
[Indonesia: violent confrontations related to Indorayon](#)

A policeman was rushed to hospital in Medan with a serious head injury after being beaten up in a confrontation on Monday 23rd November between security forces and local people at Porsea, North Tapanuli, North Sumatra. Another police officer suffered wounds to the back and leg. A police patrol vehicle and a government official's car were destroyed by the crowd and three other cars plus 23 homes and shops were smashed up and burnt.

A spokesperson for local NGO KSPPM said four local men had leg injuries from rubber bullets. The violence erupted after another Porsea man was shot on Sunday. Thousands of local people took to the streets and burnt 15 Indorayon logging trucks. A number of houses, shops and other vehicles were also damaged or burnt. The crowd were prevented from approaching the Indorayon paper and rayon pulp factory at the Sosor Ladang site (on the outskirts of Porsea) by security forces that night. But they succeeded the following day when the crowd had swelled to around 5,000 and that is when the four were shot. The crowd dispersed due to the violence of the security forces.

This incident is part of a long running dispute between the local community and the Indorayon pulp mill. Local people have protested repeatedly to local and central government since 1989 that the factory should be closed due the adverse effects of the pollution and deforestation it causes. Indorayon workers recently held a five-day counter demonstration in Medan to keep the mill open in order to safeguard their jobs. The government ordered an independent audit to settle the dispute. As part of that process, the factory has been allowed to resume operations after a three-month shut-down and this -and the high level of security forces- is what has angered local people.

Former assistant to the Environment Minister and Bandung law professor, Daud Silalahi, accused PT IJU of serious violations of air and water pollution laws since the early 1990s. He said that attempts to prosecute the company by successive environment ministers had failed due to manipulation at local and central government levels.

Source: Kompas 24/11/98 (Summary/translation by Down to Earth).