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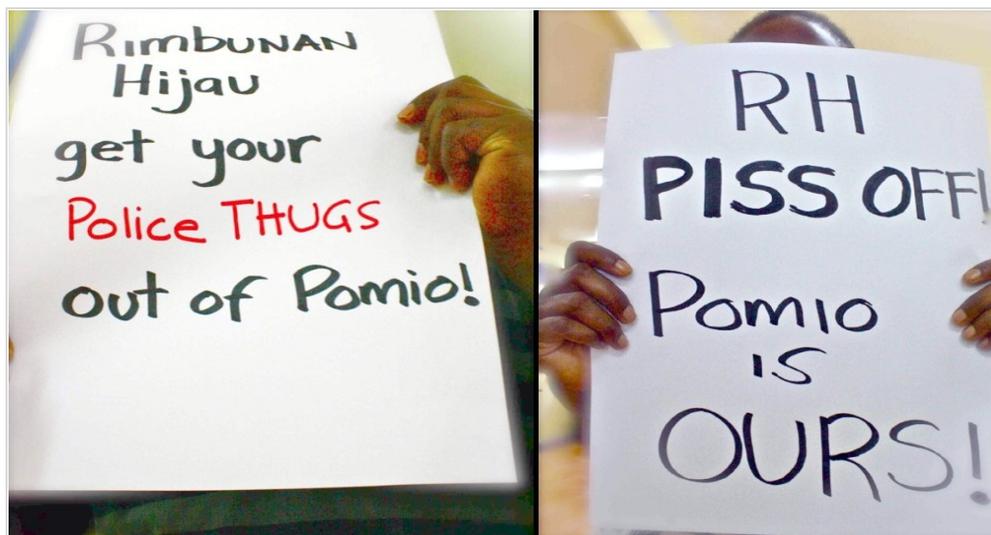
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Rimbunan Hijau welcomes PNG police investigations

10/10/2011 22:05



Pictures of placards distributed anonymously via email today condemning the Rimbunan Hijau (PNG) Group and asking it

it to leave Pomio in the East New Britain province. Despite the opposition the company said most landowners supported the project.

Malaysian logging giant Rimbunan Hijau (RH) has welcomed an investigation into reports Papua New Guinea police assaulted villagers after they initiated court proceedings against one of its subsidiaries.

Acting deputy police commissioner Fred Yakasa has been tasked by acting police commissioner Tom Kulunga to lead the inquiry into the incident which allegedly occurred between 3-6 October. The police investigation was in response to a complaint filed by Port Moresby-based non-government organization Eco-Forestry Forum (EFF).

The RH (PNG) Group said it respected the independence of the police but described the reports as "baseless allegations" made by an NGO that did not support development in PNG.

"The majority of the land owners support the palm oil projects. The recent attempts by this few disgruntled land owners with assistance from NGOs, whom do not support any form of development to derail and stop this very important project, was refused by the National Court recently. The royal constabulary (of PNG) is very independent and high integrity institution of the state of Papua New Guinea and we welcome the comments of acting police commissioner Tom Kulunga," the company said in a statement issued today.

"We regret this constant unverified adverse media release by (a) non-government organization hell bent (on) generating adverse publicity in order to keep their anti-government campaign alive for domestic and international donors. It is very much regretted and it is not helpful for a country that is seeking to develop its resources sustainably which is much needed."

The battle between the RH (PNG) Group and the villagers appears far from over, with sympathizers today distributing via email pictures of printed placards that condemned the logging company and asked it to get out of Pomio.

It is understood that the project in dispute is the Sigite Mukus Integrated Rural Development Project, which the Malaysian company had pinned its hopes on to lead its expansion into the lucrative oil palm sector. Former PNG national planning minister Paul Tiensten, who is the MP for Pomio, supported the project and

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represented the Somare government at the [official launch of a report](#) in March which backed the company's diversification plans.

However, the Somare government's toppling in August and a commission of inquiry into all land leased under the previous government's controversial Special Agricultural and Business Lease (SABL) has temporarily halted work. The RH (PNG) Group had planned to invest K800 million (US\$300 million) over the life of the project and provide infrastructure for the local communities.



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