

Greenpeace rebukes paper giant over farmer's death

JAKARTA - Environmental group Greenpeace said Monday it had suspended cooperation with paper giant Asia Pulp and Paper after an Indonesian farmer was allegedly beaten to death by guards linked to the company.

The green group had once been one of the strongest critics of APP, accusing it of destroying vast swathes of carbon-rich forests that are home to endangered species such as Sumatran orangutans and tiger.

But following APP's announcement two years ago that it would stop using any logs from Indonesia's natural forests, Greenpeace had been supporting the company's efforts.

However, Bustar Maitar, the head of Greenpeace's Indonesia forest campaign, told AFP that the group was temporarily withdrawing support for the company's initiatives on forest conservation after a farmer was beaten to death on western Sumatra island last week.



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Police said the farmer, Indra Pelani, was allegedly killed Friday near an acacia plantation in Jambi province by guards hired by a security firm contracted by Wirakarya Sakti, a pulp wood supplier owned by APP.

"Indra was found dead with injuries on his body near the company's concession on Saturday," local police spokesman Almansyah, who like many Indonesians goes by one name, told AFP.

He said that the seven alleged perpetrators fled and police were hunting for them.

Maitar said support for APP would be suspended until the case was "settled in a transparent and fair manner.

"They have declared themselves to be a responsible company. If APP doesn't take this seriously, it will cost them their reputation."

Greenpeace added in statement that they were "deeply saddened by the news of the brutal death", and called for the company to launch a full investigation of its security procedures and contractors to ensure no such incident is repeated.

APP said in a statement that it had ordered Wirakarya Sakti to suspend all personnel allegedly involved in the incident.

"We condemn violence and we support Greenpeace's decision to focus its efforts on this issue," it said, adding that efforts would be made "to ensure that justice is done".

APP's pledge to stop using logs from Indonesia's natural forests followed years of campaigning by green groups, which had led to the company losing packaging contracts with big brands such as foodmaker Kraft and Barbie's Mattel.