PRESS RELEASE
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Kolkata, INDIA - A peasant leader of the Aliansi Gerakan Reform Agraria (AGRA) from Indonesia

attended the Coordinating Council Meeting (CC) of the Asian Peasant Coalition (APC) held on December 7, 2011 in Kolkata, India to seek the international support against intimidation of four (4) AGRA farmers in Pangalengan, Bandung Regency, West Java Province of Indonesia.

The Asian Peasant Coalition (APC) is an Asia-wide peasant coalition of farmers, landless peasants, fisherfolks, agricultural workers, dalit, indigenous peoples, herders, pastoralists, peasant women and rural youth. The APC has 33 organizational members with over 15 million membership in nine (9) countries in Asia such as Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Pakistan, Mongolia, Philippines and Indonesia. The APC has also wide international network in Africa , Europe, and Latin America.

In a joint press statement by AGRA and APC, the APC expressed support the Pangalengan farmers struggle for land and to stop the harassment and intimidation perpetrated by the PDAP (Provincial Government Company on Agribusiness and Mining) in Pangalengan and the Regency Bandung Police.

Land Conflict

According to Amran Halim, AGRA West Java Coordinator, “the land conflict started when the PDAP (Provincial Government Company on Agribusiness and Mining) itself is intensifying landlessness. The PDAP is said to be allowing local landlord or rich farmers to rent their so-called ‘lands’ because they cannot cultivate it. However, this practice is not allowed by the law.”

“Ancestors of Pangalengan peasant has been tilling the land, called Sampalan, before the Dutch established its power in 1602. When the Dutch came, they grabbed the land from the farmers. When the Dutch rule ended, the government of Indonesia continue the landgrabbing. And the rest is history,” added Amran.

Intimidation and violence

“In 2004, Pangalengan’s peasant succeeded in re-claiming their right to land in 134 hectares in Sampalan. They continue in cultivating the land, under the banner of AGRA. Since then, the PDAP, police and the military started intimidation and violence against the Pangalengan peasants,” remarked Rahmat Ajiguna, APC Deputy Secretary General and concurrent Secretary General of AGRA

‘On October 24, 2011, in the afternoon, the PDAP, civilian, LPM RI, Pangalengan District Police, Military Headquarters at Ward Level of Pangalengan, Regency Bandung Police, tried to put a boundary pole in the Sampalan land that is cultivated by the peasants. The AGRA farmers defended their lands and clashed with the PDAP supporters including the Pangalengan District Police and the Military Headquarters at Ward Level of Pangalengan, Regency Bandung Police. On November 30, Regency Bandung police sent hundreds of policeman to Pangalengan to ‘secure’ the PDAP to mark the land: Once again the AGRA farmers in Pangalegan succeeded in defending their land. The police pulled-out on December 1,2011 from Pangalengan and stated that they will arrest the provocateurs, meaning, AGRA members. This statement clearly defines that the criminalization of peasants fighting for genuine land reform will continue to ensure the PDAP langrabbing,” revealed Rahmat.

Genuine land reform

The APC said that on November 18 to 21, 2011, the Pangalengan farmers joined the AGRA in hosting the “Southeast Asia Workshop on Peasants Social Welfare and Security Empowerment”. The event was attended by thirty (30) people coming from Cambodia, Vietnam, Philippines and Indonesia. The activity aims to advocate through legislative measures the expansion of social security law for old age, health insurance and better working conditions for the benefit of the poor peasants, agricultural workers and peasant women. It also aims on awareness raising for the need for genuine land reform

The international participants that joined the workshop were inspired by the Pangalengan people who is cultivating the Sampalan land, an agricultural land planted with vegetables such as tomatoes, cabbage, potatoes, carrots, corn, banana, and chili. They vowed to support the struggle of Pangalengan farmers against the PDAP landgrabbing.

The APC and AGRA also calls for the implementation of genuine land reform and the recognition of the peasants right to land. Finally, they are demanding to de-list the names of four (4) AGRA Pangalengan members such as Momo, Yana, Ubus and Yaya as suspects in the notorious Article 170 Criminal Code. #

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