It is not uncommon for security forces to face masses that are much larger in number than the personnel deployed, making the potential for chaos increasingly difficult to control. In addition, there are also coordination problems between various law enforcement agencies, such as the police, prosecutor's office, and local governments, which often do not run optimally. In some cases, the security forces on duty were accused of human rights violations, either for excessive use of force or for repressive actions that exceeded the limits of authority. The accusation then creates a negative image of the authorities, which has an impact on the decline of the legitimacy of law enforcement in the eyes of the public. As a result, public trust in the legal and security systems is weakening, increasing the potential for future riots. Therefore, the obstacles in law enforcement are not only technical, but also involve psychological, political, and social aspects.

From a positive legal point of view, the regulations governing demonstrations in Indonesia are actually quite clear. Law Number 9 of 1998 concerning Freedom of Expression in Public, for example, provides restrictions so that demonstrations remain within the legal corridor. The law emphasizes that the expression of opinions must be carried out responsibly, respecting the rights of others, and maintaining public order. Similarly, in the Criminal Code (KUHP), various articles have regulated criminal acts that can be imposed on perpetrators of vandalism, looting, or acts of violence that occur during demonstrations. However, the main problem lies in the implementation of these regulations in the field. The inability of the authorities to distinguish between peaceful demonstrators and those who commit criminal acts, as well as the lack of preventive mechanisms, make existing regulations less effective in responding to the challenges of law enforcement. As a result, even when legal norms are available, substantive justice often fails to be achieved.

Based on the above description, it is clear that law enforcement against participants in anarchist demonstrations and looting in Indonesia is not a simple matter. This issue concerns the balance between the protection of citizens' constitutional rights, the state's obligation to maintain public order, and the challenge of law implementation in the field which is full of dilemmas. The obstacles that have arisen, ranging from limited apparatus, weak coordination, allegations of human rights violations, to the lack of effectiveness of regulations, show that the law enforcement system still needs fundamental reforms. Therefore, further research and studies are essential to formulate law enforcement strategies that are fair, effective, and based on respect for human rights. With the right measures, demonstrations can be placed back in their essence as an instrument of healthy democracy, without having to turn into an arena of anarchy that harms the nation and state. The main question on which this research is based is how law enforcement against participants of anarchist demonstrations and looting in Indonesia is carried out, as well as what obstacles are faced in its implementation.

2. Method Research

This research uses normative juridical research methods with a statutory *approach* and a *conceptual approach* (Ilham 2025). The normative juridical method was chosen because the main focus of this study is on the positive legal norms that apply to law enforcement against anarchist acts and looting in demonstrations. Research data was obtained through literature studies by examining laws and regulations, court decisions, legal doctrines, scientific journals, and relevant literature. Data analysis is carried out qualitatively by interpreting existing legal provisions, relating them to practices in the field, and identifying weaknesses and obstacles in the implementation

of the law (Nasadi and Akdaji 2025). The results of the analysis are then used to provide a comprehensive understanding and offer solutions to law enforcement problems in the context of this research.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Theoretical Studies and Normative Frameworks

The concept of the modern state of law places the law as the main pillar in regulating the life of the nation and state. The law not only serves as an instrument to maintain order, but also as a mechanism for the protection of human rights and the guarantee of substantive justice. Hans Kelsen emphasized that the existence of law must be understood through a layered system of norms, where lower norms always originate from higher norms until they reach *grundnorm* as a basic norm (Kelsen 2017). In the Indonesian context, the *grundnorm* is the 1945 Constitution which animates all laws and regulations. In addition, Gustav Radbruch emphasized that law must reflect three main values, namely certainty, utility, and justice (Gentile 2006). In relation to demonstrations, the law must ensure certainty about citizens' rights to express opinions, provide benefits in the form of conducive procedural arrangements, and provide justice for both the participants of the action and the general public who are affected.

In Indonesia, freedom of opinion is explicitly guaranteed in Article 28E paragraph (3) of the 1945 Constitution which states that everyone has the right to freedom of association, assembly, and expression of opinion (Anon n.d.). However, this right is not absolute. Restrictions can be enforced as long as they are intended to maintain public order, national security, and protect the rights and freedoms of others, as affirmed in Article 28J paragraph (2) of the 1945 Constitution (Anon n.d.). This concept is in line with the theory of limitation of rights which states that the restriction of human rights is legitimate if it has a clear legal basis, aims to protect the interests of the wider community, and is carried out proportionately (Jimly Asshiddiqie 2021). Furthermore, A.V. Dicey through the doctrine of the rule of law mentioned the three main principles of the rule of law, namely the rule of law, equality before the law, and the guarantee of the basic rights of individuals (Dicey 1885). This principle requires that law enforcement against anarchist protesters and looters be carried out without discrimination and still respect due process of law.

In terms of positive criminal law, anarchist actions in demonstrations can be charged with various provisions of the Criminal Code. For example, Article 170 of the Criminal Code concerning violence against persons or goods in public, Article 351 of the Criminal Code concerning persecution, Article 406 of the Criminal Code concerning destruction of goods, and Article 363 of the Criminal Code concerning theft with relevant aggravation for cases of looting (Criminal Code n.d.). Thus, the state has the normative legitimacy to take strict action against perpetrators of criminal acts in demonstrations, while still guaranteeing the rights of peaceful action participants. In the realm of legal theory, Lon L. Fuller added that the good application of law requires eight formal principles, including clarity of rules, consistency, and non-retroactivity (Tucker 1965). If the regulation of demonstrations does not meet these principles, the law loses its internal morality and has the potential to give birth to injustice. Therefore, regulations related to demonstrations, such as Law No. 9 of 1998 concerning Freedom of Expression in Public, must be interpreted and applied in accordance with the principles of legal morality. Thus, the study of theory and normative frameworks shows that law enforcement against anarchist demonstrations and looting is not only a matter of the application of criminal articles, but also closely related to the principles of law, the principle of the rule of law, and the state's obligation to guarantee and limit freedom in a proportionate manner.

3.2. Normative Research

Normative legal research focuses on the study of positive legal norms, legal principles, doctrines, and regulatory alignment with constitutional principles and international law. In the context of law enforcement against anarchist demonstrations and looting in Indonesia, there are at least four main normative issues: the principles of legality and proportionality, regulatory disharmony, conformity with international standards, and jurisprudence (David tan 2021).

The Principle of Legality and Proportionality

The principle of legality (*nullum delictum, nulla poena sine lege*) is the main basis of criminal law. This means that a person cannot be convicted except based on the provisions of the law that pre-existed (Andi Hamzah 2005). However, in the practice of handling anarchist demonstrations, law enforcement officials often use rubberized articles, such as Article 160 of the Criminal Code on incitement or Article 216 of the Criminal Code on resisting

officials, to ensnare participants of peaceful demonstrations who actually do not commit anarchist crimes (Criminal Code n.d.). This is contrary to the principle of proportionality, which is the principle that state actions must be balanced with the goals to be achieved (Azhari Sellomitha Fodhi et al. 2024). The excessive use of force in the handling of the masses also violates this principle, because the goal of maintaining public order should not be achieved at the expense of the basic rights of citizens.

Disharmony of National Regulations

There is a clear disharmony in regulations (Chandranegara 2019). Law No. 9 of 1998 guarantees freedom of expression of opinions in public, while Law No. 2 of 2002 concerning the Police provides broad authority for the National Police to maintain order and security ((Islamic University of Kalimantan 2021). These two laws often give rise to conflicts of interpretation in the field. For example, the authorities used the authority in the Police Law as the basis for dispersing demonstrations, even though the action was in accordance with the procedures of Law No. 9 of 1998. In addition, the National Police Chief's Regulation No. 16 of 2006 concerning Guidelines for Mass Control only regulates the stages of the use of force (from persuasive to repressive), but does not explain in detail the standards of proportionality and accountability (De 2020). As a result, the authorities often take repressive measures earlier than they should.

Conformity with International Standards

When compared to international legal standards, regulations in Indonesia still leave weaknesses. Article 21 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) affirms that the right to peaceful assembly should only be limited in the interests of national security, public order, health, or public morals (Oegrosoeno 2021). Meanwhile, the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials (1990) emphasizes the principles of necessity and proportionality in the use of force (M. Reza Saputra, Irwan Triadi, and Taufiqurrohman Syahuri 2024). These principles are often not fully reflected in practice in Indonesia. Amnesty International's report (2020) shows that the authorities often use tear gas and physical violence in an immeasurable manner, which is not in line with the principle of minimum necessary force (Wardhana and Soediantono 2022).

Jurisprudence and Doctrine

The lack of court decisions that can become progressive jurisprudence is also a normative obstacle. Many cases of looting or mob violence stop at the investigation or prosecution stage without producing a verdict that provides direction for further legal practice.. In fact, jurisprudence functions as a judge-made law that can strengthen legal certainty. In addition, a number of legal doctrines affirm the need for state prudence in restricting the right to opinion. Muladi stated that substantive democracy can only be achieved if civil liberties are guaranteed along with the accountability mechanism of the apparatus (Mahendra 2021). Mahfud MD also emphasized that legal politics must be directed at creating harmony between civil liberties and public order.

3.3. Criminological Theory

The study of criminology is important in understanding the phenomenon of anarchism and looting in demonstrations in Indonesia. Positive criminal law does provide a normative basis for taking action against these acts, but sociological and criminological explanations are needed so that law enforcement is not only repressive, but also touches the root of the problem (Zaidan, M. A., & Sh n.d.)

Strain Theory (Robert K. Merton) Robert K. Merton posits that crime is born from the gap between socially recognized cultural goals and legitimate means of achieving them. In the context of demonstrations, many participants came from community groups with limited access to economic resources, so when faced with chaotic situations, they were encouraged to loot as a form of adaptation to structural pressures (Matthew and Jusuf 2025).

Theory of Relative Deprivation (Ted Robert Gurr) Ted Robert Gurr explains that collective violence is often triggered by feelings of relative deprivation, which is dissatisfaction due to the gap between expectations and reality. In the case of Indonesia, factors such as high unemployment, rising prices of basic necessities, and unfair distribution of welfare are the main triggers for the occurrence of mass anarchism (Alexandra 2020).

Social Control Theory (Travis Hirschi) Hirschi argues that deviant behavior occurs when an individual's social ties to society weaken (Alexandra 2020). In demonstrations, these bonds are weakened due to the temporary conditions of solidarity that are formed within the masses, so that the legal norms that normally bind individuals become ineffective. This explains why people who are normally law-abiding can engage in vandalism or looting while in a crowd.

Collective Behavior Theory (Neil Smelser) Smelser views collective behavior as the result of six determinants, including the presence of structural tensions, triggers, and weak social control (Kristiantoro 2023). Demonstrations that were initially peaceful could turn anarchic if there was a small provocation that triggered a mass escalation.

Labeling Theory (Howard Becker) Howard Becker through labeling theory explains that a person can be pushed to become a "criminal" because of labeling from the apparatus or society (Ahmad Ilham, Nurul Fajri, and M. Ridwan S. Ahmad 2025). In the context of demonstrations, arrested students or activists are often labeled as "anarchists" even though they are not directly involved in the violence. This label can trigger social stigmatization and cause secondary deviance.

Conflict Theory (Richard Quinney) Quinney argues that the law is often used by dominant groups to perpetuate power and control subordinate groups (Nurhadiyanto and Puspita 2021). This is seen in harsher law enforcement against civil groups than against political elites or corporations involved in violations. Thus, the law functions as an instrument of repression, not merely an instrument of justice.

The Broken Windows Theory (Wilson & Kelling) Wilson and Kelling proposed the "broken windows" theory, which states that tolerance of minor transgressions will lead to greater crimes (Pettersson 2016). In the context of demonstrations, the negligence of the authorities in taking action on minor anarchist actions, such as the destruction of fences or graffiti, can trigger an escalation into mass looting.

Table 1. National Cases: Demonstrations, Law Enforcement, and Regulation

No	Event	Background & Triggers	Forms of Action & Impact	Answer Device	Applicable Regulations	Important Lessons
1	May 1998 riots	Demands for political reform in the midst of economic crisis and transition of power	The student action expanded into mass riots; looting, arson, ethnic violence; Huge casualties	The apparatus is considered slow, weak coordination between security institutions	1945 Constitution Article 28E; Law No. 9/1998 on the Freedom of Public Expression (newly born during the reform transition); Criminal Code on Destruction/Looting	Weak crowd control, lack of coordination, unresponsive apparatus
2	September 2019 Student Demonstration	Rejection of revision of the KPK Law and RKUHP	Student-apparatus clashes; tear gas, arbitrary arrests, alleged violence against students & journalists	Officers use excessive force; Komnas HAM report on human rights violations	1945 Constitution Article 28E; Law No. 9/1998; Law No. 39/1999 on Human Rights; Perkap No. 1/2009 on the Use of Force	Imbalance between public order and respect for human rights
3	Omnibus Law 2020 Demonstration	Rejection of the Omnibus Law	Demonstrations in various regions; >6,000 people were detained, including students; Alleged Violence & Press Restrictions	The dominant repressive apparatus; information restrictions; Amnesty International notes violations	1945 Constitution Article 28F (right to information); Law No. 9/1998; Law No. 40/1999 on the Press; CRIMINAL Code	Weak application of the principle of proportionality; Disharmony of Regulations and Practices
4	2019 Papua Riots	Racism Issues Against Papuan	Wave of demonstrations in Papua & West Papua; burning of	Repressive apparatus, lack of cultural dialogue with	1945 Constitution Article 28I (right to freedom from discrimination); Law	Conflict needs a dialogical and cultural

		Students in Surabaya	the DPRD building, government offices, looting of public facilities	traditional leaders	No. 9/1998; Law No. 21/2001 on the Special Autonomy of Papua	approach, not just repressive
5	August 2025 Demonstration	The death of a student in Medan due to clashes with the authorities	Demonstrations in 19 provinces; looting of official houses, burning of the DPRD building, closing of toll roads; 6 fatalities; Thousands arrested	The dominant repressive apparatus; Lack of transparency, weak mediation	1945 Constitution Articles 28E & 28G; Law No. 9/1998; Criminal Code; Law No. 39/1999 on Human Rights	The pattern of handling the apparatus is still the same: repressive, not transparent, with minimal peaceful solutions

3.4. Law Enforcement Obstacles and Challenges

Law enforcement against anarchist demonstrations and looting in Indonesia faces multifaceted obstacles that are not merely technical, but also structural, normative, and socio-cultural. These challenges can be identified in at least four key aspects: regulatory disharmony, weak accountability mechanisms, socio-political dynamics, and institutional limitations of law enforcement agencies. Empirically, these obstacles were evident in the post-election riots of 21–22 May 2019 in Jakarta, where demonstrations escalated into anarchic violence, resulting in eight fatalities, hundreds of injuries, widespread destruction of public facilities, and acts of looting, followed by the prosecution of dozens of individuals for vandalism and violent offenses. Similar patterns also emerged during the Omnibus Law protests in 2020, when several demonstrations in major cities ended in clashes between protesters and security forces, accompanied by property damage and allegations of excessive use of force. These cases demonstrate that regulatory frameworks governing demonstrations, although formally available, have not been implemented consistently due to overlapping authority, weak coordination, and the difficulty of distinguishing peaceful protesters from perpetrators of criminal acts. Consequently, law enforcement often appears reactive rather than preventive, undermining legal certainty, public trust, and the protection of constitutional rights in the context of democratic expression.

Disharmony of Regulation

Disharmony of regulations is the main obstacle. Law No. 9 of 1998 guarantees freedom of expression in public, but this provision often clashes with the Police Law and the Criminal Code. Rubber articles in the Criminal Code, such as Article 160 on sedition, Article 212 on resistance to officials, and Article 216 on non-compliance, are often used to ensnare demonstrators. This gives the impression of criminalizing constitutional rights. In addition, implementing regulations such as Perkap No. 16 of 2006 have not fully described the principles of human rights guaranteed by the constitution and international law. As a result, proportionality standards are often ignored in the field.

Weak Accountability of the Apparatus

The accountability of law enforcement officials in handling demonstrations remains weak. Annual reports of the National Commission on Human Rights (Komnas HAM) consistently record complaints related to the excessive use of force by security personnel during demonstrations. For instance, Komnas HAM Annual Reports from 2019 to 2022 document dozens of public complaints each year concerning alleged human rights violations in the context of crowd control, including physical violence, arbitrary arrests, and intimidation of protesters. However, only a limited number of these cases have progressed beyond internal investigations into the criminal justice process.

The internal accountability mechanism within the police institution, particularly through the Professional and Security Division (Propam), is frequently criticized for lacking independence, as it involves law enforcement

officials assessing the conduct of their own institution. As a result, sanctions imposed tend to be administrative rather than criminal in nature. This condition is further aggravated by the absence of progressive judicial decisions that could serve as legal precedents in cases involving police violence against demonstrators. In many instances, investigations into alleged abuses have stalled at the inquiry stage and have not resulted in court rulings. Consequently, this situation weakens deterrence, perpetuates impunity, and undermines public trust in law enforcement accountability within a democratic system.

Socio-Political Factors

Socio-political factors also complicate law enforcement. First, economic disparities magnify the potential for looting in chaotic situations. Second, the politicization of mass actions often puts the apparatus in a dilemma between carrying out security functions and meeting the pressure of the political elite. Third, low public trust in the authorities worsens the legitimacy of law enforcement. The LIPI survey (2021) showed that only 38% of respondents believed in the neutrality of the authorities in handling demonstrations.

Institutional and Technological Limitations

The institution of the apparatus also faces limitations. Non-repressive crowd control facilities such as water cannons, body cameras, and modern communication equipment are still limited in a number of areas. Apparatus training is more oriented towards a repressive approach than a human rights-based approach. This causes the pattern of handling demonstrations to tend to be harsh, although the context still allows for a persuasive settlement.

Normative and Practical Solutions

To answer law enforcement challenges to anarchist demonstrations and looting, a combination of normative (based on regulations and legal principles) and practical (policy, strategy, and implementation-based) solutions is needed.

Harmonization of Regulations

The first solution is regulatory harmonization. The disharmony between Law No. 9 of 1998, Law No. 2 of 2002, the Criminal Code, and Perkap No. 16 of 2006 must be resolved through the revision of laws or implementing regulations. For example, Article 160 of the Criminal Code on sedition needs to be clarified so that it is not used excessively against peaceful demonstrators. In addition, the provisions on the standard use of force should be formulated more clearly, referring to the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms which emphasize the principles of necessity and proportionality.

Professionalism of Law Enforcement Officers

Improving the professionalism of the apparatus is the key. The National Police needs to strengthen human rights-based training, de-escalation techniques, and negotiation strategies in crowd control. The training is not only oriented towards the use of force, but also communication and mediation skills. In addition, the use of modern technology such as body cameras can increase the transparency and accountability of officials in the field.

Strategi Community Policing

The community policing approach needs to be expanded to prevent the escalation of demonstrations from becoming anarchic. Involving community leaders, religious leaders, and civic organizations can be an effective strategy to reduce tensions. Fadillah's research (2021) shows that areas that implement community policing have a lower rate of demonstration escalation than other areas.

Independent Accountability

Accountability mechanisms should be strengthened through independent institutions. Komnas HAM's recommendations on alleged violations in mass actions must have binding force and be followed up legally (Arief 2021). In addition, the internal supervision of the National Police through the Propam Division must be complemented by external supervision from the judiciary and the House of Representatives.

Inclusive Socio-Economic Policy

Demonstrations that lead to looting are often triggered by economic discontent. Therefore, inclusive socio-economic policies, such as job creation, basic needs subsidies, and empowerment of the poor, can suppress anarchist potential. The theory of relative deprivation (Lubis 2020) emphasizes that collective dissatisfaction can be mitigated if there is a channel for fulfilling economic and social aspirations.

Selective and Restorative Approaches

Law enforcement must apply a selective approach. The main actors of anarchism and looting must be strictly punished according to the Criminal Code, while minor perpetrators or those who are proven to be just following along can be subjected to a restorative approach. This approach is in accordance with the concept of restorative justice which emphasizes the recovery of victims' losses and social harmony

Public and Media Transparency

Public transparency is an important solution to prevent the delegitimization of the apparatus. Every handling of demonstrations must be documented and reported openly to the public through the media and official government channels (Hanna Theresia Febiola Toha 2024). In this way, public trust can be restored and prevent the development of negative narratives against the authorities.

Critical Analysis

Critically, the main dilemma of law enforcement lies in finding a balance between freedom of opinion and public order. If the state is too repressive, the legitimacy of the apparatus will decrease; On the contrary, if it is too permissive, the potential for escalation of violence increases. Normative analysis shows that Indonesia's regulations still overlap and are not fully in line with international standards. Criminological analysis explains that structural and psychological factors also strengthen anarchist risk. Therefore, solutions must combine legal, social, and human rights approaches.

4. Conclusion

Law enforcement against anarchist demonstrations and looting in Indonesia shows a fairly basic dilemma. The state must protect freedom of opinion as a constitutional right, but at the same time it is obliged to maintain public order and protect the public from the negative impact of actions that lead to anarchy. Applicable regulations have actually provided an adequate legal framework, but their implementation is often inconsistent and even violates the principles of legality, proportionality, and accountability. Other obstacles arise from overlapping regulations, weak supervision of the apparatus, limited facilities, and external factors in the form of socio-economic disparities and politicization of the law. The anarchist phenomenon and looting in the demonstrations prove that this problem is not merely an individual crime, but also a social phenomenon due to structural injustice and weak social control. Various case studies, including the large demonstrations in August 2025, show the tendency of the authorities to emphasize a repressive approach rather than a dialogical one, resulting in human rights violations and reducing public trust in the rule of law.

In order to realize a fairer and more democratic law enforcement, it is necessary to harmonize regulations so as not to cause overlapping interpretations and to be in harmony with human rights principles and international standards. Law enforcement officials must be equipped with human rights training, de-escalation strategies, and technological means that can ensure transparency. An independent accountability mechanism needs to be strengthened so that the practice of impunity does not recur. Community-based approaches and dialogue should be prioritized to prevent demonstrations from turning anarchist, while inclusive socio-economic policies need to be implemented to reduce the gaps that often lead to unrest. Law enforcement also needs to be selective, by cracking down on the main anarchist actors but providing a mechanism of restorative justice to minor perpetrators. Finally, public transparency in handling actions must be maintained so that the public still has confidence in the rule of law.

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