Indonesian vice president resigns

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Indonesian Vice President Gibran Rakabuming Raka announced in a social media post on Thursday that he was stepping down from his post amid a dispute over his educational qualifications and moves toward his impeachment in the country's parliament. His resignation marks the breakdown of the de facto alliance between Gibran's father—former President Joko Widodo—and Prabowo Subianto, the current president, that underpinned the Prabowo-Gibran ticket in the 2024 elections.

Gibran claimed that his resignation was unrelated to claims that he did not hold the high-school equivalency certificate needed to stand for high office, saying that he took the decision to "safeguard the government's capacity to function." However, the announcement took place on the same day the country's House of Representatives was due to discuss holding a parliamentary inquiry aimed at Gibran's impeachment over his educational qualifications.

Widodo defeated Prabowo twice for the presidency in the 2014 and 2019 elections. But after Prabowo challenged the 2019 result and organised street protests, Widodo installed the notorious ex-general as his defence minister. Unable to run for a third term, Widodo cut a deal with Prabowo to provide tacit support for his campaign in return for Gibran being the vice-presidential candidate on the ticket.

Gibran's candidacy was surrounded by controversy from the outset. Widodo's eldest son, whose only previous political experience was as mayor of Surakarta, was only 36 at the time. The Constitutional Court waived the requirement that vice-presidential candidates must be at least 40 years of age, provoking public outrage. Widodo's brother-in-law, who headed the court that made the decision, was disciplined but Gibran was still allowed to run for office.

As the agreement with Widodo began to fray and Prabowo moved against Widodo loyalists in his administration, Gibran again came under fire—this time over his educational qualifications. Gibran attended a secondary school in Singapore and UTS Insearch in Australia before a bachelor's degree through the Management Development Institute of Singapore.

In early October, however, the Constitutional Court ruled that there was "no convincing evidence" that Gibran possessed a formal qualification showing he had completed high school. At the same time, the court did not annul or overturn his election as vice-president as requested by the 12 petitioners but left the door open to his impeachment. A Supreme Court ruling on October 30 declared Gibran's high-school equivalency certificate invalid.

Gibran resigned after some 120 members of the House of Representatives moved on Wednesday to initiate a parliamentary inquiry into the matter. Prabowo hypocritically told the press that he had "regretfully" accepted Gibran's resignation, adding that it was "for the greater good, for the sake of the nation and the people of Indonesia." Prabowo has 14 days in which to propose two candidates to take over as vice president. The upper house of parliament will then convene within 60 days to choose their preferred candidate.

Prabowo, having relied on Widodo's political support to win the presidency, is clearly seeking to consolidate his grip on power. Over the past year, Prabowo has begun to remove Widodo loyalists from his administration amid mounting public opposition and protests over his economic policies. The first case challenging Gibran's educational credentials took place in September 2025 in a district court. Sri Mulyani Indrawati, who served as Widodo's finance chief for eight years, was abruptly sacked in the wake of mass protests last year over a large increase in the monthly accommodation allowance paid to parliamentarians.

Just last week, three senior police generals were

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arrested on charges of illegal wire-tapping, including General Listyo Sigit Prabowo, who is closely aligned with Widodo and was appointed as national police chief in 2021. Prabowo retained Listyo as national police chief until last month when he was moved sideways to the post of presidential chief-of-staff, where he could be closely monitored.

The three are accused of the unauthorised surveillance of cabinet officials, politicians, journalists, civil society leaders and business executives in 2025–26 and then attempting to cover up their activity by deleting wiretap records. If convicted, they would face prison terms of up to 10 years. Prabowo, however, has suggested that the actions of the three police generals could amount to "treason"—a charge with far greater penalties.

Three senior politicians from the Indonesian Solidarity Party (PSI), who serve in Prabowo's cabinet, collectively announced their resignations from the party on Monday, saying that they wanted to concentrate on their ministerial responsibilities. The PSI is led by Kaesang Pangarep, Widodo's youngest son, and could function as a political vehicle for the former president. Widodo and Gibran were expelled from the Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) after backing Prabowo and Gibran against the PDI-P ticket in the 2024 elections.

However, far from being in a position of strength, Prabowo is confronting a mounting economic, social and political crisis, including continuing protests over his flagship free school meals program that has been plagued by cost blowouts, high-level corruption allegations and thousands of cases of food poisoning. Prabowo's popularity ratings have plummeted from 81.2 percent in November last year to just 44.5 percent this October.

Hundreds of students and civil society group supporters protested on October 28 in Jakarta and other Indonesian cities against the school food program and the administration's handling of the ongoing forest fires—the worst in more than a decade—that have cast smoke haze over much of Indonesia as well as neighbouring Malaysia and Singapore.

While gross domestic product (GDP) growth grew by 5.47 percent year-on-year in the third quarter, it was heavily dependent on government spending, including on the school meals program that has received 75 trillion rupiah ($US4.1 billion) in funding. In August 2026, real wages dropped year-on-year. Nominal wages for workers and employees increased by 2.7 percent but official inflation rose by 3.2 percent, with food inflation climbing to 5 percent. Prices for some grades of fuel were held constant but rising government subsidies put further pressure on the budget. Non-subsidised grades of fuel rose by more than 30 percent in June, provoking protests.

The more than half the workforce who rely on poorly paid, insecure jobs in the informal sector, are the hardest hit. According to a World Bank report in March 2026, even based on the government's austere national poverty line, more than 8 percent of the population or about 23 million people live in poverty. The World Bank in 2025 estimated that 3.7 percent of Indonesians live in extreme poverty, 6.9 percent lack access to basic sanitation and 4.2 percent to limited-standard drinking water.

Superficially, Prabowo can count on a parliamentary coalition that includes seven of the eight parties with representation in parliament. However, as economic problems, social tensions and political opposition increase, this coalition, held together by ministerial posts and parliamentary perks, will inevitably start to fray. A Reuters report late last month noted that two of the coalition partners had decided to distance themselves from the deeply unpopular free school meals program and a third feared the scheme would hurt its electoral prospects. Prabowo's own Gerindra party holds just 15 percent of parliamentary seats.



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