



LEGAL PROTECTION OF DIGITAL COPYRIGHT IN THE SOCIAL MEDIA ERA (CASE STUDY OF INDRA LESMANA'S MUSIC LABEL DISPUTE)

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the legal protection of digital copyrighted works in the social media era, focusing on a case study of the dispute between musician Indra Lesmana and a music label. Using a normative juridical approach and a case study method, this study examines the legal provisions of Law Number 28 of 2014 concerning Copyright and its implementation in the context of digital distribution through platforms such as YouTube and streaming services. The results of the study indicate that although the moral and economic rights of creators have been clearly regulated in regulations, digital distribution practices still leave room for violations, primarily due to outdated licensing contracts that are not adaptive to technological developments. The Indra Lesmana dispute is a concrete example of the weak bargaining position of creators, when labels use digital systems such as Content ID and DRM to claim exclusive rights to copyrighted works. This study concludes that legal protection in the digital realm is not yet fully effective and that contract reformulation and more responsive dispute resolution mechanisms are needed to ensure that creators' rights remain protected amidst the massive expansion of digital distribution.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The digital era has fundamentally changed the way music is distributed and consumed. No longer reliant on traditional labels, musicians can now distribute their work directly through digital platforms like Spotify, YouTube, and TikTok. By 2024, global recording industry revenues are expected to reach US\$36.2 billion, with 61.8% of this revenue coming from digital streaming, equivalent to US\$22.2 billion (Tencer 2025). Streaming volume is also soaring, with 2.29 trillion on-demand music streams in just the first six months of 2024 (Dredge 2024).

These changes are opening up significant opportunities for independent creators. In the United States, 62.1% of musicians with 1-10 million streams are independent (Edney 2024). Independent musicians' revenue on Spotify reached nearly US\$4.5 billion in 2023, a fourfold increase from 2017 (TheGrooveCartel 2024). However, this transformation also presents new legal challenges, particularly regarding ownership, licensing, and control of distribution. As open distribution becomes more widespread, copyright conflicts become more complex and difficult to manage.

Despite significant growth in independent artists, major labels still dominate the digital music industry. In 2024, major labels controlled approximately 62.1% of all artists, with 1-10 million on-demand streams in the United States (Edney 2024). This dominance strengthens labels' control over distribution, monetization, and access to works.

The main problem arises from unequal agreements between musicians and labels. Disputes such as Four Tet vs. Domino and Salt N Pepa vs. Universal reflect how legacy contracts created before the streaming era often do not cover digital rights equitably, leading to conflicts over royalty and distribution distribution.

Furthermore, labels have revoked access to copyrighted works, as in the case of Indra Lesmana, where the label blocked works that were still morally the property of the creator. Practices such as demonetization and blocking of content without the creator's consent demonstrate the weak protection of digital copyright and the lack of control creators have over their own work in the social media era (Nadhira 2025).

According to Intellectual Property, in 2023, veteran musician Indra Lesmana sued a record label for allegedly blocking and taking over access to his music on various digital platforms, including YouTube and other streaming services (Intellectual Property 2022). This case attracted public attention because it involved the moral and economic rights of a creator to works created decades ago. In his statement, Indra asserted that although he was the original creator of the work, the label used digital management systems such as Content ID and DRM (Digital Rights Management) to claim exclusive rights and even remove the work from platforms, without his consent or coordination as the creator. In fact, legally speaking, creators retain inherent moral rights (Nadhira 2025).

This dispute reflects the unequal bargaining position of creators in long-term contracts created in the pre-digital era. These contracts often do not explicitly regulate digital exploitation and do not include renegotiation mechanisms, thus providing loopholes for labels to maintain unilateral control in the era of open distribution (Restuningsih et al. 2021).

Normatively, Law No. 28 of 2014 concerning Copyright recognizes the moral and economic rights of creators (Entjarau et al. 2021). However, in practice, outdated licensing agreements that fail to anticipate technological developments often become the basis for conflict. Many creators lose access and control over their work due to the absence of renegotiation clauses in their contracts (Mahendra and Neltje 2023).

Technologies such as YouTube Content ID and DRM systems are often misused by labels to claim exclusive rights over works that should be the creator's domain, including in terms of distribution, monetization, and access control. As a result, legal protection for creators in the digital ecosystem remains weak, especially when confronted with the commercial power of major labels (Ranti Fauza Mayana et al. 2024; Restuningsih et al. 2021).

Amid the rapid growth of social media as a primary means of distributing creative works, legal protection for digital copyright has become an increasingly pressing issue to examine. Platforms like YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram have become not only creative spaces but also new arenas of conflict between creators, users, and exclusive rights holders such as music labels or digital agencies.

This research is important because it aims to analyze the applicable legal provisions regarding digital copyright, particularly in the context of the exploitation of works through social media. This includes examining the effectiveness of Law Number 28 of 2014 concerning Copyright in protecting the moral and economic rights of creators when their works are used, redistributed, or monetized without permission.

Furthermore, this study will examine the extent to which the Indonesian legal system is able to protect creators in conflicts with third parties, such as music labels or digital platforms. Cases such as the dispute between Indra Lesmana and his record label demonstrate that existing protection mechanisms still leave gaps, particularly in terms of oversight and control of long-term licenses entered into before the digital era.

This research highlights the importance of reinterpreting or revising existing contracts to better adapt to the new realities of distribution and monetization of works. Without adaptation to current social media conditions, many creators will continue to be legally vulnerable, even though they remain the moral owners of their works. Therefore, this study is not only legally relevant, but also has practical value in providing a more progressive and responsive direction for legal protection to the challenges of the digital era.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This research employs a normative juridical approach based on literature review and analysis of applicable positive legal norms, particularly in the context of digital copyright protection in the social media era (Santosa 2014). This approach was chosen because the research object is closely related to written legal regulations, such as Law Number 28 of 2014 concerning Copyright and its implementing regulations. Furthermore, this research

employs a case study method to more specifically examine the dispute between musician Indra Lesmana and his music label, as a concrete example of copyright conflict in the digital music industry.

The data sources used in this research are secondary data, including primary legal materials in the form of legislation, secondary legal materials such as legal literature, scientific journals, and legal news articles relevant to the case under study. A search was conducted of various documents describing the legal context, chronology of the dispute, and arguments used by each party in the Indra Lesmana case. Furthermore, data was also obtained from a search of international legal provisions and contractual practices in the global digital music industry.

The collected data was analyzed using a descriptive-qualitative analysis method, which involved outlining, interpreting, and assessing the content of applicable laws and regulations, then comparing them with the reality of practice. The analysis was conducted to identify the extent to which Indonesian positive law protects the moral and economic rights of creators in conflict situations with third parties, particularly digital labels or platforms. In this context, the case of Indra Lesmana serves as a key platform to illustrate the gap between legal norms and practice and to assess the effectiveness of existing legal mechanisms.

Through this approach, the research is expected to provide a comprehensive overview of the current state of legal protection for digital copyrighted works in the social media era, while also offering recommendations for improvements in both regulatory aspects and contractual practices that are more responsive to developments in technology and digital distribution.

3. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

The Indra Lesmana vs. Music Label Dispute Case

The dispute between veteran musician Indra Lesmana and two record labels, Union Artis and SMD Record (formerly Pelangi Prima Sejati), is a prime example of a copyright conflict that has arisen amidst the digital transformation of music distribution. On March 16, 2022, Indra officially filed a lawsuit with the Central Jakarta Commercial Court under Case Number 22/Pdt.Sus-HKI/Merek/2022, alleging copyright infringement by the two labels (Intellectual Property 2022).



Figure 1. Indra Lesmana Case (Intellectual Property 2022)

In the lawsuit, Indra is seeking Rp 60 billion in damages, consisting of Rp 50 billion in material losses and Rp 10 billion in immaterial losses. This lawsuit was filed in response to the blocking and seizure of access to his works on various digital platforms, including YouTube and other streaming services. Union Artis is accused of failing to restore Indra's economic rights to his music and unilaterally transferring those rights to SMD Records. SMD Records is also alleged to have distributed the music without the creator's permission (Sari 2025).

Indra Lesmana believes these actions constitute a violation of his moral and economic rights guaranteed by Law Number 28 of 2014 concerning Copyright. Although he is the original creator of the works, the label allegedly used digital systems such as Content ID and Digital Rights Management (DRM) to claim exclusive rights and monopolize distribution, without involving the creator in the licensing process or profit sharing. Ironically, these actions were taken against works that, historically and morally, clearly belong to the creators (Susapto 2022).

In various public statements, Indra, along with several other musicians, also rejected the idea of eliminating several articles in the Copyright Law, such as Article 18, Article 30, and Article 122. He emphasized that these articles play a strategic role in protecting creators' positions in licensing contracts, particularly in the pre-digital era, where outright sale schemes were prevalent. Article 18, for example, allows creators to regain their economic rights after a certain period of time, as a form of fairness and protection against prolonged exploitation.

This dispute highlights a serious gap between applicable legal provisions and digital music industry practices, particularly regarding the unequal bargaining position of creators relative to licensees. In addition to testing the effectiveness of digital copyright enforcement, this case also emphasizes the importance of reformulating legacy licensing contracts and strengthening creators' legal positions in the face of increasingly complex and uncontrolled digital distribution dynamics.

This incident also highlights the gap between regulations and practices in the digital music industry. Although Law Number 28 of 2014 concerning Copyright protects the moral and economic rights of creators, in practice, many long-term licensing contracts do not contain explicit clauses regarding digital distribution. The absence of a mechanism for renegotiation or contract revision results in creators losing control of their works on new platforms, even though, legally, moral rights to a work are non-transferable (Jannah 2018).

This case illustrates how digital content management systems can become a new tool of dominance for labels, allowing them to maintain unilateral claims over works, even after the contract period is deemed morally or economically terminated. In this context, legal action through litigation is the only effective way for creators to reclaim their rights.

Thus, the Indra Lesmana dispute is not simply a dispute between artists and labels, but reflects a structural crisis in copyright protection amidst the music industry's transformation into the digital era. There is a need for updated legal approaches, renegotiation of outdated contracts, and education for creators to enable them to confront exploitative practices hidden within modern digital systems.

Study of Legal Protection in the Era of Social Media

The results of this study indicate that normatively, the Indonesian legal system has provided a framework for the protection of digital copyrighted works, particularly through Law Number 28 of 2014 concerning Copyright. The law regulates two main types of rights held by creators, namely moral rights and economic rights. Moral rights are permanent and non-transferable, which guarantees that the creator's name remains included in every use of the work (Pamungkas 2019). Meanwhile, economic rights allow creators to gain profits from the use of their work, either through licenses, royalties, or other forms of commercialization. (Arya Utama, Titin Titawati, And Aline Febryani Loilewen, "Legal Protection of Song and Music Copyright According to Law Number 28 of 2004," *Ganec Swara* 13, no. 1 (2019): 78, <https://doi.org/10.35327/gara.v13i1.65>.

However, in digital distribution practices, particularly through social media and streaming platforms, the implementation of legal protection for copyright still faces various serious obstacles. This study found that one of the main causes of conflict is outdated contracts created before the emergence of digital distribution platforms. These contracts generally do not explicitly regulate distribution rights on platforms like YouTube, Spotify, or TikTok. As a result, when copyrighted works are distributed through digital media, many labels or licensees exploit this loophole to claim exclusive rights without involving or informing the creator.

One clear illustration of this problem is the dispute involving Indra Lesmana, a senior Indonesian jazz musician, and two music labels: Union Artis and SMD Records. In the case filed with the Central Jakarta Commercial Court in March 2022 under case number 22/Pdt.Sus-HKI/Merek/2022, Indra sued both labels for alleged copyright infringement. He is seeking Rp 60 billion in damages, comprising material and immaterial losses, due to the blocking and seizure of access to his work on various digital platforms.

In his lawsuit, Indra alleges that the label has used Content ID and Digital Rights Management (DRM) systems to claim exclusive rights to works that are morally and historically his property as the creator. This type of digital control allows the label to block or monetize works without involving the original creator. This action not only eliminates potential economic benefits for the creator but also undermines recognition of the creator's own creative identity. This demonstrates that although moral rights are legally guaranteed, their protection and enforcement mechanisms remain weak in the digital realm.

Indra Lesmana also highlighted the importance of certain articles in the Copyright Law, such as Articles 18, 30, and 122, which provide creators with protection against the often detrimental practice of outright sale contracts. Article 18, for example, allows creators to reclaim their economic rights after a certain period of time. Indra, along with several musicians, rejected the idea of repealing these articles, considering them the last line of defense protecting creators from long-term label domination (Handayani 2019; Munawar and Effendy 2016; Suhayati 2014).

This study also shows that music label dominance lies not only in financial and contractual power, but also in control of the digital distribution system. Labels have access to digital control tools such as DRM and Content ID, which are difficult for individual creators to match. As a result, creators are often in a weak bargaining position, even though they still legally hold the rights to their works.

This study also found that digital copyright dispute resolution mechanisms in Indonesia remain ineffective and inadaptive. Litigation remains the only option available to creators seeking to defend their rights. However,

this process is not only time-consuming and costly, but also unfriendly to creators without adequate legal resources. The lack of a rapid and specific alternative resolution mechanism for digital copyright cases exacerbates creators' position in conflicts with labels or digital platforms.

Other findings indicate that many creators lack a comprehensive understanding of their rights, particularly in the context of digital distribution. This lack of understanding leaves them vulnerable to unfair contracts or unilateral transfers of rights. This low level of legal literacy further reinforces the structural inequality between creators and licensees.

Based on these findings, this study concludes that although normative legal protection is available, its implementation in the era of social media and digital distribution still leaves numerous weaknesses. To address this challenge, regulatory reform and reinterpretation of legacy contracts are needed to better adapt to technology and minimize the disadvantage of creators. Furthermore, systematic efforts are needed to increase creators' legal awareness and provide a dispute resolution mechanism that is rapid, affordable, and oriented towards substantive justice in the context of digital copyright distribution.

4. CONCLUSION

This research concludes that, normatively, legal protection for digital copyrighted works in Indonesia has a fairly strong foundation through Law Number 28 of 2014 concerning Copyright. This law explicitly regulates the moral and economic rights of creators, including protection against exploitation of works in digital media. However, in its implementation, there are still several gaps between legal provisions and content distribution practices in the social media era. The dispute between Indra Lesmana and a music label is a concrete example of this issue. Although legally, Indra is the original creator and should have full control over his work, in practice, the label claims exclusive rights to the work through digital systems such as Content ID and Digital Rights Management (DRM). This demonstrates that digital distribution systems can easily be exploited by licensees to seize access, monetization, and control over works without directly involving the creator. This conflict arises because many music licensing contracts created before the digital era do not include explicit clauses regarding digital distribution and lack fair renegotiation mechanisms. As a result, creators lose bargaining power and lack a sufficient legal basis to revise or update the agreement to reflect technological developments. Furthermore, the mechanism for resolving digital copyright disputes in Indonesia still relies on costly and inefficient litigation. A fast, adaptive, and creator-friendly dispute resolution system is lacking. This exacerbates the plight of creators who lack legal resources or a thorough understanding of their rights. Therefore, it can be concluded that legal protection for digital copyrighted works remains ineffective, particularly when faced with the dynamics of content distribution in the social media era. This protection requires strengthening both regulatory through revisions or adjustments to existing contracts and institutionally, through the provision of more responsive dispute resolution mechanisms. Creators' legal awareness also needs to be increased so they can independently defend their rights and avoid being easily trapped in exploitative practices disguised as contractual legality.

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