

JATAM Press Release, July 14, 2006

Protesters Attacked at Peaceful Rally against Australian Gold Mine in North Sulawesi, Indonesia

Jakarta - A peaceful protest attended by 3000 people from North Sulawesi against the Australian-owned Archipelago Resources Toka Tindung gold mine project ended in brutal attacks on the protesters by an unknown group. The group, suspected to have a close relationship with the company's Indonesian subsidiary PT Meares Soputan Mining (MSM), threw rocks at the protesters on their way home on Thursday night (13/7). Fifty-four people were reported injured with seven sustaining wounds to the head and eyes from being beaten with an iron and a wood stick with nails. A pregnant woman fainted and undergoes miscarriage after being kicked by a group of men.

Police have so far detained Jorry Lomboan and Herry Lomboan and others in his circle alleged to have perpetrated the attacks. Herry Lomboan was lately known as member of security guard with Toka Tindung project. This raised suspicion that the company has been involved with the attack. Thousands of fishermen, tourism workers, and fish canning factory laborers are opposed to the mining project that plans to dump environmentally toxic waste into the sea of Rinondoran. A local organization namely AMMALTA opposed to Archipelago's proposal to dump mining waste into the ocean, also known as Submarine Tailings Disposal, has formed.

On Thursday (13/7), more than 3,000 AMMALTA members organized a peaceful protest to express their rejection to revisions made in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of the Toka Tindung Project (1). The proposed revisions included disregarding recommendations that obliged the mining company to re-conduct the EIA study upon its expiration as stipulated in national and local government laws (2).

The North Sulawesi Bureau of Environmental Management (BPLH) stated last year that the company's EIA had expired. In December 2005, this problem was brought to the Environment Minister who later formed a team tasked to verify the EIA implementation. Based on verification team's findings, the Environment Minister decided that the EIA was expired, and needed to be redone, not just revised. The company is supposed to halt the Toka Tindung project construction until the new EIA study is completed. However, the company continues its operations and considers the 1998 EIA to be valid. The company has since said that it would revise the EIA while disobeys the Indonesian authorities.

The establishment of Toka Tindung project has triggered anxiety among the people of Bitung and North Minahasa as it plans to dump mine waste, also known as tailings, into Rinondoran Bay. The plan will adversely affect the livelihoods of thousands of fishermen in the province while threatening the province's income from the fisheries sector, which amounts to IDR 500 to 900 billion per year (3). The project also puts enormous risk on the fifty companies investing in the tourism, and endangers the livelihoods of thousands of laborers working in the fisheries and tourism sectors. The project also poses a human health contamination risk due to tailings deposition in the marine waters. The notorious

Buyat Bay case is located in the same province as the proposed Toka Tindung project, and is a reminder of how marine waste dumping of mine waste can adversely affect the local communities.

Notes to the Editor

1. PT MSM advertisement, page 10, Manado Pos daily, 16 June 2006. Requesting public participation in the revision of the EIA of the Toka Tindung project.
2. Local and national government recommendations: Letter of BPLH Sulut dated 22 November 2005 no 660.1/345/BPLH stated that the PT MSM EIA had expired. Letter of Minister of Environment dated 19 December 2005, No.B.6345/Dep.I/Lh/12/2005 stated that the PT MSM EIA had expired, and that PT MSM was obliged to redo the EIA and not revise the old EIA; Letter of North Sulawesi Governor dated 20 December 2005 No. 545/2201/SEKR to Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources requesting the halt of PT MSM activity until the company completed the new EIA. According to the Governor, the attendance of PT MSM raised significant resistance from North Sulawesi society and could lead to instability in the area.
3. North Sulawesi Central Bureau of Statistics.

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