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Response to Article “Indonesian indigenous land defenders jailed in fight with pulpwood giant” by Mongabay

As a responsible company involved in managing renewable plantations in North Sumatra, TPL seeks to provide meaningful livelihoods for our employees and deliver positively impacts to the communities in our areas of operations. Where there are land ownership contention in some parts of our operational areas, we adopt a spirit of open dialogue, seeking out peaceful resolutions with legitimate representatives of concerned communities, and acting in accordance to the government’s law and regulations.

It is therefore regretful that Mongabay chose to publish the article “*Indonesian Indigenous Land Defenders Jailed in Fight with Pulpwood Giant*” on 9 March 2020 without seeking our perspective or ascertaining the facts of the incident.

In reference to the incident that took place on 16 September 2019, we would like to clarify the following:

- **Location.** The incident happened in an area within TPL’s licensed concession. A group of “villagers” had earlier sought permission from one of our plantation security staff to cross our property to attend a wedding in another area. Out of goodwill, they were allowed access. TPL staff did not “arrive at their village” as alleged in the article. The area which the group claims is part of their village was harvested a few days prior to the incident. Moreover, that area had already seen 4 cycles of harvesting by the company in the past decade.
- **Cause.** The incident escalated not because there was a 3 year-old boy that was hurt but when one of the “villagers” hit a TPL employee with a wooden bat. This then prompted others in their group to start hitting other employees with bats and hoes. About 10 of our employees suffered injuries and had to be brought to the nearest clinic and later to Vita Insani Hospital in Pematang Siantar for treatment.
- **External Parties Involved.** While the group claimed that they were all from Sihaporas village, investigations by the police revealed that the group consisted several non-Sihaporas members, including members of Lamtoras which the Simalungun District Government has confirmed is a non-registered entity.

Furthermore, both Partuha Maujana Simalungun (PMS), the institute for history and culture of Simalungun, and Himpunan Mahasiswa Simalungun (Himapsi), the college student forum of Simalungun, have declared that there are no indigenous lands in the Simalungun District, and

confirmed that both Jonny Ambarita and Thomson Ambarita are not members of Simalungun indigenous tribes.

TPL respects with the rule of law and the court's verdict on this criminal case. We will not allow this isolated incident by a few individuals deter us from our continuous engagement with Sihaporas villagers. Over the years, we have delivered various CSR programmers that include providing key infrastructure construction and repair (like dams, water pipes, roads, toilets, etc.), SME training, and scholarship assistance to deserving students.

Corporate Communication, 2020