

Election Law Enforcement: Fighting Black Campaigns on Social Media

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Black Campaigns, Election, Law Enforcement, Social Media.

How to cite:

Fikri, S. (2024). Election Law Enforcement: Fighting Black Campaigns on Social Media. *Amsir Law Journal*, 5(2), 117-125.

DOI:

10.36746/alj.v5i2.408

Received:

January 14, 2024

Accepted:

April 15, 2024

Published:

April 30, 2024

ABSTRACT

The establishment of a democratic state requires the active involvement of its citizens, primarily through political participation, via elections. An integral part of elections is campaigning, which is inherently a strategy sometimes used to undermine opponents. These campaigns are known as "Black Campaigns". It involves the use of malicious and unethical tactics aimed at discrediting political opponents. One method that is commonly used today is the dissemination of false information, which leads to slander that erodes the dignity, reputation, and honor of election participants. This study aims to evaluate the implementation of election laws and the management of negative political campaigns spread through social media platforms. Using normative legal research methodology, this research uses legal sources in the form of laws or other regulations, legal principles, and relevant doctrines. This research reveals that black campaigns are explicitly regulated in Article 280 of Law No. 7/2017 and Article 69 of Law No. 1/2015. This law categorizes black campaigning as a prohibited act, which includes insults, incitement, and threats against individuals. In the event of black campaigning on social media, the provisions outlined in Article 27 paragraph 3 and Article 28 paragraph 2 of Law No. 19/2016 should be enforced. To address the problem of black campaigns on social media, effective countermeasures need to be proposed, such as proactively promoting media literacy to coordinating its handling with relevant institutions. In addition, repressive measures including imposing legal sanctions on individuals involved in black campaigns on social media are also necessary.

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1. Introduction

Indonesia, as a democratic country, plays an important role in maintaining security, stability and ensuring adherence to democratic principles.² Article 1 paragraph 2 of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia explicitly states that Indonesia is a democratic country.³ This constitutional provision affirms that power is vested in the people and must be exercised in accordance with the constitution. In examining these articles, it is clear that

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² Punch, M., Crawshaw, R., & Markham, G. (2016). Democratic Principles and Police Fatal Force: Avoidance of Debate, Unresolved Accountability and Human Rights. *International Journal of Law, Crime and Justice*, 100(46), 2-12.

³ Simamora, J. (2014). Tafsir Makna Negara Hukum dalam Perspektif Undang-Undang Dasar Negara Republik Indonesia Tahun 1945. *Jurnal Dinamika Hukum*, 14(3), 547-561.

ultimate power and authority rests with the people, with the government acting as the guardian of rights and responsibilities on behalf of the people. It is therefore not surprising that everyone has an equal right to actively participate in decision-making processes that have implications for the lives of many citizens.

Basically, the establishment of a democratic state⁴ is realized through popular involvement achieved through active participation of citizens in political affairs, especially through elections.⁵ Elections, is a process by which everyone is given the freedom to choose leaders based on the criteria of effective leadership. It is considered the representation and benchmark of democracy in the current context. Moreover, the act of citizens participating in elections serves as a tangible expression of their political rights.⁶

Elections and campaigns have an interrelated relationship. They form an inseparable relationship, like two sides of a coin.⁷ As defined by Law No. 7/2017 on General Elections, campaigns and elections include activities carried out by election participants or their legal representatives, including political parties consisting of organized groups of people or individual election participants. This campaign is designed to persuade voters by conveying and presenting the vision, mission, and programs that will be implemented, as well as projecting the self-image of election participants for promotional purposes. Thus, it can be concluded that a campaign is a persuasive effort directed at attracting individuals who may not be committed and persuading them to support a candidate leader.

In practical election scenarios, many campaign strategies involve deliberately weakening opponents through malicious and unethical acts, such as the spread of fake news that leads to slander. These tactics result in candidates participating in elections losing their dignity, reputation and respect in the eyes of the public. This approach deliberately creates a negative perception of the contesting candidate or opposing political party, aiming to persuade voters to vote for the candidate who has carefully cultivated a positive image in society.⁸ This is commonly referred to as “black campaigning”. This campaign strategy is specifically designed to undermine political opponents.⁹ Dodu defines a black campaign as a deliberate attempt to undermine a particular candidate through humiliation, dissemination of false information, defamation, or similar tactics.¹⁰

In the beginning, black campaigns were carried out by disseminating insulting materials to opposition parties through print media, including banners and pamphlets, which were then distributed to the general public.¹¹ However, nowadays, black campaigns are mostly carried out on social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter and Facebook. The use of social media in the political arena is undeniable due to its capacity to disseminate information quickly and efficiently to a wide audience, without time or location restrictions, and in a cost-

⁴ Mustawa, M., Hamid, A. H., & Purwanda, S. (2022). Refund of State Financial Losses in Realizing the Welfare State of Law. *Amsir Law Journal*, 4(1), 51-61.

⁵ Pamungkas, A. D., & Arifin, R. (2019). Demokrasi dan Kampanye Hitam dalam Penyelenggaraan Pemilihan Umum di Indonesia (Analisis atas Black Campaign dan Negative Campaign). *DIKTUM: Jurnal Syariah Dan Hukum*, 17(1), 16-30.

⁶ Prasetyoningsih, N. (2014). Dampak Pemilihan Umum Serentak bagi Pembangunan Demokrasi Indonesia. *Jurnal Media Hukum*, 21(2), 23.

⁷ Nur, S. M., Syaputra, D., & Zainin, F. (2022). Tinjauan Yuridis Mengenai Black Campaign di Sosial Media. *UNES Law Review*, 5(2), 509-526.

⁸ *Ibid*.

⁹ Doly, D. (2020). Penegakan Hukum Kampanye Hitam (Black Campaign) di Media Sosial: Pembelajaran Pemilihan Umum Presiden Tahun 2019. *Kajian*, 25(1), 1-18.

¹⁰ Dodu, A. B. D. (2017). Regulasi Pemilu Terkait dengan Black Campaign dan Efektifitasnya Dalam Penindakan (Studi Kasus Pilkada Kabupaten Banggai Tahun 2015). *JWP (Jurnal Wacana Politik)*, 2(1), 52-60.

¹¹ Hui, J. Y. (2020). Social Media and the 2019 Indonesian Elections: Hoax Takes the Centre Stage. *Southeast Asian Affairs*, 155-171.

effective manner.¹² Therefore, social media has the potential to amplify adverse concerns, make a substantial impact and effectively shape individuals' perceptions, which then influence their decision-making process in choosing a leader.

An example of a black campaign that is often associated with political contestation in Indonesia is Prabowo Subianto's presidential candidacy. The narrative of human rights violations and the abduction of activists in 1998 was always associated with Prabowo Subianto. Despite allegations that Prabowo Subianto, who at the time served as Commander of the Army Strategic Reserve Command (Kostrad), was allegedly involved in a series of human rights violations, including the abduction and torture of student activists and pro-democracy figures who were considered a threat to New Order rule.¹³ Despite the allegations against Prabowo, this remains a controversial issue that has yet to be fully exposed.

Meanwhile, there have also been black campaigns accusing the latest presidential candidate, Anies Baswedan, of being anti-tolerance and potentially radical.¹⁴ These accusations usually relate to his educational background and his ties to certain Islamic groups. However, these accusations are also controversial, with many considering them an unfair attempt to attack Anies Baswedan personally. Religious issues are often a major weapon in black campaigns in Indonesia. This is mainly because Indonesia is a country with a high diversity of religions and beliefs, so religious-related narratives often have a strong emotional impact and can be used to influence public opinion towards a candidate.

In addition, the accusation that the new presidential candidate pair, Ganjar-Mahfud, wants to stop "*Bantuan Sosial*" and "*Bantuan Langsung Tunai (BLT)*" if elected in the 2024 presidential election¹⁵ is also a black campaign that uses negative narratives to damage the reputation of the candidate pair. Narratives like this can be created or spread by parties who want to tarnish Ganjar-Mahfud's reputation or to secure the victory of other candidates in political contestation. It is important to critically analyze such information and ensure there are solid facts and clear evidence before believing it. Otherwise, such negative narratives can undermine the democratic process and influence the public without a strong basis.

The electoral process should ideally be based on a competition of ideas and visions, as well as candidates' track records in advancing the public interest. However, in practice, black campaigns divert attention from substantive issues to negative narratives that are often unfounded. This deviates from what should happen in a healthy democratic process. We see the reality of black campaigning in Indonesian politics.

The spread of negative narratives can influence public opinion, especially if there is no adequate effort to refute or expose the lies. Therefore, the practice of black campaigning has become part of the political reality in Indonesia, although it does not always reflect the democratic values that should underlie the political process. In the context of black campaign narratives, such accusations can obscure the public's view of the two candidates' policies and visions, thus undermining an electoral process that should be based on accurate and substantive information. Such black campaign practices should not occur in a democratic and responsible politics. However, black campaigns have become part of the political reality

¹² Nur, S. M., Syaputra, D., & Zainin, F. (2022). *Op.Cit.*

¹³ Soempeno, F. A. (2009). *Prabowo dari Cijantung Bergerak ke Istana*. Yogyakarta: Galangpress Group.

¹⁴ Arbar, T. F. (2023). *Pilpres RI Disorot Asing, Sebut Capres Anies Baswedan*. Available online from: <https://www.cnbcindonesia.com/news/20230809094413-4-461350/pilpres-ri-disorot-asing-sebut-capres-anies-baswedan>. [Accessed April 12, 2024].

¹⁵ Nur, M. F. (2024). *Silang Sengkarut Dugaan Politik Bansos, Siapa yang Diuntungkan?*. Available online from: <https://tirto.id/silang-sengkarut-dugaan-politik-bansos-siapa-yang-diuntungkan-gT5U>. [Accessed April 12, 2024].

in Indonesia that needs to be watched out for and addressed wisely by the public and political stakeholders.

The challenge of fighting cases relating to black campaigns spread on social media has significant implications for the conduct of elections as a whole. Not only does black campaigning adversely affect candidates participating in electoral contests, it also harms the public. The spread of unfounded opinions undermines the public's right to accurate information, a right guaranteed by Article 28F of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. The absence of disclosure of cases involving black campaigns on social media leads to the conclusion that election law enforcement has not been effective. In this research, the issue of electoral law enforcement is raised by examining the effectiveness of overcoming black campaigns on social media.

2. Method

The author of this study uses a normative legal research approach,¹⁶ a method that involves examining literature sources or obtaining secondary data that complements the research. In this research, the author uses a conceptual approach¹⁷ and a statutory approach¹⁸ as the methodology chosen for investigation and analysis.

3. Election Law Enforcement: A Comprehensive Fight against Social Media Black Campaigns

Campaigns are an integral element of political strategy planning. Its main purpose is to inform the general public,¹⁹ which consists of potential voters, about the vision, mission, and programs that will be implemented if the candidate pair is elected as a leader. Certain social events can witness the transformation of an initially negative campaign into a black campaign.²⁰ In this case, the campaign initially highlights the faults and vulnerabilities of political opponents (negative campaigning), but then evolves into the dissemination of unsubstantiated information, resulting in damaging defamation (black campaigning). In addition, the campaign may involve linking allegations to sensitive social issues such as ethnicity, religion, race and intergroup, increasing tensions that can trigger anger in society.²¹

The use of black campaigns arises from a mindset geared towards maintaining competitiveness, giving rise to malicious actions driven by heightened concerns about the capabilities of the political opponent at hand. As a result, black campaigns are organized with the aim of tarnishing the reputation of political opponents, thereby reducing their chances of gaining support and votes from the public.²² Therefore, a black campaign can be characterized as a deliberate attempt to tarnish one's reputation by committing malicious acts against their opponent.²³ An explicit definition of black campaigning is not provided in Indonesia's electoral laws and regulations. However, references to black campaigning can be

¹⁶ Purwanda, S., & Dewi, M. N. K. (2020). The Effects of Monism and Pluralism on Legal Development of a Nation. *Amsir Law Journal*, 2(1), 21-26.

¹⁷ Ardiansyah, M. K. (2020). Pembaruan Hukum oleh Mahkamah Agung dalam mengisi Kekosongan Hukum Acara Perdata di Indonesia. *Jurnal Ilmiah Kebijakan Hukum*, 14(2), 361-384.

¹⁸ Kaimudin, A. (2019). Perlindungan Hukum terhadap Tenaga Kerja Anak Dalam Peraturan Perundang-Undangan di Indonesia. *Jurnal Yurisprudensi*, 2(1), 37-50.

¹⁹ Azis, A., Sulfiyati, S., Putrawan, P., August, G., & Dinsar, A. (2023). Analisis Strategi Promosi Media di Kantor KPU Parepare. *Jurnal Ilmiah Multidisiplin Amsir*, 2(1), 145-154.

²⁰ Nur, S. M., Syaputra, D., & Zainin, F. (2022). *Op.Cit.*

²¹ Halimatusa'diah (2015). Etnisitas dan Agama Dalam Kontestasi Wacana Kekuasaan di Media Baru. *Jurnal Masyarakat & Budaya*, 17(2), 265-270.

²² Safitri, M. (2020). Problem Ujaran Kebencian (Hate Speech) di Media Sosial Perspektif Al-Qur'an. *Al-Fath*, 14(2), 203-238.

²³ Januru, L. (2016). Analisis Wacana Black Campaign (Kampanye Hitam) pada Pilpres Tahun 2014 di Media Kompas, Jawa Pos dan Kedaulatan Rakyat. *Natapruja*, 4(2), 181-194.

found in Article 280 of Law No. 7/2017 and Article 69 of Law No. 1/2015 on the Stipulation of Government Regulation in Lieu of Law No. 1/2014 on the Election of Governors, Regents and Mayors into Law (referred to as Law No. 1/2015).

According to these laws, black campaigning is considered a prohibited act and can appear in various forms. Article 280 of Law No. 7/2017 prohibits the following actions during a campaign:

- 1) Questioning the state foundation Pancasila, the Preamble of the 1945 Constitution, and the form of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia;
- 2) Activities that endanger the integrity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia;
- 3) Insulting a person, religion, ethnicity, race, group, candidate, and/or other election participants;
- 4) Inciting and pitting individuals or community groups;
- 5) Disrupting public order;
- 6) Threatening to commit violence or advocating the use of violence against a person, group of community members, and/or other election participants;
- 7) Damaging and/or removing campaign props of other election participants;
- 8) Using government facilities, places of worship, and places of education;
- 9) Carrying or using image signs and/or attributes other than the image signs and/or attributes of the relevant election participants; and
- 10) Promising or giving money or other materials to election campaign participants.

In addition, Article 69 of Law No. 1/2015 also prohibits the following actions during the campaign period:

- 1) Questioning the state foundation Pancasila, the Preamble to the 1945 Constitution, and the form of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia;
- 2) Insulting a person, religion, ethnicity, race, class, candidate for Governor, candidate for Deputy Governor, candidate for Regent, candidate for Deputy Regent, candidate for Mayor, candidate for Deputy Mayor, and/or Political Party;
- 3) Conducting campaigns in the form of inciting, slandering, pitting against Political Parties, individuals, and/or community groups;
- 4) Using violence, threats of violence, or advocating the use of violence against individuals, community groups, and/or Political Parties;
- 5) Disrupting security, tranquility, and public order;
- 6) Threatening and advocating the use of violence to take power from the legitimate government;
- 7) Damaging and/or removing campaign props;
- 8) Using government and local government facilities and budgets;
- 9) Using places of worship and places of education;
- 10) Marching on foot and/or using vehicles on the highway; and
- 11) Conducting campaign activities outside the schedule set by the Provincial General Election Commission and Regency/City General Election Commission.

The use of black campaigning on social media exacerbates the offenses associated with black campaigning, as the choice of media determines the additional regulations that need to be enforced. In this context, Law No. 19/2016, which amends Law No. 11/2008 on Electronic Information and Transactions, is applicable. Although it does not explicitly mention elections, this law relates to election-related crimes as it addresses prohibited actions. According to Article 27 paragraph 3 of Law No. 19/2016, it is unlawful for any person to intentionally distribute, transmit, or make accessible electronic information or documents that contain insults or defamation. Similarly, Article 28 paragraph 2 of the same law stipulates that any person who intentionally disseminates information with the intent to cause hatred or hostility of certain individuals or community groups based on ethnicity, religion, race, and intergroup is unlawful.

The description provided highlights that black campaigning is an illegal act that can cause harm to others, in various forms such as defamation, slander, and incitement. When conducted through social media, these criminal acts manifest as insults, defamation, and dissemination of materials with the aim of inciting hatred against political opponents. To effectively address the problems stemming from black campaigning, it is necessary to adopt a fair and unbiased approach to law enforcement. This approach should involve establishing clear guidelines and responsibilities for agencies responsible for enforcing the law, taking into account their roles and jurisdictions. In addition, fostering strong collaboration and support among these agencies is critical to successfully achieving the desired goals. Therefore, law enforcement by law enforcement agencies serves as a tangible manifestation of an idea that has been actualized in society, rather than merely existing in theory.

4. Countermeasures Against Black Campaigns on Social Media

The role of law enforcement in dealing with black campaigns requires unwavering dedication and decisive action against individuals who carry out black campaign activities. In this context, community involvement is essential to collectively safeguard elections to ensure they run smoothly and successfully, as they should. This is in line with the basic principles of electoral law in Indonesia, which emphasize characteristics such as direct, general, fair, free, secret, honest, and just.

Soekanto argues that law enforcement is not only about enforcing laws and regulations, but also aims to overcome discrepancies between values, rules, and patterns of behavior found in society.²⁴ From this perspective, law enforcement involves aligning rules and regulations with community behavior. To effectively enforce the law, measures are needed to combat illegal activities. Sudarto argues that this can be achieved through preventive and repressive measures.²⁵ Preventive measures refer to measures taken to prevent violations or irregularities from occurring, while repressive measures refer to measures taken to deter perpetrators who have committed violations or irregularities.

In the context of the subject discussed in this study, Article 521 of Law No. 7/2017 outlines repressive measures to address black campaigns. These measures apply to individuals who violate Article 280 of Law No. 7/2017 and Article 69 of Law No. 1/2015. According to the text, any individual or group involved in implementing or participating in an election campaign, intentionally violating the prohibition on conducting the campaign, will be subject to a maximum prison sentence of two years and a maximum fine of Rp 24,000,000,000 (twenty-four million rupiah). Suppose a black campaign is disseminated through social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook. In that case, the

²⁴ Soekanto, S. (2004). *Faktor-Faktor yang Mempengaruhi Penegakan Hukum*. Jakarta: Rajawali Press.

²⁵ Soedarto. (1986). *Hukum dan Hukum Pidana*. Bandung: Alumni.

perpetrator can be charged under Article 45, paragraph 3 of Law No. 19/2016, which pertains to the punishment for those who violate Article 27, paragraph 3 of the same law. According to the text, anyone who violates Article 27, paragraph 3 of Law No. 19/2016 will be subject to a prison sentence of 4 years and/or a maximum fine of Rp 750,000,000. Article 45, paragraph 5 of the same law also imposes punishment on individuals who violate Article 28, paragraph 2 of Law No. 19/2016. The text states that any breach of the regulations outlined in Article 28, paragraph 2 will result in a prison sentence of six years and/or a maximum fine of Rp 1,000,000,000 (one billion rupiah).

Efforts to counter the spread of harmful activities on social media can be achieved through media literacy and increased collaboration among relevant entities. Media literacy involves checking and verifying information disseminated on social media platforms, scrutinizing the accuracy of the information and evaluating the underlying message, intent and purpose of the content in question. Promoting media literacy can be done effectively through direct socialization to the public by teachers, the Election Commission, the Election Supervisory Agency, community leaders and law enforcement. This enables the public to differentiate and choose social media news wisely.

In addition, it is imperative to increase collaboration between organizations to combat disinformation campaigns spread through social media platforms. The goal is to regulate the content that exists in the digital realm, including the implementation of legal actions. The establishment of the Nusantara Task Force enhances collaboration between various agencies, aiming to reduce social, religious and racial difficulties. The National Police also partnered with the National Cyber and Crypto Agency and the Ministry of Communication and Information to combat malicious propaganda on social media, in collaboration with the General Election Commission and the Election Supervisory Agency. In addition, the authority given to law enforcement to deactivate accounts involved in black activities is an effective means to counteract such operations. According to Article 40 paragraphs 2a and 2b, the government has the authority to terminate access and/or order the Electronic System Operator to take down unlawful content while taking preventive measures.

5. Closing

Combating black campaigns requires a careful and coordinated approach. Proactive measures need to involve educating and raising public awareness on how to identify and assess the veracity of the information they receive. This requires public education on media literacy and critical skills in filtering trustworthy and untrustworthy news. In addition, individuals should actively manage the news sources they follow on social media, ensuring that they only follow credible and trustworthy sources.

On the other hand, punitive measures are essential to enforce the law and stop the spread of false information and malicious propaganda. Law enforcement agencies should be involved in identifying and taking action against accounts that engage in black campaigns and negative propaganda on social media. This could involve active monitoring and enforcement of violations of laws related to the spread of false information. Article 521 of Law No. 7/2017 and Article 45 paragraph 3 of Law No. 19/2016 provide the legal framework to deal with such actions. These articles provide the legal basis to punish individuals or entities involved in black campaigns, with fines or criminal penalties as forms of punishment. However, it is important to note that the law must be applied carefully and proportionally, taking into account the importance of freedom of expression and access to accurate information. Therefore, law enforcement agencies should operate with transparency and accountability, ensuring that the fundamental rights of individuals are respected in the law enforcement process.

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Conflict of Interest Statement:

The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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