

## NEWSLETTER

Hello there!

This is our newest newsletter series, which will help you to uncover stories from Indigenous peoples all around the world. In this episode we will introduce you to the Awyu Tribe in Papua. Enjoy the ride!



### FIRST AND FOREMOST... WHO ARE THE AWYU PEOPLE?

Awyu Tribe is one of the many Indigenous groups living in Papua, Indonesia. This tribe consists of about 20,000 people and follow a traditional lifestyle that relies directly on the nature, especially the forest, to provide their livelihoods.

Since 2005, their homeland Boven Digoel, has been planned to become the first site of large-scale oil palm plantation in South Papua. Palm oil companies then started arriving and developing plantations, affecting the local people who live in the area. Plantations cleared the forests that the people relied on. This created tensions between the local people and the palm oil companies.

When the company IAL came in 2017, various efforts were deployed to appeal to the Awyu Tribe and the local people, including the use of unfair methods. Members of the Awyu Tribe have expressed that they felt unsafe and uncomfortable with the existence of the company in their land, and that their customary and state laws have been violated during the proses of persuasion by the company. They fear that if this condition is continued, it will incite conflicts within the community itself.

### Papuan Forests and Environmental Degradation

Aside from its impact to the lives of local and Indigenous peoples, the creation of the plantation also poses a big risk of environmental damage. It is expected that the IAL's project will cause deforestation of 26,326 hectares of an area primarily consisting of dry forest land. As much as 23 million tons of CO2 will be released if this occurs. Furthermore, there are concerns regarding the preservation of biodiversity if the forests are cleared.



The plantation in Boven Digoel is a part of a larger project called Tanah Merah; which is a plan to create the largest oil palm plantation in Indonesia. This project is expected to clear thousands of hectares of untouched forests and produce emission of around 102 million tons of CO2. This contradicts the government's goal of reducing 75% of its GHG emission by 2030.



### Development of the Case

On March 13th 2023, representatives of the Awyu Tribe filed an environmental and climate change lawsuit to the Investment and One Stop Service Office of Papua Province over a permit issued to palm oil company PT Indo Asiana Lestari (IAL). The lawsuit was filed by an environmental activist of the Awyu Tribe, Hendrikus Woro, with another representative, Kasimilus Awe, to the Jayapura State Administrative Court.

The Awyu people further claimed that IAL's environmental permit is problematic and therefore needs to be revoked. The main issue being discussed is the lack of involvement of the local people in issuing the permit, disregarding their consent to the development of the project. As of now (May 2023) the Awyu people are still undergoing the legal process to protect their rights over the land.

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