

PRESS RELEASE

STRICT EMBARGO TO MONDAY, JULY 5, 2010

EU OUTLAWS ALL ILLEGAL TIMBER **Campaign group 'ecstatic' at major victory against the timber barons**

TERRORISED and injured, kidnapped Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) campaigner Faith Doherty left her captors in the jungle of Indonesian Borneo with a promise to continue fighting the timber barons who reap fortunes from stolen wood.

Now, more than 10 years of continuous campaigning, lobbying and many undercover investigations later, she and her colleagues are ecstatic to see European Union legislators reaching an agreement to ban illegally sourced timber and wood products from all EU territories.

In January 2000, Doherty and her Indonesian colleague Ruwi were held for two gruelling days during which they were beaten, threatened with death and pressed at gunpoint to recant evidence of widespread forestry crime in Indonesia, uncovered by EIA and its local partner Telapak.

The pair had travelled to Tanjung Putting National Park, in central Kalimantan, to assess the extent of illegal logging by timber baron and Indonesian MP Abdul Rasyid, who had been exposed the previous June in the EIA report *The Final Cut*.

They openly entered a sawmill belonging to Rasyid but an arranged meeting turned out to be a trap, in which they were first harangued and then assaulted.

"I was told that if I had been a man I'd have been dead. When the gun came out I really thought they were going to kill us," said Doherty.

The arrival of the police was no help – at the beck and call of Rasyid's operation, they held the pair for 48 hours of interrogation as an angry mob formed outside.

Doherty and her EIA/Telapak colleagues have since kept the pressure on, exposing illegal logging operations, lobbying for change within the Indonesian political system and pressing governments in the countries to which illegal timber is often shipped to introduce the legislation needed to lock out the timber barons.

And the long commitment paid off. On June 16, 2010, a compromise between the Spanish Presidency, the European Parliament and the European Commission gave the green light to measures to bar illegally sourced timber and wood products.

Importantly, a first placement of illegally sourced timber and wood products will be subject to a prohibition; EU companies will have to use a due diligence system which includes a risk assessment where illegal activities are thought to have occurred, and operators will now have to trace back their timber to the country and place of origin.

The European Parliament is due to endorse the new legislation when it meets in plenary session on July 5-8. Member states are expected to approve the agreement when the Agriculture Council meets this autumn.

"This is an amazing result," said Doherty. "EIA and its partners have fought long and hard, and literally shed blood, in the struggle to stop illegal logging and the associated illegal trade in producer countries.

"This legislation means a huge marketplace has been shut off to the timber mafia and, more importantly, the law is there to allow for enforcement and penalties.

"Now that the EU has done its job, we expect the UK Government to bring in the highest penalties and to ensure enforcement agencies are aware of this legislation."

Telapak campaigner Mardi Minangsari added: "It is not the solution to all the forestry problems of Indonesia but it is a good result, a large market again being closed to timber that has been illegally logged and stolen."

The new law follows the success of EIA's work in the USA which helped achieve a revision of the Lacey Act, adopted in May 2008, to ban all sales of, and trade in, illegally harvested timber.

For interviews and images, please contact Faith Doherty, EIA Senior Campaigner, at faithdoherty@eia-international.org or telephone 020 7354 7960.

EDITORS' NOTES

1. The Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) is a UK-based Non Governmental Organisation and charitable trust (registered charity number 1040615) that investigates and campaigns against a wide range of environmental crimes, including illegal wildlife trade, illegal logging, hazardous waste, and trade in climate and ozone-altering chemicals.
2. The legislation was steered through the EU environment committee by UK Green MEP Caroline Lucas, who has since stepped down after being elected as British MP in May.
3. Global deforestation is occurring at a rate of about 13 million hectares a year, is responsible for nearly 20 per cent of global carbon emissions and is a key cause of biodiversity loss. Illegal logging also causes serious human rights problems.
4. Illegal logging is a major driver of deforestation, with the volume of industrial wood from illegal sources estimated at 20-40 per cent of global industrial wood production. It depresses timber prices, strips natural resources and tax revenues, and increases poverty of forest-dependent people.
5. European illegal timber consumption drives 12 per cent of the world's illegal logging, equivalent to €1.8 billion a year, and generates 18.36 million tons of CO₂e (carbon dioxide equivalent) emissions per year.
6. EIA has repeatedly exposed European consumption of illegal timber; see <http://www.eia-international.org/campaigns/forests/reports/>
7. The World Bank estimates illegal logging causes developing countries losses equivalent to US\$15 billion per annum.

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