

Legal Standing Reform in Constitutional Adjudication: Reconciling Foreign Nationals' Rights with Constitutional Protection in Indonesia

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Article Info

Received: 2025-01-12

Revised: 2025-03-10

Accepted: 2025-03-16

Keywords:

**Legal Standing,
Constitutional Review,
Constitutional Rights,
Legal Protection.**

Abstract

This research aims to analyze the normative conflict between the legal standing restriction in Article 51(1) of the Constitutional Court Law and the principle of equality before the law, as well as to formulate a reconstructed concept of legal standing regulations that ensures greater justice for foreign citizens in constitutional review processes at the Indonesian Constitutional Court. The study was conducted through comprehensive research and analysis of legal principles, constitutional norms, and constitutional law doctrines related to the concept of legal standing and the principle of equality before the law. The research findings indicate that the restriction of legal standing for foreign citizens in judicial review creates a legal vacuum in the protection mechanism of foreign citizens' constitutional rights. This study presents a novel finding in the form of a reconstructed concept of Article 51(1) of the Constitutional Court Law, which expands legal standing to foreign citizens under the condition that they can demonstrate a nexus between their constitutional injury and the implementation of the law under review.

I. Introduction

The concept of the rule of law adopted by Indonesia, as enshrined in Article 1(3) of the 1945 Constitution, mandates that all aspects of life in social, national, and state affairs, including governance, must consistently be based on law. This fundamental principle establishes that every person, whether Indonesian citizens or foreign nationals within Indonesia's jurisdictional territory, holds equal standing before the law and is entitled to equitable legal protection (Bima et al., 2023). The Constitutional Court, as the guardian of the constitution, possesses strategic authority to conduct judicial review of laws against the 1945 Constitution. This authority manifests the principle of checks and balances within Indonesia's constitutional system while serving as a mechanism for protecting citizens' constitutional rights from potential legislative arbitrariness in law-making processes and multiple interpretations that may lead to erroneous court decisions (Disantara, 2021). Empirical evidence demonstrates that the legal standing restriction in judicial review, as regulated in Article 51(1) of the Constitutional Court Law, has created discrimination and injustice for foreign citizens while violating the very principle of equality before the law. This is exemplified by the concrete case of Chika Agbasi, a Nigerian citizen who became entangled in an allegedly fabricated narcotics criminalization case in Indonesia, where her constitutional rights were violated, yet she lacked access to judicial review mechanisms. Furthermore, Chika Agbasi was powerless to petition for a review of Article 51(1) of the Constitutional Court Law itself, as she encountered the same procedural deadlock as a foreign national, despite this being the very article that had infringed upon her rights guaranteed by Article 28D(1) of the 1945 Constitution - the provision she sought to challenge.

Conversely, Indonesian citizens would not suffer constitutional injury from the application of Article 51(1) of the Constitutional Court Law, thus creating a legal vacuum (*rechtsvacuum*) regarding who can and/or has the right to petition for judicial review of Article 51(1) of the Constitutional Court Law? The restriction of legal standing exclusively to Indonesian citizens raises critical questions about Indonesia's commitment to upholding the principle of equality before the law as guaranteed by Article 28D(1) of the 1945 Constitution (Wibowo et al., 2021). The phrase 'every person' in this article, both grammatically and systematically, encompasses not only Indonesian citizens but also foreign nationals within Indonesia's jurisdictional territory whose rights have been violated by a law (Riza & Sibarani, 2021). This problematic becomes increasingly complex when considered in light of Indonesia's

obligations as a member of the international community to ensure human rights protection for all persons without discrimination. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, both ratified by Indonesia, explicitly state that access to justice is a fundamental right that cannot be restricted based on citizenship (Weissbrodt & Divine, 2015).

The restriction on foreign citizens' standing to file constitutional review petitions to the Constitutional Court has created a legal vacuum (*rechtsvacuum*) in the protection mechanism of their constitutional rights (Koritelu & Dewi, 2020). This condition potentially creates systemic injustice, where foreign nationals whose constitutional rights are violated by a law lack effective legal remedies to defend their rights. In the context of the modern rule of law, restricting access to constitutional review based on citizenship status can be viewed as a form of discrimination that contradicts the universal principle of access to justice (Samartzis, 2021). Particularly when the contested law has direct implications for foreign nationals' fundamental rights guaranteed by the constitution (Cassola et al., 2016). The urgency to reconstruct legal standing provisions for constitutional review petitioners becomes increasingly pressing given the escalating cross-border interactions in the era of globalization (Kingsbury et al., 2005). The presence of foreign nationals across various sectors of life in Indonesia, whether as workers, investors, or temporary residents, necessitates legal protection guarantees equivalent to those provided to Indonesian citizens (Riyadi et al., 2023). From a theoretical perspective, the restriction of legal standing for foreign nationals in constitutional review raises questions about the coherence of Indonesia's legal system (Sidharta et al., 2017).

On one hand, the constitution guarantees equality before the law for all persons; on the other hand, the Constitutional Court Law restricts foreign nationals' access to defend their constitutional rights through judicial review mechanisms (Tibaka & Rosdian, 2018). Given the complexity of these issues, comprehensive research is necessary to formulate legal solutions that can accommodate the protection of foreign nationals' constitutional rights while preserving national legal sovereignty. The reconstruction of legal standing provisions for constitutional review petitioners becomes crucial in realizing a more inclusive and equitable constitutional justice system. The Constitutional Court's existence as the protector of citizens' constitutional rights carries the logical consequence that every person potentially experiencing constitutional injury due to the implementation of a law should have equal opportunity to defend their rights (Hryb et al., 2023). Access restrictions based on

citizenship status create disparities in legal protection that contradict modern rule of law principles, raising the fundamental question: what is the actual urgency for restricting foreign nationals' standing?

Contemporary developments in constitutional law demonstrate a paradigm shift from state sovereignty towards constitutional sovereignty (Kuo, 2009). Within this paradigm, the constitution as the supreme law must provide protection to every person within the state's jurisdiction, without discriminating based on citizenship status. Article 27(1) of the 1945 Constitution, which states that 'all citizens shall be equal before the law and government,' must be interpreted progressively in contemporary context. The modern interpretation of this article should not be confined to a textual reading that limits equality guarantees to Indonesian citizens alone, but must encompass all citizens of any nation within Indonesia's jurisdiction. Empirical evidence demonstrates that foreign nationals encountering legal issues in Indonesia frequently face obstacles in accessing constitutional justice (Syamsumardian et al., 2020). The case of Chika Agbasi, a Nigerian citizen in a narcotics proceeding, serves as a concrete reflection of how legal standing restrictions can impede access to justice and potentially violate constitutional rights.

In the human rights context, restricting legal standing based on citizenship can be viewed as a form of discrimination that contradicts the principle of non-discrimination guaranteed by various international legal instruments (Orgad, 2021). As a member of the international community, Indonesia has an obligation to ensure human rights protection without discrimination (Conclusions of the Workshop on the Role of National Human Rights Institutions in the Promotion and Implementation of the Yogyakarta Principles, 2010).

Indonesia's constitutional practice demonstrates inconsistency in the application of the principle of equality before the law (Lutfiyah, 2021). On one hand, foreign nationals are granted rights to file civil lawsuits, stand as defendants in criminal courts (and ad hoc tribunals), submit bankruptcy petitions, file administrative court claims, and even become parties (as divorce petitioners) in religious courts provided they are Muslim. On the other hand, they are denied access to defend their constitutional rights through the mechanism of judicial review at the Constitutional Court. The urgency to reconstruct legal standing provisions for constitutional review is further grounded in the consideration that laws, as legislative products, potentially affect the rights and obligations of every person within Indonesia's jurisdiction. Therefore, constitutional control mechanisms through judicial review should be

accessible to any party potentially experiencing injury (Chalid, 2017). From a theoretical perspective, the reconstruction of legal standing in constitutional review must consider three fundamental aspects: first, the guarantee of constitutional rights protection for all persons; second, the principle of national legal sovereignty; and third, the effectiveness of the constitutional justice system in ensuring constitutional supremacy. The complexity of these issues requires in-depth analysis not only from the perspective of constitutional law but also from the viewpoints of administrative law and international law. The interrelation among these various legal fields becomes crucial in finding the appropriate formulation for reconstructing legal standing provisions at the Constitutional Court. Based on this exposition, this research addresses a fundamental question: How can the legal standing provisions for foreign nationals in constitutional review at the Constitutional Court be reconstructed to align with the principle of equality before the law and modern constitutionalism?

II. Research Method

This research employs a normative legal research methodology examining legal principles and norms within Indonesia's constitutional system (Irwansyah & Yunus, 2021), particularly regarding legal standing provisions for constitutional review at the Constitutional Court. The legal materials utilized comprise primary legal sources, including legislation and Constitutional Court decisions, and secondary legal sources consisting of academic journals, books, and research findings in constitutional law and constitutional rights. The analysis employs both statutory and conceptual approaches to examine the coherence between legal standing restrictions on foreign nationals and the principle of equality before the law. Systematic and teleological interpretations are utilized to formulate a reconstruction of legal standing provisions that ensures greater justice and aligns with developments in modern constitutionalism.

III. Result and Discussion

Philosophical and Constitutional Analysis of Foreign Nationals' Legal Standing

Restrictions in Constitutional Review

The fundamentalism of the rule of law adopted by Indonesia mandates the guarantee of human rights protection for all persons without exception (Peerenboom, 2003). This principle is reflected in the Preamble of the 1945 Constitution, which affirms Indonesia's commitment to protecting the entire Indonesian nation and homeland, philosophically encompassing protection for every person within Indonesia's jurisdiction (Disantara et al., 2023). The legal standing restriction in Article 51(1) of the Constitutional Court Law, which grants only Indonesian citizens the right to petition for judicial review, reflects a discrepancy between the legal ideal (*rechtsidee*) embodied in the constitution and its normative implementation. This is evidenced by the concrete case of Chika Agbasi, a Nigerian citizen who was unable to petition for judicial review despite suffering constitutional injury. The concept of legal sovereignty in the modern state has shifted from state-centered sovereignty toward human rights-centered sovereignty (Tinnevelt & Verschraegen, 2006). Within this paradigm, state power legitimacy is not solely based on territorial sovereignty but also on its capacity to protect the human rights of every person within its jurisdiction. A systematic interpretation of Article 28D(1) of the 1945 Constitution, which employs the phrase 'every person,' indicates that the constitution does not intend to restrict access to justice based on citizenship status. The meaning of 'every person' in this context must be interpreted as encompassing every legal subject within Indonesia's jurisdiction.

From a philosophical perspective, the restriction of legal standing for foreign nationals contradicts the principle of universal justice that underpins the modern rule of law. John Rawls in 'A Theory of Justice' asserts that justice must be fair and should not be constrained by artificial barriers such as citizenship status (Hrubec, 2010). Analysis of the Constitutional Court's original intent reveals that the authority for judicial review was designed as a constitutional control mechanism to protect fundamental rights guaranteed by the constitution. Access restrictions based on citizenship do not align with this spirit and potentially create a vacuum in constitutional rights protection. In the context of modern constitutionalism, judicial review represents a manifestation of the principle of constitutional supremacy, which requires control mechanisms over legislative products. Restricting access to this mechanism based on citizenship status creates a loophole in the constitutional rights protection system. The philosophical construction of legal standing restrictions in the Constitutional Court Law also raises issues concerning the coherence of Indonesia's legal system. While Indonesia recognizes and protects universal human rights on one hand, it restricts foreign nationals' access to defend these rights through judicial

review mechanisms on the other.

Juridical Implications of Foreign Nationals' Legal Standing Restrictions on Access to Constitutional Justice

The restriction of legal standing for foreign nationals in constitutional review has created significant juridical implications for Indonesia's constitutional rights protection system. This is evidenced by the emergence of a legal vacuum in the protection mechanism for foreign nationals when confronting laws that potentially violate their constitutional rights. The case of Chika Agbasi, a Nigerian citizen in a narcotics case, provides a concrete reflection of how legal standing restrictions for judicial review petitioners have created systemic injustice within Indonesia's legal system. Although she could demonstrate potential constitutional injury resulting from the narcotics law's implementation, her lack of legal standing as a petitioner resulted in the absence of an effective legal mechanism to defend her constitutional rights. At a practical level, this restriction also raises issues concerning the effectiveness of law enforcement and human rights protection in Indonesia. Foreign nationals who become victims of injustice or fabricated criminalization due to the implementation of a law lack adequate legal remedies to defend their constitutional rights. The inability of foreign nationals to access judicial review mechanisms also has implications for the development of Indonesian constitutional law. The perspectives and experiences of foreign nationals that could potentially enrich Constitutional Court jurisprudence cannot be accommodated due to legal standing restrictions.

Another equally significant implication concerns Indonesia's image within the international community. The restriction of access to constitutional justice based on citizenship status may be viewed as a form of discrimination that contradicts Indonesia's international commitments to human rights protection (Hadiprayitno, 2010). In the context of international relations, these restrictions also potentially affect the investment climate and foreign investors' confidence in Indonesia's legal system. The absence of effective constitutional rights protection mechanisms for foreign nationals may serve as a negative consideration in investment decisions (Wells & Ahmed, 2006). Systemically, legal standing restrictions for foreign nationals create inconsistencies within Indonesia's legal system, as they can be parties in civil proceedings, defendants in criminal courts (and ad hoc tribunals), file for bankruptcy petitions, submit administrative court claims, and even become parties (as divorce petitioners) in religious courts if they are Muslim, yet they lack legal standing as petitioners in constitutional review at the Constitutional

Court and their access is restricted.

Reconstructing Foreign Nationals' Legal Standing in Constitutional Review: Toward a More Equitable Constitutional Justice System

The reconstruction of legal standing provisions for foreign nationals in constitutional review represents a strategic step toward creating a more inclusive and equitable constitutional justice system. This reconstruction must be grounded in the principle of equality before the law while maintaining aspects of national legal sovereignty. The proposed reconstruction formula involves revising Article 51(1) of the Constitutional Court Law to grant legal standing to foreign nationals under more specific and measurable requirements. Foreign nationals petitioning for judicial review must demonstrate a nexus or causal relationship between their constitutional injury and the implementation of the law under review. Constitutional injury requirements for foreign nationals must fulfill five cumulative criteria: first, the existence of constitutional rights guaranteed by the 1945 Constitution; second, these rights are considered violated by the law's implementation; third, the injury is specific and actual or at least potential; fourth, there exists a causal relationship (causal verband) between the injury and the law's implementation; and fifth, the possibility that if the petition is granted, the constitutional injury will not occur. Procedurally, foreign nationals' constitutional review petitions can be filed through legal representation by Indonesian advocates licensed to practice before the Constitutional Court. This ensures adequate understanding of Indonesia's legal system and Constitutional Court procedures.

This reconstruction also encompasses granting the Constitutional Court authority to conduct preliminary examinations of foreign nationals' legal standing. This stage is crucial to ensure that foreign nationals' judicial review petitions have strong constitutional foundations and do not violate national legal sovereignty principles. For maintain balance between protecting foreign nationals' constitutional rights and national interests, substantive limitations must be established regarding the types of laws foreign nationals can challenge. Laws concerning state sovereignty, defense security, and foreign relations may be exempted from foreign nationals' review. Another crucial aspect of this reconstruction is strengthening the Constitutional Court's role as constitutional interpreter in assessing foreign nationals' constitutional injuries. The Court must develop comprehensive judicial doctrine regarding constitutional injury proof standards for foreign nationals. The proposed reconstruction model also emphasizes transparency and accountability in processing foreign nationals' judicial review petitions. This can be

achieved through mandatory publication of more detailed and comprehensive legal considerations in Constitutional Court decisions. The reconstruction of foreign nationals' legal standing must be accompanied by strengthening the Constitutional Court's institutional capacity, including enhancing constitutional judges' understanding of international law aspects and comparative constitutional law. This is crucial as foreign nationals' judicial review often involves international law issues. Implementing this reconstruction requires a paradigm shift in Indonesia's constitutional justice system from state-centered to rights-centered. This change aligns with modern constitutionalism developments emphasizing universal human rights protection.

Challenges and Implementation Strategies for Foreign Nationals' Legal Standing Reconstruction in Indonesia's Constitutional System

The implementation of legal standing reconstruction for foreign nationals in constitutional review faces several fundamental challenges within Indonesia's constitutional system. Resistance to expanding constitutional review access to foreign nationals may emerge from various stakeholders who adhere to traditional state sovereignty paradigms. The legal-political aspect presents a distinct challenge, given the necessity of amending the Constitutional Court Law through legislative processes in Parliament. The complexity of political processes and diverse interests within the legislative body may influence both the substance and timeline of implementing foreign nationals' legal standing reconstruction. Technical-juridical challenges also arise regarding the mechanism for proving foreign nationals' constitutional injury. New doctrine and jurisprudence development is necessary to establish clear parameters for assessing foreign national petitioners' legal standing legitimacy, including standards for proving the nexus between constitutional injury and law implementation. The potential misuse of judicial review mechanisms by foreign nationals for purposes contrary to state sovereignty must be anticipated. This necessitates developing an effective screening system during preliminary examination without creating excessive bureaucratic barriers. Institutionally, implementing this reconstruction requires strengthening the Constitutional Court's capacity in both human resources and infrastructure. Enhancing constitutional judges' and supporting staff's competence in handling cases involving foreign nationals becomes a crucial prerequisite.

The international relations dimension requires consideration, as this reconstruction's implementation will affect the international community's perception of Indonesia's legal system. An effective communication strategy is needed to explain the rationale and limitations of foreign nationals' legal standing reconstruction. Legal culture challenges are

equally significant, considering the necessary mindset shift among legal practitioners and society regarding foreign nationals' position in Indonesia's legal system. Education and socialization become key to building understanding about the urgency of expanding constitutional justice access to foreign nationals. The complexity of this reconstruction's implementation also relates to the need for harmonization with various related legislation, including laws on citizenship, immigration, and judiciary. A comprehensive approach is necessary to avoid overlapping or conflicting norms within Indonesia's legal system.

IV. Conclusion

The restriction of foreign nationals' legal standing in constitutional review as regulated in Article 51(1) of the Constitutional Court Law has created discrimination and inequity within Indonesia's constitutional justice system. This restriction contradicts the principle of equality before the law guaranteed by Article 28D(1) of the 1945 Constitution and creates a vacuum in the protection mechanism for foreign nationals' constitutional rights. Philosophical and constitutional analysis demonstrates that restricting legal standing based on citizenship status contradicts the universal principle of access to justice and modern constitutionalism developments. This is reinforced by concrete cases showing how foreign nationals experiencing constitutional injury lack access to defend their rights through judicial review mechanisms. The juridical implications of restricting foreign nationals' legal standing impact not only at the individual level but also Indonesia's legal system as a whole. The absence of constitutional control mechanisms accessible to foreign nationals creates inconsistencies in constitutional rights protection and potentially affects international confidence in Indonesia's legal system. The reconstruction of foreign nationals' legal standing provisions in constitutional review represents a strategic step toward realizing a more inclusive and equitable constitutional justice system. The proposed reconstruction model includes expanding legal standing to foreign national petitioners with specific requirements and effective control mechanisms to maintain balance between constitutional rights protection and national legal sovereignty. Based on these conclusions, it is recommended that legislators revise Article 51(1) of the Constitutional Court Law to include provisions granting legal standing to foreign national petitioners in constitutional review. This revision must be accompanied by detailed regulations regarding requirements and mechanisms for foreign nationals' judicial review petitions, including preliminary examination systems and constitutional injury proof standards. The Constitutional Court must also develop comprehensive judicial doctrine regarding foreign national petitioners' legal standing assessment and strengthen

institutional capacity to implement legal standing reconstruction effectively. This includes enhancing constitutional judges' competence in international law aspects and developing progressive jurisprudence in protecting foreign nationals' constitutional rights.

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