
[Indonesia: Killings by Perhutani in East Java teak plantations – a twofold perverted notion of joint forest management](#)

The state-owned company Perhutani boasts of having “one of the highest percentages of forest plantation in the world” (<http://perhutaniproducts.com/>) with a land area of 2,426,206 Ha in Java and Madura Island of Indonesia.

It has also the gloomy record of having severely damaged or destroyed well over half the 'state forest' of Wonosobo in Central Java (see WRM Bulletin N° 96).

On top of that, it has recently added notoriousness for killing villagers from the forest fringe of teak plantations in Perhutani's Madiun and Bojonegoro sectors.

Lidah Tani, a local NGO based in Blora, East Java, Indonesia, which supports forest farmers, issued a letter of protest denouncing that:

“Yaimin was shot dead by forest security forces in teak plantations in Perhutani's Madiun sector on Tuesday 6th May 2008. He received 4 bullet wounds in the chest. He was suspected, with others, of being involved in illegal logging.” His friends deny the accusation, but, beyond that, Lidah Tani rightfully rebukes: “Four bullets for one man!”

The letter recalls that: “Less than two weeks previously, on 23rd April 2008, three people who were looking for wood in Perhutani teak plantations in the Bojonegoro sector were also shot. Two died and one is still in a critical condition.”

These dead people belonged to communities who were the original owners of the forest land that was seized over a hundred years ago by the Dutch and never returned to them. Later on Perhutani took control of the forest and established teak plantations depriving forest farmers of their livelihood.

Recently Perhutani has vigorously promoted its Joint Forest Management programme as a means of involving communities in forest management and protection. However, the Indonesian local NGO wonders: “Is joint management the right term when the forestry company has seized control of community forests?”

People who have lived communally in the forests for generations, relying on subsistence agriculture, livestock, fruit and non timber forest products gathering such as honey, resin and fiber became the workforce to prepare the land and plant and tend the trees so Perhutani harvests the timber of its teak plantations.

The meaning of joint forest management has been twofold perverted, because monoculture plantations of teak are by no means a biodiverse forest, and because joint management is far from implying the killing of forest community members.

“What is the meaning of 'joint management' when Perhutani shoots people to protect forests and

members of the community are its victims?”, asks Lidah Tani in the letter of protest. The organisation denounces that allegedly to protect state assets, Perhutani and its forest guards “shoot and kill people from villages on the forest margins those who are poor and oppressed”. The criminal record of the company since 1998 is 31 dead and 69 people who were beaten up or shot by forest guards.

Lidah Tani’ demands: “that justice is done. The perpetrators of murder and human rights violations must be sought out, tried and given appropriate sentences. We call on all parties to stop all forms of violence and for a forest protection system without guns. We urge all farmers' groups and community organisations to stop all forms of cooperation with Perhutani. Starting from today! Don't wait for the next victim!”

Article based on the “Letter of Protest About Killings of Villagers From the Forest Fringe by Perhutani”, available at http://www.wrm.org.uy/countries/Indonesia/Killing_Villagers.html