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INDONESIA

Stop the attacks to Indigenous Peoples defending their land from palm oil operations

The Indigenous Peoples Rights International (IPRI) vehemently denounces the brutal attack by the Indonesian police on the Indigenous Dayak Banjar community protesting in Bangkal Village, Seruyan, Central Kalimantan. This community has been actively defending their land against the encroachments of a palm oil company.

IPRI, an Indigenous-led organization, spearheads the global movement to counteract the criminalization of and impunity towards Indigenous Peoples.

Based on information relayed to IPRI, on October 7, 2023, the Indonesian police opened fire on a demonstration of Indigenous individuals. Since 2008, this community has been raising concerns about the illegal seizure of their lands by PT Hampan Masawit Bangun Persada (HMBP), a subsidiary of the oil giant, Best Agro. This excessive use of force by the police resulted in the death of one Indigenous individual, injuries to two more, and the arbitrary detention of dozens. Thereafter, reports indicate that the police obstructed entry to Bangkal Village.

Central to this conflict is the lack of legal recognition and protection of Indigenous Peoples and their rights. The Dayak Banjar community has consistently pointed out that the government has sanctioned operations by HMBP on their ancestral lands, neglecting their customary rights. In fact, it has been reported that the aforementioned company has unlawfully seized an additional 1,175 hectares beyond the permitted area. The Indigenous community seeks recognition of their land rights and demands the return of the illegally occupied land, so they can cultivate it themselves.

Regrettably, the Indonesian government does not formally recognize the rights of its Indigenous Peoples and has been facilitating landgrabs by palm oil companies and businesses. It should be noted that the Constitutional Court of Indonesia issued a ruling that community forests are not state-forests, meaning customary communities have the right over these forests.

IPRI extends our warmest solidarity with Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara - AMAN (Indigenous Peoples' Alliance of the Archipelago) for their unwavering

dedication to championing the rights of Indigenous Peoples in Indonesia and taking action on this incident.

IPRI extends its unwavering support to the affected individuals and their communities. We call upon the government of Indonesia to:

- Immediately commission an impartial investigation and facilitate justice and redress for the victims of these violent attacks.
- Immediately lift the blockade on the Bangkal community, as this action contradicts both the constitution and human rights standards, particularly the collective rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- Release the Indigenous individuals detained during the protests against the company and safeguard their rights.
- Reassign security forces away from the company's premises and give precedence to fostering dialogue with all parties in Bangkal Village, Seruyan.

We urge the Chief of the Republic of Indonesia Police to carry out an investigation into the perpetrator of the shooting which resulted in death in Bangkal Village.

Furthermore, we call upon the National Commission on Human Rights of the Republic of Indonesia (Komnas HAM) to establish an Independent Fact-Finding Team to delve into this matter.