

Derogation of the Rights of Forest Communities Worldwide

Call for Action - Indonesian Government must address violation of community's rights

By [Forest Peoples Programme](#)

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The Indonesian government must address the human rights violations in Long Isun, Indonesia – a global gathering has declared.

Delegates from Africa, Asia and Latin America heard first-hand testimonies of the growing harm facing forest communities around the world. From Indonesia, many cases demonstrated that Government plans and policies favoured the interests of large companies to the detriment of unprotected communities.

They have called on the Government to protect the rights of the communities.

Among the stories shared was the situation facing indigenous people from Long Isun, in Long Pahangai, Mahakam Ulu – in East Kalimantan on the island of Borneo. There, customary land has been seized by the timber company PT. Kemakmuran Berkah Timber (KBT) without prior consultation or consent from the community that lives and survives off the land.

In a [recent report](#) (p14 & 22) by international NGO Rainforest Alliance, KBT was said to have failed to protect rare, threatened and endangered species, provided no off-site locations for the disposals of its chemical and damaged soils and water resources. The company was also found to be using Delamethrin in its operations in the Upper Mahakam, a chemical which is extremely toxic to fish even in low concentration.

Speaking to the delegates, Pak Hanyang, from the Dayak Bahau community living in Long Isun, said: “Behind the beauty of the forest lies great sadness, if there is no forest left how will can we expect our children and grandchildren to live? The Dayak Bahau need the forest to survive, we are nothing without the forest.”

The impacts of KBT’s activities have devastated the community. Hufat Biseh, a hunter, said: “The river Meraseh is now dirty. We cannot fish there anymore. Wild boar and deer populations have moved deeper and deeper into the forest fearing the noise caused by KBT’s activities, so it is harder and harder for us to hunt.”

He added that the fish populations had almost disappeared in parts of the river close to the company’s operations.

The community explained that they were worried not only about the pollution of water sources and the physical destruction of their hunting grounds, but the impact it had had on

their society, with some members lured by the promise of ‘fees’ and the first pick of newly-harvested hardwoods (*ulin*).

“Before the company came Naha Aruq and Long Isun were one. Now we cannot speak to some of brothers and sisters in Naha Aruq because they are in bed with the company,” said Inui Yaq. “It has split our community, it has split our family.”

Naha Aruq’s close ties to the new regency government – the Wakil Bupati/Vice District Head originates from the village and its several business interests in the area means the community is more open to the company’s favours.

On hearing the situation, the delegation issued the Pekanbaru Declaration. This expresses concern about KBT’s negative impacts on indigenous rights and raises the alarm at the continued activities despite community resistance, and also calls on the Government of Indonesia to take concrete action to:

- Revoke the executive order (The SK Bupati Kutai Barat Decree No.136.143/K.917/2011 dated 4th November 2011) which has led to border disputes with neighbouring Naha Aruq and allowed the PT KBT to enter Long Isun ancestral land without their consent.
- Remove the customary land of the village of Long Isun from all company concessions.
- Restore Long Isun’s customary boundaries in accordance to the 1966 map agreed between the indigenous communities of the Upper Mahakam.

Indigenous peoples of Long Isun have managed their own lands and forests for generations; it is their birth right to be able to live peacefully on their ancestral land. The 24 Indonesian-based NGOs hope the declaration will spur the Indonesian Government, East Kalimantan and the District of Mahakam Hulu officials, and the national human rights commission to take urgent action to address the gross violations and atrocities that are being committed by KBT.

The Rights of Forest Peoples meeting was held from 6-10 February in Pekanbaru, Indonesia.

KBT is a subsidiary of the Roda Mas Group.

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