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**Indonesia: Detention of environmental human rights defender Ilham Mahmudi**

On 9 May 2024, human rights defender **Ilham Mahmudi** received a letter extending his detention after being arrested on 18 April 2024 by the Langkat Police. The letter arrived from the prosecutor's office agreeing to give him a 40-day extension of his detention.

Ilham Mahmudi is an environmental human rights defender based in the North Sumatra Province of Indonesia. Mahmudi works on the protection of mangrove forests in Langkat suffering from illegal logging by oil palm companies, including in his village. He was the head of Hamlet (Kadus) II Kwala Langkat Village, Tanjung Pura District, Langkat Regency in North Sumatra province, but was temporarily dismissed for allegedly refusing to sign a letter of sale and purchase of the village forest land that was planned to be converted into oil palm plantations.

On 18 April 2024, Ilham Mahmudi was arrested, forcibly pulled and put in the trunk of a car with his hands tied by the Langkat Resort Police without being presented with any arrest warrant. According to the Langkat Police Criminal Investigation Unit Head, Ilham has been charged under Article 170 of the Criminal Code based on allegations of the destruction of houses and barracks in the Protected Forest Areas.

In February 2024, Ilham Mahmudi and the village' residents reported to the authorities that an excavator unit was destroying the mangrove areas in protected forest areas recorded on the Inauguration Map of Protected Forest Areas in accordance with the Decree of the Minister of Environment and Forestry of the Republic of Indonesia Number SK.6609/MenLHK-PKTL/KUH/PLA/2/10/20221. So far, only one excavator unit has been successfully seized by the North Sumatra Regional Police ever since the villagers reported activities to the authorities. During this time, village residents reported having received threats by village collaborators of the oil palm companies aiming to develop oil palm plantations in Kwala Langkat mangrove forests. Allegedly, involved police officers have visited the village in different occasions, telling the villagers to stop opposing the environmental damage caused by the company's operations.

On January 31 2024, Ilham Mahmudi was temporarily suspended after being the head of Hamlet II for 8 years as he opposed the land sale. The human rights defender was also threatened by an accomplice of the oil palm companies, and told "if you don't sign the land sale and purchase agreement, your position will end." Later in the afternoon, a letter of temporary suspension of Ilham was issued by the Head of Kwala Langkat Village. Ilham has not received a salary since January 2024. The land sale and purchase took place between residents and individuals allegedly part of a suspected land mafia network who wanted to control the village (customary) forest. The land being traded is approximately 5 hectares, but listed as approximately 7 hectares in the letter.

Front Line Defenders strongly condemns the arrest and extension of environmental human rights defender Ilham Mahmudi's detention, and is concerned with a larger attempt to target and intimidate land and environmental rights defenders involved in the protection of mangrove forests in Langkat.

**Front Line Defenders urges the relevant authorities in Indonesia to:**

- 1) Immediately and unconditionally release Ilham Mahmudi and drop all charges against him.
- 2) Immediately cease all other forms of harassment, including intimidation against human rights defenders and the villagers of Langkat.
- 3) Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Indonesia can carry forward their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals.

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