

Building a Fortress of Independent Journalism: Historical Study of the Role of Aliansi Jurnalis Independen (AJI) in Indonesia, 1994-1999

Raisye Soleh Haghia[✉], Susanto Zuhdi, Linda Sunarti
Universitas Indonesia, [✉]raisye@ui.ac.id

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Abstract: The democratic transition period in Indonesia (1994-1999) became crucial for developing independent journalism. *Aliansi Jurnalis Independen* (AJI) emerged as a firm and strong organization that fought for press freedom and built a fortress of independent journalism amid the New Order repression. This study aims to analyze AJI's strategy in building and fighting for independent journalism in Indonesia during this period. Using historical analysis and a qualitative approach, this study explores AJI's contribution to voicing the interests of journalists, fighting for freedom of expression, and rejecting state intervention in the press. The data was collected through literature studies, analysis of organizational documents, and in-depth interviews with AJI activists. This research opens a new understanding of AJI's efforts to achieve press freedom in the New Order era through a review of AJI's strategy for developing independent journalism in Indonesia. This study's results show that AJI uses conventional strategies such as advocacy and education and innovative strategies such as networking, solidarity, and publications. These strategies have proven effective in strengthening independent journalism in Indonesia, with the realization of a freer and professional journalistic environment.

Abstrak: Periode transisi demokrasi di Indonesia (1994–1999) menjadi masa krusial bagi tumbuhnya jurnalisme independen. Aliansi Jurnalis Independen (AJI) muncul sebagai organisasi yang tegas dan kuat dalam memperjuangkan kebebasan pers serta membangun benteng jurnalisme independen di tengah represi Orde Baru. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis strategi AJI dalam membangun dan memperjuangkan jurnalisme independen di Indonesia selama periode tersebut. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan historis dan kualitatif, studi ini menggali kontribusi AJI dalam menyuarakan kepentingan jurnalis, memperjuangkan kebebasan berekspresi, serta menolak intervensi negara terhadap pers. Data diperoleh melalui studi literatur, analisis dokumen organisasi, dan wawancara mendalam dengan aktivis AJI. Penelitian ini membuka pemahaman baru mengenai upaya AJI dalam meraih kebebasan pers di era Orde Baru, melalui peninjauan terhadap strategi-strategi AJI dalam mengembangkan jurnalisme independen di Indonesia. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa AJI tidak hanya menggunakan strategi konvensional seperti advokasi dan edukasi, tetapi juga strategi inovatif seperti membangun jaringan, solidaritas, dan penerbitan. Strategi-strategi ini terbukti efektif dalam memperkuat jurnalisme independen di Indonesia, ditandai dengan terciptanya iklim jurnalistik yang lebih bebas dan profesional.



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INTRODUCTION

Freedom of the press is the cornerstone of modern democracy, considered the fourth pillar after the executive, legislative, and judicial. The press plays an important role in encouraging checks and balances and functions as a watchdog (Deane, 2015). In a democracy, a free press is trusted to reveal facts and truths (Howard, 2019) and provide information that strengthens democracy (Trappel &

Tomaz, 2021). Press freedom and democracy are closely intertwined; Freedom of the press is a key prerequisite for democracy, allowing the press to function as a catalyst for change. However, in Indonesia during the New Order era (1966-1998), the term Pancasila press was applied with the slogan "free and responsible". Free means that the press is given the freedom to present news, but it must be responsible if the news is not in accordance with the wishes of the New Order government; then, the press must face a ban. In this case, it is in line with the research of Karjono et al, which states that "Under the New Order, Pancasila really became the most effective ideological force to strengthen its power" (Karjono et al., 2024, p. 276).

This article examines the conflicts involving actors and agencies in the press in the New Order era from a historical perspective, and explores the role of the Aliansi Jurnalis Independen (AJI) in realizing press freedom in Indonesia. AJI, founded on August 7, 1994, was born as a response to the aspirations of journalists who are not accommodated in fighting for press freedom and independent journalism. Previous studies by Railon (1984), Abar (1995), Heryanto and Adi (2001), Hill and Sen (2008; 2010), Hill (2011), Steele (2012), and Ishadi SK (2014) have explored the development of the press in the New Order era. The seven previous studies focused on the emergence and development of press life in the New Order era and the various policy changes taken by the government. However, it does not present a discussion of the birth and strategy of the Alliance of Independent Journalists and the impact the birth of AJI had on the emergence of press freedom in Indonesia.

Railon (1984) and Abar (1995) examine the life of the press in the early days of the New Order government. Railon (1984) focused on the Indonesian Student newspaper, helping to understand the New Order from a political and ideological point of view. Abar (1995) describes how political factors caused critical power and freedom to grow, then lost meaning in that period. Heryanto and Adi (2001) stated that AJI opposes the *Persatuan Wartawan Indonesia* (PWI) because PWI is considered incapable of fighting for the interests of journalists. After banning Tempo, Detik, and Editor in 1994, PWI was indifferent, so journalists needed a new platform to fight for their interests.

Hill (2011) explained that AJI was based on journalists' anxiety about the press structure during the New Order. The government tightly controls the press, and AJI is formed by journalists who are committed to the profession and the democratiza-

tion process. AJI fights for a press that is free from government interference, intimidation, censorship, and censorship that denies freedom of opinion and citizens' right to information.

In the New Order era, the press played an important role in shaping the socio-political landscape and political dynamics, such as paternalism and clientelism, but also became a tool of government propaganda (Pradhana et al., 2024). Under President Soeharto, authoritarian government and centralized power became the hallmarks of the government (Widyatama, 2018). The press is tightly controlled to maintain power and silence dissent. Manipulating the press landscape is a New Order strategy to shape public opinion, spread propaganda, and restrict press freedom.

Government control over the press is carried out through two main agencies: the *Persatuan Wartawan Indonesia* (PWI) which since 1975 has been confirmed as the only professional journalism organization in Indonesia (Rauf, 2018), and the Ministry of Information which issued a regulation on *Surat Izin Penerbitan Pers* (SIUPP) in 1982. Dissatisfaction with the New Order press structure triggered the anxiety of journalists, which eventually gave birth to social movements (Klandermans, 2005).

Journalists' anxiety emerged after the 1994 lockdown, when the government revoked the SIUPP against *Tempo*, *Detik*, and *Editor*. The protest did not get a solution, so AJI was born with the spirit of freedom. AJI was founded by a group of young journalists concerned about journalism's condition in Indonesia during the New Order period. The presence of AJI is an important milestone in the struggle of journalists to obtain press freedom and protection from intimidation and violence.

According to Scott's (1990) analysis, "passive obedience" by those in subordinate positions contributes to strengthening dominance. Change arises if the individual has the ability and confidence to question accepted opinions. The press can politicize its readers and help address that compliance by providing insight into the alternatives available. However, the media do not act independently but interact with many other agents of change (Atkins, 2002).

This article analyzes the process of AJI's formation, AJI's strategy against government control over the mass media, and AJI's contribution to building independent journalism in Indonesia. This study reveals power relationships between actors that previous researchers may have overlooked. By

analyzing AJI's role in promoting press freedom, this study shows that AJI plays an important role in media reform and opens up space for free and responsible journalism. AJI's contribution to the history of Indonesian journalism is very important and deserves to be studied.

The concept of agency in AJI resistance is related to the ability of individuals (Hodkinson, 2016), especially AJI members or sympathizers, to spread across various agencies such as PWI and the legislature. They struggle from within the structure (internal resistance actors) to operate independently and make choices that "deviate" from the norms set by the government. These actors demonstrate their capacity to act, decide, and influence outcomes. Understanding this concept underlines that individuals have a degree of autonomy in a structured environment, empowering them to question, oppose, or change existing norms or power dynamics. It emphasizes that individuals are not only passive recipients of organizational structures but can actively participate in acts of resistance or change, playing an important role in social change.

METHOD

This research applies the historical method as the main approach, through the stages of heuristic, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography. According to Pranoto (2005), the foundation of the historical method is the handling and connection of historical evidence, so each stage is important to reconstruct past events. This research uses primary sources from archives, newspapers, and magazines. The archive includes documents, annual reports, and letters of cooperation between AJI and various institutions domestically and internationally. The magazine used was *Suara Independen*, a magazine published by AJI, published without SIUPP, as a symbol of the movement.

Secondary sources used include books, journals, and contemporary magazines or newspapers that discuss the press of the New Order era, obtained from the National Library of the Republic of Indonesia, as well as private collections. The selection of this research period allows the application of three data collection techniques: document study, interviews, and social media analysis. Document studies are carried out by collecting documents related to AJI's history, articles of association, meeting minutes, and publications, and utilizing contemporary newspapers and magazines. The interview technique was conducted by interviewing journalists, AJI activists, and historical experts through a Focus Group Discussion session. Inter-

views are conducted both in person and using published recording sources. The results of the interviews are transcribed, analyzed, and interpreted.

In addition, social media analysis collects information about AJI through social media channels such as YouTube and search pages. After data collection, the next step is analysis, interpretation, and writing or historiography. The analysis of primary and secondary sources shows that the restraint of press freedom by state institutions and apparatus has caused resistance from young journalists and the public who yearn to establish democracy.

THE LIFE OF THE NEW ORDER PRESS AND THE 1994 SUPPRESSION

The New Order government (1966-1998) required permanent political stability to create a strong economic foundation. As a result, all activities considered to create political instability, including freedom of association and expression, often have to deal with the dominant forces of the New Order government. Silalahi (1990) said that the New Order government implemented a strong and dominant model of government as an effort to realize national development (Silalahi, 1990). The impact is the emergence of greater and greater state dominance over every aspect of life, in this case, such as 'mono-loyalty' developed towards civil servants and bureaucratic apparatus to always support the policies taken by the government (Hadi & Kasuma, 2012).

The New Order government used the press as a propaganda tool to create national stability. The New Order government's control over the press is considered necessary and important because the press must be "directed" to achieve development programs. Furthermore, Taufik (1977), explained the New Order's actions in controlling the press because the New Order considered the press one of the driving elements in development. All information must be controlled so that development can be carried out properly. At that time, the press only functioned as an intermediary between communicators who sat in the highest positions of government, so that the information circulating was only for the benefit of the government. Meanwhile, the community is positioned only as communicators informed by various propaganda.

The New Order defines the Indonesian press as the Pancasila press. The essence of the Pancasila press is conveyed in the formulation of the Decree of the XXV Plenary Session of the Press Council, which convened in Surakarta in 1984, namely a free

and responsible press (Racmadi, 1990; Susanto, 2010). The Pancasila Press is a complex concept with various advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, the Pancasila press emphasizes Pancasila's values and aims to create a "free and responsible" society that supports national development. On the other hand, the Pancasila press has been widely criticized for restricting press freedom and being used by the government to pressure the press so that it is not critical of the government.

In realizing the Pancasila press, the New Order government applies various coaching models to the press. First, it urges or precisely prohibits the press from reporting certain events or issues for any reason and justifications, and prohibits criticizing or showing mistakes made by the government. This impacts the emergence of *self-censorship*, whether imposed by the state or the pure desire of press leaders (Efendi, 2010). President Soeharto once stated that the government is obliged to guarantee a free and responsible press. However, the press must be more and first responsible for preserving its freedom (*Press Indonesia*, 1978).

Second, in 1975, the Persatuan Wartawan Indonesia (PWI) was designated the only professional journalism organization in Indonesia. This single regulation of mass organizations is an effective way to control the press. PWI was determined as the only professional organization of journalism by the Minister of Information, Mashuri, S.H., through Decree No. 47/KEP/MENPEN/1975. With this provision, other professional journalist organizations are prohibited from standing or being declared illegal. After PWI became the only forum for the journalist profession, the space for journalists to conduct coverage became very limited. For example, journalists must show a PWI membership card when interviewing government officials. Without the card, journalists do not get access to conduct interviews or cover the activities of state officials (Macno, 2020). Getting a PWI membership card is not easy for professional journalists. Journalists must meet various conditions that ensure they will not contradict the government. However, ironically, PWI membership cards are often easily owned by people who are not professional journalists but have political ambitions to achieve positions as state officials (Arismunandar, 2023). As a result, PWI, which was supposed to be a forum for journalists' struggle in realizing press freedom, turned into a government tool to control and curb the press. This eventually sparked dissatisfaction among journalists with the organization that was supposed to be a "home" for journalists.

Third, the issuance of regulations related to the Permit for Press Publication (SIUPP). All forms of publication in the mass media are under government supervision, namely through the Ministry of Information. Akhmad Efendi (2010) explained that during the New Order period, all press publications were under the supervision of the government, namely through the Ministry of Information. The control of the New Order government over the press is considered necessary and important because the press must be "directed" to achieve development programs. Furthermore, I Taufik (1977) explained the New Order's actions in controlling the press because the New Order considered the press one of the driving elements in development. All information must be controlled so that development can be carried out properly. That is why the Department of Information is a vital tool in developing programs (Magenda, 1997).

In practice, SIUPP has become a threat and a source of fear for the press in Indonesia in the New Order era. If the SIUPP of a media does not want to be canceled by the government, then the mass media must report good things about the New Order government. If the media violates, the government will ban it (Efendi, 2010). The government considers the press a tool for development, so the information provided must support development, not make a "rowdy", which will ultimately threaten national stability. Meanwhile, media owners try to "adjust" information to the government's tastes to save their businesses (Heryanto & Adi, 2021). This regulation resulted in the majority of the mass media at that time being controlled by groups or individuals who had links to the government or power groups (Hill, 2011). This condition limits the diversity of the press and raises concerns about media independence. Journalists who violate government policies often face repression, including arrest, intimidation, or job dismissal (Arismunandar, 2023).

Of the many bans during the New Order period, the 1994 Banning event was the most interesting. It is said that this is because, after the 1994 recession incident, there was a wave of demonstrations against the recession. This is a new phenomenon in the history of press banning in Indonesia. Demonstrations and the emergence of various solidarity actions from journalists, NGO activists, students, academics, clergy, and artists united in the same issue: pursuing press freedom and realizing democratization in Indonesia. The 1994 Banning incident was a momentum for the unity of various professional backgrounds and ideologies to carry out a movement to realize press freedom

(Arismunandar, 2023). Atmakusumah stated that there has never been a prolonged 'welcome' with 'anger', both by journalists and press media managers, observers and readers of the press media concerned about the press's condition in Indonesia. Atmakusumah further explained that in the history of the press in Indonesia, there has never been a protest and demonstration protesting against the restrictions on press freedom that continues to spread from one city to another, in at least 21 cities, for more than a year (Hill, 2011).

The protest against the ban occurred after the government revoked the SIUPP for *Tempo*, *Editor*, and *Detik*. The ban occurred on June 21, 1994. This event helped create momentum for the formation of a collective action of journalists to release the restraints of the press from the grip of the New Order government. The banning on June 21, 1994, was shock therapy, which later transformed into a flag to mobilize the solidarity of young journalists to realize the dream of forming an independent journalist professional organization. This collective action was driven by young journalists who had the idealism to realize a press free from government interference, intimidation, and censorship. From the above explanation, it can be seen that the structure of the New Order, with all its extensions, tried to control the press strictly. This eventually gave birth to anxiety, anger, and among journalists who continued to roll like snowballs until they finally gained momentum to carry out resistance actions. These young journalists finally formed a professional journalists' organization to realize concrete resistance. The organization is called the Aliansi Jurnalis Independen (AJI).

TRANSFORMATION FROM DISCONTENT TO THE BIRTH OF ALIANSI JURNALIS INDEPENDEN (AJI)

On June 21, 1994, a shocking and important event occurred for the press world in Indonesia. The government revoked the Surat Izin Usaha Penerbitan Pers (SIUPP) of three prominent mass media that are vocal and critical of the government: *Tempo*, *Detik*, and *Editor*. This decision is contained in the Decree of the Minister of Information Number 123, 124, and 125 of 1994. The reasons for the government's revocation of the SIUPP include allegations of violations of journalistic ethics and the publication of content that endangers national security and stability (*Suara Pembaruan*, 1994). However, this claim is widely regarded as a pretext to dampen media criticism directed at the government. It is evidence of the government's efforts to silence critical

voices in the New Order era. This unilateral government decision is considered an effort to silence critical voices and reduce press freedom. The ban on the leading mass media is a blow to press freedom and political openness, as well as a tangible manifestation of the decline of democracy.

The revocation of SIUPP by three well-known mass media outlets, *Tempo*, *Detik*, and *Editor*, drew strong reactions from various parties. This is for press personnel and the wider community, which feels they have lost access to critical information and public space. After the 1994 election, efforts to ask the government to be wiser and wiser in upholding the freedom of the responsible press continued to be carried out. Various demonstrations were carried out, not only in Jakarta but also in other big cities. There was a wave of protests against the blockade. During the history of press bans carried out by the New Order, never before has the act of banning been "welcomed" with prolonged anger, both by journalists and press managers as well as observers and readers of the press media who feel concerned. The 1994 ban sparked widespread public outrage. Solidarity and protests against the ban occurred in several major cities. The first demonstration in Jakarta occurred the next day. The action was driven by journalists and the press observer community and was carried out in front of the Department of Information Building in Jalan Merdeka Barat. The mass action consisted of journalists, students, and activists of non-governmental organizations, carrying banners, one of which read '*Gantung Harmoko*'. Lawyer Adnan Buyung Nasution also joined the demonstration. He and many demonstrators' representatives briefly entered the office of the Ministry of Information but left after the Minister of Information, Harmoko, and the Director General of PPG, Subrata, were unwilling to meet him (Tempo Journalist Team, 1994).

Similar actions resumed the next day, June 24, 1994. Hundreds of people wearing black t-shirts gathered in the Monumen Nasional (Monas) courtyard, opposite the Ministry of Information office. The managers of *Tempo* and *Detik* had previously agreed to hold a demonstration and wear black T-shirts as a sign of mourning. After the masses gathered, a delegation was selected to meet officials of the Ministry of Information. The demonstrators at that time were represented by Adnan Buyung Nasution, Sribintang Pamungkas, Hj Princen. Representatives from *Tempo* and *Detik* were Didi Pram-badi, Bowo, and Dadang RHS. The Director General of PPG Subrata and several staff received the

demonstrators' representatives. However, the meeting did not yield the expected results (Manan, 2014).

Apart from Jakarta, protests against the ban also occurred in several regions, including Bandung. On June 23, 1994, around 150 members of the Forum Aktivist Mahasiswa Unisba (FAMU) and the Bandung Islamic Student Association (PMIB) held a demonstration from 09.00 WIB to 13.00 WIB at the Bandung Islamic University (Unisba) Campus. After the oration on campus, the crowd planned to move to the West Java DPRD office. But they eventually abandoned their intentions because hundreds of police and soldiers chased them away and forced them to return to campus (*FOWI News*, 1994).

An even bigger action occurred on June 27, 1994. Apart from Jakarta, protest participants came from various regions, including Surabaya and Bandung. Before the crowd arrived that morning, riot police and soldiers were already on standby in the Monas Square. When the masses from *Tempo* and *Detik* arrived at the Monas field near the Ministry of Information's office, the security forces had formed a security curtain around the field. At almost the same time, a mass of NGO activists, students, and artists gathered at the Sarinah Store Department, Jl. MH Thamrin Central Jakarta. Towards 10,000 WIB, the period moved to the office of the Ministry of Information. The smell of tension began to be felt when the security forces wearing the uniform of Opsih (Operation Bersih) 1994 formed a line when the masses arrived at the Budi Kemuliaan Roundabout (Sirait, 1999).

Representatives of the demonstrators tried to negotiate to be allowed to pass. As the negotiations were taking place, suddenly the *loreng* troops stormed towards the demonstrators using rattan sticks. The crowd was in disarray and retreated towards Sarinah's shop. The Opsih troops chased, which jammed traffic on Jalan MH Thamrin. Some demonstrators managed to escape the army's pursuit by entering the Bank Indonesia Building or taking a city bus (Manan, 2014). However, not a few ended up being victims of violence by the security forces. Hadi Cipto, who is actively defending the Marsinah case in Surabaya, is one of the victims. He was beaten by six soldiers who made his head leak. Artist Samsar Siahaan also became a victim of the violence of the authorities. He fell and broke his leg because soldiers beat him.

...The first days after the ban, many demonstrations occurred in Medan Merdeka and various other places. These demonstrations then stopped when the security forces became increasingly vio-

lent, so yes, even one of the artists, Samsar Siahaan, broke his leg because he was hit by the authorities... (Interview Ign Harryanto, 2023).

These acts of violence did not stop the resistance to the blockade. In addition to Jakarta, actions against the ban occurred in several major cities in Indonesia, such as Medan, Padang, Pekanbaru, Bandar Lampung, Palembang, Bandung, Semarang, Samarinda, Ujungpandang (now Makassar), Manado, Denpasar, Mataram, and Dili in East Timor (Hill, 2011). In addition to holding demonstrations, anti-ban protests were conveyed through a statement of concern. The anger of the protesters was not only directed at the Ministry of Information, which is authorized to take care of the issue of *Surat Izin Penerbitan Pers* (SIUPP), but their anger was also directed at the *Persatuan Wartawan Indonesia* (PWI), which could not behave and side with the interests of journalists.

Banning three media in 1994 is a special record in the history of the Indonesian press. The government's arbitrariness by "killing" the media, which has been considered critical, not only triggers public anger, but also crystallizes the aspirations of young journalists who have been dissatisfied with the so-called Pancasila Press. The 1994 ban can motivate young journalists to unite to realize press freedom (Arismunandar, 2023). Various waves of actions against the Ministry of Information and PWI did not show significant results. So, the young journalists agreed to consolidate and formulate a strategy for the struggle of young journalists. Several meetings and communication between journalists were established and then an agreement was reached to hold a meeting entitled "*Silaturahmi Wartawan Independen*", which was scheduled to be held on August 6-7, 1994 at a guesthouse owned by *Tempo*, located in Sirnagalih Village, Puncak, Bogor, West Java (Manan, 2014).

A declaration was born in the meeting, later referred to as the Sirnagalih Declaration. This declaration was signed by 58 journalists from all over Indonesia, mainly from Jakarta, Surabaya, Bandung, and Yogyakarta. This declaration affirms the attitude toward the principles of Indonesian journalism. In more detail, the following is the content of the Sirnagalih Declaration:

That freedom of opinion, information, and association is a fundamental right of citizens. The history of the Indonesian press departs from the struggling press that upholds truth and justice and fights arbitrariness. In carrying out its mission of struggle, the Indonesian press places the interests and integrity of the nation above person-

al and group interests. Indonesia is a state of law. Therefore, the Indonesian press bases its struggle on the principles of fair law and not on power. Based on these principles, we declare:

- Reject all forms of interference, intimidation, censorship, and banning that deny freedom of speech and the right of citizens to obtain information.
- Reject all efforts to obscure the spirit of the Indonesian press as a press of struggle.
- Reject the imposition of one-sided information for personal and group interests, on behalf of the nation's interests.
- Rejecting legal abuses and legal products that are contrary to Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution.
- Rejecting a single forum for the journalism profession.
- Proclaiming the establishment of the Alliance of Independent Journalists as one of the forums for the struggle of the Indonesian press. (Sirnagalih, 7 Agustus 1994)

The birth of this declaration is an important record in the history of the national press. This declaration itself can be considered an effort to renew the role of the press as a controlling force that is not just obeying, let alone becoming a political tool of the government. This declaration also marks the birth of an alternative journalism organization outside PWI, Aliansi Jurnalis Independen (AJI).

The term alliance was chosen because at that time, the founders of AJI respected the communities of young journalists formed in various cities such as Bandung, Yogyakarta, Surabaya, and Jakarta. So the word alliance is considered appropriate. Then the word Independent was chosen to distinguish it from PWI. And the word journalist was chosen because it is considered more representative of journalists' work in journalism.

Why did AJI choose the name Alliance? Why not Unity? Because at that time we respected the communities of journalists that had already formed in such a way... it was an alliance of various communities that already existed in Bandung, Yogyakarta, Surabaya, and others. Why use Independent? Well, this is to be different from PWI. Because PWI uses Indonesia, we don't want to use "Indonesia," and this distinguishes the independent aspect of the Alliance of Independent Journalists. Why did you choose journalists? To restore journalists as journalistic duty bearers" (Interview Arismunandar, 2023).

AJI moves with the spirit of press freedom. As a democratic country, press freedom should be a pillar to ensure that democracy runs well. As con-

veyed by Satrio Arismunandar, quoted as follows.

Because at that time we young journalists understood how the press should function in a democratic climate... but we also saw that it was not possible under the New Order. We hoped from the existing organizations, but the existing organizations could not do that..." (Interview Arismunandar, 2023).

The emergence of the 1994 ban became a momentum for young journalists to unite and realize the desire for press freedom in Indonesia. The 1994 ban was a major event that moved journalists. Although the journalists' worries have occurred, they have not yet had a moment to make a real movement. Journalists' disappointment with PWI has occurred since the silence of PWI regarding its impartiality to the interests of journalists and journalism in general. In 1991, journalists met in Taman Ismail Marzuki to discuss the need to form an alternative organization outside of PWI. However, this desire was only realized after the 1994 ban.

Satrio Arismunandar emphasized that AJI is open to the ranks of heartache. This is because the founders of AJI and the members who were active in AJI in the early generation were activists and not from the banned media.

Now then, I need to explain that "AJI is not a movement of hurt". Why is that? Because if we look at the composition of the AJI board, the founders of AJI and those who were active in AJI in the early generation, the majority were activists. The key is that it was not from the mass media that was banned, ... so it was not from Tempo that was banned, let alone the Editor ... the Editor did not even join AJI at that time. Well, instead people like me entered, I was not one of the people who was banned. I'm from Kompas, if I want to sit around and relax, I'm safe, I wasn't banned..." (Interview Arismunandar, 2023).

According to Satrio Arismunandar, the collective action carried out by AJI involves actors who have the ability and willingness to change the structure. In a social movement, participants in social movements challenge the mainstream structure, which has so far held that the average citizen is apathetic and uninterested in politics (Barnes & Kaase, 1979; Pokpkin, 1991). People who join social movements and have sufficient knowledge are determined to achieve social change and are committed to the collective goals of their movements.

CLARIFYING THE DIRECTION OF AJI'S STRUGGLE

The Sirnagalih Declaration, on August 7, 1994, was

the first footprint in the history of the AJI organization. The declaration is a milestone and the spirit of a new organization whose birth has been confirmed to be undesirable by the government, which has only recognized PWI as the sole forum for journalists in Indonesia. After the establishment of AJI on August 7, 1994, Santoso was elected as Secretary General of AJI, and Ahmad Taufik as Chairman of the AJI Presidium (1994-1995). The first step is finding a secretary to operate the organization. Santoso directly searched for candidates for the AJI secretariat and finally chose Tanah Abang Flats Block 39, Floor II, Number 4 on Jalan KH Mas Mansyur as the first secretariat of AJI (Manan, 2014). This secretariat is an important step because it will be where individuals construct and reconstruct collective beliefs to organize and carry out movements. In this case, it is known that collective beliefs are not created by individuals alone but through interactions between individuals (Klandermands, 2005).

In the secretariat, ideas and proposals began to emerge that clarified the direction of AJI's program and existence. Because the meeting in Sirnagalih only prepared the outline. At least two main programs are being worked out at the secretariat. First, AJI's short-term program is to improve the quality of Indonesian journalism. This program is carried out, among others, by publishing books, organizing training, seminars, and publishing *Independent magazines* regularly. Independent Magazine was originally a magazine managed by the Forum Wartawan Independen (FOWI) Bandung, but after AJI was established, the magazine changed its name to Independent Magazine and was circulated without having SIUPP. Independent publishing is a top priority because it is an important symbol of AJI in fighting SIUPP, an effective tool to control the press. Second, a long-term program in the form of the elimination of SIUPP. This second program was fought in various ways, including by continuing to voice opposition to the 1994 ban by conducting actions and demonstrations, expanding the network of journalists nationally and internationally, and using the internet as a freedom struggle (Hill & Sen, 1997).

Aliansi Jurnalis Independen (AJI)'s first appearance in public was on September 16, 1994, when it launched the book "Bredel 1994". The book was compiled in a short period of time, less than a month after the Sirnagalih Declaration. The book is a collection of testimonies from several experts, activists, and journalists regarding the 1994 ban of *Tempo*, *Detik*, and *Editor*. The launch of this book

coincided with a seminar on the condition of the press in Indonesia after the lockdown, which AJI organized in collaboration with the Jakarta Foreign Correspondent Club (JFCC) at the International Petroleum Club Building, Jalan Medan Merdeka Timur, Central Jakarta. Speakers in this discussion were JFCC President John McBeth, Indonesian Press historian and historian Abdurrahman Surjomihardjo, former editor-in-chief of *Sinar Harapan* daily Arisides Katopo, and AJI Secretary General Santoso. The seminar took place in a warm and intimate atmosphere, attended by around 150 people. However, no media covered the event except for the *Sriwijaya Post*. *Republika* newspaper only published a review of the book 'Bredel 1994' without reporting the book's launch and seminar (Manan, 2014).

The book 'Bredel 1994' received an overwhelming response from the beginning of its publication. The first print of 2,000 copies sold out within two months. The second edition, of the same amount, sold out within four months. This popularity led AJI to look at the organization in the national realm and the international world, which was considered illegal by the New Order government. At the end of September 1994, the book was translated into Dutch by *the Nederlandse Vereniging Journalist* (NVJ) and into English under the title 'Banning 1994'. NVJ subsequently played an important role in recommending AJI to join the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), an organization of world journalists headquartered in Brussels, Belgium.

In addition to managing the *Independent* magazine and holding seminars, AJI also protested against the restraint of press freedom in those early days. One of the things done was to complain to Komnas HAM over the attitude of the Chairman of PWI Jaya Tarman Azzam, who revoked the recommendation of the editor-in-chief of the weekly newspaper *Simponi* for hiring a former *Detik* journalist, who is also a member of AJI. Another thing that was conveyed to Komnas HAM was the Ministry of Information's policy on granting SIUPP. One of the questions is why the SIUPP application for the News magazine, submitted by the Tempo Welfare Foundation, is unclear about its fate, even though several formal requirements have been met.

In those early days, AJI looked for opportunities and took advantage of every opportunity to cooperate with state institutions. One of the opportunities came in October 1994. At that time, there was an offer of cooperation in the traffic campaign from the police. The cooperation was initially in the

form of an offer submitted by the staff of the National Police Information Service, Col. Drs. Hari Sutanto, to Roy Pakpahan, a reporter for the daily *Suara Pembaruan* and an AJI sympathizer whose coverage post is in the police. After the cooperation was established, a banner was installed, but shortly after that, the National Police expressed regret for cooperating with AJI and asked for the banner to be removed (Harsono, 1995).

Furthermore, in the early days, AJI held internal discussion events at the AJI secretariat. The speakers ranged from domestic pro-democracy activists, domestic researchers, and foreign researchers in Indonesia. One of those who has come to the AJI's secretariat is David T. Hill, a doctoral graduate of Murdoch University. Another researcher who went to the AJI's secretariat was Prof. William Liddle, a professor of political science from Ohio University, United States. In addition, domestic researchers who had visited were Arief Budiman, one of the founders of AJI, and Ariel Heryanto. This fact suggests that although AJI is hostile to the government, AJI is popular among movement activists and students. The case of the banning of three media outlets in 1994 is still the central theme of AJI's struggle, although the government, through the Minister of Information Harmoko, said that the problem had been resolved with the issuance of several SIUPPs for banned media.

HOTEL WISATA EVENTS AND THE BEGINNING OF THE UNDERGROUND MOVEMENT

Since the beginning of 1995, AJI has been closely monitored by the security forces. This started from a report from the Ministry of Information related to *Independen magazines* that needed to be monitored because they did not have SIUPP. At first, the government allowed the publication of the magazine. This proves that several editions of *Independen* magazines can be published and circulated in the community. However, after the development of this magazine increasingly gained a place in the community, the last edition before the *Independen* magazine was declared illegal, which touched the -copy mark, which led the government to immediately take a crackdown (*Forum Keadilan*, April 13, 1995). Since February 1995, police intelligence has been spying on the AJI headquarters in *Rumah Susun Tanah Abang*. The following month, the reconnaissance operation was upgraded to the stalking of AJI activists (Haryanto, 2023). Even though AJI has been made a target of government supervision, AJI activists are still moving to plan and carry out activities that remain focused on the issue of press freedom.

On March 16, 1995, AJI held a *halal bi halal* event at the Wisata Hotel, Central Jakarta. The event was arranged in addition to being a routine event for several agencies after Eid al-Fitr; the event was also used as a camouflage to gather people who support AJI's struggle and equate the concept of the AJI movement. Apart from being a gathering place, the event affirmed AJI's position in fighting for press freedom and expanding the network (Santoso interview, June 2014, Manan, 2014). This event was attended by several community leaders such as Adanan Buyung Nasution, Ali Sadikin, Rendra, Iwan Fals, and Marsilam Simajuntak. In the event, *Independen* magazine Number 10 edition of January 10, 1995 was also circulated with the cover title '*Harmoko dan Saham di 32 Media*'. The decision to circulate *Independen* magazine in the event triggered a polemic within AJI. AJI members who support the circulation consider it an opportunity to spread AJI's struggle values. However, for members who did not agree with it, they worried that circulating the *Independen* would be the right reason for the security forces to beat AJI. The prediction turned out to be true, as the circulation of *Independen* magazine became the beginning of arresting AJI activists (Manan, 2014).

The event, which was attended by hundreds of people, ran smoothly until it was completed at 21.00 WIB. However, after the event, the Chairman of the AJI Presidium, Ahmad Taufik, Liston Siregar, and Danang Kukuh Wardoyo were arrested by the security forces. After being taken to the Police station, Liston Siregar was released because there was insufficient evidence. Eko Maryadi, one of the AJI activists, was arrested at the AJI Secretariat. They were arrested in connection with the publication of *the Independen magazine*. They were charged with Article 154 of the Criminal Code regarding the spread of "hostility to the government", the Basic Press Law, and the regulation of the Minister of Information (*Forum Keadilan*, 1995). The reason for the arrest of AJI activists was that they were related to the publication of *an Independen* magazine that did not have a SIUPP (*Kompas*, March 18, 1995).

The arrest at the *Hotel Wisata* and *Rumah Susun Tanah Abang* marked a new era in AJI's existence, which was not even a year old. AJI can no longer be an organization that operates on the surface and must move underground. Following the arrest of AJI activists, PWI held a press conference the next day on March 17, 1995. During the conference, the Chairman of PWI, Jaya Tarman Azzam, announced a decision to cancel the membership status of 13 journalists who signed the Sirnagalih

Declaration on August 7, 1994 (Kompas, 1995). The reason behind the abortion of their participation status was signing the Sirnagalih Declaration, which did not recognize PWI as the only professional organization of journalists. In addition, the Chairman of PWI also asked all editors-in-chief not to hire journalists who signed the Sirnagalih Declaration. Meanwhile, in March 1995, the Minister of Information and PWI asked *Kompas* to fire two of its reporters who were members of AJI, namely Satrio Arismunandar and Dhia Prakesya Yudha (Hazanaki, 1998).

Emphasis continues to be placed on AJI activists who work as journalists in various media. The dismissal of AJI's secretary general, Santoso, from the *Justice Forum* magazine on April 1, 1995, was also carried out. The same thing also happened to Ayu Utami and Imran Hasibua, journalists of *Forum Keadilan* magazine, who were transferred from editorial to marketing. Another AJI activist, Roy Pakpahan, was transferred from the editorial to the non-editorial section of the *Suara Pembaruan* (Arismundar, 2023). The actions taken by the government are seen as killing economic rights. By being fired as members of PWI, they can no longer work in the media sector. One of the requirements for becoming a journalist is to have a PWI membership card.

Since the March 16, 1995, arrest, many people thought AJI had disbanded. The AJI management dismissed this notion by holding a press conference on Monday, March 20, 1995, at the LBH Jakarta office on Jalan Diponegoro, Central Jakarta. In the press conference, the Secretary General of AJI, Santoso, addressed the dismissal of 13 PWI members. According to Santoso, AJI does not believe in a single bar system because such a system will drown out history (Santoso Interview 2014 in Manan, 2014). The press conference did not receive a welcome from the existing mainstream media, but non-governmental organizations and students received a lot of support. One of the supporters came from the Solidarity Group for Solidaritas Pembebasan Pers, holding a rally to express its support for alternative presses such as *Independen* magazines. On Tuesday, March 21, 1995, around 100 students and NGO activists came to the House of Representatives to complain about the arrest of *Independen* activists. Only the PDI faction is willing to meet the delegation from SIUPP. In the dialogue, PDI members, Sabam Sirait, Soetardjo Soerjogoeritno, and Royali said that Ahmad Taufik, Eko Maryadi, and Danang Kukuh Wardoyo should be released (Manan, 2014).

The government's arrest and tough stance

against the *Independen* magazine could not stop AJI. However, the core management of this organization felt that the safer option at that time was to keep moving, with most of it having to be done underground. Some AJI higher-ups who managed to avoid the arrest decided to lay low, avoiding the follow-up arrests. For example, Santoso decided not to show up as he went to Bogor and chose to join the farming community that he had accompanied. He also went to Thailand to avoid the possibility of follow-up arrests. However, it has been decided that AJI will continue, including the publication of *Independen* magazine (Santoso Interview, June 2014 in Manan, 2014).

CONCLUSION

The findings in this study explain the complex interactions between the media, the state, and the public in New Order-era Indonesia. This influenced the emergence of various events that eventually became part of the dynamics of the press and the realization of press freedom in Indonesia. AJI's efforts to realize press independence and democratization faced major obstacles due to the entrenched paradigm of state control, making it difficult for AJI to build a free and professional press. AJI's commitment to reject intimidation and censorship, as well as the single platform of PWI, became the basic identity of the organization and contributed to the magnitude of AJI's struggle. The core problem faced by AJI was the state's domination of the press by controlling PWI, the Information Department, and media owners. AJI's resistance triggered conflict, which led to disputes between actors. The large number of media owners who prefer to save their business, coupled with the dependence of PWI and Department of Information officials on state funding, exacerbates these conflicts, strengthening state hegemony. Despite this, AJI continued to struggle until finally their efforts were rewarded with the passing of Press Law No.40 of 1999, which guarantees the freedom of the press.

This study reveals an example of collective action. AJI demonstrates a set of action-oriented beliefs and meanings, which inspire and legitimize various social movement activities and campaigns. In a collective action carried out by AJI, we can see that three factors strongly influence the movement: a sense of injustice, identity elements, and agency factors. A sense of injustice arises from moral indignation associated with disappointment, such as journalists who feel that the only state-recognized journalist organization, PWI, is not fighting for their fate. Research on emotions suggests that anger is expressed by people who hold outsiders responsi-

ble for an undesirable situation. This anger seems to depend on causal attribution, i.e., identifying the party to blame for the troubling situation. But in order to motivate collective action, the anger must be shared. This brings us to the second component of the collective action framework, identity.

The identification of “them” (the authorities) as responsible for a negative situation implies the existence of “us” as the opposite. In establishing the “we”, the identity component of this collective action framework is a set of collective beliefs, i.e., beliefs shared by a group of people. In this study, the identity AJI built showed that the injustice felt by journalists, a feeling in common with journalists who were banned and fired from their workplaces, became a shared identity used as the second component of the requirement for collective action.

The third component is agency. Agency is the belief that one can change conditions or policies through collective action. A sense of injustice and identity may be necessary for participation in a movement, but feeling a shared sense of discontent and finding an authority to blame are not enough to encourage people to engage in collective action. Individuals must become convinced that they have the power to change their conditions. Such a belief is a prerequisite for the emergence of agents who give the impression of being politically influential, as evidenced by their past success or potential influence. In addition, while the research describes the challenges, it does not directly reflect the government’s response to AJI’s struggle. Therefore, future research may explicitly address this issue.

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