

# Indonesia: Papuan students in Jayapura protest against massive sugar cane plantation in Merauke

Tuesday 22 October 2024, by [BALOWSKI James](#), [ULIM Aida](#) (Date first published: 7 October 2024).

Aida Ulim, Jayapura — The South Papua Student Concern Front held a free speech forum on Monday October 7 in Jayapura city, Papua, rejecting investment and deforestation of customary forests the Animha region of South Papua that the government want to transform into sugar cane and rice plantations.

During the action, which was held at the Jayapura University of Science and Technology (USTJ) campus, the protesters who attended brought banners and pamphlets reading “Climate justice without oligarchy”, “Immediately ratify the Draft Law on Indigenous Peoples”, “The land of Papua is not for sale” and “Save indigenous Papuan’s Forests”.

Field coordinator (Korlap) Stenly Jambojay said the free speech forum was aimed at rejecting investment by sugarcane plantation companies in Merauke regency. Jambojay said that the presence of the 2 million hectare sugarcane plantation, which will develop sugarcane plantations as raw materials for the sugar industry, will threaten forest areas in Merauke regency.

“Therefore, as students and representing indigenous communities, there is only one word, resist”, he said in a speech at the USTJ campus square in Jayapura city on Monday.

Jambojay also said that with regard to the sugarcane plantation, the government did not involve local communities and that it will harm these communities as many will lose their source of livelihood.

“Stop stealing customary land, the land of Papua is not empty, our free speech forum rejects the 2 million hectare sugarcane project in Merauke regency. To the government, immediately implement the rights of indigenous peoples so that they are recognised by the state”, he said.

Enis Dapla, a Cenderawasih University (Uncen) student who also joined the free speech forum, said that they firmly rejected the sugar cane companies that will destroy customary forest in Merauke regency. He also urged the central and regional governments to immediately implement the law on the protection of indigenous peoples’ rights to their land.

“Because local people have difficulty finding sources of livelihood and also palm oil companies have inflicted huge financial losses on communities, not just in Merauke but in most parts of Papua”, he said.

During the action, the South Papua Student Concern Front read out a statement.

We fully support Bapak (Mr) Vincent Kwipalo and the indigenous people of the Yeinan tribe, the Marind Maklew tribe, the Kima tribe and the tribes from Kondo to Digoel in rejecting the National Strategic Program (PSN) in their customary lands.

We, the South Papua Student Concern Front, firmly reject the PSN that will take over 2 million hectares of land for sugar cane plantations and rice fields in Merauke regency.

We, the South Papua Student Concern Front, strongly condemn and reject all foreign companies or investors operating on the customary land of indigenous Papuans from Sorong to Merauke.

We, the South Papua Student Concern Front, ask the state, in this case the Indonesian Council of Bishops (KWI) and the Vatican Ambassador to Indonesia, to replace the archbishop of Merauke, Bishop Petrus Canisius Mandagi, M.S.G., with a native Papuan bishop in the Merauke archdiocese.

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**Aida Ulim**

**Translated by James Balowski**

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