
[Solidaritas Declaration Merauke, an emergency call from Papua: stop the Merauke National Strategic Project](#)

In 2023, the President at the time, President Jokowi designated Merauke in South Papua as the site for yet another National Strategic Project (PSN). The food and energy production programme covers 2 million hectares, focused on rice and sugar cane plantations, the latter with the objective to produce sugar and bio-ethanol. If fully implemented, it might become the biggest deforestation project worldwide, directly affecting an indigenous population of 40,000 people. (1)

The meeting brought together 256 participants who came not only from Merauke, but from villages throughout Papua as well as dozens of other islands including Maluku, Kalimantan, Nusa Tenggara, Sulawesi, and Sumatra. What unites them is opposition to the colonial and socially and ecologically harmful policy of the Central Government in Jakarta called National Strategic Project (PSN). At present, around 200 large-scale projects and programmes have received the status of PSN throughout the archipelago

Indonesia has ratified a number of human right protocols, including those designed to protect the Indigenous Peoples. Yet, each government decision to create yet another PSN has been made with zero public consultation and is thus starkly anti-democratic. Furthermore, once a PSN investment gets the central government's green light, communities within and surrounding a PSN site must comply with iron-fist security protocols. Whenever a community decides to reject a PSN, they are likely to face intimidation and criminalisation or worse.

Merauke was chosen as the location for the big people's gathering because of the peculiar manner by which the PSN Merauke is being carried out. From the beginning, the project has been conspicuously militaristic (2) and set up to benefit oligarchies. In 2024, the Army inaugurated the works to set up five new battalions in "conflict-prone" areas across Papua, two of which based in Merauke. Ironically, while number one priority of the new Prabowo government is providing free meals to all Indonesian school students, the Merauke PSN is currently destroying food sovereignty of thousands of Papuans.

The Merauke PSN has been preceded by a similar PSN, the "Merauke Integrated Food and Energy Estate" (MIFEE), launched in 2010. Lessons learned from this programme show it resulted in "land grabbing, land acquisition and land concentration in the hands of a few capital owners, labor exploitation, deforestation, recurring and widespread drought and ecological disasters, malnutrition and food shortages, corruption, violence and human rights violations, the victims of which are Indigenous People and villagers around the project". (3)

See below the full text of the declaration, also available [here](#).

Solidaritas Merauke Declaration

This declaration is the result of our collective work in the Solidaritas Merauke Movement. It is the

result from the shared stories of our collective suffering and trauma caused by state-corporate crimes, especially in the name of National Strategic Projects (PSN), which occupy and dispossess our living space and defile what we hold sacred.

The destruction and extinction of our indigenous life, knowledge and spirituality continues to expand. We are losing our identity, our historical memory of who we are, our sacred places, our kinship with the land and nature. We are losing our sources of food, our sources of medicine, our sources of livelihood and independence of work. On top of that, we are subjected to discrimination, forced labour, physical violence, intimidation and criminalisation. This catastrophe should be called an emergency for the sake of the people.

It is clear that this ongoing suffering and catastrophe is a reflection of colonialism that is being sugar-coated through a patchwork of laws and regulations. It is ironic that in the face of the robbery of people's wealth, the coercion and use of the force of law, political, economic and military power, false promises of prosperity, the destruction of human bodies and the exploitation of humans over humans, people are to be comforted with 'free nutritious food' program.

We, Solidaritas Merauke, declare our total rejection of the ploy that grabs people's wealth through policy reform. We demand a total halt to the National Strategic Project (PSN) and other projects in the name of national interest that clearly victimise the people. The perpetrators of state-corporate crimes must return all the stolen prosperity of the people and immediately restore the health and living space of the people in all areas sacrificed in the name of national interests.

No island is too big or too small to have its landscape damaged. If these glaring signs of catastrophe are underestimated, there will surely be an unprecedented acceleration of social-ecological chaos of the islands from Papua to Sumatra.

Sata Kekuatan! Satu Perlawanan! Rawat Kehidupan! (One Power! One Struggle! Care for Life!)
Merauke, 14 March 2025

(1) Briefing Paper of Yayasan Pusaka Bentala Rakyat, updated on September 2024, "The National Strategic Project (PSN) of Food and Energy Development in Merauke Regency, South Papua Province: Violating Human Rights and Worsening Environmental Crisis", [available here](#)

(2) Short video by "The Gecko Project", from March 2025, "Militarised deforestation in Papua: how Indonesia is converting indigenous forest into farms", [available here](#)

(3) Idem 1.