

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF PANCASILA: AN ANALYSIS OF THE PROTECTION OF JOURNALISTS' HUMAN RIGHTS IN INDONESIA

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Abstrak

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*Freedom of the press is a fundamental pillar of a democratic ecosystem that serves as an instrument for public social control; however, the exercise of media independence in Indonesia currently faces multi-layered threats, such as physical violence, cyber repression, and judicial criminalization through ambiguous legal provisions. This study aims to critically examine the model for protecting journalists' human rights in Indonesia as they carry out their professional duties, employing Pancasila values as the primary analytical perspective and parameter, integrated with Social Responsibility Theory to analyze the reciprocal relationship between media freedom and the press's moral obligations toward the public. The research method used is descriptive qualitative with a literature review design, analyzing normative legal documents, prior scientific research, and contemporary reports on cases of violence against the press. The results indicate that the framework for press freedom from the perspective of Pancasila emphasizes a functional balance rooted in three main pillars: the Second Principle, which underscores the necessity of comprehensive security guarantees to protect the human dignity of journalists from physical threats and digital harassment such as doxing; the Fourth Principle, which positions press independence as a core prerequisite for popular sovereignty to prevent chilling effects; and the Fifth Principle, which demands distributive legal justice through the consistent enforcement of the Press Law as a *lex specialis* principle and a layered remedies approach that treats criminal law strictly as an *ultimum remedium*.*

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INTRODUCTION

The existence of press freedom is a fundamental pillar in a democratic sociopolitical system, where the mass media serves as a space for fulfilling the right to information as well as an instrument of public oversight. In Indonesia, the freedom currently enjoyed by the media cannot be separated from the post-Reform era's legal and political shifts, which provide legal guarantees for the freedom of expression. Nevertheless, this freedom is not unlimited; rather, it must be oriented toward strengthening the nation's identity, which is grounded in the state ideology. In this context, press freedom should ideally be exercised in a manner that consistently reflects the noble founding principles of the state, so that the exercise of media freedom aligns with the enforcement of the law and social responsibility—values inherent in the essence of Pancasila (Sumarwan & Wardhani, 2023).

However, contemporary realities reveal a significant disparity between regulatory guarantees and the actual protection of journalists' physical and digital safety in the field. Field data confirms that Indonesia has not yet become a safe space for the journalism profession, where escalating obstacles to law enforcement for media workers are still marked by rampant acts of anarchy from various actors (Putri & Nurafifah, 2025). Journalists are often easy targets when covering public conflicts, such as the mass assault on a reporter in Palembang, the assault on several journalists by a specific group in Serang, and repressive acts—including beatings—carried out by certain law enforcement officials. In addition to violence in public spaces, threats to journalists' human rights also manifest in the form of intimidation in domestic settings, confinement, destruction of work equipment, and symbolic acts of terror—such as the mailing of a pig's head to *Tempo* magazine, which undermines the value of social justice.

This pattern of repression has expanded in the digital age through structured cyberattacks, such as Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks, doxing, and hacking of national media systems—all of which require the strengthening of cross-jurisdictional regulatory governance models (Wulandari et al., 2025). This series of violent incidents and obstacles to law enforcement reflects the suboptimal implementation of protections for members of the press. These various forms of intimidation not only violate the right to security but also fundamentally undermine the values of justice and consensus-based deliberation enshrined in Pancasila. Therefore, the reconstruction of the “ ” and an evaluation of the legal protection model for journalists in Indonesia have become matters of the utmost urgency. Through the analytical lens of Pancasila, this study aims to examine the urgency of strengthening guarantees for journalists' human rights so that the national press can function as an independent pillar of democracy, free from the snare of impunity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Freedom of the press is one of the essential elements of a democracy because it provides the public with the opportunity to obtain information, express opinions, and monitor the workings of the government. This freedom is linked to human rights, particularly the right to communicate and obtain information, as stipulated in Article 28F of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. In practice, freedom of the press grants journalists the authority to seek out, process, and convey information to the public. However, this freedom must also be accompanied by professional responsibility and respect for the rights of others. Law No. 40 of 1999 on the Press serves as one of the legal

foundations that guarantees press freedom while also providing protection for journalists in the performance of their duties. Thus, freedom of the press is not only related to the media's freedom to convey information but also to the guarantee of safety for journalists so they can work without threats or pressure. In relation to the protection of journalists, a study (Haq & Hufron, 2023) titled "Forms of Legal Protection for Journalists Against Physical and Non-Physical Violence While Performing Their Professional Duties" discusses the importance of legal protection for journalists who experience violence while carrying out their journalistic duties.

Violence against journalists can take the form not only of physical attacks but also of non-physical actions that hinder their work and threaten their safety. These findings and discussions are relevant to the state of press freedom in Indonesia, where journalists still face various forms of intimidation, threats, destruction of work equipment, and even attacks in the digital realm. This situation demonstrates that the existence of legal provisions must be accompanied by the implementation of effective protections. Therefore, the protection of journalists must be understood as part of the effort to guarantee the public's right to access accurate and balanced information. In addition to press freedom and legal protection, this study employs Social Responsibility Theory. Social Responsibility Theory originated from the Hutchins Commission report (Press, 1947) in the United States, which was later formalized (Siebert et al., 1956). This theory corrects the libertarian view that emphasizes unlimited freedom by asserting that freedom is inseparable from responsibility.

The press is required to present accurate, balanced, and meaningful information; serve as a forum for the exchange of criticism; reflect the diversity of groups in society; and articulate social goals and values (Permana, 2005). (McQuail, 2010) adds that these responsibilities are carried out through professional self-regulation, such as codes of ethics and press councils, with state intervention serving as a last resort. In the Indonesian context, this theory is embodied in Articles 3 and 6 of the Press Law, which position the press as a vehicle for information, education, entertainment, and social control, as well as in the Code of Journalistic Ethics established by the Press Council. However, social responsibility is reciprocal. If the press is burdened with moral obligations toward society, then society and the state are obligated to create safe conditions so that these obligations can be fulfilled. Journalists who are intimidated, hacked, or criminalized cannot optimally fulfill their public service functions.

Therefore, the protection of journalists can be viewed as a structural prerequisite for the realization of the press's social responsibility. From this foundation emerged the concept of "Pancasila Press"—that is, a press that is free and responsible, with its values oriented toward the state ideology. This concept was once implemented problematically during the New Order era, when it was used to justify state control over the media. Consequently, a contemporary interpretation of the "Pancasila Press" must be clearly distinguished: social responsibility is understood as professional ethics and a commitment to the public interest that arises from within the press itself, not as a tool to justify censorship or repression. (Sumarwan & Wardhani, 2023) emphasize that press freedom must be oriented toward strengthening the nation's identity and upholding the rule of law in accordance with Pancasila values, so that media freedom aligns with social responsibility.

Research (Sumarwan & Wardhani, 2023) on the embodiment of Pancasila values in press freedom following the Reform era indicates that press freedom must be

understood in relation to the nation's foundational values. Press freedom is not sufficiently guaranteed by written regulations alone but must be realized through concrete actions by those involved in the media sector. Thus, the protection of journalists can be viewed as the application of Pancasila values, particularly respect for human dignity and justice; consequently, violence or intimidation against journalists is not merely a matter of professional safety but also a matter of the application of the law and the nation's foundational values. The protection of journalists is also linked to legal ethics—that is, the relationship between legal rules and the moral values underpinning their application. Legislation provides legal certainty, but the effectiveness of protection is determined by its implementation by law enforcement officials, relevant institutions, and the public. Legal ethics is used in this study to emphasize that the protection of journalists requires more than just meeting formal requirements; it must also take into account humanity, justice, and responsibility.

Violence against journalists that is not properly addressed can create a sense of insecurity and hinder the dissemination of information to the public; thus, fair and consistent law enforcement is an essential component of responsible press freedom. Based on these theories and prior research, this study focuses on evaluating legal protections for journalists in the performance of their professional duties, using the values of Pancasila as an analytical framework. (Haq & Hufon, 2023) provide a foundation regarding the forms of violence against journalists and the importance of legal protection, while (Sumarwan & Wardhani, 2023) provide a basis for understanding the relationship between the values of Pancasila and press freedom following the Reform era. Building on these studies, this research examines the extent to which legal protection for journalists has been implemented and how the values of Pancasila can be used to assess and strengthen such protection. Thus, this study is expected to provide insight into the importance of fostering press freedom that is not only legally guaranteed but also supported by fair law enforcement and respect for journalists' safety.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach using a literature review method. This approach is used to examine the protection of journalists' human rights in Indonesia as they carry out their professional duties and to assess the implementation of press freedom based on the values of Pancasila. The literature review method was chosen because this study focuses on analyzing legal documents, scholarly literature, and information related to real-world cases concerning press freedom, the protection of journalists, and their alignment with the principles enshrined in Pancasila. The data sources for this study consist of primary and secondary sources. Primary sources consist of legal documents addressing press freedom and the protection of human rights, such as the Pancasila as stated in the Preamble to the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, Article 28F of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, which outlines the right to communicate and access information, and Law No. 40 of 1999 on the Press. Secondary sources include academic journals, books, and previous studies addressing press freedom, legal protections for journalists, human rights, and the application of Pancasila values.

Additionally, news articles and reports on real-world cases were used as supporting material to illustrate the state of journalist protection in Indonesia. Source searches were conducted using Google Scholar as well as relevant publication websites

or official documents, focusing on the most recent sources while still considering earlier sources that remain relevant. Data were collected by searching for, reading, and recording information from sources relevant to the research topic. The collected data was analyzed using descriptive qualitative analysis techniques, through steps such as identifying, categorizing, and understanding information based on the research problem. The analysis was conducted using the values of Pancasila as the primary perspective for assessing the protection of journalists' human rights, particularly in terms of the values of humanity, justice, and democracy. The theory of social responsibility was also used as a supporting framework for understanding the relationship between freedom and responsibility in the world of journalism. Through this analysis, this study seeks to examine how legal protections for journalists are implemented and to understand the importance of strengthening journalists' human rights so that press freedom can operate independently, responsibly, and in accordance with the values of Pancasila.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Construction of Press Freedom Based on the Values of Pancasila

Based on a literature review of several scientific articles and laws and regulations, freedom of the press is an essential component of democratic life because the press is tasked with providing information, serving as a means of education for the public, and monitoring the exercise of government authority. In the Indonesian context, press freedom cannot be separated from Pancasila as the foundation of the state; the way of life of the people and the values of Pancasila form the basis for understanding the importance of press freedom. (Sumarwan & Wardhani, 2023) emphasize that press freedom grounded in Pancasila must be exercised freely and responsibly, and should not be easily influenced by external interests. Therefore, the framework for press freedom grounded in Pancasila must regard journalistic freedom and the protection of journalists as two interrelated elements. Constitutionally, the right to obtain and disseminate information is grounded in Article 28F of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. Meanwhile, Law No. 40 of 1999 on the Press provides the legal foundation for press freedom and also defines the role and responsibilities the press must fulfill in the life of society, the nation, and the state. On the one hand, journalists must be free to seek, obtain, and convey information; on the other hand, the public expects the media to operate independently to fulfill their right to information. Therefore, the values of Pancasila can serve as a conceptual framework for assessing the extent to which press freedom and the protection of journalists reflect respect for human rights.

Analysis of the Second Principle: Protection of Journalists' Dignity and Human Rights

The second principle of Pancasila, namely "Just and Civilized Humanity," upholds respect for human dignity as a fundamental principle in social and national life. In the context of press freedom, this value is not only related to journalistic ethics when gathering news but also to the obligation to respect the rights and safety of journalists while they are performing their duties. Journalists are individuals who are entitled to protection, freedom of expression, and a sense of safety from acts of violence or threats. Therefore, actions that endanger a journalist's safety due to their work as a journalist contradict the spirit of a just and civilized humanity. (Sumarwan & Wardhani, 2023) explain that freedom of the press, from the perspective of the second principle of " " must

be realized through reporting that is independent, fair, and respectful, while upholding fundamental human rights. Physical violence, threats, intimidation, or actions that degrade a journalist's dignity cannot be viewed merely as a matter between the perpetrator and the victim. If such actions are taken to obstruct reporting, their impact also undermines press freedom and the public's right to information. In today's media landscape, threats against journalists also emerge in the digital realm. (Wulandari et al., 2025) discuss "doxing" as one such threat directed at journalists—the act of disclosing a person's personal information without consent, which can be used to humiliate, intimidate, or even endanger the targeted individual.

The dissemination of home addresses, contact information, or other personal data can pose psychological risks and even threaten the physical safety of journalists. This situation underscores that the protection of human dignity must be understood more broadly, including the safety of journalists in both physical and digital environments. From the perspective of the second principle, intimidating behavior toward journalists and differences of opinion regarding a news story must not be used as a justification for threats or violence; such actions amount to a failure to respect human dignity. If any party feels wronged by a particular news story, the resolution should be pursued through means that respect the rights of all parties, not through actions that endanger journalists. (Rohman, 2020) emphasizes the importance of legal protection for journalists in the performance of their duties, as they may face various forms of violence, such as being beaten, having their personal belongings seized, or their work equipment destroyed. Therefore, the values of a just and civilized humanity require us to recognize that the safety of journalists is an integral part of respect for human rights.

Analysis of the Fourth Principle: Freedom of the Press as a Pillar of Democracy and People's Sovereignty

The fourth principle of Pancasila—Democracy Led by the Wisdom of Deliberation and Representation—embodies the principle that democratic life must be built through the exchange of ideas, rational thinking, and mutual respect for differing opinions. Within this framework, the media plays a vital role as a provider of information that helps the public understand societal issues and form opinions more wisely. Accurate and balanced information can serve as the foundation for the public to engage in democratic life, evaluate government policies, and monitor how the government exercises its power. (Turnya, 2024) notes that the mass media plays a vital role in shaping public understanding and consensus regarding the values of Pancasila by conveying honest information that includes diverse perspectives. This role demonstrates that the press does not merely report events but also provides opportunities for the public to understand various issues and differing perspectives. In the context of the fourth principle of Pancasila, the press supports the democratic process because wise decision-making by the public requires appropriate information. Without access to diverse and reliable information, the public may participate in discussions without fully understanding the issues at hand. Press freedom is closely linked to the principle of popular sovereignty. The public needs information to evaluate government actions, understand what matters to the people, and respond to policies that affect their lives.

Therefore, restricting press freedom through threats or intimidation can limit the public's access to vital information in the democratic process. (Sumarwan & Wardhani, 2023) view the press as a vital component of democracy that plays a role in exercising social control. However, this function will be difficult to fulfill if press freedom is

disrupted by pressure from those in power, the interests of capital owners, or other groups seeking to control the issues being covered. The value of the fourth principle can be seen in the case of the pig's head terror attack directed at the Tempo editorial office on March 19, 2025. (Moh. Fajar Arif Fiyanto, Sunu Dwi Mahardika, 2026) analyzed this incident as a form of symbolic intimidation that threatens press freedom, which contradicts the values of deliberation, wisdom, and respect for differing opinions. In a democratic system, if someone disagrees with a news report, that opinion should be expressed through argumentation, providing a response, or using appropriate means of resolution. Acts of terror, however, replace dialogue with coercion and can instill fear in the journalistic process.

This case demonstrates that threats against the press not only endanger the safety of media workers but also undermine the quality of democracy. If journalists or editorial teams feel threatened due to critical reporting, there is a risk that certain information will no longer be reported freely. (Sumarwan & Wardhani, 2023) emphasize that press freedom must be exercised with full responsibility in accordance with the principles of Pancasila. The press must ensure that it remains accurate, independent, balanced, and open to any feedback that may arise. Thus, the fourth principle provides two mutually reinforcing foundations: the public is expected to value press freedom as a vital element of democratic life, while the press must carry out its duties with professionalism so that the information provided can contribute to the process of deliberation and wise decision-making.

Analysis of the Fifth Principle: Justice and Legal Protection for Journalists

The fifth principle of Pancasila—Social Justice for All Indonesian People—emphasizes the importance of justice in fulfilling the rights and obligations of every citizen. In the context of press freedom, this value relates to the right of journalists to carry out their work safely and receive appropriate protection when facing threats arising from their journalistic work. Journalists play a vital role in society, such as providing information, monitoring the public interest, and exposing issues that the public needs to know about. (Rohman, 2020) asserts that legal protection for journalists is necessary for them to carry out their duties, rights, obligations, and roles in accordance with statutory provisions. The study indicates that journalistic work can expose journalists to various risks, such as physical violence and damage to their work equipment. This underscores that recognition of press freedom must be accompanied by protections that allow journalists to work without fear of threats arising from their reporting duties.

From a social justice perspective, this protection is part of concrete efforts to ensure journalists' rights are respected—not merely acknowledged in theory. Justice for journalists is also tied to the press's role in exercising social control. The press provides information on issues facing society, monitors the exercise of power, and gives a voice to groups whose interests are often overlooked. (Sumarwan & Wardhani, 2023) state that the Pancasila-based press must strive for justice and truth and prioritize the common good. In line with this view, press freedom should not be viewed merely as the interest of media companies or journalists, but also as a means to fulfill the public's right to relevant and trustworthy information. In this context, social justice requires a balance between journalists' rights, their professional responsibilities, and the needs of society. Journalists are obligated to perform their duties based on accurate facts, adhere to journalistic ethics, and respect the rights of those who are the subject of their reports.

Those who disagree with a news story must respect press freedom and express their opinions through proper channels without resorting to violence or threats. This principle demonstrates that justice is not merely about protecting journalists, but also about ensuring there is a space to resolve issues that respects the rights of all parties. The protection of journalists, as outlined in the fifth principle of Pancasila, ultimately relates to ensuring that their rights and safety are respected while carrying out their journalistic duties. Protection that respects human rights and journalistic freedom can, in fact, help foster a more just democracy. Based on a review of the literature and an analysis of the second, fourth, and fifth principles of Pancasila, freedom of the press from the perspective of Pancasila is closely linked to respect for human dignity, the preservation of democratic life, and the achievement of social justice. These three values form an essential foundation for protecting journalists, enabling them to carry out their journalistic duties safely, independently, and responsibly in the public interest.

Legal Challenges to the Protection of Journalists in Indonesia

Normatively speaking, protections for journalists are quite comprehensive. Article 8 of the Press Law states that journalists are entitled to legal protection; Article 4, paragraphs (2) and (3), guarantee that the press is free from censorship and suppression; and Article 18, paragraph (1), imposes a penalty of imprisonment for a maximum of two years or a fine of up to Rp500,000,000.00 on anyone who intentionally obstructs the work of the press (Haq & Hufron, 2023; Manasa et al., 2023). A review of the literature reveals a gap between these guarantees and their implementation on the ground. Violence against journalists occurs repeatedly and follows a consistent pattern. (Rohman, 2020) documented 55 cases of violence against journalists from May 2007 to May 2008, according to the Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI), with physical assaults being the most common form (21 cases), followed by legal action (8), threats (7), expulsion (7), harassment (5), news censorship (4), and imprisonment (3). The most common perpetrators were mobs, thugs, and government officials, including members of the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI) and National Police (Polri).

The survey cited by Rohman also showed that 47 percent of respondents considered legal protection for journalists to be inadequate. Local data (Manasa et al., 2023) documented 13 cases involving members of AJI Makassar from 2016 to 2021 (10 physical and 3 psychological). In a September 2019 incident, three journalists in Makassar were assaulted by police officers while covering a protest, even though they had presented their press credentials. (Haq & Hufron, 2023) documented an assault and a two-hour detention of a Tempo journalist in Surabaya (2021), as well as the murder of an online media owner triggered by news coverage. The Udin case (1996), which remains unsolved, demonstrates that impunity has persisted for decades. Low reporting rates further obscure the scale of the problem. According to (Manasa et al., 2023), many victims do not report incidents to their organizations, and some withdraw their reports after being persuaded or threatened by the perpetrators. Official data from press organizations therefore capture only a small fraction of cases. The zero-case figures for 2020 and 2021 in Makassar—attributed to the pandemic—should be interpreted with caution and do not automatically mean that violence has ceased.

Law enforcement has also been slow and inconsistent. In a 2019 case in Makassar, the police stated that the process had been conducted in accordance with the Criminal Procedure Code (KUHAP), while the Legal Aid Institute for the Press (LBH Pers) noted that the case had dragged on for two years without resolution even though four suspects

had been identified (Manasa et al., 2023). (Putra & Soediro, 2025) identified six obstacles: a lack of public awareness regarding the Press Law, external pressure, high levels of violence, weak law enforcement, insufficient legal support and operational protection (insurance, training, and assistance), as well as economic pressures within the media industry. According to Soekanto's framework, law enforcement factors and supporting infrastructure represent the weakest links. The root of the problem, as emphasized by Rohman (2020), is the lack of a shared perspective among the public, the police, and the government regarding the Press Law. Mass violence against the press is, in fact, a form of assault under the Criminal Code, and its resolution depends on the actions of law enforcement officials.

Threats have also expanded into the symbolic and digital realms. The “pig’s head” terror attack against Tempo (Moh. Fajar Arif Fiyanto, Sunu Dwi Mahardika, 2026) as well as DDoS attacks, doxing, and hacking (Wulandari et al., 2025) fall outside the scope of protection mechanisms designed for physical violence. (Hijriani & Nur, 2024) add that the Press Law is primarily aimed at conventional media, and guidelines for conduct in the digital realm remain scarce and lag behind emerging cases. Internally, journalists’ lack of legal knowledge and awareness also hinders legal proceedings (Manasa et al., 2023), as evidenced by reports that were withdrawn by the victims themselves.

The Threat of Criminalization and Vague Regulations

An analysis of secondary case files shows that journalists are often charged with defamation (under the ITE Law or the Criminal Code) because authorities disregard the *lex specialis* principle of Press Law No. 40 of 1999. The case of Muhammad Asrul illustrates this. This Berita.news journalist was reported to have covered alleged corruption in Palopo; he was then reported by an official named in the story, detained, and sentenced to three months in prison under the ITE Law in November 2021 (Putra & Soediro, 2025). A dispute that should have been resolved through the Press Council instead resulted in criminal charges. A similar pattern is evident in South Sulawesi, where the Makassar Legal Aid Institute for the Press (LBH Pers Makassar) described provisions of the ITE Law as a “go-to tool” for targeting online journalists in several regions, with complaints filed by officials and regional heads (Manasa et al., 2023). The root of the problem lies in the wording of the articles. Provisions regarding defamation, hate speech, and pornography are “vague,” allowing them to be used to stifle criticism (Alhakim, 2022, in Hijriani & Nur, 2024).

Constitutional Court Decision No. 36/PUU-XX/2022 emphasizes the principles of *lex certa* and *lex stricta* to ensure that offenses related to expression are not vague (Qurbani & Yuningsih, 2026). The result is a chilling effect and self-censorship (), as the threat of criminal penalties drives newsrooms to withhold or delete sensitive news stories (Qurbani & Yuningsih, 2026). AJI, in , thereby eroding the press’s watchdog function. (Qurbani & Yuningsih, 2026) also caution that the new Criminal Code, effective in 2026, has the potential to criminalize journalistic works under defamation provisions if it is not harmonized with the Press Law and Article 19 of the ICCPR. As a solution, (Qurbani & Yuningsih, 2026) propose a “layered remedies” approach: disputes over news coverage are first assessed by the Press Council, followed by the right of reply and the right to correction (Article 5 of the Press Law), then civil proceedings, with criminal proceedings serving only as a last resort if malicious intent or serious harm is proven. (Rohman, 2020) concurs with this, emphasizing that errors in news reporting are fundamentally resolved through the mechanisms of the Press Law. Within the framework of Pancasila, this type

of criminalization contradicts the Fourth Principle, as disagreements over news reports should be resolved through deliberation and corrective mechanisms, not criminal prosecution, as well as the Fifth Principle, since justice demands proportional treatment.

Analysis of the Social Responsibility Theory Regarding the Protection of Journalists

The Social Responsibility Theory states that press freedom is inseparable from a duty to society—namely, to provide accurate and balanced information, to serve as a forum for criticism, and to serve the public interest (McQuail, 2010; Siebert et al., 1956). In Indonesia, these obligations are outlined in Articles 3 and 6 of the Press Law, the Journalistic Code of Ethics, and the mechanisms for the right of reply and correction (Hijriani & Nur, 2024; Rohman, 2020). However, this theory is reciprocal. Journalists who are threatened, persecuted, or criminalized find it difficult to fulfill their obligation to serve the public because such pressure leads to self-censorship; thus, the protection of journalists becomes a structural prerequisite for the press's social responsibility. The state and law enforcement agencies must enforce Articles 8 and 18 of the Press Law and respect the principles of *lex specialis* and *ultimum remedium*. The press must adhere to a code of ethics and provide legal assistance to its journalists (Putra & Soediro, 2025), and the public must resolve objections through the right of reply or complaints to the Press Council, not through violence (Haq & Hufon, 2023; Rohman, 2020). This interpretation differs from the “Pancasila Press” of the New Order era, because social responsibility here refers to a professional code of ethics that emerges from within the press and whose safe space is guaranteed by the state—not as a tool for control or censorship.

The Evolution of Digital Violence and the Effectiveness of Regulation

The massive development of information technology has not only changed the landscape of information dissemination but has also asymmetrically transformed the landscape of repression against media institutions. Based on a critical analysis of annual reports on the contemporary media ecosystem, the nature of repression against press freedom in Indonesia has undergone a fundamental paradigm shift, moving from conventional intimidation in physical public spaces toward cyber repression in the digital realm (Putri & Nurafifah, 2025). Attacks on investigative journalism now take the form of lethal, structured cyberattacks. These forms of attack include the manipulation of content management systems (CMS), server bombardment via Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks to cripple access to news sites, and inhumane acts such as the dissemination of personal data (doxing) to psychologically terrorize and damage the reputation of individual journalists (Wulandari et al., 2025). This evolution of digital crime creates new methods of silencing that are extremely dangerous for the democratic climate. The internet's inherent nature, which provides a high degree of anonymity, makes it nearly impossible to identify and prosecute the masterminds behind these cyberattacks. From a theoretical perspective in media sociology, this hybrid threat indirectly paralyzes newsrooms by creating a massive chilling effect. Fear of family data leaks or the economic collapse of media outlets forces press institutions to engage in strict self-censorship to safeguard their internal security (Qurbani & Yuningsih, 2026).

Ironically, current national cyberlaw enforcement regulations—particularly the Law on Information and Electronic Transactions (ITE Law)—suffer from chronic dysfunction. Instead of serving as a shield to protect the press from cybercrime, these regulations are often reduced by those in power to a judicial weapon for criminalizing critical journalism (Hijriani & Nur, 2024). On the other hand, formal law enforcement efforts undertaken by professional journalism organizations to build a legal protective

barrier often run up against the wall of institutional disintegration at the practical level. One of the primary instruments expected to serve as a protective shield for journalists is the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Press Council and the Indonesian National Police (POLRI). However, empirical evidence on the ground indicates that the implementation of this MoU remains highly ineffective and has suffered severe stagnation, particularly when carried out at the local law enforcement level (Manasa et al., 2023). Investigators at the local level tend to continue processing complaints filed by public officials or influential figures regarding news coverage by applying general criminal offenses under the Criminal Code (KUHP) or defamation provisions of the ITE Law, without consulting the Press Council or submitting the case files to it (Putri & Nurafifah, 2025).

The institutional parochialism of law enforcement agencies and the lack of understanding and awareness among local officials regarding the status of the Press Law as a special legal provision (*lex specialis*) are the primary root causes of the stagnation in the effectiveness of this regulation (Rohman, 2020). As a result, instead of resolving disputes through the Press Council's ethical framework, journalists in regional areas are often directly designated as general criminal suspects without first fulfilling the mechanisms for the right of reply and the right of correction (Putra & Soediro, 2025). This failure to synchronize and enforce regulations at the regional level perpetuates a cycle of impunity for perpetrators of violence while widening the disparity in legal protection between journalists in the centers of power and those at the local level. From the philosophical perspective of Pancasila, the evolution of digital repression and the ineffectiveness of operational regulations in these regions constitute a serious violation of the nation's foundational values.

From the perspective of the Second Principle (Just and Civilized Humanity), the state's failure to address cyberattacks and doxing reflects its failure to protect the dignity and humanity of its citizens who are carrying out public duties. Meanwhile, from the perspective of the Fifth Principle (Social Justice for All Indonesian People), the failure to implement the Press Council-National Police MoU at the regional level demonstrates that legal justice is not being distributed equitably. This creates discriminatory protection for media workers in the regions, preventing the national press from fulfilling its social responsibilities independently, fairly, and safely—free from the shadow of digital or judicial coercion.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this literature review, legal protection for journalists in Indonesia is regulated under Law No. 40 of 1999 on the Press; however, its implementation still faces various obstacles, such as violence, intimidation, digital attacks, and criminalization. These conditions reveal a gap between legal provisions and reality on the ground. From a Pancasila perspective, the protection of journalists is a form of respect for human dignity, democracy, and social justice. Therefore, consistent law enforcement is necessary so that journalists can work safely and independently. These findings remain limited because the research relied solely on a literature review and did not directly examine conditions on the ground. The government and law enforcement agencies need to improve the implementation of regulations protecting journalists and ensure that disputes over news coverage are resolved through mechanisms in accordance with the Press Law. Media companies and professional organizations also need to provide

legal assistance and enhance journalists' safety, including in the digital space. The public is encouraged to voice objections to news coverage through appropriate channels without resorting to intimidation or violence. Future research is recommended to include interviews with journalists, the Press Council, and law enforcement officials to gain a more in-depth understanding of the effectiveness of legal protections for journalists in Indonesia.

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