

Legal Certainty in the Termination of Prosecution Based on Restorative Justice: A Study at the Gunungsitoli District Prosecutor's Office

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ABSTRACT

This study examines legal certainty in the implementation of the termination of criminal prosecutions based on restorative justice, with a particular focus on the jurisdiction of the Gunungsitoli District Prosecutor's Office. As a state governed by the rule of law, Indonesia maintains a legal enforcement system that seeks to balance the principles of legal certainty, justice, and expediency. The enactment of Attorney General Regulation (PERJA) No. 15 of 2020 concerning the Termination of Prosecution Based on Restorative Justice provides a juridical basis for prosecutors, as holders of the dominus litis principle, to exercise prosecutorial discretion in resolving criminal cases. Employing a normative juridical and empirical socio-legal research approach with a descriptive-analytical design, this study analyzes the legal framework, implementation process, and challenges encountered in the application of restorative justice. The findings indicate a significant increase in the settlement of criminal cases through restorative justice at the Gunungsitoli District Prosecutor's Office, rising from four cases in 2023 to nine cases in 2024. The principal obstacles include the failure to satisfy substantive and procedural requirements, conflicts of interest arising from disproportionate compensation demands, and the absence of willingness among the parties to reach an amicable settlement. To address these challenges, the study recommends strengthening the capacity of Prosecutor Facilitators, enhancing institutional coordination and harmonization, and establishing restorative justice counseling centers to facilitate the psychological recovery of both victims and offenders. These measures are expected to improve the effectiveness of restorative justice while ensuring greater legal certainty in the exercise of prosecutorial discretion.

Keywords: Legal Certainty, Restorative Justice, Termination of Prosecution, Prosecution Service, *Dominus Litis*.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a state governed by the rule of law, as expressly mandated by Article 1 Paragraph (3) of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. Law is positioned as a body of rules containing commands and prohibitions designed to regulate social order and, therefore, possesses a binding and imperative character that must be obeyed (Rahardjo, 2005, p. 38). The concept of the rule of law requires the realization of justice based on applicable positive law. Law functions as the cohesive force of a civilized society, established in such a manner that individuals and public authorities can maintain social order and pursue collective objectives. Violations of legal norms inevitably disrupt social stability and result in legal harm (Meuwissen, 2008, p. 20).

Within Indonesia's criminal justice system, the Office of the Attorney General of the Republic of Indonesia occupies a central role in the enforcement of criminal law and serves as the sole institution authorized to carry out prosecutions. Its institutional status is explicitly regulated under Law No. 11 of 2021 concerning Amendments to Law No. 16 of 2004 on the Office of the Attorney General of the Republic of Indonesia. Prosecution is defined as the act of

a Public Prosecutor in submitting a criminal case to the competent district court in accordance with the procedures prescribed by law, with the request that the case be examined and adjudicated by a judge in judicial proceedings.

The dynamics of modern society have contributed to an increasing rate of criminal activity, resulting in a growing number of criminal cases being processed through adjudicative mechanisms before the courts. Conventionally, the settlement of criminal cases through judicial proceedings has been regarded as the primary means of achieving justice. However, empirical realities demonstrate that criminal adjudication often fails to reflect substantive justice. An approach that is excessively oriented toward retributive punishment may generate dissatisfaction among the parties involved and, in certain circumstances, even foster feelings of resentment and retaliation.

In response to these challenges, the Government of Indonesia, through Presidential Regulation No. 18 of 2020 concerning the National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN) 2020–2024, identified restorative justice as an essential instrument within the national criminal law reform agenda (Media Justitia, 2025). Pursuant to this policy direction, law enforcement institutions have progressively developed internal guidelines for the implementation of restorative justice. The Indonesian National Police adopted this approach through National Police Regulation No. 8 of 2021, while the Supreme Court introduced similar measures through the Decree of the Director General of the General Courts Agency No. 1691/DJU/SK/PS.00/12/2020.

Within the prosecution stage, the absolute authority vested in the prosecution service places prosecutors in the position of *dominus litis*, or controllers of criminal proceedings, as reflected in Article 139 of the Indonesian Criminal Procedure Code (KUHAP) (Surachman, 1996, p. 83). Prosecutors possess the authority to determine whether a criminal case should proceed to trial or be discontinued. The legal basis for terminating a prosecution is provided in Article 140 Paragraph (2) Letter a of the Criminal Procedure Code, which authorizes prosecutors to discontinue a prosecution where there is insufficient evidence, where the alleged conduct does not constitute a criminal offense, or where the case must be closed as a matter of law (Tampoli, 2016, p. 128).

The exercise of this prosecutorial authority was subsequently operationalized through Attorney General Regulation (PERJA) No. 15 of 2020 concerning the Termination of Prosecution Based on Restorative Justice. This regulatory framework emphasizes the resolution of criminal disputes through the restoration of the parties' original condition, rather than focusing exclusively on imprisonment as a punitive response (Akub & Sutiawati, 2018, p. 7). The implementation of PERJA No. 15 of 2020 has received considerable attention within the jurisdiction of the Gunungsitoli District Prosecutor's Office. Available data indicate a notable increase in the number of criminal cases resolved through restorative justice mechanisms, from four cases in 2023 to nine cases in 2024. This development is consistent with the Attorney General's policy directive promoting a more humane model of law enforcement that prioritizes conscience, fairness, and proportionality.

Nevertheless, the implementation of prosecution termination based on restorative justice continues to face a range of technical and sociological challenges. These include difficulties in satisfying substantive and procedural requirements, disparities in interpretation among law enforcement officials, and disagreements between offenders and victims regarding compensation

and restitution. Against this background, this article seeks to examine the legal framework governing restorative justice-based termination of prosecution, the process of its implementation, and the challenges and potential solutions associated with its application within the jurisdiction of the Gunungsitoli District Prosecutor's Office.

METHODS

This study employs a combined normative juridical and empirical socio-legal research approach. Normative juridical research is directed toward examining positive legal provisions governing prosecutorial authority and restorative justice through a comprehensive review of legal materials and relevant literature. In contrast, the empirical socio-legal approach focuses on the practical application (*law in action*) of normative regulations within the legal phenomena under investigation (Muhammad, 2004, p. 134; Fajar & Achmad, 2007, p. 280). The research adopts a descriptive-analytical design, aiming to provide an accurate and factual description of the implementation of restorative justice while simultaneously analyzing the phenomenon through the lens of legal theories, principles, and normative prescriptions (Soekanto, 2005, pp. 10–11). This approach enables the study not only to describe the operation of restorative justice mechanisms but also to critically assess their conformity with the objectives of legal certainty and justice.

The data utilized in this study consist of both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were obtained directly from the field through in-depth interviews with the Head of the General Crimes Division of the Gunungsitoli District Prosecutor's Office. Secondary data were collected from legal materials classified into three categories. Primary legal materials include statutory regulations such as the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, the Indonesian Criminal Procedure Code (KUHAP), Law No. 16 of 2004 concerning the Office of the Attorney General as amended by Law No. 11 of 2021, and Attorney General Regulation (PERJA) No. 15 of 2020 concerning the Termination of Prosecution Based on Restorative Justice. Secondary legal materials consist of legal literature, scholarly publications, and academic journals relevant to the subject matter, while tertiary legal materials include legal dictionaries and other reference sources that assist in clarifying legal concepts and terminology. The collected data were analyzed qualitatively through the systematic organization of legal materials, followed by teleological and grammatical interpretation of relevant legal norms. Subsequently, legal arguments were constructed comprehensively in order to evaluate the implementation of restorative justice-based prosecution termination and its implications for legal certainty within the Indonesian criminal justice system (Moleong, 2008, p. 48).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Legal Framework of Case Termination Based on Restorative Justice

The theoretical foundation of criminal case resolution is centered on the three fundamental legal values proposed by Gustav Radbruch: justice (*gerechtigheit*), legal certainty (*rechtssicherheit*), and expediency (*zweckmäßigkeit*) (Radbruch, 1950, pp. 107–109; Mertokusumo, 2019, p. 145). The theory of legal certainty, which is rooted in the positivist tradition, emphasizes the necessity of clear legal norms to prevent arbitrary actions by state authorities (Ali, 2009, p. 217). Utrecht further explained that legal certainty requires the existence

of general and predictable regulations, enabling individuals to understand the boundaries of lawful conduct and to anticipate the legal consequences of their actions as well as the potential exercise of state power (Syahrani, 1999, p. 23). In the context of restorative justice, Lon L. Fuller articulated eight principles of legality, emphasizing that laws must be publicly promulgated, prospective rather than retroactive, clearly formulated, internally consistent, and implemented in a manner consistent with their stated objectives (Fuller, 1964, pp. 54–58).

The concept of restorative justice is also closely associated with the Progressive Law Theory developed by Satjipto Rahardjo. Progressive law rejects the rigidity of legal positivism and views law as a moral and humanitarian institution designed to serve human beings rather than the reverse (Rahardjo, 2004, p. 17). Its principal tenets include the commitment of law to substantive justice, social welfare, responsiveness to societal needs, and the expectation that law enforcement officials move beyond a purely textual interpretation of statutes (*black-letter law*) in order to capture the deeper philosophical purposes underlying legal norms.

Restorative justice itself represents a victim-centered approach to criminal justice that seeks to repair the harm caused by criminal conduct through reconciliation among victims, offenders, and the broader community (Sarre, 2003, p. 97). Howard Zehr argues that crime should not merely be understood as a violation against the State; rather, it constitutes a violation of people and the social relationships that bind communities together (Zehr, 2015, p. 21). Consequently, restorative justice emphasizes healing, accountability, and the restoration of social harmony rather than solely focusing on punishment. Muladi identifies several fundamental characteristics of restorative justice. These include viewing crime as an interpersonal conflict, emphasizing responsibility for future repair, encouraging processes based on normative dialogue and negotiation, prioritizing restitution and reconciliation, and reducing social stigma through restorative measures (Akub & Sutiawati, 2018, pp. 9–10). This approach is further supported by the principles promoted by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), which emphasize voluntariness, non-discrimination, confidentiality, community protection, proportionality in law enforcement responses, and the reintegration of both victims and offenders as the primary objectives of restorative processes.

Within Indonesia's Criminal Justice System, prosecutorial discretion to discontinue cases derives from the Opportunity Principle (*Asas Oportunitas*), as reflected in Article 14 Letter h of the Criminal Procedure Code. This principle provides the legal basis for the Attorney General's authority to set aside criminal cases in the public interest. The current regulatory framework governing restorative justice is dispersed across several institutions, each of which has established its own legal instruments:

1. Law No. 11 of 2012 on the Juvenile Criminal Justice System mandates the implementation of diversion at every stage of the criminal justice process for offenses punishable by less than seven years of imprisonment and involving non-recidivist offenders.
2. National Police Regulation No. 8 of 2021 establishes substantive requirements for the termination of criminal investigations, including the absence of public unrest, the lack of potential social conflict, and the exclusion of offenses such as terrorism and corruption from restorative justice mechanisms.
3. Supreme Court Regulation No. 1 of 2024 provides guidelines for judges in adjudicating minor criminal offenses involving losses below IDR 2,500,000 or offenses carrying a maximum penalty of five years' imprisonment.

4. Attorney General Regulation No. 15 of 2020 grants explicit legal authority to Public Prosecutors to terminate prosecutions based on restorative justice, subject to clearly defined and proportionate substantive and procedural requirements.

The existence of multiple regulatory instruments governing restorative justice reflects Indonesia's commitment to integrating restorative principles into the criminal justice system. Nevertheless, the fragmentation of these regulations across different institutions necessitates greater harmonization in order to prevent inconsistencies in implementation. Without such harmonization, disparities in the application of restorative justice may emerge among law enforcement agencies, potentially undermining legal certainty and diminishing public confidence in the fairness and predictability of the criminal justice system (Arief, 2018, pp. 211–214).

Implementation Process of Prosecution Termination at the Gunungsitoli District Prosecutor's Office

The authority of the Gunungsitoli District Prosecutor's Office to implement prosecution termination based on restorative justice derives from powers delegated by the Attorney General. Within Indonesia's criminal justice system, prosecutors occupy the position of *dominus litis*, exercising primary control over criminal proceedings from the pre-prosecution stage through the execution of judgments (Harahap, 2015, pp. 36–38). This authority does not constitute unrestricted discretion; rather, it represents an institutionalized form of discretion that is carefully regulated to prevent arbitrary decision-making and abuse of power.

The implementation of restorative justice at the Gunungsitoli District Prosecutor's Office demonstrates a positive trend. Four criminal cases were successfully resolved through prosecution termination in 2023, increasing to nine cases in 2024. This achievement placed the Gunungsitoli District Prosecutor's Office in the highest rank for the effectiveness of restorative justice case resolution within the jurisdiction of the North Sumatra High Prosecutor's Office (Top Metro News, 2025).

Pursuant to Articles 4 and 5 of Attorney General Regulation (PERJA) No. 15 of 2020, prosecution termination based on restorative justice is subject to strict requirements:

1. The suspect must be a first-time offender.
2. The offense must be punishable by a fine or imprisonment of no more than five years.
3. The material loss resulting from the offense must not exceed IDR 2,500,000.

In practice, the Public Prosecutor assumes the role of a Facilitating Prosecutor (*Jaksa Fasilitator*). The mediation process begins with the formal summoning of the suspect, the victim, family members, and relevant community representatives, including customary leaders, religious leaders, and village officials. Where the suspect voluntarily acknowledges responsibility and expresses willingness to compensate for the harm caused, the Facilitating Prosecutor offers a restorative settlement mechanism in a neutral manner, free from coercion or undue pressure.

The implementation process generally follows two distinct stages. First, an Attempt at Reconciliation, whereby the prosecutor formally offers the possibility of restorative settlement. If the offer is rejected by either party, the case proceeds directly to court. Second, a Reconciliation Process, during which the prosecutor facilitates negotiations concerning compensation and restoration within a fourteen-day period following the transfer of responsibility at the prosecutor's office. If an agreement is successfully reached, the prosecutor prepares a Peace Agreement Report, drafts a legal assessment memorandum, and submits a recommendation for

prosecution termination through a hierarchical approval process involving the Head of the District Prosecutor's Office, the Head of the High Prosecutor's Office, and ultimately the Deputy Attorney General for General Crimes (*JAMPIDUM*), whose approval is required before prosecution may be formally terminated.

Challenges and Solutions in the Implementation of Restorative Justice

Despite its growing success, the implementation of prosecution termination based on restorative justice at the Gunungsitoli District Prosecutor's Office continues to face several legal and sociological challenges.

1. Regulatory and Procedural Constraints

Proposals for restorative justice are frequently rejected due to mandatory legal restrictions. Such obstacles arise where the suspect has a prior criminal record, where the offense exceeds the statutory sentencing threshold, or where other formal requirements established by PERJA No. 15 of 2020 are not satisfied.

2. Cultural and Emotional Conflicts of Interest

Resistance from victims remains a significant challenge. In many cases, victims are unwilling to forgive offenders because of perceived attacks on personal dignity, unresolved interpersonal conflicts, accumulated resentment from previous disputes, or a desire to see the offender experience formal punishment through imprisonment. These emotional considerations often complicate efforts to achieve consensus.

3. Imbalance in Restitution Demands

Negotiations frequently fail because victims demand compensation that exceeds the financial capacity of the offender. Conversely, certain offenders demonstrate little willingness to assume moral responsibility or express genuine remorse, thereby undermining the restorative process. Such imbalances create barriers to achieving mutually acceptable agreements.

4. Limitations in Mediator Capacity

The communication, negotiation, and mediation skills of prosecutors acting as facilitators are not uniformly developed. Inadequate facilitation may hinder productive dialogue and reinforce public perceptions that restorative justice merely provides impunity for offenders rather than accountability and restoration. Consequently, the effectiveness of restorative justice is closely linked to the professional competence of facilitating prosecutors.

To address these challenges, several strategic measures should be undertaken by the Gunungsitoli District Prosecutor's Office and higher prosecutorial institutions.

1. Strengthening the Capacity of Facilitating Prosecutors

The prosecution service should establish continuous legal education programs focusing on mediation psychology, empathetic communication, conflict resolution, and negotiation techniques. Prosecutors must undergo a paradigm shift from functioning solely as case processors to becoming effective conflict resolvers capable of facilitating restorative outcomes.

2. Harmonization Among Criminal Justice Institutions

Closer coordination between police investigators and public prosecutors is essential to identify cases suitable for restorative justice at the earliest stages of criminal proceedings.

Such cooperation would reduce procedural duplication and minimize unnecessary burdens on victims and offenders.

3. Active Involvement of Customary Leaders

Given the strong influence of customary values and kinship structures within the social fabric of Nias and Gunungsitoli, the participation of traditional leaders is crucial. Their involvement can assist in reducing emotional tensions, assessing culturally appropriate compensation, and providing social legitimacy to reconciliation agreements reached by the parties.

4. Development of Technical Standard Operating Procedures

The Gunungsitoli District Prosecutor's Office should formulate more comprehensive internal Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) governing timelines, documentation standards, verification procedures, and confidentiality safeguards. Such measures would promote administrative consistency and enhance legal certainty in the implementation of restorative justice.

5. Establishment of Non-Penal Counseling Institutions

To ensure that restorative agreements produce genuine psychological restoration rather than merely administrative settlement, the criminal justice system should be supported by specialized counseling institutions. These institutions could assist victims in recovering from psychological trauma while facilitating the social reintegration of offenders, thereby reducing the likelihood of recidivism and contributing to sustainable conflict resolution.

CONCLUSION

Based on the juridical analysis and empirical findings, several principal conclusions can be drawn. First, the legal framework governing the termination of criminal prosecutions at the Gunungsitoli District Prosecutor's Office is founded upon a paradigm shift toward progressive law, which prioritizes restoration over retribution. Attorney General Regulation (PERJA) No. 15 of 2020 serves as a legal certainty instrument that legitimizes the exercise of prosecutorial authority under the *dominus litis* principle, enabling prosecutors to discontinue prosecutions in pursuit of substantive justice. Second, the implementation of restorative justice is carried out by Facilitating Prosecutors following the transfer of case files at Stage II of the criminal process. The mechanism emphasizes inclusive and voluntary mediation involving the relevant parties and is followed by a hierarchical reporting and approval process designed to ensure accountability and prevent potential abuse of prosecutorial discretion.

Third, the principal challenges encountered in the implementation of restorative justice include the failure to satisfy formal legal requirements, particularly where offenses exceed the prescribed sentencing threshold, as well as the inability of the parties to reach consensus due to disproportionate compensation demands or the absence of a genuine willingness to reconcile. These obstacles demonstrate that the effectiveness of restorative justice is influenced not only by legal norms but also by sociological, cultural, and psychological factors affecting both victims and offenders. To address these challenges, a comprehensive strategy is required. Such a strategy should include strengthening mediation and negotiation competencies among prosecutors, expanding the participation of customary leaders in dispute resolution processes, and integrating social recovery mechanisms through the establishment of restorative counseling institutions.

These measures are expected to enhance the effectiveness of restorative justice while simultaneously reinforcing legal certainty, social harmony, and public confidence in the administration of criminal justice.

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