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Security Update: Indonesia

Indonesia: Commercial Security Measures and Potential Civil Unrest Risk

Executive Summary

Recent media reports have indicated that a number of shopping malls and financial institutions across Indonesia have begun installing or reinforcing steel perimeter fencing around entrances due to concerns of possible renewed civil unrest similar to the demonstrations and disturbances experienced in August 2025. The reports have generated speculation that businesses are preparing for a significant deterioration in Indonesia's domestic security environment.

Assessment indicates that there is some factual basis behind these reports; however, the extent of the activity appears to have been overstated. Some commercial properties, particularly large shopping centres located in major urban areas, have introduced additional physical security measures, including fencing and improved access control arrangements. These measures appear to represent precautionary risk mitigation based on lessons learned from previous demonstrations rather than evidence of confirmed intelligence indicating imminent nationwide unrest.

The security environment in Jakarta remains generally stable, with normal commercial activity continuing. There is currently no indication of widespread disruption, increased foreign business targeting, or a coordinated movement toward nationwide demonstrations. The primary risk remains the possibility of short-notice protests or isolated unrest triggered by political developments, economic grievances, or a specific incident involving security forces.

For foreign corporate personnel operating in Jakarta, the current risk level remains assessed as **LOW to MODERATE**, with normal security awareness and avoidance measures considered sufficient. For remote field operations, particularly in resource and infrastructure sectors, the principal concern remains localised community, labour, and political disputes rather than Jakarta-style mass demonstrations.

Background

Indonesia experienced a significant period of civil unrest during August 2025, representing one of the most serious episodes of public disorder in recent years. The initial demonstrations were driven by dissatisfaction with political issues, perceived inequality, government spending priorities, and broader economic concerns.

The situation escalated following the death of motorcycle taxi driver Affan Kurniawan, who was struck by a police vehicle during demonstrations in Jakarta. The incident generated widespread public anger and contributed to the expansion of demonstrations across several Indonesian cities.

During the unrest, some government buildings, police facilities, and commercial properties were damaged. Several businesses temporarily reduced operations as a precautionary measure, particularly those located near known protest areas or major government facilities. Shopping malls and financial institutions reviewed their security arrangements after identifying vulnerabilities associated with large open public areas, unrestricted access points, and limited ability to prevent crowds gathering close to commercial entrances.

The current introduction of fencing measures appears to be directly linked to these previous experiences. Commercial operators appear to be attempting to improve their ability to control access, protect employees and customers, and prevent large groups from gathering immediately adjacent to buildings.

Current Situation

Recent reporting regarding steel fencing around malls and financial institutions should be assessed with caution. While there are confirmed reports of some locations introducing additional physical security measures, there is no evidence at present of a nationwide directive requiring commercial properties to fortify entrances.

The measures appear to be implemented independently by individual property owners and security managers. Locations with higher perceived exposure, particularly large malls situated near government buildings, transport hubs, or areas historically associated with demonstrations, appear more likely to have introduced barriers.

The purpose of the fencing appears primarily defensive. The measures are intended to create a controlled perimeter, restrict uncontrolled crowd movement, provide additional reaction time for security personnel, and protect assets during periods of elevated tension.

The presence of fencing should therefore not automatically be interpreted as an indicator that authorities or businesses possess specific intelligence of planned riots. Rather, it reflects a broader trend among commercial operators globally to adopt preventative security measures after experiencing previous disruptions.

The lack of visible changes across much of Jakarta is consistent with this assessment. Areas such as South Jakarta, business districts, residential areas, and normal commercial locations continue to operate without significant disruption. The situation does not currently resemble the conditions observed immediately before the August 2025 unrest.

Drivers Behind Increased Security Precautions

The primary driver behind these measures is institutional memory following the August 2025 unrest. Indonesian businesses experienced firsthand the speed at which demonstrations could escalate from peaceful gatherings into situations involving property damage and operational disruption.

For shopping malls, the main vulnerabilities identified during previous incidents included open entrances, underground parking access, large pedestrian areas, and the inability to quickly prevent crowds from approaching commercial facilities.

Financial institutions face similar concerns, particularly because banks represent visible symbols of economic institutions and have previously been targeted during periods of social unrest. Additional physical barriers provide a relatively inexpensive method of increasing resilience.

A second contributing factor is continuing public dissatisfaction regarding economic pressures. Although Indonesia remains politically stable, concerns regarding inflation, employment opportunities, inequality, and perceptions of government accountability remain potential drivers of future demonstrations.

A further consideration is the symbolic significance of the anniversary period. Security organisations commonly increase preparedness around the anniversary of major incidents, particularly where previous unrest resulted in significant public attention. The increased security posture may therefore reflect precautionary planning ahead of August rather than intelligence regarding a specific threat.

Security Assessment: Jakarta

The current threat environment in Jakarta remains assessed as manageable. There are no confirmed indicators of an imminent large-scale civil disturbance.

The most likely scenario is the continuation of small to medium-sized demonstrations associated with political, economic, or social issues. These events are most likely to occur around recognised protest locations, including government facilities, university areas, and central Jakarta.

Such demonstrations could result in temporary road closures, increased police presence, and disruption to commuting routes. Foreign companies and international personnel are unlikely to be directly targeted unless they are located immediately adjacent to protest activity or become associated with a controversial issue.

The possibility of rapid escalation following a triggering event remains the principal concern. Previous Indonesian unrest demonstrated that public anger can increase quickly following incidents involving perceived government misconduct, police action, corruption allegations, or controversial political decisions.

A repeat of widespread nationwide unrest similar to August 2025 is assessed as unlikely under current conditions. Such an event would require a significant triggering incident combined with broad public mobilisation and a breakdown in confidence between the population and government institutions.

Implications for Jakarta Office Personnel

For corporate personnel based in Jakarta, the current security environment does not require significant changes to normal operations. However, they should ensure that basic civil unrest preparedness measures remain active.

Personnel should continue monitoring local news and company security notifications, particularly during periods of political activity or major government announcements. Employees should avoid demonstrations and large political gatherings, even where initially peaceful, as conditions can change rapidly.

Travel disruption remains the most likely operational impact. Employees should maintain awareness of alternative routes and avoid known protest locations, particularly central government areas and locations where demonstrations are occurring.

The company should ensure emergency contact details remain current and that staff understand procedures for temporary office closure, remote working arrangements, or movement restrictions should the situation deteriorate.

Future Outlook

Over the next several months, Indonesia is expected to remain politically stable; however, the possibility of periodic demonstrations remains elevated compared with previous years.

The most likely future development is continued precautionary security enhancement by commercial operators, including improved fencing, access control, and security staffing at high-profile locations. These measures are likely to remain in place as a permanent improvement rather than a temporary emergency response.

The principal escalation indicators that would require increased monitoring include large student mobilisation, significant corruption allegations involving senior officials, major economic policy changes, fuel price increases, or incidents involving police and civilian casualties.

If such an event occurs, demonstrations could develop quickly through social media mobilisation. The most probable impact on foreign businesses would be transport disruption, temporary access restrictions, and precautionary office measures rather than direct targeting.

Overall Security Risk Assessment

The reported installation of steel fencing at Indonesian malls and financial institutions is assessed as a genuine but limited development. The measures reflect commercial security planning following the August 2025 unrest and should not currently be interpreted as evidence of imminent nationwide instability.

Jakarta remains operationally stable, and foreign companies should continue normal business activities while maintaining standard civil unrest preparedness.