
[Indonesia: people take action against companies' destructive activities](#)

Indonesian forests suffer periodically from huge fires. In 1982-83 severe fires destroyed 3.5 million hectares of forests in Kalimantan. Still fresh in our minds are the late 1997 huge fires that devastated millions of hectares of forests in this country, with consequences affecting the whole of South East Asia. Even if presented as “natural disasters” or “accidents” such fires are in fact the consequence of the overexploitation of forests by logging accompanied by the activities of plantation companies and the negligence of the authority to control them. While forest fires represent an economic loss for the country's economy it means something much more tragic for the indigenous peoples and local communities that inhabit them.

A new case of abuse has been denounced. PT Matrasawit and London Sumatera Indonesia (Lonsum) have recently felled forests in East Kalimantan, Muara Pahu, Jempang and Bongan without the permission from the Forestry Department. The companies are also suspected of being involved with forest burning in those areas. A spokesperson of East Kalimantan Local Police said that there is not enough evidence to judge Lonsum in relation to the fires. The Forestry Department stated that PT Lonsum didn't have any site license or permission to use the timber, and that the case had been handed over to the police to investigate it. Nevertheless local police said that they are only handling the forest burning case. Another information said that the Plantation and Forestry Minister has asked Chief of Indonesia Republic Police to investigate the case.

Given the existing contradictions between the responsible authorities and because of compensation slowness, affected local people decided to undertake direct actions and took company's equipment as hostage. They also demonstrated to the governor office and Kutai regency office.

Source: SAWIT WATCH - Campaign Against Big Scale Oil Palm Plantation in Indonesia.