



# Implementation of the Use of Force by Police Officers In Handling Mass Actions Based On The Regulation of The Chief of The Indonesian National Police Number 1 of 2009

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**Abstract:** This study examines the implementation of the use of force by Indonesian National Police (Polri) officers in handling mass demonstrations, focusing on the application of Regulation of the Chief of the Indonesian National Police Number 1 of 2009. Using a normative juridical method, the research analyzes statutory provisions, legal doctrines, and selected empirical cases from West Papua to assess compliance with the principles of legality, necessity, proportionality, and accountability. The findings indicate that, although the regulatory framework has formally adopted international human rights standards and a graduated use-of-force model, significant gaps persist between normative rules and operational practice. In several documented incidents, coercive measures such as tear gas, rubber bullets, and mass arrests were applied prematurely, without sufficient de-escalation efforts or transparent post-action accountability. These shortcomings are influenced by structural weaknesses in internal oversight, limited professional training, and an institutional culture that prioritizes security over dialogue-based policing. The study concludes that strengthening external oversight mechanisms, enhancing human rights-based training, and reforming organizational culture are essential to align police practices with democratic principles and international standards on the use of force.

**Keywords:** Human rights; Mass demonstrations; Police accountability; Use of force; Indonesia

## 1. Introduction

Law enforcement in a democratic state places the police as the organ authorized to maintain public order and security, enforce the law, and provide protection, assistance, and services to the public (Melisa & Anggraini, 2021). One crucial aspect in carrying out these duties is the use of force, particularly in situations with the potential for security disturbances, such as handling mass demonstrations. The use of force by police officers is extraordinary in nature, as it directly relates to the restriction of an individual's human rights and has the potential to cause injury, loss, and even loss of life if used excessively (Nusyafifin et al., 2024). Therefore, such actions must be based on clear legal regulations, be proportional, and prioritize respect for human rights.

The legal basis for the use of force by the Indonesian National Police (Polri) is regulated in various national legal instruments. Law Number 2 of 2002 concerning the Indonesian National Police authorizes the POLRI to carry out police actions to maintain public order and security, provided such actions comply with the principles of professionalism, proportionality, and legality. Furthermore, Regulation of the Chief of the Indonesian National Police Number 1 of 2009 concerning the Use of Force in Police Actions provides more technical details regarding the stages, limitations, and mechanisms for the use of force, including the use of physical force, blunt weapons, chemical weapons, and firearms. This regulation aims to ensure that all police actions are performed in a measured, phased manner and based on an accurate threat assessment.

This normative framework is also based on international principles, namely the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials (1990), which emphasize that the use of force must meet four main principles: legality, necessity,

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Received: Nov 30, 2025;

Revised: Dec 09 2025;

Accepted: Dec 13, 2025;

Published : Dec 30, 2025



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proportionality, and accountability (Gane & Mackarel, 1997a). The application of these principles is crucial to ensure that the police's function as law enforcers does not become a tool of repression, particularly in situations of mass protests, which are often political in nature and prone to human rights violations.

However, the use of force in practice does not always align with established regulations. In various regions of Indonesia, including West Papua (and the broader Papua region), the handling of mass protests often sparks controversy over allegations of excessive, poorly measured, or procedurally improper use of force. For example, a protest in Nabire in 2024 to commemorate a historical agreement ended in clashes, with one demonstrator reportedly injured by a rubber bullet and 95 others arrested (Mambor, 2024). In addition, on December 10, during the commemoration of Human Rights Day in Papua, there was a forced dispersal of a number of demonstrators and mass arrests by the authorities, including in cities in West Papua (Amnesty International Indonesia, 2022). The sociological characteristics of West Papua and the Papua region in general exacerbate the complexity of the situation, due to sensitive historical relationships, identity dynamics, and the intensity of protests, which are often related to issues of autonomy, welfare, indigenous peoples' rights, and political aspirations.

Field practice reveals various implementation issues, such as the use of repressive measures to disperse crowds that are deemed disproportionate; the lack of a pause or de-escalation phase before dispersal; the use of tear gas and rubber bullets in peaceful demonstrations; and mass arrests even before demonstrations have begun (Human Rights Monitor, 2025b). Intimidation of journalists during coverage of the action was also reported (Human Rights Monitor, 2025a). The lack of documentation and transparent accountability mechanisms for each use of force exacerbates the situation. In many cases, despite allegations of human rights violations, little progress has been made in independent investigations or full accountability by authorities.

A recent example of this critical situation occurred in Manokwari Regency, West Papua. In August 2025, officers from the Manokwari City Resort Command (Polresta) deployed approximately 300 personnel to anticipate potential violent demonstrations in the Amban area, demonstrating a high level of preparedness for possible demonstrations even before they occurred (Weking, 2025). The accumulation of these various empirical facts demonstrates that, although regulations such as Regulation of the Chief of the Indonesian National Police Number 1 of 2009 exist as normative guidelines, there is a significant gap between these regulations and practice on the ground, particularly in the context of handling mass demonstrations in West Papua. This situation underscores the importance of systematic academic studies to evaluate the implementation of the use of force and to critically identify factors that cause deviations from normative and human rights standards.

The gap between the provisions stipulated in Regulation No. 1 of 2009 and the practice of the use of force on the ground demonstrates the need for a comprehensive academic evaluation of the implementation of these regulations in handling mass demonstrations, particularly in West Papua, which has distinct socio-political characteristics compared to other regions. This study is crucial not only to strengthen the legal basis and internal policies of the Indonesian National Police but also to ensure that the use of force remains within a framework of respect for human rights, oriented toward citizen protection, and able to enhance public trust in the police institution.

Furthermore, there is a specific research gap regarding the implementation of police use of force in West Papua compared to previous studies in Indonesia. Most previous studies have focused on general analyses of police use of force in urban areas or national cases, without paying in-depth attention to the sociological, historical, and political characteristics of West Papua. This study emphasizes the integration of the 4P principle (legality, necessity, proportionality, accountability) in evaluating police practices, while also examining its relationship with legal and regulatory theory, including the perspectives of Friedman and Nonet & Selznick, which emphasize the interaction between formal legal norms and the social functions of institutions in the context of law enforcement.

This approach is expected to highlight factors that deviate from normative standards more systematically and critically.

The purpose of this study is to comprehensively analyze the relationship between the normative framework of Regulation of the Chief of the Indonesian National Police Number 1 of 2009, international human rights principles, and the socio-political context of West Papua, and the practice of use of force in the field. This study seeks to evaluate the extent to which the implementation of Perkap 1/2009 has taken into account the 4P principles and human rights protection, and to identify factors influencing the conformity of police practices with normative provisions and community needs. The study's findings are expected to provide relevant academic and policy recommendations to improve police professionalism and accountability in handling mass demonstrations in areas with high socio-political sensitivity.

## 2. Materials and Methods

This research uses a normative juridical method, placing law as the written norm and the primary object of study. The approaches used include a statutory approach to analyze Perkap No. 1 of 2009 and regulations related to the use of force in police actions; a conceptual approach to examine the principles of legality, necessity, proportionality, and accountability in the use of force according to legal doctrine and international human rights standards; and a case approach through examining media reports, court decisions, and documentation from civil society organizations regarding the handling of mass demonstrations in West Papua. The legal materials used in this study consist of primary legal materials, namely laws and human rights instruments; secondary legal materials, such as books, scientific articles, and research reports; and tertiary legal materials, including legal dictionaries and encyclopedias. Data analysis was conducted descriptively and qualitatively to assess the consistency between normative regulations and the practice of using force in the field.

## 3. Results and Discussion

### 3.1. *Regulations on the Use of Force by Members of the Republic of Indonesia National Police in Handling Mass Actions as Regulated in Regulation of the Head of the Republic of Indonesia National Police Number 1 of 2009 Concerning the Use of Force in Police Actions*

Regulation of the Chief of the Indonesian National Police Number 1 of 2009 concerning the Use of Force in Police Actions is a technical regulation designed to provide comprehensive guidelines for Polri members on how to use force in a measured, targeted manner, and in accordance with human rights principles. This regulation contains key principles derived from international standards, specifically the Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials (1990), which emphasize that the use of force must be carried out only when necessary, proportionate to the threat, and accountable.

Perkap 1/2009 stipulates six levels of use of force: from police presence, verbal commands, soft hand-to-hand control, hard hand-to-hand control, battering rams or other instruments, to the use of firearms, which is only justified in situations that threaten life (Hasibuan & Wibowo, 2024). This staging framework reflects the adoption of the internationally recognized escalation-of-force concept. The regulation also mandates post-action evaluation and reporting for every use of force by police officers. Normatively, it demonstrates a legal awareness that state power must be strictly constrained to prevent abuses that harm citizens. From a legal-theoretical perspective, Regulation No. 1/2009 aligns with the concept of responsive law advanced by Philippe Nonet and Philip Selznick. Responsive law serves as a corrective to repressive or purely autonomous legal models by emphasizing sensitivity to societal needs, the primacy of rights protection, and effective oversight of state authority (Nonet et al., 2017). In the context of Police Regulation No. 1/2009, principles such as proportionality, necessity, legality, and accountability demonstrate that the Indonesian National Police (Polri) is

striving to develop legal instruments that are not merely coercive but also oriented toward protecting citizens' rights. This regulation requires officers to consider alternatives to physical force before taking action. The obligation to submit accountability reports is also a characteristic of responsive law, which positions state officials as transparent and accountable parties.

The regulation can be analyzed through Roscoe Pound's theory of law as a tool of social control. According to Pound, law is not merely a collection of rules but a mechanism for controlling social behavior, including the behavior of state officials (Nonet et al., 2017). Law functions to balance individual and societal interests. In the context of the use of force, Police Regulation (Perkap) No. 1/2009 operates as a mechanism to control the exercise of state power by regulating the stages of force to prevent excessive and arbitrary actions that may violate citizens' rights. Thus, the regulation governs not only society but also the conduct of law enforcement officers. To further assess the effectiveness of this regulation, this study applies Lawrence M. Friedman's legal system theory, which posits that the success of a legal norm depends on the interaction of three elements: legal substance, legal structure, and legal culture (Friedman, 1975a).

Substantively, Police Regulation (Perkap) No. 1 of 2009 provides a comprehensive framework on the use of force based on the principles of legality, necessity, proportionality, and accountability, and incorporates international standards. However, strong normative design alone does not ensure effective implementation. Structurally, major weaknesses persist in internal oversight, operational readiness, and consistent application of SOPs. Hierarchical command procedures, uneven training in crowd control, and weak coordination between field operations and administrative policy limit the Regulation's practical effectiveness and enable procedural irregularities.

Culturally, variations in human rights awareness and a security-oriented organizational mindset continue to encourage coercive responses to mass protests. When legal culture diverges from formal norms, enforcement becomes inconsistent and prone to excessive force. Thus, the effectiveness of Perkap No. 1 of 2009 ultimately depends on the alignment of legal substance, legal structure, and legal culture.

### ***3.2 Implementation of the Use of Force by Police Officers in Handling Mass Actions in West Papua***

The implementation of the use of force in handling mass demonstrations in West Papua has not fully conformed to the normative framework of Police Regulation (Perkap) No. 1 of 2009. The socio-political context of Manokwari, Sorong, Fakfak, and Bintuni marked by historical tensions, socio-economic disparities, and fragile state-community relations requires police responses that are sensitive to local identity, politics, and perceptions of justice. However, incidents such as the Manokwari riot of August 19, 2019, as reported by the media and investigated by the National Human Rights Commission (Komnas HAM), show that police responses *仍* tended to rely on coercive force rather than prioritizing de-escalation. This gap between legal norms and practice reflects the distinct challenges of implementing use-of-force policies in West Papua.

From a legal substance perspective, Perkap No. 1 of 2009 has in fact established comprehensive norms governing the stages of the use of force. (Andes, 2025a), starting from police presence, verbal commands, hand-to-hand control, the use of non-lethal means, and the use of lethal force as a last resort. This legal substance theoretically meets the principles of legality, necessity, proportionality, and accountability as stipulated in international standards, including the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms (Gane & Mackarel, 1997b). Empirical findings show that officers' understanding of use-of-force norms remains uneven, particularly among those deployed in high-risk areas. Although most officers acknowledge basic principles, the intense psychological pressure of handling mass demonstrations in West Papua often hinders consistent application of proportionality. In addition, limited availability of non-lethal equipment such as shields, non-lethal launchers, and body cameras forces greater reliance on

physical force. Thus, despite sound legal substance, implementation remains constrained by gaps in capacity and resources.

Structurally, the police command system in West Papua remains highly hierarchical, weakening the effectiveness of internal oversight. Reporting mechanisms are predominantly top-down and lack independent review bodies to ensure transparent evaluation. Several public complaints, including allegations of police violence during student demonstrations in Manokwari in November 2022, were handled only through internal investigations without public disclosure. This weakens accountability and limits proportional sanctions. Moreover, the distribution of specially trained crowd-control personnel remains inadequate. From Friedman's perspective, such structural weaknesses significantly undermine the effectiveness of legal norms, as structure determines whether substance can function in practice (Friedman, 1975b).

Meanwhile, from a legal culture perspective, the authorities' paradigm in handling mass demonstrations in West Papua still tends to be oriented toward security and stability, rather than human rights protection (Hamonangan et al., 2024). Historical factors related to the protest movement, aspirations for independence, and clashes between authorities and the community have also influenced their mindset (Djo, 2019), so that a repressive approach is often considered the most effective measure to control the situation (Widjojo et al., 2010). For example, Amnesty International's 2020 monitoring showed several cases of tear gas and warning shots being used in situations that could have been handled through negotiation. From Friedman's legal culture theory perspective, officials' values and assumptions that are not aligned with human rights principles will cause legal norms to lose their social control (Al Kautsar & Muhammad, 2022). It means that even if the substance and structure are in place, an unsupportive legal culture will remain a major obstacle to developing the professionalism of law enforcement officers.

From the perspective of the use-of-force continuum, which emphasizes the relationship between threat level and officer response, in West Papua, the lack of objective threat indicators often leaves officers relying on subjective perceptions of potential danger, influenced by political factors and the history of conflict (Sugandi, 2008; Widjojo et al., 2010). This graduated response theory demands constant evaluation of the threat level, but stressful conditions on the ground often force officers to immediately resort to high-level strategic options (Setyawan et al., n.d.). It aligns with the National Commission on Human Rights' (Komnas HAM) findings that the use of force by officers in West Papua is still influenced by psychological and social factors, not just legal ones (Hardiyanto & Saryono, 2023). Therefore, the use of this additional theory clarifies that a normative legal approach alone is insufficient to explain officer behavior in the field.

The implementation of the use of force by officers in West Papua has not achieved the level of effectiveness expected by the national regulatory framework or international standards. The legal substance in *Perkap 1/2009* is indeed quite adequate and aligns with human rights principles, but the legal structure and legal culture remain key weaknesses (Ponto & ST, 2014). Limited internal oversight, a lack of trained personnel, and an organizational culture that still prioritizes security and stability create a significant gap between regulations and field practice. Unless structural and cultural reforms occur within the National Police (Polri) in West Papua, the implementation of the use of force will continue to face significant obstacles, and the potential for abuse will persist. Thus, increasing the capacity of the apparatus, establishing an independent oversight mechanism, and strengthening a human rights-based legal culture are absolute requirements for achieving effective use of force in handling mass demonstrations in West Papua.

### ***3.2. Conformity of the Implementation of the Use of Force by Police Members in Handling Mass Actions with the Principles of Legality, Necessity, Proportionality, and Accountability***

The implementation of the use of force by members of the Indonesian National Police in handling mass demonstrations in West Papua needs to be analyzed based on four fundamental principles as developed in national and international legal standards, namely the principles of legality, necessity, proportionality, and accountability (Butarbutar et al., 2024). These principles are the basis of Regulation of the Chief of the Indonesian National Police Number 1 of 2009 concerning the Use of Force in Police Actions, and are in line with the United Nations Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials (1990). An analysis of the application of these four principles reveals several discrepancies (gaps) between norms and practice, particularly in handling mass demonstrations in West Papua, which have a unique socio-political character.

#### **a. Principle of Legality**

The principle of legality asserts that every use of force by police officers must be based on clear legal authority, carried out in accordance with procedures, and must not conflict with norms established by laws and regulations (Dm, 2024; Tamba et al., 2025). The principle of legality requires a clear legal basis, defined authority, and procedural limits to prevent arbitrary action. Under Police Regulation (Perkap) No. 1 of 2009, the use of force is permitted only for legitimate purposes—such as self-defense, public protection, crime prevention, and the restoration of public order—and must follow a strict escalation process, from police presence and verbal commands to physical control and, as a last resort, firearms. Legality thus applies not only to the authority itself but also to strict compliance with procedural stages.

However, empirical findings indicate inconsistent enforcement of this principle in West Papua. During the Manokwari student protests in November 2022, officers were reported to have used physical force and tear gas without prior verbal warnings or negotiation, contrary to Article 5 (a) and (b) of Perkap No. 1 of 2009. Bypassing these mandatory initial steps constitutes procedural illegality, rendering the use of force legally unjustified despite the formal legality of the equipment used.

Similarly, in the August 19, 2019 Manokwari protest, officers allegedly fired warning shots without an immediate threat to life, despite the Regulation limiting firearm use to situations of serious danger. This constitutes an excessive exercise of authority and violates both domestic law and international standards, including the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms.

These findings demonstrate that the principle of legality has not been fully institutionalized in the handling of mass demonstrations in West Papua. Although the normative framework is clear, its application is often shaped by situational pressure, command urgency, and weak self-restraint. This reflects not merely individual failure but also deficiencies in oversight structures and the internalization of legal compliance within police culture.

#### **b. The Principle of Necessity (Absolute Necessity)**

The principle of necessity requires that the use of force by police officers is justified only when it is the only available option to resolve a situation that threatens public safety or order (Andes, 2025b). This principle contains two main elements: (1) the objective requirement, that force be taken because it is necessary based on the factual circumstances; and (2) the alternative requirement, that there are no other options that are safer, more effective, and do not pose unnecessary risks. International standards, particularly the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms, emphasize the use of force as a "last resort," requiring police to ensure that all de-escalation measures, negotiation, verbal communication, and conflict prevention measures have been exhausted first. Thus, the principle of necessity not only examines the justification for the use of force but also examines whether officers have made every effort to avoid the use of force.

In the context of West Papua, implementing this principle faces quite complex challenges, particularly regarding the capacity of officers to implement conflict prevention strategies and responsive crowd management (Sangari & Arnold, 2024). Although Perkap No. 1 of 2009 clearly mandates de-escalation and the prioritization of non-violent measures, empirical findings show that its implementation remains inconsistent. Amnesty International (2020) reported that in several mass demonstrations, authorities rapidly adopted coercive measures despite the continued availability of negotiation and verbal control. This reflects a persistent force-first approach that contradicts the core of the principle of necessity.

A clear example is the dispersal of protests against Special Autonomy (Otsus) in Jayapura and Manokwari in July 2021, where tear gas was used even though the situation had not escalated into a serious threat. The premature deployment of force indicates that non-violent options were not fully exhausted, demonstrating weak internalization of de-escalation practices, particularly in managing initially peaceful protests.

These findings confirm that the principle of necessity has not been fully implemented in line with national law and international human rights standards. The obstacles are both structural and cultural: uneven crowd-control training, limited communication infrastructure, and an organizational mindset that still prioritizes coercion over dialogue. Consequently, effective implementation of the necessity principle in West Papua requires not only procedural compliance but also a transformation of institutional attitudes toward humane and proportional policing.

#### c. The Principle of Proportionality

The principle of proportionality requires that police force be strictly commensurate with the level of threat and limited to what is necessary for control. Within the use-of-force continuum, officers are obligated to apply force sequentially, from police presence and verbal commands to physical control and, only as a last resort, the use of special tools or lethal force. Proportionality is therefore assessed not merely by outcomes, but by the reasonableness of threat evaluation at each stage.

Empirical findings indicate that proportionality is the principle most frequently violated in mass demonstrations in West Papua. During the 2019 Manokwari protests, the use of warning shots and tear gas was disproportionate to the initial situation, which involved non-aggressive crowds expressing opinions. The early deployment of high-level force reflects a premature leap in the force continuum and weak threat assessment, with tear gas also carrying a high potential to escalate disorder.

These findings are reinforced by KontraS (2021), which documented multiple incidents of excessive use of batons and shields against largely unarmed and non-resisting protesters. Such actions violate Article 7 of Perkap No. 1 of 2009, which mandates the least injurious measure. The use of force absent a credible threat undermines both proportionality and the legitimacy of police action.

From Friedman's legal system perspective, these violations reflect weaknesses in both legal structure and legal culture. Weak internal oversight fails to produce deterrence, while a persistent coercive mindset normalizes physical force as a primary tool of control. Consequently, the imbalance between threat and response in West Papua confirms that proportionality has not been fully internalized in police practice and requires structural and cultural reform to align enforcement with modern human rights-based policing.

#### d. Principle of Accountability

The principle of accountability requires that every use of force by police officers be legally, administratively, and ethically accountable. Perkap No. 1 of 2009 mandates written reporting, documentation, and evaluation for each use of force, especially when it results in injury, death, or property damage, and is reinforced by Government Regulation No. 2 of 2003 on police discipline. Accountability thus functions not merely as an ad-

ministrative requirement, but as a safeguard to ensure professionalism and human rights compliance.

Empirical findings in West Papua, however, reveal serious implementation gaps. Allegations of excessive force are predominantly handled through closed internal mechanisms, with limited transparency regarding investigative outcomes. The 2022 Manokwari student protest case illustrates this problem, as no official findings have been publicly disclosed. This opacity weakens substantive accountability and undermines public trust.

Structurally, internal oversight bodies such as Propam and the Police Ethics Commission operate within the same institutional hierarchy as the officers they supervise, creating inherent conflicts of interest. As documented by KontraS, low transparency and weak sanctions allow violations to escape meaningful accountability. From Friedman's perspective, these weaknesses reflect deficiencies in both legal structure and legal culture: structurally, the absence of independent external oversight weakens checks and balances; culturally, a strong esprit de corps and closed institutional mindset prioritize institutional image over public accountability.

Accordingly, the accountability principle in the use of force has not yet functioned effectively in West Papua. Weak documentation, limited transparency, ineffective internal oversight, and a closed organizational culture demonstrate the urgent need for stronger external supervision, greater public transparency, and cultural reform to align police accountability with the rule of law and international human rights standards.

#### 4. Conclusions

Overall, this study shows that although Regulation of the Chief of Staff Number 1 of 2009 provides a comprehensive normative framework for the use of force through the principles of legality, necessity, proportionality, and accountability, its implementation in handling mass demonstrations in West Papua still faces various structural, procedural, and cultural obstacles. In practice, several actions by officers were found that were not fully aligned with the stages of the use of force and human rights principles, such as the use of tear gas, warning shots, and physical actions carried out without prior negotiation or that were disproportionate to the level of threat. Furthermore, weak oversight mechanisms, minimal transparency of internal audit results, and an organizational culture that still tends to be coercive have contributed to the lack of optimal implementation of the principle of accountability. Thus, there is a clear gap between normative provisions and practice in the field, necessitating strengthening the capacity of officers, increasing the effectiveness of supervision, and transforming the organizational culture so that the use of force is truly in line with legal principles and human rights protection.

Based on these findings, some of the most important and measurable policy recommendations include: reforming the design of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the use of force, making them more detailed and based on de-escalation stages; strengthening officer training related to human rights and crowd control; mandatory implementation of body cameras for all crowd control operations; and establishing an independent external oversight mechanism to ensure transparency and accountability of officer actions. These recommendations are targeted at the Indonesian National Police (Polri), specifically the Propam Division, the Crowd Control Unit, and the Regional Police, with a short- to medium-term implementation period of approximately 1–3 years, with regular reviews of effectiveness.

This study has several limitations that should be noted. First, access to official data related to reports on the use of force and the results of internal audits is still limited. Second, the study lacks direct interviews with officers or affected communities, which would have allowed for a more comprehensive field perspective. Third, the study focused only on West Papua, so generalizations to other regions in Indonesia require caution. Based on these limitations, relevant further research agendas include comparative studies on the implementation of Perkap 1/2009 between regions with different socio-political characteristics, surveys of public perceptions of the police, and analysis of

the impact of internal Polri policies on the professionalism of officers and the protection of human rights.

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