
[Indonesia: Dayak's tour seeking support](#)

A group of Dayaks recently toured Australia to promote solidarity with their struggle for land rights and compensation from Australian-based mining companies, which account for more than 60% of Australian investments in Indonesia.

Their campaign is focusing on two important gold and silver mines: PT Kelian Equatorial Mine (PT KEM) in East Kalimantan and PT Indo Muro Kencana (PT IMK) located in Central Kalimantan. PT KEM is 90% owned by Rio Tinto Co., while PT IMK is 90% owned by Perth-based Aurora. This company was allegedly involved in the death -possibly murder- of four Ekari people in September 1997 (see WRM Bulletin nr. 5). Traditional landowners and people from the towns and villages in the vicinity of these mines have had to cope with a host of problems -as heavy water pollution and the destruction of forests and roads- since exploration and operations began in the 1980s. These problems have been exacerbated by the recent fires and drought (see WRM Bulletin nr. 8).

"Before Rio Tinto came, traditional mining was the main and most important source of income. There is a regulation from the local government which allows people to do traditional mining in a 50-metre band along the banks of the Kelian River. PT KEM ignores this regulation. When it started exploration, the company simply claimed the area along the river. Now the people are not allowed to do their traditional mining there, and hundreds of families have been evicted from their land" states Pius Nyompe, a customary landowner forced off his land by the company. In effect, some 440 families have been displaced since land acquisitions by the company began in 1990. Meanwhile the company does not respond to the concerns of people affected.

Unions have joined the Dayak in their claims and denounce the anti-worker practices of Rio Tinto.

Source: Drillbits & Tailings, March 7, 1998; Volume 3, Number 5.