

Press Release

Fate of Leuser Ecosystem Hangs in the Balance: GeRAM Lawsuit Verdict Delayed by 3 Weeks

JAKARTA -- 8 November 2016 --- The Aceh Citizen Lawsuit Movement (GeRAM) left court disappointed today after Jakarta state court judges delayed their verdict for 3 weeks until 29th November 2016. GeRAM's citizen lawsuit challenges the Minister of Home Affairs, the Aceh Governor and the Aceh parliament for failing to include the Leuser Ecosystem (LE) in the Aceh Spatial Plan 2013-2033 (Qanun Aceh No. 19/2013).

The lawsuit was registered at the Jakarta state court on the 21st January 2016 (33/Pdt.G/2016/PN.JKT.PST) by 9 Acehese community leaders¹ who form GeRAM. The plaintiffs travelled from all around Aceh to hear today's ruling on their case – the first ever citizen lawsuit to come out of Aceh. However the chair of the judges announced that regrettably the decision could not be delivered as planned today. The representative of the Minister of Home Affairs attended the hearing, while the representatives of the Aceh Governor and Aceh parliament were not present.

Chair of the judges, Agustinus Setyo Wahyu, said, *"We regret to inform you that our panel of judges are otherwise engaged in duties from the Supreme court so we must delay our verdict until the 29th November."*

Aman Jarum, a Gayo Lues traditional leader and one of the plaintiffs said, *"We are going back to Aceh with heavy hearts because we have been struggling for many years against this destructive spatial plan. But we will return to Jakarta in 3 weeks time for the verdict. We appeal to the judges to apply their wisdom in making their decision, taking into account the lives and livelihoods of the Acehese people which depend on the LE."*

Over the course of the case, factual and expert witnesses for the plaintiffs presented strong testimony for why the Aceh Spatial Plan breaches national law. The LE exists as a protected area in at least three legal regulations: Law No. 11 year 2006 on Governing Aceh, Law No. 26 Year 2007 on Spatial Planning, and its derivative Government Regulation 26 Year 2008 on the National Spatial Plan. This year has also seen significant momentum in the protection of the LE from the Indonesian government. In April 2016, the Minister of Environment and Forestry, Siti Nurbaya, declared a moratorium on oil palm expansion and mining inside the LE. Only last Thursday (3/11) the Minister said that she had decided to incorporate the boundaries of the LE into the Aceh state forest map, which means that the LE would become an inseparable part of the Aceh Spatial Plan².

Representative of the plaintiffs, Farwiza Farhan said, "We applaud Minister Siti Nurbaya for her efforts to ensure that the Leuser Ecosystem is integral to the Aceh Spatial Plan. We hope that the verdict on our citizen lawsuit case will align with the Minister's efforts and result in a revision of the spatial plan which upholds the national legal protection of the Leuser Ecosystem."

Continues over

¹ Effendi, Aceh Besar District; Juarsyah, Bener Meriah district; Abu Kari, Gayo Lues District; Dahlan, Lhokseumawe city; Kamal Faisal, Aceh Tamiang District; Muhammad Ansari Sidik, Southeast Aceh district; Sarbunis, South Aceh District; Najaruddin, Nagan Raya district; Farwiza, Banda Aceh.

² <http://foresthints.news/minister-designates-leuser-ecosystem-as-inseparable-part-of-aceh-spatial-plan>

GeRAM

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GeRAM delivered their petition to Indonesian President Joko Widodo on 3rd November where it was received by Yanuar Nugroho, Deputy Chief of Staff, who indicated that he now plans to coordinate with relevant institutions regarding the protection of the Leuser Ecosystem.

"We now wait to see these good intentions translated into real policy change on the ground, and for the Aceh and central governments to work together to protect the Leuser Ecosystem. Over 75,000 people have now signed our ongoing GeRAM petition (change.org/saveleuser) to show their solidarity for protecting the LE. We thank all of our supporters for continuing to help bring our struggle to the attention of Indonesia and the rest of the world."
Farwiza concluded.****

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Photos Attached

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Caption 1. The GeRAM plaintiffs leave Jakarta state court disappointed by the 3 week delay in the Aceh citizen lawsuit verdict.

Caption 2. Forest clearing for an oil palm plantation in the Leuser Ecosystem. Credit: Paul Hilton for RAN/LDF

Caption 3. GeRAM are fighting to protect the Leuser Ecosystem: last place on earth where rhinos, elephants, orangutans and tigers co-exist in the wild. Credit: Paul Hilton for RAN/LDF