

Pembebasan students call for end to criminalisation of environmental activists

Wednesday 4 April 2018, by [HAFID Saifuddin](#) (Date first published: 19 March 2018).

The Student Struggle Centre for National Liberation (Pembebasan) held a protest action at the offices of PT. Huddleston on Jl. Jenderal Sudirman in South Jakarta on Monday March 19 calling for an end to the criminalisation of environmental activists.

Pembebasan chairperson Rahman Ladanu said that the presence of PT Rayon Utama Makmur (PT RUM) in the village of Plesan in Nguter, Sukoharjo, Central Java, has been a disaster for the environment and people living in the vicinity.

Because, he said, for more than six months residents have been anxious about a foul smell resembling excrement which is emanating from waste produced by PT RUM. The waste has damaged resident's health and several children in the area are suffering from acute respiratory infections (ISPA).

"Rather than investigating PT RUM which is clearly damaging the environment, the East Java Polda [district police] have instead criminalised local residents and activists fighting for their environment and clean air", said Rahman during the action.

In addition to this added Rahman, the involvement of the Indonesian military (TNI) in the production activities of PT RUM raises other questions.

The factory and other company's "social" activities are being guarded by uniformed TNI soldiers. Yet referring to Law Number 34/2004 on the TNI, there is no legal basis for the TNI to be present at the factory.

"[The TNI's] involvement in security businesses such as this conflicts with the TNI law and hinders the TNI's internal reform itself", he said.

Because of this therefore, Pembebasan believes that PT RUM, its parent company PT Sri Rejeki Isman (Sritex) and PT Huddleston, which holds a majority share in Sritex, have been criminally negligent crime by allowing poisonous production waste into the environment and homes of Sukoharjo residents.

As well as calling for an end to the criminalisation of activists, the group is also demanded the release of their comrade Muhammad Hisbun Payu from all charges, the cancelation of PT RUM's business license and the withdrawal of the TNI from PT RUM.

In addition to this, Rahman also appealed to the people's movements to continue to inform the public that Sritex products are made from the oppression of people and the environment and for more people to become involved in the fight against PT RUM. (wawan)

[Translated by James Balowski for the Indoleft News Service. The original title of the article was

“Hentikan Kriminalisasi Pejuang Lingkungan Hidup, Cabut Izin Usaha PT.RUM”.]

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