

# Indonesia: Walhi urges Jokowi to also revoke permits of companies damaging the environment

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**Jakarta — The Indonesian Forum for the Environment (Walhi) supports the move by President Joko “Jokowi” Widodo to revoke some 2,078 mining business permits which are inactive or “lying idle”. This move however, is not enough.**

Walhi Executive Director Zenzi Suhadi says that Widodo should not just revoke permits for mining concession which are “lying idle”, but also those which are damaging the environment and causing conflicts in society.

“The president should conduct an evaluation and the revocation of these permits can be done continuously and periodically using indicators which are not just restricted to the permit area being inactive or not being managed by the permit holder”, said Suhadi in a press release on Friday January 7.

“But [Jokowi must revoke] permits where there is conflict with communities or that are causing environmental damage and ecological disasters”, he said.

In addition to this, Suhadi is of the view that Widodo must ensure that the related ministries not issue or tender new permits in regions where permits have already been revoked.

According to Suhadi, this is important so that the goal of better improving the management of natural resources and the environment can be realised.

Restoring the environment, people’s rights

Walhi plantation and forestry campaign director Uli Arta Siagian meanwhile believes that the revocation of these mining permits must also be accompanied by the restoration of the environment and people’s rights.

Siagian says that this restoration should also be part of efforts to resolve agrarian conflicts as a consequence of mining company activities.

“This momentum should be used to resolve agrarian conflicts which have been occurring between the people and companies, both those owned by the state as well as the private sector”, she said.

Siagian explained that in order to restore the people’s rights, the government must return land which has been stolen by corporation. And not just in the forestry sector, but also agriculture and other right to cultivate (HGU) permits.

Walhi is proposing that the first step which must be carried out by the government is publishing a list of companies whose permits have been revoked so that the public can know and monitor which land should be returned to the people.

“Aside from permits in the forestry sector, HGU agricultural permits which have already been revoked, if these permits are ones where there has been conflict with the people, [the land] must be returned to the people”, she said.

“As a form of restitution of the rights of people who have been taken away by the state through the permit issuance scheme”, she said.

In relation to the restoration of the environment, Siagian is of the view that the government cannot just wash its hands of the issue but must order the corporations involved to take responsibility for environmental damage.

According to Siagian, this responsibility must unconditional both in terms of financial losses as a result of environmental damage as well as efforts to restore the environment itself.

“Permits in the forestry sector for example, the government must ensure that these companies restore forest ecosystems by restoring the forests function as it should be”, she said.

Yesterday, President Widodo revoked some 2,078 mining business permits that have been given to companies because they had failed to submit a working plan with the government.

According to Widodo, permits which have been held by companies for years and years but have not been utilised have obstructed the exploitation of natural resources to improve the welfare of local communities.

“Today as many as 2,078 mining and coal mining company permits have been revoked because they never submitted a work plan”, said Widodo at a press conference broadcast on the Presidential Secretariat’s YouTube channel on Thursday January 6.

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