

# Student Solidarity for Palestine in Indonesian Universities: Campus Activism, Academic Freedom, and Political Participation

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## Abstract

Palestine has become an increasingly visible subject of student activism in Indonesian universities. Campus demonstrations, public discussions, fundraising campaigns, academic forums, and solidarity movements demonstrate the capacity of students to engage with international humanitarian and political issues. This article examines Palestine-related student activism in Indonesian higher education institutions. Using qualitative socio-legal analysis, the study investigates the relationship between student political participation, academic freedom, university regulations, and freedom of expression. The article argues that Palestine solidarity provides an important case for examining how Indonesian universities accommodate political expression concerning international conflicts. While universities have legitimate responsibilities to maintain campus order and academic standards, excessive restrictions on peaceful activism may undermine students' rights to political participation and expression. The study proposes a rights-based campus governance framework that protects peaceful demonstrations, academic discussions, fundraising activities, and student organizations while maintaining proportionate institutional safeguards. The article further examines the role of universities as spaces for humanitarian education and critical discussion. The study concludes that Palestine-related activism can strengthen civic participation among Indonesian students when universities provide an environment that allows political engagement, evidence-based debate, and peaceful collective action.

*[Palestina telah menjadi subjek aktivisme mahasiswa yang semakin terlihat di universitas-universitas Indonesia. Demonstrasi kampus, diskusi publik, kampanye penggalangan dana, forum akademik, dan gerakan solidaritas menunjukkan kemampuan mahasiswa untuk terlibat dengan isu-isu kemanusiaan dan politik internasional. Artikel ini mengkaji aktivisme mahasiswa terkait Palestina di lembaga pendidikan tinggi Indonesia. Dengan menggunakan analisis sosio-hukum kualitatif, studi ini menyelidiki hubungan*

*antara partisipasi politik mahasiswa, kebebasan akademik, peraturan universitas, dan kebebasan berekspresi. Artikel ini berpendapat bahwa solidaritas Palestina memberikan kasus penting untuk mengkaji bagaimana universitas-universitas Indonesia mengakomodasi ekspresi politik terkait konflik internasional. Meskipun universitas memiliki tanggung jawab yang sah untuk menjaga ketertiban kampus dan standar akademik, pembatasan yang berlebihan terhadap aktivisme damai dapat merusak hak mahasiswa untuk berpartisipasi dan berekspresi secara politik. Studi ini mengusulkan kerangka kerja tata kelola kampus berbasis hak yang melindungi demonstrasi damai, diskusi akademik, kegiatan penggalangan dana, dan organisasi mahasiswa sambil mempertahankan perlindungan kelembagaan yang proporsional. Artikel ini selanjutnya mengkaji peran universitas sebagai ruang untuk pendidikan kemanusiaan dan diskusi kritis. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa aktivisme terkait Palestina dapat memperkuat partisipasi warga di kalangan mahasiswa Indonesia ketika universitas menyediakan lingkungan yang memungkinkan keterlibatan politik, debat berbasis bukti, dan aksi kolektif yang damai.]*

**Keywords:** Palestine solidarity, Indonesian universities, student activism, academic freedom, political participation

## Introduction

Universities occupy a distinctive position in democratic societies because they are simultaneously educational institutions, intellectual communities, and spaces for civic engagement. Students are not merely recipients of educational services; they are members of an academic community who develop political judgment through discussion, association, research, public advocacy, and participation in collective affairs. In Indonesia, this role has historical significance because student movements contributed substantially to political transformation during the Reformasi period and continued to function as important channels of public criticism afterward. Recent research demonstrates that Indonesian student activism has increasingly combined social media, organizational participation, public discourse, and street demonstrations, while contemporary movements have continued to address justice, civil liberties, welfare, and democratic accountability (Ramadhan and Aminuddin 2025). Earlier scholarship similarly shows that student movements should be understood as forms of political participation rather than simply as campus disturbances (Lutfiana and Widiyanto 2018; Ramadhan et al. 2022).

The Palestine issue provides a particularly important context for examining this function of Indonesian universities. The conflict is simultaneously understood through humanitarian, legal, religious, political, and international-relations perspectives, making it an issue capable of generating substantial public engagement. Indonesian students have expressed solidarity through

demonstrations, seminars, petitions, fundraising, social media campaigns, public statements, and institutional advocacy. Such activities demonstrate that international issues can become part of domestic civic participation when students interpret distant events through normative commitments to human rights and justice. Scholarship on Palestinian digital activism indicates that social media can facilitate the construction of alternative narratives and solidarity networks, particularly among younger audiences (Cervi and Marhn-Llady 2022). The relevance of digital communication to student mobilization is also evident in research showing that online platforms allow activists to expand campus-based campaigns beyond the physical boundaries of universities (Byrne et al. 2021).

Previous studies on Indonesian student activism have predominantly examined domestic political movements, democratic participation, and the historical role of students in political change. Research has documented the persistence of student movements after Reformasi and their changing ideological and organizational strategies (Akbar 2016; Adhipermana 2022). Other studies have focused on political participation among university students and the relationship between educational environments, political knowledge, and civic engagement (Wulandari, Ningrum, and Purwantiningsih 2023; Sadeli 2025). Meanwhile, international scholarship has increasingly examined how students use digital platforms to challenge institutional narratives and organize collective action (Robertson 2023; Lee 2024). Research specifically addressing Palestine-related student activism has expanded rapidly, but much of it focuses on Western university settings or digital activism rather than the institutional and legal environment of Indonesian universities. This creates an analytical gap concerning how Indonesian universities should reconcile political expression concerning Palestine with academic freedom, institutional autonomy, and legitimate campus governance.

This article addresses that gap by examining Palestine solidarity as a case through which broader questions of student political participation and academic freedom can be analyzed. The central argument is that peaceful student solidarity with Palestine falls within the legitimate sphere of political and civic expression unless particular conduct independently satisfies lawful grounds for restriction. The political subject of an expression should not determine whether the expression is protected. Rather, universities should evaluate conduct according to content-neutral principles concerning violence, harassment, disruption, misinformation, academic integrity, and the rights of others. This approach is consistent with the broader principle that academic institutions should maintain spaces in which controversial issues can be discussed without institutional retaliation, while also recognizing that freedom of expression is not absolute and may be subject to narrowly defined restrictions (Trudel 2021; Hamill 2021).

The article therefore develops three related propositions. First, Palestine solidarity constitutes a legitimate form of student political participation when undertaken through peaceful and lawful means. Second, academic freedom and freedom of expression impose substantive constraints on university responses to

such activism, particularly where restrictions are based on political viewpoint rather than demonstrable institutional harm. Third, protecting activism does not require universities to tolerate every form of conduct; rather, universities should adopt proportionate procedures capable of distinguishing peaceful political advocacy from unlawful or harmful behavior. The contribution of the article lies in connecting the Indonesian literature on student movements with international scholarship on digital activism, campus protest, and Palestine-related solidarity, while framing the issue through principles of rights-based university governance.

## **Literature Review and Theoretical Frameworks**

Student activism can be understood through social movement theory as collective action directed toward changing political, social, or institutional conditions. The traditional model of student movements emphasized organizational structures, ideological commitments, leadership, and physical mobilization. Contemporary student activism, however, increasingly operates through flexible networks that combine formal organizations with decentralized digital participation. The logic of connective action explains how individuals can participate in political campaigns without necessarily belonging to a conventional organization, using personalized digital communication to connect their actions to broader collective narratives (Bennett and Segerberg 2012). This framework is particularly relevant to Palestine solidarity because students may participate through demonstrations, reposting information, producing educational content, fundraising, or attending public discussions without belonging to a single organizational structure. The resulting movement can therefore be politically significant even when its participants are institutionally fragmented.

The concept of political participation provides a second theoretical foundation. Political participation extends beyond electoral behavior and includes activities through which citizens attempt to influence public affairs, communicate political preferences, and shape collective decisions. Student activism occupies an important position within this broader framework because universities provide young citizens with opportunities to develop political efficacy through collective experience. Indonesian research indicates that student organizations can strengthen political awareness, communication abilities, and confidence in public participation, although movements may also encounter problems involving political pragmatism, misinformation, polarization, and external political interests (Ramadhan and Aminuddin 2025). Accordingly, Palestine solidarity should not be evaluated exclusively according to whether it produces immediate policy change. Its democratic significance may also lie in developing political knowledge, civic identity, collective responsibility, and the capacity to articulate public demands.

A third framework concerns academic freedom. Academic freedom traditionally protects the ability of members of the academic community to pursue knowledge, research, teaching, and intellectual inquiry without inappropriate political interference. For students, this principle intersects with freedom of

expression and association. A university that permits discussion of controversial domestic issues but restricts discussion of international conflicts based solely on political sensitivity would risk undermining the intellectual autonomy that defines higher education. At the same time, academic freedom does not create an unrestricted entitlement to use university facilities for every activity. Universities may regulate time, place, and manner of demonstrations, provided that restrictions are based on legitimate objectives and applied consistently. Scholarship on campus expression emphasizes that the university must balance expressive freedom with concerns relating to equality, harassment, safety, and the rights of others (Hamill 2021; Trudel 2021).

The fourth theoretical perspective is the digital public sphere. Social media has transformed political participation by reducing the cost of producing and distributing political messages. Digital platforms allow students to communicate beyond the university, create counter-narratives, document events, and connect local campaigns with transnational movements. Research on student activism shows that activists can appropriate institutional hashtags and digital spaces to challenge dominant narratives and make campus issues visible to external audiences (Byrne et al. 2021). Similar dynamics are visible in Palestine-related digital activism, where young users employ platform-specific cultural practices to communicate political messages and construct solidarity networks (Cervi and Marn-Llady 2022). Nevertheless, the digital public sphere also creates risks because misinformation, algorithmic amplification, harassment, surveillance, and polarization can weaken the quality of political participation (Lee 2024). A rights-based framework must therefore protect digital expression while encouraging responsible information practices.

Finally, the article adopts a rights-based governance perspective. Under this approach, universities are not merely managerial organizations but institutions whose policies must respect fundamental rights. Restrictions on student activism should consequently satisfy legality, legitimate purpose, necessity, proportionality, non-discrimination, transparency, and procedural fairness. This framework avoids two extremes. The first is treating all activism as inherently disruptive and therefore subject to institutional control. The second is assuming that every action undertaken in the name of political solidarity is automatically protected. Rights-based governance instead requires universities to evaluate actual conduct and concrete risks. This distinction is especially important for Palestine-related activism because political controversy surrounding the subject can create institutional pressure to regulate expression more aggressively than comparable forms of political advocacy.

## Methods

This research employs qualitative socio-legal and normative juridical methods. The socio-legal component is used to examine student activism as a social and political practice rather than treating it exclusively as a legal issue. The normative juridical component analyzes the legal principles governing freedom of

expression, peaceful assembly, association, higher education, and academic freedom in Indonesia. The study also uses a conceptual approach to examine political participation, social movement theory, digital activism, and rights-based university governance. The analytical focus is not limited to the formal legality of campus regulations but also considers whether institutional practices are compatible with the substantive requirements of democratic governance.

The materials analyzed consist primarily of legislation, constitutional provisions, international human rights standards, peer-reviewed journal literature, and scholarly studies concerning student movements, digital activism, academic freedom, and Palestine-related political communication. The study does not attempt to measure the number of Indonesian students participating in Palestine solidarity campaigns. Instead, it develops a legal and conceptual assessment of the institutional conditions under which such participation should be protected. The analytical method is interpretive and argumentative. Relevant legal principles are first identified, then compared with theoretical approaches to student participation and academic freedom, and finally applied to the context of Palestine-related activism in Indonesian universities.

The analysis distinguishes between the protected expression of political viewpoints and conduct that may legitimately be regulated. Peaceful demonstrations, academic seminars, petitions, fundraising activities, student publications, and political discussion are treated as presumptively protected forms of participation. Conduct involving violence, credible threats, targeted harassment, destruction of property, or serious interference with the rights of others may be subject to regulation. This distinction is important because the legitimacy of a restriction should depend on the nature and consequences of conduct rather than the political position expressed. The study consequently evaluates university governance according to the principles of viewpoint neutrality, proportionality, transparency, and procedural fairness.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **A. Palestine Solidarity as a Form of Student Political Participation**

Palestine solidarity should first be understood within the broader history of Indonesian student political participation. Students have repeatedly acted as intermediaries between social grievances and political institutions, particularly when formal political channels are perceived as insufficiently responsive. Research on the post-authoritarian period indicates that student activism has evolved rather than disappeared, with contemporary movements employing demonstrations, social media, organizational networks, and alliances with civil society groups (Ramadlan and Aminuddin 2025). Earlier studies similarly demonstrate that student movements constitute important forms of political participation and social change, although their effectiveness depends on organizational strategy, political context, and their ability to build broader alliances (Akbar 2016; Adhipermana 2022). Palestine solidarity fits this trajectory because students are responding to a

perceived humanitarian and political injustice that they understand as relevant to Indonesia's broader commitments to peace, human rights, and international solidarity.

The political character of Palestine solidarity does not make it inappropriate for universities. Universities routinely address contested questions concerning war, human rights, colonialism, international law, migration, and political violence through teaching and research. Student engagement with such subjects therefore lies close to the educational mission itself. What distinguishes activism from ordinary classroom discussion is its collective and public character, but this difference does not automatically remove it from the protection of political expression. Student organizations may reasonably organize seminars, public lectures, petitions, demonstrations, and humanitarian campaigns provided that they comply with generally applicable rules. The relevant institutional question should therefore be whether an activity contributes to or interferes with legitimate university functions, not whether its political subject is controversial.

The connection between Palestine solidarity and political participation is further strengthened by the development of digital communication. Contemporary students can move rapidly between online expression and physical mobilization. A social media post may announce a campus demonstration; a demonstration may generate online documentation; online fundraising may support humanitarian initiatives; and academic discussions may circulate through digital networks beyond the university. Studies of student activism demonstrate that social media can transform campus-based grievances into wider public debates (Byrne et al. 2021). This pattern is also evident in Palestine-related communication, where digital platforms facilitate the circulation of narratives that challenge established media frames and allow younger audiences to engage with the issue through visual and participatory forms (Cervi and Marín-Llady 2022). Political participation is therefore increasingly hybrid rather than exclusively physical or digital.

At the same time, the democratic value of Palestine solidarity should not be romanticized. Digital activism can encourage rapid mobilization without necessarily producing careful engagement with evidence. Students may encounter manipulated images, misleading statistics, decontextualized historical claims, or emotionally charged content. Research on youth digital activism demonstrates that social media can function as a powerful educational environment while also creating challenges concerning the quality and reliability of information (Martinez Sainz and Hannab 2025). The appropriate institutional response is not to suppress political participation but to strengthen media literacy, source verification, and evidence-based public discussion. Universities can therefore transform potential informational weaknesses into educational opportunities by encouraging students to distinguish advocacy from factual verification.

## **B. Academic Freedom and the University as a Space for Political Dissent**

The protection of Palestine-related student activism is closely connected to the meaning of academic freedom. Academic freedom cannot be reduced to the liberty of professors to conduct research; it also requires an institutional culture in which students can question dominant assumptions, debate controversial political questions, and challenge institutional positions. If universities discipline students because their political views are inconvenient or unpopular, the institution risks replacing intellectual autonomy with administrative conformity. Recent research concerning Indonesian higher education has raised concerns about the structural pressures that can weaken academic freedom and freedom of expression, particularly where hierarchical university structures interact with external political interests (Karim and Ar-Raniry 2025). These concerns make the treatment of politically sensitive student activism an important indicator of institutional democratic quality.

The distinction between academic freedom and general freedom of expression should nevertheless be maintained. Not every political activity occurring on campus is necessarily academic in character. A fundraising campaign, protest, or political rally may fall primarily within freedom of expression and association rather than academic freedom. Yet the two spheres overlap because universities are institutions dedicated to inquiry, discussion, and the contestation of ideas. A university cannot credibly protect academic freedom while treating peaceful political expression as inherently incompatible with academic life. The stronger position is that universities should protect the expressive environment necessary for intellectual development while maintaining reasonable rules governing the use of institutional resources.

This requires particular attention to viewpoint neutrality. Universities may regulate demonstrations to prevent obstruction of emergency exits, protect examination rooms from significant disruption, or prevent violence. They should not, however, impose restrictions merely because the political message creates discomfort among administrators, donors, external political actors, or other groups. The principle of viewpoint neutrality does not require universities to treat all conduct as permissible. It requires them to avoid making the political content of expression the decisive factor in determining whether a student activity will be allowed. In practical terms, a rule prohibiting violence should apply equally to pro-Palestinian and opposing demonstrations; a rule concerning noise near examination spaces should apply regardless of the political cause being promoted.

Academic freedom also requires institutional tolerance for disagreement within Palestine solidarity movements themselves. Universities should not assume that students who support Palestinian rights hold identical political or ideological positions. Some may frame the issue primarily through international humanitarian law, others through anti-colonial theory, religion, human rights, or Indonesian foreign policy. Others may focus exclusively on humanitarian assistance rather than

political advocacy. Treating the student community as ideologically homogeneous risks reproducing the very simplification that universities should resist. A genuinely academic environment should permit disagreement among supporters and critics alike, provided that participation remains peaceful and does not become a vehicle for intimidation or discriminatory harassment.

### **C. Regulation, Institutional Autonomy, and the Limits of Campus Restrictions**

University autonomy provides institutions with legitimate authority to establish rules governing campus activities. Without such authority, universities would be unable to protect teaching, research, examinations, public safety, or the rights of students and staff. The existence of institutional autonomy, however, does not mean that university regulations are beyond constitutional or human rights scrutiny. Institutional rules must operate within the broader Indonesian legal framework governing freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, association, and higher education. The central issue is therefore not whether universities may regulate student activism, but whether their regulatory choices are sufficiently clear, legitimate, necessary, and proportionate.

A rights-compatible campus regulation should begin with clear and publicly accessible rules. Students should be able to determine what conduct requires notification, what locations may be used for demonstrations, what procedures govern room reservations, and what consequences follow from violations. Vague rules create uncertainty and can produce selective enforcement because administrators retain excessive discretion to decide which political activities are considered acceptable. Such uncertainty may generate a chilling effect even when sanctions are rarely imposed. Research on university expression emphasizes that restrictions should be assessed through principled distinctions between protected expression and conduct that legitimately threatens the rights or safety of others (Hamill 2021; Trudel 2021). The same principle should guide Indonesian universities.

Proportionality is equally important. A minor procedural violation should not automatically result in suspension or expulsion. Universities should employ graduated responses that distinguish between administrative non-compliance and serious misconduct. A student organization that holds a demonstration without completing a notification procedure should ordinarily face a different institutional response from an organization that deliberately engages in violence or intimidation. Excessive sanctions can transform ordinary disciplinary processes into mechanisms of political deterrence. The concern is particularly acute where the contested political issue is emotionally sensitive and students perceive disciplinary decisions as politically motivated.

Procedural fairness provides an additional safeguard. Students facing disciplinary measures should receive clear notice of the alleged violation, an opportunity to respond, access to relevant evidence, an impartial decision-maker,

and an avenue for appeal. These procedural requirements are not merely administrative technicalities. They are necessary to ensure that university authority is exercised according to rules rather than personal preference. A transparent process can also protect university administrators because it demonstrates that restrictions were imposed for institutional reasons rather than political disagreement. This creates a mutually beneficial framework in which both students and university authorities can rely on predictable governance.

Institutional autonomy should consequently be understood as compatible with, rather than opposed to, student rights. Universities are strongest when they possess sufficient autonomy to resist external political pressure while simultaneously maintaining internal procedures that respect freedom of expression. If external actors demand the suppression of Palestine-related activism, university leaders should evaluate those demands according to institutional rules and legal obligations rather than political convenience. Conversely, if student groups claim that every restriction constitutes repression, universities should be able to explain the objective and proportionate basis for rules. Autonomy becomes meaningful when it protects the university from both governmental interference and arbitrary internal administration.

#### **D. Digital Activism, Information Integrity, and Transnational Solidarity**

The digital dimension of Palestine solidarity changes the institutional environment in which student activism occurs. A campus campaign is no longer confined to a particular university community. Student-produced videos, statements, photographs, livestreams, and hashtags can reach national and international audiences within minutes. This creates opportunities for political participation but also changes the risks associated with activism. Research on digital student movements demonstrates that online spaces can function as counterpublics in which students challenge institutional narratives and make marginalized perspectives visible (Robertson 2023). Palestine-related activism similarly illustrates how young users can employ platform-specific communication practices to build transnational solidarity (Cervi and Marín-Llady 2022).

The transnational character of digital solidarity is important because students may participate in a political movement without direct organizational contact with actors outside Indonesia. A student can learn about humanitarian conditions in Gaza, encounter international campaigns, share educational material, and participate in fundraising without joining a formal political organization. This lowers barriers to participation and potentially broadens the social composition of solidarity movements. At the same time, the absence of organizational gatekeepers can make misinformation more difficult to control. Universities should therefore resist the temptation to treat digital political engagement as inherently unreliable while developing educational mechanisms that improve verification skills.

Digital activism also raises questions concerning surveillance. Students may reasonably fear that political posts, photographs, or participation records could be monitored by university administrators or external authorities. Research on youth activism shows that surveillance can cause activists to develop less visible forms of political participation, including tactics designed to avoid detection (Lee 2024). If students believe that peaceful Palestine-related expression may expose them to disproportionate institutional scrutiny, participation may shift from open discussion toward less transparent networks. This outcome is counterproductive for universities because democratic debate becomes less visible rather than disappearing.

The appropriate response is a combination of privacy protection, media literacy, and clear institutional standards. Universities should clarify when digital conduct falls within legitimate disciplinary jurisdiction and should avoid monitoring students merely because they express political views. Intervention becomes more defensible where online conduct involves credible threats, targeted harassment, doxxing, or serious violations of institutional policy. At the same time, universities should provide educational programs addressing source verification, manipulated content, contextual interpretation, and ethical digital communication. Such measures would strengthen rather than weaken student political participation because they equip students to advocate persuasively without relying on inaccurate information.

The digital sphere also expands the educational potential of Palestine solidarity. Students can engage with international humanitarian law, conflict reporting, refugee studies, peace studies, media ethics, international relations, and human rights through the same issue. This interdisciplinary potential means that universities can use Palestine-related debates to strengthen critical inquiry. Rather than imposing political silence, institutions can encourage students to distinguish factual claims from normative arguments and to support advocacy with reliable evidence. The result would be a model of political participation in which solidarity is not reduced to symbolic expression but becomes an avenue for deeper civic and intellectual learning.

## **E. Toward a Rights-Based Governance Model for Palestine-Related Campus Activism**

The analysis suggests that Indonesian universities need a governance framework that neither automatically endorses nor automatically restricts Palestine-related student activism. The first principle should be a presumption in favor of peaceful political expression. Students should generally be free to organize demonstrations, discussions, petitions, publications, humanitarian fundraising, and other forms of peaceful collective activity. Restrictions should be based on identifiable institutional interests such as safety, serious disruption, harassment, or unlawful conduct rather than the political viewpoint expressed. This approach is consistent with scholarship emphasizing the importance of campus spaces as

environments in which controversial political expression can be tested through reasoned debate (Hamill 2021; Trudel 2021).

The second principle should be procedural neutrality. Universities should establish uniform procedures for political demonstrations regardless of the subject or ideological position of the organizers. Requirements concerning notification, venue use, security, noise, fundraising, and event management should apply consistently. A university should not create special burdens for Palestine-related events merely because they involve a politically sensitive international conflict. Nor should it provide preferential treatment to particular political positions. Equal procedures can reduce accusations of institutional bias and strengthen confidence in university decision-making.

The third principle should be academic integration. Universities should create legitimate spaces for structured discussion of Palestine, including public lectures, research seminars, student conferences, legal discussions, and interdisciplinary forums. Such spaces allow students to move beyond slogans toward substantive analysis. Academic discussion should not require political neutrality in the sense of refusing to take positions; rather, it should require intellectual standards concerning evidence, argumentation, citation, and engagement with competing perspectives. This distinction enables universities to preserve academic rigor without suppressing moral or political commitments.

The fourth principle should be responsible digital participation. Universities should protect students from retaliation for lawful political expression online while also providing clear standards concerning threats, harassment, privacy violations, and deliberate dissemination of demonstrably false information. The goal should be to cultivate digital citizenship rather than impose broad restrictions on political speech. Research on youth digital activism demonstrates that online movements can operate as spaces for rights education and experiential civic learning (Martinez Sainz and Hannab 2025). Indonesian universities can similarly treat digital activism as part of contemporary civic education.

The final principle should be meaningful student participation in campus governance. Students should not merely be subjects of regulations concerning demonstrations and political expression; they should have opportunities to contribute to the development and revision of those regulations. Participatory rulemaking can reveal practical problems that administrators may overlook and can improve legitimacy because students understand how rules affect actual political organizing. Research on Indonesian student activism demonstrates that students remain important actors in democratic development, although their movements face institutional and political constraints (Ramadhan and Aminuddin 2025). Incorporating students into governance can therefore transform conflict over activism into a more constructive institutional relationship.

## Conclusion

Palestine-related student activism in Indonesian universities illustrates the continuing importance of students as political and civic actors within democratic society. Demonstrations, academic discussions, humanitarian fundraising, digital campaigns, and student organizations should not be treated as inherently incompatible with university life. They represent forms of political participation through which students develop civic competence, articulate ethical commitments, and engage with international questions that increasingly influence domestic public discourse. The protection of such participation is particularly important because universities have an educational responsibility to cultivate critical thinking rather than political conformity. At the same time, student activism does not exist outside institutional rules. Violence, credible threats, targeted harassment, serious disruption, and other unlawful conduct may legitimately be regulated. The essential distinction is therefore between political viewpoint and harmful conduct: the former should receive strong protection, while the latter may be subject to proportionate regulation.

A rights-based approach requires Indonesian universities to combine academic freedom with institutional responsibility. Clear rules, viewpoint-neutral procedures, proportional sanctions, independent disciplinary processes, and meaningful avenues for appeal can ensure that campus governance does not become a mechanism for suppressing political dissent. Universities should also develop digital literacy programs and provide structured academic spaces for discussing Palestine, international humanitarian law, human rights, and competing interpretations of the conflict. Such measures would transform a potentially contentious issue into an opportunity for intellectual and civic development. Ultimately, the legitimacy of university governance should be measured not by the absence of political controversy but by the institution's capacity to manage disagreement without sacrificing rights. Palestine solidarity offers a particularly important test because it combines humanitarian concern, international politics, religious identity, digital mobilization, and student activism. If Indonesian universities can protect peaceful political expression while maintaining academic standards, safety, and procedural fairness, they can strengthen rather than weaken democratic education. The objective should therefore not be political neutrality imposed through silence, but an academically rigorous and rights-respecting environment in which students can participate in political life responsibly, critically, and peacefully.

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