

Human Rights and Contemporary Challenges in Indonesia

An Indonesia Diaspora Forum, UNSW Sydney, 18th June, 2026

On 18 June 2026, the Diplomacy Training Program (DTP) in collaboration with Gerakan Sydney Untuk Bersuara (GUSAR), hosted a public discussion at the Faculty of Law & Justice, UNSW. The event, titled “*Human Rights and Contemporary Challenges in Indonesia*”, featured three distinguished speakers: **Saurlin Siagian** (Commissioner of Komnas HAM), **Herlambang P. Wiratraman** (Lecturer at the Faculty of Law, Universitas Gadjah Mada), and **Gita Putri Damayana** (PhD Candidate at the School of Regulation and Global Governance, Australian National University).

The discussion, held in Bahasa, provided an opportunity for speakers and participants to exchange perspectives on recent developments in democracy and human rights in Indonesia. Drawing on their respective areas of expertise, the speakers examined the challenges facing democratic governance, civic participation, and human rights protection in contemporary Indonesia.

One of the key points raised by Herlambang P. Wiratraman was Indonesia’s democratic decline through the framework of “embedded oligarchic politics.” He argued that powerful economic and political elites have become deeply integrated into formal democratic and state institutions, enabling them to shape political processes and public policy in ways that undermine constitutionalism, the rule of law, and democratic accountability.

Gita Putri Damayana highlighted the relationship between public demonstration and controversial legislative and political developments in Indonesia. She noted that major waves of protest have often emerged in response to government policies perceived as lacking public participation and democratic legitimacy. Examples included the 2019 protests against revisions to the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) Law, the 2020 protests against the Omnibus Law on Job Creation, and the 2024 demonstrations concerning the Constitutional Court decision on vice-presidential age requirements and proposed revisions to the Regional Elections Law. According to Damayana, these episodes reflect broader concerns regarding the limited involvement of civil society in policy making processes.

Saurlin Siagian provided insights into ongoing efforts to revise Indonesia’s Human Rights Law. He outlined the current status of the legislative process, the key issues under discussion, and the challenges involved in strengthening Indonesia’s human rights framework through legal reform.

The discussion attracted Indonesian students, researchers, and diaspora in Sydney, fostering an engaging exchange on the future of democracy, human rights, and civic participation in Indonesia. This event and collaboration is part of DTP’s work with diaspora communities in Australia.

