



**JARINGAN ORANG ASAL SEMALAYSIA**  
INDIGENOUS PEOPLES NETWORK OF MALAYSIA

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## **PRESS STATEMENT**

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

#### **JOAS condemns arrest of member and demands release**

JOAS condemns the unjust arrest of 7 villagers by the police for the crime of allegedly causing mischief by fire and blocking the company by erecting a blockade. They will be detained until Tuesday until further notice.

4 villagers were arrested last night, which include 2 headmen. They are Tuai Rumah Philip Anak Bakat of Kampung Tungkah Atap, Tuai Rumah Neli Anak Nipa of Kampung Bajong Ili, Bawi Anak Atman of Kampung Lubok Manta and Tinsi Anak Gunda of Kampung Lumut.

3 more villagers were arrested at 2.30 this afternoon. They are Tuai Rumah Sadun Anak Aton and Nicholas Mujah of Kampung Ensika and Numpang Anak Suntai of Kampung Bajong. Nicholas Mujah is also the Secretary General of the Sarawak Dayak Iban Association (SADIA) and a member of the Indigenous Peoples Network of Malaysia (JOAS).

He is currently assisting the Ibans in Sebuyau, who are also his community in their current native customary land dispute involving a logging company named Quality Concrete Holdings.

JOAS condemns the heavy use of force and intimidation against the community leaders and villagers and calls for neutrality of the state infrastructure in this legal dispute between the private company and indigenous peoples.

"Why do the police decide only to act now when before, numerous reports were lodged by the villagers against the encroachment of the logging company without any action being taken?" Mark Bujang, Executive Director of Borneo Resources Institute (BRIMAS) asked. "We believe that Nicholas Mujah and the 6 other villagers were wrongly accused and this is not the first time that indigenous communities in Sarawak who defend their land are accused of committing a crime just so that the police will find an excuse to arrest and detain them."

Romuald Siew, President of Jaringan Tanah Hak Adat Bangsa Asal Sarawak (TAHABAS) also condemns the arrest of the 7 Iban villagers. "Our communities have

been oppressed and our rights neglected and trampled upon for too long. This is just another example of where the rich and powerful are bullying the natives so that they can become even richer at the expense of the natives," said Siew.

"We stand in solidarity with the communities in Sebuyau, and demand that the authorities would release the 7 Iban villagers immediately," said Siew.

Hellan Empaing, President of Sarawak Rural Women Association (WADESA) pointed out, "The Malaysian police should take measures ensuring the protection of the villagers whom are the victims. Instead, they are arresting the villagers defending their forests and ancestral lands. This is an offensive act of misused power."

Adrian Lasimbang, President of Malaysia Indigenous Peoples Network (JOAS) which is now attending the Conference of Parties (COP 10) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in Nagoya, Japan, stated that while the governments talk about conservation of biodiversity in Nagoya, the government continues destructions back home and disregards indigenous rights on land and resources.

"Indigenous peoples are first line of defense to biodiversity destruction and they are willing to go face to face with destructive practices for the sake of biodiversity conservation. This contribution can be seen practiced by the community in Sebuyau."

The non-recognition of their rights to NCR land, will cause the loss of biodiversity and deforestation. And when they stand to fight this struggle of oppression, indigenous peoples are prosecuted by the government for protecting biodiversity and defending their customary rights to their land and resources.

Nicholas Mujah's case is just one of hundreds of land encroachment and conflict cases between indigenous peoples and logging companies in Sarawak.

With these statements, JOAS demands the immediate unconditional release of Nicholas Mujah and the six other villagers. JOAS also demands that police stop this practice of intimidating and harassing Sarawak's indigenous leaders.

For more information please contact the JOAS Secretariat

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