

Indonesia: police use of tear gas in football stadium deaths must be fully investigated



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At least 174 people reported dead, with more than 180 injured after stampede at football ground exit following police use of tear gas

Tear gas must only be used in response to widespread violence and not in confined areas

‘People must be warned that tear gas will be used and allowed to disperse’ - Usman Hamid

Responding to the reported deaths of at least 174 people following a stampede at the Kanjuruhan Stadium in Malang, East Java yesterday after police used tear gas when fans invaded the pitch, Usman Hamid, Amnesty International’s Indonesia Executive Director, said:

“We express our deepest condolences to the families of the victims. No one should lose their lives at a football match. “Tear gas should only be used to disperse crowds when widespread violence has occurred and when other methods have failed. People must be warned that tear gas will be used and allowed to disperse. “Tear gas should also never be fired in confined spaces. FIFA’s stadium safety guidelines also prohibit the carrying or use of ‘crowd control gas’ by pitch-side stewards or police. “We call on the authorities to conduct a swift, thorough and independent investigation into the use of tear gas at the stadium and ensure that those who are found to have committed violations are tried in open court and do not merely receive internal or administrative sanctions. “We also call on the police to review policies on the

use of tear gas and other 'less-lethal weapons' to ensure that such a heartbreaking tragedy never occurs again."

After last night's football match between Arema and Persebaya in the Kanjuruhan Stadium in Malang, East Java ended in defeat for Arema, dozens of Arema supporters invaded the pitch and attacked players and police. To disperse the crowd, police fired tear gas into the stands.

East Java police chief Inspector General Nico Afinta told journalists that the tear gas caused supporters to head to one exit. "There was a crush and because of that crush people were asphyxiated," he said.

In addition to the 174 reported dead, including two police officers, at least 180 people have been injured.

The use of tear gas is only proportionate in responding to incidents of widespread violence, and only where other methods of dispersing an assembly have failed or would fail. Policing and security equipment - such as tear gas, often described as "less-lethal" weapons - can result in serious injury and even death.

The use of force by police and security officials is subject to strict human rights safeguards as set out in the UN Code of Conduct for Law-Enforcement Officials (1979) and the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law-Enforcement Officials (1990). The use of force by law-enforcement officials in Indonesia is further regulated by the Indonesian Chief of Police Regulation on the Use of Force in Police Action (No. 1/2009).

While Amnesty acknowledges the complex environment law-enforcement officials often find themselves in when carrying out their duty, they must ensure full respect for the right to life and security of all persons, including those suspected of crime.

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