

URGENT ACTION

ENVIRONMENTAL HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS FREE

Syamsul Bahri and Samsir, father and son from a farmer community in North Sumatra, are now free from risk of imprisonment. An appellate court in the province upheld a lower court's decision to sentence the men to two months suspended prison sentence with four months' probation on charges of assault, meaning they will not be imprisoned unless they commit criminal offense within their probation period. Arrested on what is thought to be spurious charges, it is believed that the men have been targeted for their work as environmental human rights defenders and should therefore never have been convicted in the first place.

NO FURTHER ACTION IS REQUESTED. MANY THANKS TO ALL WHO SENT APPEALS.

Syamsul Bahri and Samsir were arrested on 10 February 2021 and named assault suspects following an accusation of violence. The charges were believed to be fabricated and linked to their activities as environmental human rights defenders working to conserve the environment and to defend their access to land.

Despite no reliable evidence being presented during the trial, the men were found guilty and sentenced to two months suspended prison sentence with four months' probation on 31 May. Following an appeal by the prosecutors, who wanted the men to face imprisonment, the Medan High Court upheld the lower's court ruling on 18 August, and Syamsul Bahri and Samsir were officially free from risk of imprisonment, subject to successful completion of their four-month probation period.

As a result of international mobilisation around this case, the Law and Human Rights Ministry held a meeting with local authorities, CSOs, and the farmer community to seek clarification on the allegations of criminalization against the two men. The ministry also sought information on a suspected illegal operation of a palm oil plantation located on land where the community has the right to manage under the government's social forestry permit. While the Ministry said it found no evidence of criminalization, it called on the North Sumatra Police and Environment and Forestry Ministry to investigate the palm oil plantation that the farmer community had been protesting.

Sumiati Surbakti, the director of Srikandi Lestari Foundation and member of their legal team, said, *"On behalf of Syamsul, Samsir, and the team, we want to say thank you very much to Amnesty International for having supported us tirelessly."*

Amnesty International will continue to monitor the situation of Syamsul Bahri and Samsir as well as to document the circumstance surrounding other environmental human rights defenders in Indonesia.

NAME AND PRONOUN: Syamsul Bahri and Samsir (he/him)

THIS IS THE FOURTH UA AND FINAL OUTPUT FOR UA 23/21

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa21/4351/2021/en/>

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