

Letter of Protest
Concerning the PT Menara Wasior case in Wondama Bay Regency

To:

1. The President of the Republic of Indonesia
2. The Indonesian Environment and Forestry Minister

Respectfully,

We are writing regarding the permit to release state forest lands in the Wosimi River area, Naikere and Kuriwamesa sub-districts, Wondama Bay Regency, Papua Barat province that was issued to oil palm plantation company PT Menara Wasior on the 20th September 2017, decree SK No. 16/1/PKH/PMDH/2017. We wish to protest strongly about this permit and the policy which underlies it.

Back in 2015 we sent a letter protesting about PT Menara Wasior's plans and asked the government not to process PT Menara Wasior's request that state forest land be released for an oil palm plantation.

There were multiple reasons for this:

1. The area of forest in question is the customary land and living space of the Wondamen, Torowar and Mairasi ethnic groups, who were the victims of the human rights violations known as the "2001 Bloody Wasior events", which still remains unresolved to this day. The people in the area are still traumatised and they do not have the freedom of expression to make a decision about 'development' projects on their customary lands. Because of this, the granting of this permit goes against any sense of justice, it neither respects nor protects the indigenous people's legal rights, and it disregards their right to feel safe and their right to determine their own path of development.
2. PT Menara Wasior's plantation will threaten the loss of the forest which is the source of life for local indigenous people. This forest is the source of their livelihoods, their income, their food and water, their medicines, the groves that are passed from generation to generation, sacred places, etc.
3. This policy is incompatible with the government's commitment to issue a moratorium on oil palm permits, and its commitment to sustainable development.

Based on these aforementioned issues, in the name of justice and the law, we urge the following action:

1. The President should take immediate action to find a settlement to the 2001 Bloody Wasior human rights violation, rehabilitate and restore the victims' rights, in a fair way

which shows respect to the victims and their families. The same should also apply to all other cases of human rights violations throughout the Land of Papua.

2. The Environment and Forestry Minister should immediately revoke the forest release permit issued to PT Menara Wasior because it violates the fundamental rights of Papuan indigenous people and has the potential to exacerbate existing problems or create other social conflicts. (A chronology is attached below).
3. Another important action is to acknowledge, protect and respect indigenous people and their rights to land, forest and other natural wealth.

Jakarta, 23 March 2018

Yours respectfully,

Yayasan Pusaka
Foker LSM Papua
KPKC GKI Tanah Papua
Walhi Papua
Wongkei Institute
JERAT Papua
SKP KC Fransiskan Papua
Perkumpulan Belantara
Perkumpulan Bin Madag Kom
Papua Forest Watch

Copies sent to:

1. Head of the Capital Investment Coordinating Board
2. Director-General for Planology at the Environment and Forestry Ministry
3. Cabinet Secretary
4. The Presidential Chief of Staff at the President's Staff Office
5. The Head of the National Human Rights Commission
6. Papua Barat Provincial Governor

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A CHRONOLOGY OF NATURAL RESOURCE EXPLOITATION AND VIOLENCE IN WASIOR

In 2001: as the Bloody Wasior events unfolded between March and October 2001, a string of protest actions took place against the logging companies operating in the area: PT Wapoga Mutiara Timber (WMT), PT Dharma Mukti Persada (DMP, a subsidiary of Kayu Lapis Indonesia Group), CV Vatika Papuana Perkasa (VPP). The reason for the actions was that these companies had not met their obligations or fulfilled the promises of development they had made to the local people.

Subsequently, after some violent protests, officers from the Police Mobile Brigade (Brimob) got involved to provide security for the companies and tensions mounted, until some acts of deadly violence occurred. In June 2001, the Papuan Police HQ, with the support of the XVII Trikora Regional Military Command launched the “Operasi Tuntas Matoa” sweeping operation.

This major sweeping operation to track down the killers of some policemen started in nearby villages and eventually reached areas such as Nabire and Serui. Many villagers who knew nothing whatsoever about the issue were also arrested without a warrant, held in custody, beaten up and shot. 51 houses of local people were burnt along with all their possessions in eight different locations (Wasior city, Wondamawi, Wondiboi, Senderaboi, Sanoba and Ambuni villages, as well as Yopenggar and Sanoba in Nabire Regency). Gardens were destroyed and farm animals killed.

According to the report of the Humanitarian Team for the 2001 Wasior case, there were 94 known cases of innocent civilians arrested, amongst which some experienced mild or severe torture, or were even left with disabilities for life. People also fled the area en masse.

The results of the investigation carried out by the National Human Rights Commission’s Study Team on Human Rights Problems in Papua, stated that during the whole period the people who were believed to have carried out the killings were being pursued, people were killed, others were tortured, including tortured to death, and there were forced disappearances and rapes in several locations.

Four cases of people who died were recorded, one case of sexual abuse, five disappearances and 39 cases of torture. The Human Rights Commission passed the dossier on this case to the Attorney General’s office in July 2015. The AGO returned it several times (in July 2013 and June 2014), but the National Human Rights commission have continued to resubmit it (in September 2004, December 2004, September 2013 and on the 17th July 2014).

In early May 2017 in Geneva, Switzerland, the Indonesian Government, represented by foreign minister Retno Marsuhi – speaking to the UN Human Rights Council during the Universal Periodic Review hearing, expressed the Indonesian Government’s commitment to establish a human rights court as outlined in law 26/2000. However, there is still no evidence that any trial process will be set out.

2009: New concessions and Continuing Violence

Amidst the lack of clarity in reaching a settlement about the Bloody Wasior human rights violation, the Forestry Minister granted a logging permit to PT Kurnia Tama Sejahtera (KTS, a company belonging to the Artha Graha group). The permit, with reference SK.648/MenhutII/2009, was located in PT DMP's former concession area, and was for an area of 115,800 hectares.

The government and company never consulted with the local indigenous community or sought their support before the permit was granted. The company offered compensation money and promises of development. The Mairasi, Miere, Torowa and Wondamen ethnic groups, never gave their free consent, and opposed the plan, because they were still traumatised by the events of the past (ie. Bloody Wasior).

In January 2013, violence took place once more as three residents of Sararti and Ambumi villages were punched and tortured by members of army battalion Yonif 753 from Sorong at PT KTS' log compound in Ambuni and at the KM48 company basecamp. In February 2013, community leaders from Sararti, Wosimo, Inyora, Undurari, Oyaa and Yawore villages, Naikere sub-district, wrote a statement expressing the indigenous community's opposition to PT. KTS' operations.

2013: Wijaya Sentosa and unpaid debts

In 2013, the Forestry Minister once again issued a logging permit, this time to PT Wijaya Sentosa (WS, subsidiary of the Sinar Wijaya Group), with permit reference SK.33/Menhut-II/2013, dated 15th January 2013, and for a location stretching from Kuri Wamesa sub-district to Nikiwar sub-district. This concession borders on that of PT KTS.

Previously, PT WS' concession belonged to PT WMT which had not been active in the area since the Bloody Wasior events. The company left owing many debts, including compensation to indigenous landowners for commercial timber species which had already been felled, as well as the promised development projects which had not been fully realised.

The people from the Dusner, Kuri and Wamesa ethnic groups, who are the customary owners of the concession land and live in the area, weren't able to oppose the arrival of PT WS on their lands either. Army and Brimob guards oversaw all the company's work, from when it asked for the community's agreement to the annual work plan to transporting logs to the logging compound. The company was working without heeding what the people were saying. Sacred forests were destroyed, commercial timber species were felled all along the course of the river and even along the shoreline, rivers were silted up with mud so they stopped flowing and sago groves died. Despite all this, the company was able to obtain a sustainable forestry certificate [from the FSC].

2017: Threatened Deforestation for Oil Palm

During Susilo Bambang Yudhuyono's presidency, Forestry Minister Zulkifli Hasan issued an in-principle permit to release forest estate land for an oil palm plantation to PT Menara Wasior

(MW, associated with the Salim Group), in the lowlands along the Wosimi River near Ambuni Village, Kuriwamesa sub-district, for 32,170 hectares. The concession also shares a border with PT KTS's logging concession.

Then in 2017, the government issued a forest release permit to PT Menara Wasior with reference SK No. 16/1/PKH/PMDH/2017, dated 20 September 2017. The company had visited the area several times to present its plans and consult on its environmental impact assessment, but the community opposed the plans and did not attend the meetings.

In 2015, Pusaka sent a protest letter to the Environment and Forestry Minister, asking to halt the process of issuing a permit to release state forest to PT MW in line with the demands and opposition of local people, and because it was inappropriate to bring new companies to the area before problems of the past were resolved, notably the human right violations and other incidents that had occurred in the area. The government did not respond to this letter, and did not act consistently with its stated policy to implement a moratorium on oil palm plantations.

The natural forest around the Wosimi river is now threatened with deforestation. Local people from the Wondamen ethnic group will directly feel the effects of this plan. Ancestral forest, sacred places and sago groves which are passed from generation to generation, including the areas known as Sanebuh, Iwagasi and Koine, will be lost forever. Areas which people find the resources to support their livelihoods will be cleared and the people will lose their sources of food and income.

Aside from the oil palm company, another threat has arisen from a plan to mine gold in the area. In 2014, the Wondama Bay local government issued an exploration permit to PT Abisha Bumi Persada, with number 543/06A/BUP-TW/2014, also located in Kuriwamesa, Rasiei and Naikere sub-districts, an area of 23,324 hectares. [This company is currently engaging in consultations for its EIA study.](#)

The Salim Group in Papua

PT Menara Wasior is believed to still be linked with the giant Salim Group, belonging to the family of the late Sudono Salim (Liem Sioe Liong). In the Soeharto era, Sudono Salim was known as a crony of Soeharto and owned a logging business in Papua through PT Hanurata.

In Papua, oil palm companies linked to the Salim Group are PT Rimbun Sawit Papua (RSP, 2014), located in Bomberay and Tomage sub-districts, Fakfak Regency (10,102 ha), PT Suber Karunia Raya (SKR, 2014), located in Maskona sub-district Bintuni Bay Regency (38,770 ha) and PT Bintuni Agro Prima Perkasa (BAPP, 2014) located in Kebar, Tamberauw Regency (19,369 ha).

The Salim Group's expansion in Papua has been met with protests from opponents. In Tamberauw, [local people have protested](#) because the commodity planted by PT BAPP does not correspond to its permits and it threatens the local environment.