Stop Land Grabs – Declaration

POVERTY, SOCIAL MOVEMENTS • October 31, 2018 • Frans Ari Prasetyo and People’s Alliance Against Eviction

Declaration of the Social Movements: Ten Peoples’ Principles Against Land Grabs, Evictions and Neoliberalism


The world order of the 21st century has changed, as colonialism and imperialism mutate into many faces. Neoliberalism becomes new foundation for neo-colonialism, neo-imperialism, and authoritarianism with a populist mask. These all continue the practices of colonialism and exploitation for corporate and commercial interests against the rights of the people. Land grabbing, land evictions and exclusion of local people from their sources of livelihood, and inclusion of the poor in exploitative works are a result.

These neocolonial practices occur with the facilitation of the state and its various apparatuses, which are frequently deployed with either a mask of populism or manipulation of popular issues. Nowadays, land grabs, disposessions, as well as forced evictions are expounded and protected by neoliberal laws and regulations in the interests of attaining capitalist investments.

Land policies and the large-scale land control regulations at the global, national, and local level have been formulated by neoliberal agents that exist within various institutions such as the World Bank, Bank Dunia of Indonesia, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the International Land Coalition (ILC), national and local governments, and often non-governmental organizations. Consultative forums such as the Global Land Forum need to place the peoples’ interests first and oppose – not legitimize – the ongoing and persistent dispossession of people’s rights on land.

Agrarian reform policy should be formed to uphold social justice, restructure unequal land distribution, prevent land concentration in a handful of economic and political elites, and provide security of tenure to local people and the poor. But such reform policies often become operations to turn on the land market. Land registration and certification may be wrapped in the beautiful words of seeking “to formalize and guarantee the security of land control and ownership.” But they often are used to facilitate land transfers that come under control of the powerful market players and capitalists as part of a land grab.
The People’s Alliance Against Eviction (Aliansi Rakyat Anti Pengusuran, ARAP), together with other global citizens taking up the spirit of anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism as written in the 1955 Declaration of Asia-Africa Conference, affirms the following principles as a struggle based against land grabs, evictions, and the neoliberal global land policies.

1. Respect for human rights and the related specific rights with respect to land control and ownerships for the rural and urban poor, as indicated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights standard and instruments.
2. Respect for the people’s sovereignty over land, territorial entity and living space of all citizens.
3. Standing up for equality of access over land and for protection (and the truth guarantee) of the land rights for the rural and urban poor and the landless.
4. Resistance against the concentration of land control by corporations, as well by the state if the land is not be used to advance the lives of the poor in both rural and urban areas in accordance with the principles of advancement the economic, social and cultural rights.
5. Support people’s struggle to gain their economic, social and cultural rights, including to fight for and defence of rights over land.
6. Respect to the rights of self-determination, rights of the citizens to self-defense whether as individual or collective struggles.
7. Engage civilian defence schemes that collectively act (in certain circumstances) to fight against neoliberal regimes, especially to defend the rights over land.
8. Resist the authoritarian regimes including the populist-authoritarian governments, who collaboratively work together with the international, national and local neoliberal agencies, and whose results often appear as policies, legal instruments, and programs that threaten the people’s right over land and territories as sources of livelihood and cultural life.
9. Refuse all neoliberal rural development and agrarian reforms, especially those mandated by the international finance institutions as part of loan obligations.
10. Promote and implement agrarian reform and agrarian conflict resolution that is based on social and agrarian justice, and collective emancipation, equality and prosperity.

The Bandung Declaration of the Social Movements emerges out of the Global Land Forum in Bandung, Indonesia in 2018, and the People’s Alliance Against Eviction (Aliansi Rakyat Anti Pengusuran, ARAP). •

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