
[Video - Militarised deforestation in Papua: how Indonesia is converting indigenous forest into farms](#)

The Indonesian government's food estate programme aims to convert 1.6 million hectares of land in Papua into rice fields and sugar cane plantations, annexing indigenous lands in the process. Thousands of troops have been sent from Java to support President Prabowo Subianto's signature policy.

In recent months, [The Gecko Project](#) has been working to understand the role of the military in the programme using two approaches: conducting interviews with Papuans and monitoring content posted by the soldiers on TikTok.

The military has a troubled record in Papua. Indigenous Papuans have been subjected to systemic violence, with the army targeting civilians accused of being part of the separatist group, the OPM. Forced abductions, extrajudicial killings, and imprisonment are rife, according to human rights monitors.

Now, the large-scale mobilisation of the military for the food estate has created a climate of fear. One Papuan told us that Merauke had taken on the appearance of a 'war zone.'

The legal basis for deploying troops to an agricultural project is not clear. Civil society groups described the Indonesian government's action as illegal.

[Read the story here.](#)