

The Geopolitics of the Strait of Hormuz and the Plight of Traditional Fishermen Amidst the Fuel Price Crisis

Stella Rosita Anggraini¹

¹ Universitas Islam Indonesia, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

* Correspondence e-mail; stellasita21@gmail.com

* WhatsApp Number; 081357072745

Article history

Submitted: 2026/06/12; Revised: 2026/07/21; Accepted: 2026/08/17

Abstract

Geopolitical dynamics in the Strait of Hormuz have significantly impacted global energy supply stability and triggered a rise in world oil prices, directly burdening importing nations like Indonesia. This impact profoundly affects the capture fisheries sector particularly traditional fishers who rely heavily on fuel for their fishing operations. This study aims to comprehensively examine the impact of fuel price hikes resulting from the situation in the Strait of Hormuz on traditional fishers. The research employs a normative legal study method with a socio-legal approach, utilizing statutory and conceptual approaches alongside an analysis of geopolitical causality. The findings indicate an urgent need to strengthen legal policies through targeted fuel subsidy mechanisms, energy crisis mitigation systems for the fisheries sector, and the integration of energy, maritime, and social protection policies. These strategic measures are crucial for ensuring legal certainty, achieving equity, and safeguarding the welfare of traditional fishers the group most vulnerable to global economic volatility.

Keywords

Fuel Subsidies, Geopolitics, Global Oil Prices, Legal Protection, Strait of Hormuz, Traditional Fishermen.



© 2026 by the authors. This is an open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY SA) license, <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>.

INTRODUCTION

The Strait of Hormuz is one of the international shipping lanes that has a strategic role in the distribution of oil and natural gas worldwide. Geographically, this strait is located in the Middle East, between the territory of Iran and Oman, and serves as a link between the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea. From the perspective of international relations, the Middle East region occupies a very important position because it has abundant reserves of energy resources and is the main route of global energy trade. This condition makes this region not only have high economic value, but also strategic value from the political and international security aspects. Therefore, the Middle East is often an arena for competition of interests

between various countries, including Iran and the United States. The dynamics of the two countries' relations are marked by various tensions rooted in each side's efforts to maintain and expand its strategic influence in the region, particularly with regard to the control of energy trade routes and regional security stability.

Global economic stability is facing serious pressure due to rising tensions in the Strait of Hormuz. The blockade of these strategic shipping lanes, carried out with asymmetric tactics such as sea mines, unmanned vehicles, and ballistic missiles, threatens the smooth distribution of the world's energy (Ramaswam, 2026). As a route that carries about 20 million barrels of crude oil per day and about 20% of the world's LNG supply, disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz have the potential to trigger disruption to energy supply chains and have a far-reaching impact on the global economy.

Fishermen are coastal communities that depend on the fisheries sector for their economic livelihood. The poverty experienced by fishermen is not only caused by cultural factors, but also by various natural and non-natural factors. Natural factors include fluctuations in the fishing season that cause fishermen's income to be unstable. Meanwhile, unnatural factors include limited fishing technology, an unfair profit-sharing system, weak social security, fluctuations in fish prices, and limited alternative employment opportunities. This condition causes many fishing households to be in a circle of poverty that is difficult to overcome.

The international legal arrangements regarding the strait used for international shipping are comprehensively regulated in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). This provision is contained in Part III of Articles 37–44, which govern the implementation of the transit regime as a legal mechanism for shipping and international flights through the straits.

Therefore, the research focuses on comprehensively examining the phenomenon of the impact of the Strait of Hormuz with rising fuel prices on traditional fishermen. The formulation of the problem in this study is how to reconstruct legal protection for traditional Indonesian fishermen in the face of fuel price fluctuations due to the conflict in the Strait of Hormuz.

METHODS

This research is a normative legal research with a socio-legal approach. The approaches used include a statute approach, a conceptual approach, and a geopolitical causality. The legislative approach is used to analyze the alignment of national regulations such as the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, Law No. 7/2016 on the Protection of Fishermen, and the Energy Sector Law with international legal

instruments (UNCLOS 1982). Conceptual approaches and geopolitical causality are applied to dissect the doctrine of the right to livelihoods, energy security, and correlate the conflict of the Strait of Hormuz with fuel price dynamics and their impact on traditional fishermen.

The research data is sourced from secondary legal materials collected through library research. Primary legal materials include international conventions, laws, and implementing regulations related to the allocation of fishermen's fuel. Secondary legal materials consist of scientific journals, books, and official reports of government and international institutions, which are supported by tertiary legal materials such as legal dictionaries and trusted news. All legal materials are analyzed qualitatively with deductive reasoning through systematic and teleological interpretation. This research is prescriptive to formulate a reconstruction of a more adaptive legal policy model in protecting fishermen from the turmoil of the global energy crisis.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The impact of rising fuel prices on traditional fishermen

Fishermen are a group of people who depend on marine resources for their livelihoods, both through fishing activities and fishery cultivation. Generally, they settle in coastal areas adjacent to the area where they carry out economic activities at sea.

In the fisheries sector in Indonesia, human rights issues experienced by fishermen, both migrant fishermen and small-scale fishermen, are still an issue that has not been optimally resolved. Various forms of exploitation still often occur, such as modern slavery, human trafficking, debt bondage, the *ijon* system, and forced labor. Modern slavery in this context encompasses various practices carried out by individuals and companies by exploiting fishermen's vulnerabilities, including employing minors, implementing slavery-like practices, and tying fishermen through debt. This condition occurs when fishermen are forced to give up their labor and freedom as collateral for loans received from the parties who employ them (LEIP, 2022).

As a vital route for world oil trade, the Strait of Hormuz is a strategic route in world oil trade that has become an arena for influence competition between regional countries, especially Iran, and global powers such as Britain and the United States. The competition reflects the concept of security dilemma in realism theory, which is a situation when a country's efforts to strengthen its security are perceived as a threat by another country, thus prompting the country to take similar steps to improve its defense capabilities.

The increase in fuel oil (BBM) prices has had a significant impact on the sustainability of the capture fisheries business, especially for small and medium fishermen who depend on fuel as the main component of operational costs. The surge in diesel prices caused many fishermen to stop their activities at sea, so that fishery production decreased, fish auction activities

stopped, the supply of fish in the market decreased, and the welfare of coastal communities was increasingly threatened. This condition shows that access to fuel is not only related to the energy sector, but also has implications for national food security. Therefore, a state policy is needed that ensures the availability and affordability of fuel for fishermen as a form of protection for the fisheries sector and the fulfillment of the right to the welfare of coastal communities.

Fishermen's operational costs are all expenses that must be incurred in every fishing activity at sea. These expenses include the cost of purchasing fuel oil (BBM), consumption, ice, gas, levies, and mooring costs during the landing process. The increase in fuel prices has led to an increase in operational costs that fishermen must bear when going to sea. This condition has an impact on the decline in fishermen's income because production costs are getting higher. In addition, the increase in fuel prices has also triggered an increase in the prices of various needs, especially basic materials.

Legal Protection of Traditional Fishermen Based on International and National Legal Instruments

In international law, disputes that occur between countries in maritime areas cannot be separated from the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) 1982 as the main legal basis governing maritime governance. The convention stipulates various rights and obligations of states, including regulations regarding transit passage rights in straits that are used as international shipping lanes. Based on Article 38 of the 1982 UNCLOS, every ship and aircraft has the right to carry out transit through international straits on a continuous basis and without unnecessary delay. In its implementation, coastal states are not allowed to arbitrarily obstruct or restrict these rights, as long as the voyage is carried out in accordance with the provisions of applicable international law.

The Strait of Hormuz is the most obvious example of how geopolitical competition between Iran and Western countries, especially the United States, affects the stability of international shipping in the region. In addition to acting as a vital route for world energy distribution, this strait also has strategic value as a means of diplomacy as well as a tool of political pressure in international relations. When conflict or tension increases, coastal states tend to expand the exercise of their jurisdictional authority, including through policies that in practice can restrict freedom of navigation on the grounds of national security. This condition shows that in a geopolitical situation full of uncertainty, the effectiveness of the application of international law is often weakened because it has to deal with political interests and the dominance of state power (*power politics*).

Legal protection for traditional fishermen in Indonesia has been strictly regulated, both through the provisions of national law and international law, especially UNCLOS 1982. At the national level, the constitutional basis of this protection is reflected in Article 27 and Article 33 of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia which mandates the protection of the rights and welfare of the community, including traditional fishermen. In the field of fisheries,

the government replaced Law Number 9 of 1985 with Law Number 31 of 2004 concerning Fisheries which contains various provisions regarding prohibitions and sanctions for violations in the fisheries sector. Furthermore, through changes made by Law Number 45 of 2009, the government seeks to strengthen protection for small fishermen. However, even though regulations have been improved, various problems faced by traditional fishermen have not been solved comprehensively.

The concept of legal protection for local fishermen can be understood through the thinking of Philipus M. Hadjon who classifies legal protection into two forms, namely preventive and repressive protection. Preventive protection is directed to prevent the occurrence of rights violations before causing losses, including through licensing policies, supervision, and empowerment programs for fishermen. Meanwhile, repressive protection serves to provide restoration of rights that have been violated through law enforcement mechanisms and dispute resolution in court. In line with this view, Satjipto Rahardjo emphasized that legal protection is a form of protection provided by the state to every citizen to ensure the fulfillment of their rights. Both concepts have a strong basis in Article 33 paragraph (3) of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia which mandates that the management of natural resources be carried out for the greatest possible prosperity of the people. Thus, the protection of local fishermen is a constitutional obligation of the state that must be realized, not just a choice of government policy.

From the perspective of international law, respect, protection, and fulfillment of human rights in the maritime space is an obligation that must be guaranteed to every legal subject who carries out activities at sea. The guarantee covers various groups, such as seafarers, fishermen, ship passengers, as well as migrants and refugees who move by sea. Thus, maritime space is not only seen as an area for the use of natural resources, but also as an area that demands the protection of the basic rights of every individual who is in it.

Regulations regarding the governance of marine areas and all activities that take place in them are comprehensively regulated through the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) of 1982. This convention is recognized as the main instrument of international maritime law and is often referred to as A Constitution for the Oceans because it provides a comprehensive legal framework for the management of maritime space. UNCLOS is the result of multilateral negotiations that lasted for approximately nine years and consisted of 17 chapters, 320 articles, and 9 annexes. The scope of its regulation covers various fundamental aspects of maritime law, including state sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction over maritime territories, international shipping regimes, fisheries resource management, marine scientific research, marine environmental protection, and exploration and exploitation of mineral resources in the international seabed. Therefore, UNCLOS 1982 is an important legal basis in realizing marine governance that is oriented towards legal certainty, cooperation between countries, and the sustainable use of marine resources.

Energy Transition & Independence of Traditional Fishers

The management of coastal areas is an effort that needs to be carried out in a sustainable manner to support the improvement of community welfare, while maintaining the preservation of coastal ecosystems based on the principles of the people's economy. Regulations regarding this matter are regulated in the Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 27 of 2007 concerning the Management of Coastal Areas and Small Islands. In Article 1 paragraph (1) and paragraph (2), it is explained that the management of coastal areas and small islands includes the process of planning, utilizing, supervising, and controlling coastal resources and small islands which is carried out in an integrated manner between sectors, involving the central government and local governments, integrating land and marine ecosystems, and combining science with management. The entire process aims to improve the welfare of the community and realize the sustainable development of coastal areas.

Energy security is one of the main concerns in the modern era in line with the increasing global energy demand and uncertainty in the availability of fossil energy supply. As an archipelagic country experiencing economic growth and an ever-increasing population, Indonesia is faced with the challenge of ensuring sustainable energy availability. The high dependence on fossil energy not only increases the economic burden due to the need for energy imports, but also has a negative impact on the quality of the environment through increasing ecological damage.

One of the strategies that can be applied in empowering coastal communities is to expand access to capital sources. These efforts are carried out through the development of a self-financing mechanism based on strengthening social solidarity and collective community action. Its implementation can be realized through the formation of cooperatives and joint business groups as a forum for community economic management. Furthermore, he explained that the existence of economic institutions built through cooperation between fishermen in the provision of capital is able to make it easier for members to meet their various business needs and living needs.

Therefore, as stipulated in Law Number 30 of 2007 and Law Number 30 of 2009, the implementation of development must be based on the principles of social justice and maintain environmental sustainability. Therefore, the government and business actors need to ensure the active involvement of the community at every stage of development, especially in the process of preparing the EIA. This involvement can be realized through communicative socialization, open dialogue, public consultation forums, and the provision of transparent information so that people's aspirations can be accommodated, the potential for social conflicts can be minimized, and the goal of equitable and sustainable development can achieve the independence of traditional fishermen.

CONCLUSION

The geopolitical conflict in the Strait of Hormuz has far-reaching implications for the stability of world energy supplies and contributes to rising global oil prices. As an

oil importing country, Indonesia also experienced an impact in the form of increasing fuel supply costs which then affected the capture fisheries sector, especially traditional fishermen who are highly dependent on fuel to carry out sea activities.

The development of the escalation of the conflict during 2025–2026 indicates that legal certainty in oil and gas exploration has developed beyond the issue of maritime delimitation. This aspect is now also influenced by geopolitical competition between countries and the importance of maintaining energy security stability at the regional level.

Although Indonesia already has various legal instruments governing fishermen's protection and energy policies, their implementation has not been fully able to anticipate the impact of the energy crisis triggered by international geopolitical dynamics. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen legal policies through more targeted subsidy mechanisms, energy crisis mitigation systems for the fisheries sector, and integration between energy, marine, and social protection policies. This step is important to realize legal certainty, justice, and welfare for traditional fishers as the most vulnerable group to global economic turmoil.

REFERENCES

- Agustin, S. H. (2026). Transit passage dan keamanan selat strategis: Studi perbandingan Selat Hormuz, Malaka dan Bab El-Mandeb. *Rewang Rencang: Jurnal Hukum Lex Generalis*, 7(1), 2.
- Anthony, C. F., Simanjuntak, T. R., & Nau, N. U. W. (2024). Keterlibatan Indonesia melalui Annual South East Asia Forum–Sustainable Capture Fisheries dalam mengembangkan industri perikanan berkelanjutan tahun 2022. *ADMINISTRAUS: Jurnal Ilmu Administrasi dan Manajemen*, 8(1), 28.
- Darmawan, M. W., Ramadhani, Y. O., Febriananda, M. A. F., & Saragih, H. M. (2026). Dampak krisis jalur Selat Hormuz terhadap kerja sama ekonomi anggota OPEC di pasar global. *Journal of Political and Government Issues (POLIGOVIS)*, 4(1), 31.
- Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Republik Indonesia. (2026, May 8). *Kenaikan harga BBM lumpuhkan aktivitas nelayan, ketahanan pangan terancam*. <https://share.google/ppCIBtwbtOrH83Ind>.
- Jayadi, I., Framesty, T. C., Sitinjak, V. C., & Pratama, A. (2026). Perlindungan nelayan lokal sebagai strategi preventif terhadap praktik illegal fishing. *Jurnal Kajian Hukum dan Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan*, 2(3), 866.
- Karyawan, K. A. P., Mangku, D. G. S., & Yulianti, N. P. R. (2023). Perlindungan hukum terhadap penangkapan nelayan tradisional Indonesia dari Nusa Tenggara Timur di Pulau Pasir berdasarkan perspektif hukum internasional. *Jurnal Komunitas Yustisia*, 6(4), 164.
- Manalu, B. A., Manik, D., & Datiansyah, M. A. S. (2026). Sengketa batas maritim di Laut Natuna Utara dan mekanisme provisional arrangement UNCLOS 1982:

- Analisis konflik eksplorasi migas Blok Tuna 2025–2026. *ANTHOR: Education and Learning Journal*, 5(3), 603–615.
- Munandar, T. A., & Darmawan, D. (2020). Implementasi program pemberdayaan masyarakat miskin pada komunitas nelayan tradisional untuk kesejahteraan sosial ekonomi di Lontar Kabupaten Serang. *Jurnal Eksistensi Pendidikan Luar Sekolah (E-Plus)*, 5(2), 130.
- Nugraha, M. D., Aditya, I., & Azijah, D. N. (2025). Mengkaji perubahan sosial ekonomi masyarakat pesisir Cilamaya Wetan akibat pembangunan proyek strategis nasional PLTGU Jawa-1 Power. *Jurnal Dinamika Pemerintahan*, 8(2), 589–616.
- Nurhidayanti, M. (2025). Pengelolaan sumber daya energi terbarukan berbasis komunitas untuk ketahanan energi dan perekonomian lokal. *Jurnal Energi dan Ketahanan*, 1(1), 26–33.
- Rangkuti, D. R., et al. (2026). Strategi pertahanan Iran dan diplomasi terhadap Amerika Serikat dalam ketegangan Selat Hormuz. *Legal: Jurnal Reformasi Hukum Pidana dan Perdata*, 1(2).
- Rofingatin, S., Wisadirana, D., & Kanto, S. (2016). Pengembangan model kelembagaan ekonomi komunitas nelayan tradisional dalam rangka strategi bertahan hidup (Studi kasus: Di Dusun Karanggongso Kabupaten Trenggalek). *Wacana: Jurnal Sosial dan Humaniora*, 19(3).
- Siswandi, A. G. (2022). Isu-isu kontemporer mengenai hak asasi manusia di laut: Keadilan laut (*ocean equity*) dan kapal laut nirawak (*maritime autonomous surface ship*). *Jurnal Poros Hukum Padjadjaran*, 3(2), 290.
- Wijayanti, C. P. (2024). Penegakan hukum internasional dalam penyelesaian sengketa wilayah perbatasan. *Jurnal Hukum Internasional*, 12(2), 145–160.