

# UGM discussion on removal of presidents leads to death threats

*University officials condemn threats as attacks on academic freedom*

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Yogyakarta's Gadjah Mada University (UGM) has canceled a planned online discussion about the constitutional mechanism for removing a president from office after students and a professor received death threats and faced other forms of intimidation.

The Constitutional Law Society (CLS), the student community that organized the discussion, said the event, scheduled for Friday, was meant to be a response to recent public discussions about the possibility of dismissing the President for what some perceive as his inadequate handling of the COVID-19 outbreak.

"The aim of the discussion was to inform the public about the dismissal of a president from a constitutional law point of view," CLS head Aditya Halimawan said in a written statement obtained by *The Jakarta Post* on Saturday.

On Thursday, a poster of the discussion went viral after a man named Bagas Pujilaksono, who identified himself as an UGM academic, wrote an opinion article denouncing the discussion as an act of treason.

According to the CLS state-

ment, on Friday, two members of the discussion's organizing committee started to receive threats in various forms including text messages, phone calls and the hacking of their accounts.

Individuals claiming to be members of the Klaten branch of the Islamic mass organization Muhammadiyah sent death threats to the committee members' parents through text messages.

"Tell your child they will be charged with treason," one message said. "I will kill your whole family if you can't teach your child."

"Can you tell your child? Or teach your child to be a good person?" another message read. "Please, just turn yourself in. I will kill your whole family."

Muhammadiyah Klaten has denied that it was in any way involved in the messages and condemned such threats as violations of academic freedom.

"The regional leadership of Muhammadiyah Klaten urges the National Police to conduct a complete investigation into the crimes of impersonation, defamation, threats, terror and intimidation toward the organizers of the discussion," the group said in a statement on Sunday.

One of the students also had their WhatsApp account hacked on Friday. The hacker sent a message saying that the discussion had been canceled to a group of around 300 participants. The hacker also kicked out all participants from the group afterward.

The other student's Gojek account was hacked and was used to order GoCar and GoFood services to the student's house. Aditya's Instagram account and the CLS's official Instagram account were hacked as well, though Aditya managed to recover his account.

Indonesian Islamic University (UII) constitutional law professor Nimatul Huda, who was a speaker at the discussion, was also reportedly threatened.

"Professor Nimatul called me on Thursday night, and reported that several people had visited her house at 11 p.m. and knocked on her door and rang the bell repeatedly until 6 a.m.," UII's School of Law dean Abdul Jamil said in a television interview. He added that Nimatul also received a death threat via text message.

Following the threats, the committee officially canceled the discussion on Friday for security reasons.

UGM's School of Law dean Si-

git Riyanto condemned the acts of intimidation as well as those who said the discussion was an act of treason.

"This is a serious threat to academic freedom. These people arbitrarily and brutally defined the discussion as treason even before it started. The students are now experiencing psychological shock from the threats," Sigit said in a written statement.

He said he appreciated and supported the students' initiative and contribution to offering different perspectives through discussion.

"It's also a part of freedom of speech. The School of Law also encourages the public to respect freedom of speech and academic freedom," Sigit said.

The National Commission on Human Rights (Komnas HAM) also condemned the incident and urged the police to find and arrest the perpetrators.

"This is important so that serious crimes like this are not repeated," the commission said in a statement on Saturday.

National Police spokesperson Insp. Gen. Argo Yuwono said on Sunday that the police had yet to receive an official report about the intimidation, but were ready to start an investigation once it did.