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# “Forest People” Without A Forest

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## Abstract

*The Orang Rimba have lived in the forests of Jambi, Sumatra, Indonesia for centuries. These ancestral lands are threatened by deforestation driven primarily by expanding palm oil operations in the region. This causes displacement of Orang Rimba groups leading to land disputes, lifestyle changes, and environmental impacts for the landscape. Through this paper I strive to demonstrate the importance of the Orang Rimba's access to their forest habitats using two approaches: ethnographic-centered accounts and interviews, and outside advocacy-based informants weighing in on the legal and environmental consequences of displacement. I also touch on political issues like colonialism and government policies involved in the growing of palm oil in Indonesia. Several sources offer suggestions for improvement and the future of palm oil use around the world to mediate this problem.*

## 1. Introduction

Southeast Asia is home to a rich, yet declining, population of indigenous peoples across the region. One indigenous group located in Jambi, on the island of Sumatra, Indonesia is the Orang Rimba, meaning “forest people” (Elkholy, 2016). The primary obstacle the Orang Rimba face is displacement due to deforestation, driven in large part by the establishment of palm oil plantations. The necessity of land access for the Orang Rimba is proven in light of the many implications that ensue when groups are displaced, ranging from day-

to-day living for Orang Rimba individuals to environmental and political implications across the region. The displacement also demonstrates Southeast Asia's history of colonialism and unique collection of periphery populations. Palm oil is the world's most common vegetable oil, coming from the oil palm tree. Colonial leaders began planting oil palm seeds in Southeast Asia due to the region's more productive climate, and that decision would have lasting impacts on the landscape. With Southeast Asia as the largest producer of palm oil worldwide (Erik, et. al., 2020), and Indonesia as the region's top exporter and domestic consumer of the crop, there comes many implications for native life which beg for displacement issues to be recognized and addressed. This argument is shown through ethnographic and outside literature; both communicate the urgency of land access issues, but approach displacement with different priorities. I rely on two ethnographic accounts from Ramsey Elkholy and Elizabeth Pisani, anthropologists who have lived with Orang Rimba groups in the forest. Other sources, like the Human Rights Watch, while possessing ethnographic elements, are more advocacy, legal, and scientific-aimed pieces. This range of sources allows for a deep exploration of the impacts of displacement based on the true experiences and voices of the Orang Rimba people.

Though the Orang Rimba face a disheartening situation with expanding palm oil plantations, it is crucial to first understand them as a living population with their own culture outside of the issues they face. Their existence should not be bound up with struggle, and their defining his-



**Figure 1. Pictured: Map of Bukit Duabelas National Park. This satellite shot shows the suffocation of the Park by nearby expanding palm oil operations. The Orang Rimba have less and less space on which to live (Google Earth, 2017).**

tory and identity should be recognized to better grasp the need for access to ancestral land. The Orang Rimba are semi-nomadic hunter-gatherer groups who practice swidden agriculture. They are centered in south-central Sumatra, where they inhabit primary and secondary lowland forests on the foothills of the Barisan Mountain range (Missouri.edu, n.d.). The Orang Rimba for centuries have isolated themselves from sustained contact with agricultural-intensive neighbors, and trade only with specific groups by leaving trading goods on the margins of the forest who would exchange them with goods from outside of the forest like salt and metal goods. This is called “silent trade”, as both parties never meet face-to-face (Missouri.edu, n.d.). As these agricultural trade partners became incorporated with larger polities, they resorted to strict avoidance as they feared persecution (Elkholy, 2016). Over the years, Orang Rimba populations have become concentrated inside Bukit Duabelas National Park due to relocations from expanding palm oil operations, where they have very little contact with life outside of the Park unless displaced (Wedel, 2019). Presence in

the forest is integral to the existence of the Orang Rimba, though now many of them must live outside of it. As the history of the Orang Rimba has occurred inside the forest, the landscape possesses autobiographical qualities for the group that cannot be experienced from the outside where many are pushed (Elkholy, 2016). The Orang Rimba have a sacred and historical connection to the forest, as experienced shamans use spirituality to protect the group from dangers and grant luck in their general well-being (Missouri.edu, n.d.). The National Park provides some protection from palm oil plantations, but threat of relocation is ever-present, on top of those who already relocated to the Park territory from their original spaces and the environmental impacts from nearby plantations that worsen conditions inside the Park.

## **2. Palm oil in Bukit Duabelas National Park**

In 1984, the Orang Rimba began advocating for the establishment of a national park in Bukit Duabelas to protect their lifestyles from infringement by agricultural development like palm oil, which the Indonesian government approved in

2000. As it is the only space left where the Orang Rimba can practice their indigenous ways of life, the Park protects not only the ecosystem but also the people within it (Environmental Justice Atlas, 2018). Unfortunately, language in the establishment of the Park was careful not to grant the Orang Rimba land rights of the forest or any territory, so plantations on the Park's margins can expand and groups are forcibly relocated with less difficulty. In her ethnography of the Orang Rimba in Bukit Duabelas, Elizabeth Pisani shares about the hour-long drive she took from the 2004 Park boundary marker (signifying that the boundary had already been pushed back since 2000) to the edge of primary forest (forest not yet touched by non-native species) at her time of writing in 2012 (Pisani, 2012). It can be assumed this boundary has since been further pushed due to the lack of serious protection and continued expansion.

The palm oil company that operates in Jambi is known as P.T. Sari Aditya Loka 1, with plantations pushing the margins of Bukit Duabelas National Park. Pisani shares that during her time with the Orang Rimba, she never witnessed "any indication that the National Park was being protected in any way. No forestry patrols, no rangers" (Pisani, 2012). The company has self-reported programs and efforts to help rehabilitate displaced Orang Rimba, though they often fall short or misrepresent the needs of the displaced. Their major initiative to provide education, healthcare, and economic opportunities strives to assimilate the Orang Rimba into dominant Indonesian society, but those erase their identity. The company also reports it has built houses for the displaced, but the Orang Rimba are accustomed to life outside, and so the homes are often vacant. Their needs are sorely met as "The company's efforts are not done in collaboration with the Orang Rimba, and the company isn't thinking about what the Orang Rimba want and need" (Dholakia, 2019). Though what the Orang Rimba truly need is access to their ancestral land, the company could seek further understanding with displaced groups to provide bet-

ter services. After the Orang Rimba are displaced and forced into a capitalist society, PT Sari Aditya Loka 1 provides little jobs for those struggling to adapt (Wedel, 2019). The Orang Rimba rarely receive enough compensation for the evacuation of their land.

### 3. Realities of displacement

The expansion of palm oil plantations has caused the mass relocation of many of the Orang Rimba from their lands to either different patches of forest on the margins of a plantation or out of the forest completely. Both drastically hinder Orang Rimba ways of life. Disconnection from the rainforest prevents them from carrying out the same rituals they have done for centuries and erases their identity as people of the forest (Dholakia, 2019). Ethnographic evidence reveals the realities of total displacement from the forest. Temenggung Tarip, a displaced Orang Rimba living in Sarolangun, shares he was converted to Islam and forced to complete an identity card, on which his indigenous religion is not represented (Beech, 2018). Tarip lives in a concrete house, a three day's walk from the forest where he used to live. This introduction to "concrete walls, processed food, brightly colored plastic..." (Beech, 2018) is shocking in many ways to exiles of the forest. Another displaced Orang Rimba, Rokima, also notes her forceful conversion to Islam and the discomfort of a home outside of the forest. She lives in a wooden shack with a picture of Mecca on her wall, though she does not understand the symbolism. Rokima longs to visit her birthplace by a river in the forest, and reconnect with her own gods, but says she "cannot go back to the forest because there is no forest left anymore" (Beech, 2018). The Orang Rimba are forcibly assimilated into surrounding Indonesian society, erasing their identity and discontinuing their ways of life.

Orang Rimba who remain in the forest also face challenges. Though these groups are in the "forest", the conditions are much different as these



**Figure 2. Pictured: A displaced Orang Rimba family living under a sudung. Note the lack of rainforest in the background; Orang Rimba have lost many of the forest resources they survive on, including the canopy of trees, hence the use of a plastic shelter ([Orang Rimba family], n.d.).**

spaces are either on palm oil plantations or are close by and have been heavily altered. The threat of displacement constantly looms, though many who reside in these spaces have already been displaced from their original territory several times. It is estimated that 1,000 Orang Rimba remain in the forest, though this does not shield them from the outside world. One of the largest issues is smoke from nearby plantations, where large patches of forest are burned to clear room for palm oil crops. The monoculture of the plantations has driven away the wildlife and plants that the Orang Rimba survive on, and decreased water quality endangers the people and kills off the fish they eat (Beech, 2018). Access to freshwater is limited as streams are redirected for irrigation to the plantations, and the few sources of water that remain, they fear, have been polluted with fertilizer and pesticide runoff from the plantations (which the Indonesian government and palm oil companies have failed to prove otherwise) (Beech, 2018). Outside forces threaten the residency of Orang Rimba groups still in the forest, as groups like the Islamic Defenders Front lead mass conversions wherein they march through the forest and

encourage Orang Rimba villages to pray as Muslims (Beech, 2018). Most of the Orang Rimba remaining in the forest are often inside palm oil plantations and forced to live in groups of five to ten under plastic sheets called sudungs (Wedel, 2019). These conditions are far from the historic ways of life the Orang Rimba have always led.

Mas, a displaced Orang Rimba remaining in the forest, shares that a lack of resources from forest destruction has cost the Orang Rimba their economic freedom. Instead of trading or relying on forest products like wicker, resin, or honey that they used to (Dholakia, 2019), many Orang Rimba must seek jobs that pay in cash so they can purchase food and medicine for their families that they can no longer find in the forest. Some Orang Rimba have been observed begging in roadways due to the scarce conditions (Wedel, 2019). Displaced Orang Rimba are rarely hired for work on plantations, and Meriau, another displaced Orang Rimba, shares she tries to earn money from selling fruits but is chased away and prohibited from such business (Beech, 2018). Pisani notes the vicious cycle this creates as more Orang Rimba are displaced due to deforestation, so they need cash



to purchase products sold in stores, and so they seek jobs that pay them to cut down even more trees, which they need cash to purchase the equipment for so they work more and cut down more trees...etc. Displacement completely changes how the Orang Rimba operate and interact with others by pushing them into a capitalist system.

#### 4. Land disputes

Land disputes between Orang Rimba groups and palm oil plantations are very complex given the semi-nomadic nature of the groups and the legal complications of land ownership. It is difficult for the Orang Rimba to claim land because under Indonesian law, indigenous people must be legally recognized to own land, a status that is hard to obtain as many provinces make that process difficult or lack one altogether (Beech, 2018). While the establishment of Bukit Duabelas National Park did not denote any ownership of land to the Orang Rimba, groups and their NGO advocates interpret the creation of the Park as a permission of land rights, and so land disputes are easy to ensue (Environmental Justice Atlas, 2018). It is Orang Rimba custom to move every time a member of a group dies, and therefore they make less of an impression to authorities about their presence on the land, whereas plantation operators with more permanent settlements can make stronger claims (Cooper, 2020). PT Sari Aditya Loka 1 continues to expand into the Park despite a court ruling dictating the protection of indigenous life in the Park (Beech, 2018). When company officials seek to expand their territory, there is little to no consultation with Orang Rimba settlements until after the patch of forest is destroyed (Wedel, 2019; Elkholy, 2016); security forces from palm oil companies regularly chase away Orang Rimba families as they prepare to transform more forest into plantation, and guards are ruthless as they disband entire villages full of the sick, elderly, new-born, and pregnant (Wedel, 2019). Efforts between the Orang Rimba and local NGOs

have appealed for greater land rights through establishing mapped territory, but most attempts at land ownership or return have been unsuccessful (Elkholy, 2016). While semi-nomadic tendencies can confuse outside conceptions of land ownership, the Orang Rimba have an undeniable presence in Jambi and rejection of their ownership seriously impacts their lifestyle and the landscape of the region.

#### 5. Colonial roots of Indonesian palm oil

Displacement issues for the Orang Rimba harken back to early colonialism of Southeast Asia and continue into modern expressions of colonization. Both oil palm seeds and the forces that brought them to Southeast Asia were acts of colonialism. The oil palm itself is a colonizing plant (Cooper, 2020), as it is foreign to Southeast Asia and endangers native life because it has no natural predators, so it can expand faster and steal more resources away from native plants. Oil palm seeds in this way are much like foreign colonial leaders who claimed Southeast Asian land and conquered native life. Colonialists created a new palm oil industry in Southeast Asia, where they granted plantation companies “nearly unlimited” access to land despite Orang Rimba and other indigenous presence (Robins, 2021). This attitude continues into today, as companies like P.T. Sari Aditya Loka 1 are continuously granted access to expand into Orang Rimba territory. Though now independent since 1945, the same forces remain at play in Indonesia. Plantation companies retained their land rights after independence as colonial powers sold their land to local actors; plantations became proud domestic achievements while still having roots in colonization (Robins, 2020). Long after direct colonization, “The machinery of the plantation remained intact after independence: the trees, oil mills, agronomic methods, and the colonial-era legal frameworks that allowed access to forested lands” (Robins, 2020). When Orang Rimba groups are displaced for palm oil, they re-

main victims of colonization like indigenous people in Southeast Asia have been for centuries.

Palm oil plantations continue to draw legitimacy from foreign powers that the Indonesian government upholds with legal protection. Another major palm oil operation that threatens the Orang Rimba is P.T. IFA, a French company founded in 1968 with ties to the authoritarian Suharto regime in Indonesia. Given its commanding presence in the region, P.T. IFA was granted a concession by the Indonesian government to expand up to the margins of Bukit Duabelas National Park (Wedel, 2019). P.T. Sari Aditya Loka 1 is owned by P.T. Astra Agro Lestari TBK, a product of Jardine Matheson Holding Ltd., a British business conglomerate that serves the London economy. Only six years after it began to develop its plantation adjacent to Orang Rimba villages did the company obtain a permit from the government in 1995, and renewed the permit in 2006 to expand their operation (Wedel, 2019). It has been expanding ever since. The Indonesian government continues to uphold palm oil plants' presence that harms its residents despite ties to foreign powers.

## **6. How displacement affects Orang Rimba ways of life**

Displacing Orang Rimba from their historical and ancestral territory has vast implications for their population. In his ethnography of Orang Rimba groups inside Bukit Duabelas National Park, Ramsey Elkholy offers close looks into ancestral practices and history, helping to see just how different displaced life is. The Orang Rimba view their connection to the forest in biographical terms, and their endonym of "forest people" denotes their connection to the ecosystem. By losing touch with the forest, Orang Rimba members who are displaced begin to part with their identity and history (Elkholy, 2016). Originally, the Orang Rimba had divided the forest of Jambi into four significant pieces for burials, births, praying, and planting and harvesting (Wedel, 2019). Now that

their territory has been so constrained, the four sectors are gone. Muju, a displaced Orang Rimba, shares that some living inside Bukit Duabelas National Park try their best to follow their traditions and rituals, but it is difficult in such a shrinking space, and those outside of the Park have lost their traditions completely (Wedel, 2019). It is impossible for the Orang Rimba to live similar lives when they cannot inhabit their ancestral spaces.

As Orang Rimba bodies are accustomed to the forest, displacement to a different landscape has embodied effects. Orang Rimba children who grow up in the forest develop a sensory-cognitive model of their environment, and the forest becomes a part of their sensory-motor palette (Elkholy, 2016). Someone with this background suddenly moved to a more urban environment would be very disoriented. Living in the forest and the immediate interaction it requires develops language skills more quickly in young children. It also accelerates depth perception development and teaches children to recognize small details (Elkholy, 2016), skills that would progress slowly or differently in a different environment. While children born away from the forest would know no difference, this shows how much Orang Rimba members stand to be impacted when they are displaced.

The forest environment is also imperative to Orang Rimba existence because they use the environment for spiritual and medicinal benefits. Walking in the forest has been found to develop the body's kinesthesia and muscular systems (Elkholy, 2016). Living in the forest strengthens the body, and displacement for people acclimated to this environment causes significant disruption. The forest also provides medicinal resources that the Orang Rimba rely on. Groups use over 100 plants and fungi from the forest to remedy over 50 ailments from rashes, to coughs, to diseases (Missouri.edu, n.d.). When Orang Rimba are displaced and the forests destroyed, not only do they lose access to the products they know, but urban life forces them to pay for medicines with money

which outside society makes difficult for them to earn (Beech, 2018). Temenggung Tarip used to be a traditional healer who relied on the jungle blooms of the forest to bring prosperity to his group. His displacement and removal of the forest now prevents him from doing so. He worries that the forest can no longer protect the Orang Rimba because it no longer exists (Beech, 2018). Orang Rimba health and well-being depend on their presence in the forest, where they can use their knowledge of natural remedies.

## 7. Environmental impacts of displacement

Loss of land access for the Orang Rimba impacts much more than individuals of the groups; it can have regional environmental consequences. When Orang Rimba groups are denied land access and displaced, plantations can operate with no interruption, causing vast environmental impacts. This begins with expansion into forests. Oil production in general has exploded worldwide, with 30% of cropland used for oil crops like oil palm (Erik, et. al., 2020). Where the Orang Rimba reside in Jambi, 32% of forests have disappeared since 2000. This is higher than the national average of Indonesia of 15%, where palm oil production accounts for half of the country's deforestation (Beech, 2018; Dholakia, 2019). Not granting Orang Rimba access to the land in which they live not only causes issues for them as they are displaced, but allows for deforestation of these levels which releases greenhouse gasses long sequestered by the forest and creates a feedback loop as it reduces the biomass able to draw in future greenhouse gasses. Deforestation also causes increased temperatures not only due to the greenhouse gasses it releases, but because fewer trees bring less rainfall (Erik, et. al., 2020). Deforestation from palm oil production threatens 321 species, more than any other oil crop.

Orang Rimba still living in forested areas not faced with outright deforestation still feel the effects of expanding palm oil plantations. Nearby

plantation projects cause decreases in water quality from destruction of nearby peatlands, runoff from plantations using fertilizers, pesticides, and other chemicals, which worsen water quality, and smoky air from next-door forest-burning projects (Erik, et. al., 2020), which outside residents of Indonesia encounter as well as smoke travels across neighborhoods and cities. The failure to grant land privileges to Orang Rimba groups devastates the Jambi landscape, contributes to global warming, and threatens the lives of Orang Rimba not yet displaced and still living in the forest.

While damages incur when oil palm is planted in massive plantations without respect for indigenous presence, palm oil has potential to be a more positive crop. This paper aims not to advocate a complete discontinuation of the use of palm oil; only for it to be used in a responsible manner. Palm oil has long been a substitute for fossil fuels, and therefore meets United Nations Sustainable Development Goals seven and thirteen by finding a cleaner energy source (Erik, et. al., 2020). Oil palm trees can intake large amounts of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, and once planted, have the benefit of being a non-timber forest product as their fruit is harvested without cutting down the tree. While the carbon uptake of oil palms cannot compare to the capacity of the native rainforests they replace or the emissions released from that process, they offer an option for secondary forests or planting in lands already converted to pastures (Fassler, 2016). Most importantly, palm oil stands to improve its name by being planted where it is native: Africa, where it has been used for thousands of years. In his article, "Giving Up Palm Oil Might Actually Be Bad for the Environment", Joe Fassler argues palm oil should remain a product in global economies, as its disuse would inspire a reversal to fossil fuels or use of less sustainable oil crops. He believes the plant's return to Africa and use in areas already deforested (to ensure the same harm is not transferred to indigenous populations in Africa) can make the crop a more positive force. Striving to realize the bet-





**Figure 3. Pictured: a patch of forest, or what used to be, in Jambi after a fire to clear room for a palm oil plantation. All life is driven away, and smoke drifts across the landscape, harming lives further than the subject of the photograph (Sabajo, 2017).**

ter potential of oil palm crops can cause less harm to Orang Rimba groups, and their use in areas already clear of forests or on another continent entirely will mitigate impacts of displacement.

### **8. The Orang Rimba as part of ‘Zomia’**

The displacement of Orang Rimba groups also represents a political struggle between centralized and decentralized Southeast Asia and suggests that in relationships between larger societies and smaller indigenous groups, land rights remain essential. The incorporation of Orang Rimba groups into the more organized societies around them reflect James Scott’s idea of “Zomia”, a term referring to regions in Asia populated by less organized, sparsely dispersed people. Understanding the Orang Rimba in this context can explain their relationship with palm oil plantations. While Scott’s theory is centered in mainland Southeast Asia, it can be applied to the dynamic between the Orang Rimba and outside society as they are displaced by deforestation. Scott refers to a “last

enclosure movement” of Southeast Asia, wherein people and land are integrated and monetized so they can contribute to the larger country’s revenue and trade (Scott, 2009). He references interaction with people of the periphery, and while he uses this term to describe those in the highlands, the Orang Rimba in their lowland forests possess the same qualities of some degree of isolation from other societies and a lack of central organization between groups. While larger Indonesian society seeks to incorporate Orang Rimba people into their economy through displacement, those in the periphery often want to remain in the periphery. The efforts of palm oil companies to use land on which the Orang Rimba live to generate profit coupled with the desire of outside society to assimilate displaced Orang Rimba groups into their dominant lifestyles display the integration of Zomia lands into the property of larger national actors. Scott also mentions the use of Zomia lands for cash-cropping or mono-cropping (Scott, 2009), which Orang Rimba land is destroyed to pursue by palm oil companies. One of Scott’s

principles of those in Zomia is the intentionality of their withdrawal from outside society (Scott, 2009). The Orang Rimba who remain in the forest, though loosely connected to others through silent trade (Elkholy, 2016), resist displacement and prefer to retain higher degrees of isolation. Scott's idea of Zomia legitimizes the existence of the Orang Rimba and can guide outside Indonesian society into better interaction with them as their lifestyle is understood in a wider context.

## 9. Palm oil in policy and improvements

Given the grim picture that has been painted surrounding the palm oil industry in Indonesia, the government has sought to address the situation. In 2018, Indonesian President Joko Widodo issued a moratorium on new palm oil plantation developments for three years (though this does not guarantee existing plantations will not expand) (Beech, 2018), and some statutes have been introduced to increase the communication between plantations and local communities before expansion (Dholakia, 2019). Indonesia and Malaysia, another top palm oil producer in Southeast Asia, have started their own organizations called the Indonesian Sustainable Palm Oil Initiative and Malaysian Sustainable Palm Oil to help ensure socially and environmentally responsible production (Erik, et. al., 2020). While "sustainable" has become a catchy corporate moto in the past few years to appeal to consumers, the efforts still display a degree of change or potential to do so.

Additionally, a 2017 survey found that the palm oil industry had the highest proportion of zero-deforestation commitments. In the following year, a majority of palm oil producers committed to address deforestation, with over half committing to zero-deforestation (Erik, et. al., 2020). "Zero-deforestation" is a label employed to show a company's commitment to either zero tree loss or zero net tree loss; due to the indistinguishable nature of the word, it often means zero net tree loss which is not the same as leaving forests un-

touched. Companies can cut into forests as deep as they please, so long as they replant trees to replace them, which typically takes the form of tree plantations which do not offer the same benefits as primary native forests, despite what the label may convey. However, zero-deforestation, in either meaning, typically prohibits clearing of High Conservation Value areas, the use of fire, and production without local or indigenous consultation (Lake and Baer, 2015). More possible change in Indonesia can come from individual consumers, who can make choices about their consumption of palm oil. Indonesia has the highest domestic consumption of palm oil in the world, despite its negative effects on the country's own landscape, with the second-highest nation on the list (India) only consuming half as much (NationMaster, 2020). Existing palm oil policy has much potential for improvement to remedy the impacts brought by displacement.

A comprehensive list of suggestions for improvement for the Indonesian government and palm oil companies is provided by the Human Rights Watch, an advocacy-based source I utilized outside of my ethnographic material that concern themselves with livelihood of Orang Rimba people. To start, HRW recommends the passing of the Recognition and Protection of Indigenous People's Rights Bill, an act that has been introduced to the Indonesian parliament and would improve indigenous groups' chances at claiming land rights (Dholakia, 2019). HRW also advocates for the creation of a high-level commission with Orang Rimba representatives that would work to resolve land disputes between indigenous groups and palm oil companies (Wedel, 2019). Additionally, HRW seeks re-alignment of the Indonesian Sustainable Palm Oil Initiative to cater towards the human rights of indigenous groups. HRW also provides suggestions to palm oil companies themselves. Companies must have a strong compass for human rights interests in their activities, and close monitoring of what improvements must be made in their communities. It is recommended

that PT Sari Aditya Loka 1 host mediation sessions between their company and displaced Orang Rimba people to resolve long-standing grievances and create a plan for compensation or remediation (Wedel, 2019). Though palm oil plantations and the Indonesian government have been a source of pain for the Orang Rimba, they stand to correct past actions and forge a new path forward to slow and stop future displacement issues.

## 10. Similar ongoing cases

The displacement of the Orang Rimba in Bukit Duabelas National Park is not an isolated incident, and is part of an international showcase of why indigenous land rights stand to benefit all. This dynamic of continuous pushing into national parks and endangering native life is played out across the globe. In Brazil, another country with vast rainforests facing accelerating deforestation, Campos Amazonicos National Park is threatened by deforestation due to land disputes despite federal protection, a disagreement also present at Bukit Duabelas. Though this deforestation occurs mainly from cattle farming, both cases are aimed at industrial plantations of a consumer good brought by the burning of forest and produce the dangerous consequence of rainforests emitting more carbon than they absorb (Ionava, 2021). Throughout South America, many national parks are threatened with deforestation from plantations for various crops, though different from Southeast Asia is government policy; most of this activity is illegal, and rangers seek to investigate and end activities that threaten nationally protected forest. While threats still persist, this is one possible route for the future of protected forests in Indonesia as the government gets serious about conserving its national parks with indigenous life.

## 11. Results and conclusion

Through ethnographic, advocacy, and scientific evidence, I have demonstrated the harsh consequences of Orang Rimba displacement and ar-

gued the need for forest existence and access to it. Groups are removed from their ancestral lands and placed into settlements outside the forest they possess no attachment to. The forest is where the Orang Rimba draw their identity and history from, and rely on its resources to fulfill their specific lifestyle. Displacement also has massive impacts for the land, as the removal of the Orang Rimba allows for degradation of the forest which has serious environmental implications. This paper has showed that access to their preferred land is the most significant cause for the Orang Rimba, as land allows them to lead the lifestyle they choose and isolate themselves as desired.

The Orang Rimba are the first victims of deforestation arising from palm oil production in Jambi. Major implications include displacement, which entails land disputes, dramatic lifestyle changes, and environmental impacts. Plantations have colonial roots, making this a centuries-old dynamic between indigenous people and those seeking the monetization of land. Ethnographic research highlights the shocking changes displaced Orang Rimba undergo when they are removed from the forest by plantations, and advocacy-based literature offers suggestions for the future of this issue. It is essential for palm oil companies, the Indonesian government, and all consumers purchasing palm oil products to understand the situation facing the Orang Rimba and seek improvements to the situation. Without a forest, their identity and ways of life cease to exist.

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