

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

MEDIA ADVISORY

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Indonesia: Government must investigate Wilmar labour practices as company attempts to cover up abuse claims

Spokespeople available

Agri giant Wilmar's campaign to cover up labour abuses exposed in a damning Amnesty International report is being aided by the Indonesian government's failure to investigate claims against the palm oil company.

Despite reports that the authorities would create a special task force to probe human rights abuses detailed in the report, *'The Great Palm Oil Scandal: Labour Abuses Behind Big Brand Names'*, no progress has been made. Meanwhile, Wilmar has tried to intimidate staff into denying the claims.

"Workers on plantations live in fear of reprisals for speaking out about their poor working conditions. Such reprisals could include being moved away from their families to a different plantation, or even losing their job entirely," said Seema Joshi, Head of Amnesty International's Business and Human Rights team.

"Their predicament is not being helped by the government's complete failure to act on the gross human rights abuses detailed in our report."

At a meeting with trade union representatives in January, Wilmar asked workers to sign a document which stated that the abuses outlined in the Amnesty International report were not taking place on their plantations.

“Any signed statements that Wilmar obtains from its staff under such duress, including the threat of being fired, are not legally valid.” Seema Joshi said.

“Wilmar's approach to addressing the abuses flagged in our report is deeply worrying. The company is patently seeking to publicly discredit Amnesty International's evidence.”

Wilmar resorted to such tactics following a media report that the Indonesian government would carry out a thorough investigation into the issues highlighted in Amnesty International's report.

“We are encouraged by the commitment the Indonesian government has shown towards holding corporates to account for human rights. But in the three months since the report's release we have seen no action. An urgent investigation is needed,” said Seema Joshi.

“In light of Wilmar's attempts at discrediting our report and their ongoing failure to address any of the concerns it raised, the Indonesian authorities must now make good on the pledge to establish a task force to investigate Wilmar's labour practices.”

Wilmar's Singapore office has stated that the issues raised by Amnesty International are being actively discussed by Wilmar Plantation Operations Management and that their investigation continues.

The company said it will continue with this process until it is able to address all the issues highlighted, and will publish its full findings. It also says that trade union signatures were provided voluntarily.

Wilmar's public response, however, seems to be at odds with their approach behind the scenes.

Background:

- The report ['The Great Palm Oil Scandal: Labour Abuses Behind Big Brand Names'](#), revealed that labour practices used at Wilmar plantations include child labour, forced labour, exposure to dangerous conditions and endemic discrimination against women. These practices are in contravention of Indonesian law, some of which are criminal.
- Three months on from the publication of the report, none of the companies named have taken active steps to stop the labour abuses on their plantations, nor have they provided any remedy for those who have suffered abuses.
- Despite making a commitment to investigate the findings of the report and announcing that would it hire a consultancy for this purpose, Amnesty International has found no convincing evidence that Wilmar has addressed key issues including the use of high targets and piece rate which contributes to child labour, exploitation of female workers, nor non-payment of the minimum wage.

For more information or to arrange an interview contact Thomas Coombes +44 (0)20 30 3650 65 (desk), +44 (0)7983563983 (mobile) or email press@amnesty.org

Amnesty International has also released the following public statement on Wilmar:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa21/5189/2017/en/>