

# 125 people killed in stampede at Indonesian soccer stadium

Owen Howell  
3 October 2022

A stampede at an Indonesian soccer stadium on Saturday night has left at least 125 people dead and 323 injured. The crush of thousands of spectators hurrying to escape the arena was triggered after police fired tear gas into the crowd. The horrific event is one of the world's deadliest sports stadium disasters on record.

The Kanjuruhan Stadium, in the city of Malang, East Java, hosted a soccer match where home team Arema FC was defeated by their rivals Persebaya Surabaya. After the game, the pitch was invaded by an estimated 3,000 fans of the losing side, local reports claimed. Soldiers and police in riot gear, armed with shields and batons, stepped onto the ground before numerous tear gas canisters were fired on the pitch and into the stands.

Footage posted on social media showed clouds of the gas engulfing the stadium and police beating spectators as they ran to escape. Some were seen carrying those injured to safety. Many were crushed, suffocated, or trampled when the crowd of 42,000 ran to the stadium's only exit.

Malang hospitals were quickly overwhelmed by an influx of over 300 injured people rushed to emergency. Many victims died on the way to hospital or during treatment from trauma, shortness of breath and lack of oxygen. The head of nearby Kanjuruhan Hospital told Metro TV that some victims had sustained brain injuries and that the dead included a five-year-old child.

At least 32 children, aged between 3 and 17, were reported among the dead. These included two brothers, aged 14 and 15, whose family had brought them to their first soccer match. Their elder sister told Reuters: "My family and I didn't think it would turn out like this."

While most victims died in hospital, 34 people died inside the stadium, after being brought to the soccer team doctor for treatment. Their bodies were carried off by players of the Arema FC team. Two police officers also died, East Java police chief Nico Afinta told the press.

Witnesses and victims spoke to local media about the

brutality of the police. "Many of our friends lost their lives because of the officers who dehumanised us," said Muhammad Rian Dwicahyono, 22, in hospital with a broken arm. "Many lives have been wasted."

In a BBC interview, Muhamad Dipo Maulana, 21, claimed that police beatings of a few initial pitch invaders after the match caused more spectators to flood the ground in protest. Dipo said he heard over 20 tear gas shots fired "continuously and fast" all around the stadium.

Graffiti were painted on the stadium's walls the day after, highlighting the police's role in the disaster. Messages included: "Savage Police," "ACAB" [All Cops Are Bastards], and "My siblings were killed—investigate thoroughly."

This anger was reflected on social media, with many Twitter posts outraged by the police's actions going viral just hours after the stampede. "Firing tear gas in a closed space full of humans is a serious violation," read one tweet that was liked 11,000 times.

Mourners gathered outside the Malang stadium on Sunday to lay flowers for the dead, with a candle-lit vigil held that night. In the capital city of Jakarta, hundreds attended a similar vigil, carrying placards that read "Stop Police Brutality!" The demonstrators chanted repeatedly "Murderer! Murderer!" and placed police tape around a major Jakarta soccer stadium.

In a bid to quell public anger, Indonesian President Joko Widodo announced token investigations. He told authorities to re-evaluate security at soccer matches and ordered the suspension of the Indonesian Premier League until an investigation was completed. The government announced it would form an independent fact-finding team, including academics, soccer experts, and government officials.

Meanwhile, world soccer's governing body FIFA ordered the Football Association of Indonesia to send an investigative team to Malang, as the possession or use of

“crowd control gas” by stewards or police is a violation of FIFA guidelines.

In addition, the incident raises serious questions of safety regulations at the stadium. Indonesia’s chief security minister Mahfud MD wrote in an Instagram post Sunday that 42,000 tickets had been issued for a stadium that holds a maximum of 38,000 people.

The above-capacity crowd, moreover, could only leave the stadium through one exit. The lack of safety at the Kanjuruhan Stadium is symptomatic of the much broader problem in Indonesia of inadequate investment in social infrastructure and public safety. The neglect is the result of the subordination of social need to profit interests by successive Indonesian governments.

Widodo said Saturday’s stampede should be the “last soccer tragedy in the nation.” According to Chanell News Asia, 78 people have died in soccer-related incidents over the past three decades.

Violent outbreaks at sporting events, often between fan bases of clubs with strong rivalries, have always been a distorted expression of underlying social tensions. In Indonesia, the decades-long social immiseration of workers and rural toilers has accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic, which has not only killed hundreds of thousands, but thrown tens of millions into poverty. Global inflation is driving up the prices of basic goods and is fuelling protests and strikes.

The death toll in the police-provoked stampede is one of the worst tragedies at football stadiums in the world.

In 1964, a total of 320 people were killed and more than 1,000 injured during a stampede at a Peru-Argentina Olympic qualifier in Lima.

In the United Kingdom, a crush developed at the Hillsborough stadium in Sheffield in 1989, resulting in the deaths of 97 Liverpool fans attending a match against Nottingham Forest.



To contact the WSWS and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**