

Justice on the Net

How important is the subject of justice to Indonesians, especially the intelligentsia? Far less than outsiders, even insiders, might guess, even in the minimalist pragmatic sense of fair results.

Let's remember first of all that justice is not synonymous with law (hukum). There are many unjust laws in Indonesia. And it would be a brave soul indeed who might choose to argue that something closer to justice, the rule of law, has ever existed in Indonesia.

Wikipedia

The English Wikipedia, now housing over a million articles, has an extensive article on the concept (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Justice>). In the Indonesian-language Wikipedia (http://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Halaman_Utama), with approximately 23,000 articles, there is not one article remotely comparable. The major relevant entry involves social justice and is just five lines long (http://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Keadilan_sosial), with all its external links pointing to English sites. A pitiful performance by Indonesia's hardest-core net literati.

Blogs

Other measures? Indonesian bloggers are a much larger community than Wikipedia contributors. Let's examine search results for postings containing both the words keadilan and Indonesia.

Two leading established dedicated blog search engines -- Google Blog Search (<http://blogsearch.google.com>) and Technorati (<http://technorati.com>) each return only just over 2,000 hits. As a comparison, the Islam and Indonesia searchword combo yields about 19,000 hits on each engine. Technorati's Blog Finder directory tab shows not a single blogger has applied the tag keadilan to his or her blog. Again, not too impressive.

Lists

What about mailing lists, around in the Indonesian net universe more years than blogs and still more often used? Indonesians are highly concentrated in lists on Yahoo! Groups (<http://groups.yahoo.com>). Using Yahoo!'s Find A Group search box, just 84 lists use the combo terms keadilan and Indonesia in their names or descriptions. Of those lists, there are just four with over 1,000 subscribers. Three deal with Partai Keadilan Sejahtera. The other one aims at Muslim businessmen in the Greater Jakarta area.

On Google Groups (<http://groups.google.com>) there are just seven lists dealing with justice in Indonesia. None reaches a thousand subscribers, not even the

venerable old Usenet standby soc.culture.indonesia.

Websites

Specialized directories of Indonesian websites? The two main survivors are Jendela Indonesia (<http://www.ji-indonesia.com>) and Endonesia (<http://www.endonesia.com>). Both list far more Indonesian sites than do any of the major net directories like Google and Yahoo!. Yet, a search of website names and descriptions for the sole word keadilan on Jendela turns up a meager 12 sites, and Endonesia, only 10.

Newspapers

What about offline? There are now more public databases of major newspapers available than in earlier years. But their functionality is limited. For example, Kompas will show no more than 300 results per search, Media Indonesia 50. Republika searches only the very limited stories database on its current site. Koran Tempo? Its online (fee) database doesn't work at all. Tempo's ballyhooed library of 10,000+ volumes houses only 23 books with keadilan in the title or blurb.

Sinar Harapan, to its credit, does display a grand total. A simple keadilan search, however, yields a meager 388 stories of all types. For keadilan Indonesia, the Sinar figure drops to 210. Suara Pembaruan, using Google on its site, yields only 209 stories for the identical combo search. Legendary press idealism (idealisme pers)? From this little exercise, never too extensive and fading fast, it seems.

Surveys

Any national sample surveys focused on issues of justice? After scanning all public institutional domestic and foreign sources, including those set up or working after the formal end of Soeharto's rule, I could not turn up a single such poll. No one yet really knows what salience justice holds in Indonesians' psyches.

Why injustice reigns

But the admittedly very simple, rough, methodologically too-simple net-research exercises recorded here may just be suggestive enough to explain in part why impunity continues for perpetrators of outrages committed throughout Indonesia in 1965-66, and since, in locales like Jakarta, Aceh, Papua, East Timor, Maluku, Kalimantan and Sulawesi. Popular demands for justice, although recurrently, even regularly visible, are narrow, weak, and perhaps vitiated by political and religious partisanship, too.

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