

Indonesia: Investigation by rights groups finds numerous rights violations in Rempang

Saturday 14 October 2023, by [BETALIA Vonita](#) (Date first published: 18 September 2023).

Nine human rights organisations calling themselves the “National Solidarity for Rempang” have published the results of a preliminary investigation into the September 7 riots on Rempang Island in Batam, Riau Islands. The investigation found a number of human rights violations.

The publication, titled “Flawed Justice on Rempang Island”, is the result of a joint investigation by the Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation (YLBHI), the Pekanbaru Legal Aid Foundation (LBH Pekanbaru), the Indonesian Forum for the Environment (Walhi) National Executive, Walhi Riau, the Commission for Missing Persons and Victims of Violence (Kontras), Amnesty International Indonesia, the Agrarian Reform Consortium (KPA), the Nusantara Indigenous Peoples Alliance (AMAN) and Trend Asia.

“We concluded that alleged human rights violations occurred during the violent incident in Rempang on September 7, 2023 and therefore it must be declared as a human rights violations as stipulated under Law Number 39/1999 on Human Rights”, read a section from the report published on Monday September 18.

In the report it said that these rights violations can be seen from a number of things such as the excessive deployment of security forces, the use of violence and minimum participation and access to information on the Eco City project on Rempang Island.

This included arbitrary arrests by the Barelang municipal police (Polresta) following protests by residents, the violation of the rights of women and children related to the social conflict, the loss of a sense of security and widespread fear among Rempang residents.

In addition, the series of violations that occurred in Rempang were violations of national and international human rights instruments including Law Number 39/199 and the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights which Indonesia has ratified through Law Number 12/2005.

“Thus, this is enough for the National Human Rights Commission (Komnas HAM) to declare the tragedy in Rempang on September 7, 2023 as a human rights violation”, read the report.

As reported earlier, residents on Rempang Island opposing the Rempang Eco City project held a protest that ended in a clash with joint units of the TNI (Indonesian military) and police on September 7.

The Coalition is asking security forces to end the repressive actions against Rempang Island resident and stop the development of the Rempang Eco City.

The act of violence, according to the Coalition, resulted in the local indigenous people falling victim to the ambitions of the national strategic project.

“The Indonesian military and the police were used as a tool by the state to facilitate the development of the Rempang Eco City area requiring the eviction of people from 16 ancient Malayu [traditional Malay communities] villages which have existed since 1834”, read the Coalition’s report.

The clash between the local peoples and the authorities occurred at around 10 am. The joint force of TNI and police using tactical vehicles attempted to force their way onto Rempang Island to install boundary markers and conduct land measurements.

At the time, residents were gathered at the entry point onto Rempang Island at the Barelang IV Bridge. A clash was inevitable and during the incident police arrested at least six people. Scores of other suffered injuries, several children were traumatised and one child was injured after police fired tear gas into their school.

The Rempang Eco City will an industrial area resulting from investment commitments by a glass and solar panel company from China, namely the Xinyi Group. Later, Batam will have the second largest glass and solar panel factory in the world after China.

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Translated by James Balowski.

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