

Press Release: SAVE Rivers, JOAS, BRIMAS,
The Borneo Project, and Bruno Manser Fund



24 October 2015

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

International indigenous anti-dam activists join two year anniversary celebration of blockades in Malaysia

Indigenous resistance against the proposed Baram Dam receives international support for the celebration of the second year anniversary of the Baram Dam blockades: indigenous anti-dam activists from many parts of the world adopt declaration at the banks of the Baram River in Sarawak, Malaysia.

(BARAM / SARAWAK / MALAYSIA) On October 23rd 2015 indigenous communities from around the world gathered on the banks of the Baram River in Sarawak, Malaysia in the context of the second year anniversary of the indigenous-led blockades against the proposed Baram Dam. Two years ago indigenous communities set up two blockades and chased workers and researchers from the site. The works on the dam have come to a standstill and last month the government of Sarawak announced a moratorium.

Indigenous anti-dam activists from Indonesia, the Philippines, Cambodia, Brazil, the US, Honduras, and from around Malaysia united at the blockades to stand in solidarity with the resistance against the Baram Dam and to strengthen ties between their communities. The week-long event is called the World Indigenous Summit on Environment and Rivers, WISER Baram 2015, and was hosted by the grassroots network SAVE Rivers.

During celebrations at the two blockades, the proposed dam site, as well as at a conference in the town of Miri, the participants were united by the similarities between their struggles. "I have gained a lot of experience from all of the delegates. And with such information, I am confident enough such experiences will be fundamental to us - the Baram People - and our strategies to continue to fight and stop the proposed Baram Dam," said James Nyurang, who hosted the delegates at his village.

According to Berta Cáceres, 2015 Goldman Prize winner from Honduras, "this summit on indigenous peoples and rivers has a special value in that its actions give strength to the historic resistance of our peoples and makes visible the grave aggressions and conflict generated by the privatization of rivers and the construction of dams within Indigenous communities and regions."

Participants in the summit collectively produced a declaration that acknowledges the widespread suffering and destruction caused by dams, and stresses the importance of obtaining Free, Prior, and Informed Consent from communities impacted by dam building. It urges all stakeholders to act in full accountability, transparency, and compliance of all human rights principals and values.

The declaration also calls on governments and institutions to stop presenting dams as climate neutral, and recognize that dams emit large amounts of greenhouse gases, including methane.

The indigenous defense of the Baram river stands united with other communities' struggles for land, livelihood, spirituality, identity, and community cohesion.

Media contact
Peter Kallang, Chairman of SAVE Rivers
Phone: +6013 833 1104

Delegate statements:

“According to my personal opinion, I am very happy to have delegates from all over the world who have committed to come to Baram and have visited places as my own Kampung - Lepo ‘Gah’ Tanjung Tepalit, the Blockade at Kilometer 15, and also the other Blockade at Long Lama.

Being together with all the delegates - especially during the conference - sharing and discussing about various strategies to encounter the challenges of how to stop all the unnecessary dams in the world, I have gained a lot of experience from all of the delegates. And with such information, I am confident enough such experiences will be fundamental to us - the Baram People - and our strategies to continue to fight and stop the proposed Baram Dam.”

-James Nyurang, former headman of Tanjung Tepalit, a leader in the Resistance against the Baram Dam

“I believe in the sharing part of of WISER, that’s why I came. I’m feeling excited to share with the people opposing dams around the world my own experience of being displaced so that they will know how much you can lose in terms of natural resources and community, and about the psychological trauma that happens. I hope to build as much awareness as possible. I gained so much from the fellow participants of WISER from many countries and different parts of the world.”

-Nicholas Bawin, Sarawak, Malaysia

“During the mission we analyzed our situations and we came to the conclusion that our conditions of marginalization, discrimination, and violence arises mainly from the failure of the states and investors to respect, protect, and fulfill their obligations under national laws and international human rights law.”

-Samin Ngach, Bunong Indigenous, Cambodia

“We shared our voices and resistance in defense of rivers and Mother Earth on the banks of the Baram River, together with the Indigenous communities in Tanjung Tepalit, Long San, and at the Blockades at Kilometer 15 and Long Lama. Now we are denouncing before the world, which often ignores this, that this ethnocide that is a product of predatory capitalism and extractivism. We make a strong call to the next Climate Change Summit in Paris to listen to and respect Indigenous peoples and the alternatives to climate change our communities offer.”

-Berta Cáceres, Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras - COPINH, Lenca People, Honduras