

Capitalism as the Primary Cause of the Flood Disaster in Sumatra

News:

Cyclone Senyar was only the trigger; the scale of destruction in Indonesia reflects decades of ecological mismanagement. Sumatra has lost millions of hectares of forest, weakening watersheds in Aceh, North Sumatra, and West Sumatra. Peatlands were drained for plantations, causing land subsidence and turning natural water buffers into flood basins. Rapid settlement in floodplains, combined with weak land-use governance, amplified the impact. When extreme rainfall arrived, the landscape had no remaining capacity to absorb it. The disaster shows that Indonesia's development model—driven by extraction and poor environmental oversight—has made extreme weather far more deadly than it should be. ([news.mongabay](http://news.mongabay.com))

Comment:

The massive floods that claimed hundreds of lives in Aceh, North Sumatra, and West Sumatra were not merely natural disasters, but clear evidence of systemic failure—the failure of a greedy capitalist order and a powerless democracy to protect the living space of its citizens.

Capitalism promotes the logic of “endless growth,” which ultimately normalizes forest grabs, palm oil expansion, mining operations, and energy projects in the heart of the Bukit Barisan ecosystem in Sumatra. Over the past ten years, 1.4 million hectares of forest have been lost in these three provinces. This massive deforestation is not an accident; it is the direct consequence of state policies that submit to market interests and investors. When forests are cleared, rivers become shallow, and mountains are stripped bare, can we still call these floods natural disasters?

Meanwhile, democracy—supposedly a mechanism for public oversight—has failed to halt the surge of concessions, exploitation permits, and policies that ignore environmental carrying capacity. Public participation becomes mere formality, while strategic decisions are made in spaces far removed from the people's voice and often more favorable to capital owners. In practice, democracy produces a state that is active in building and destroying nature, yet indifferent to human safety.

When disasters strike, the state responds as though these events were unavoidable. In reality, the root cause lies in the long-standing political and economic choices made by adopting a secular capitalist system.

The catastrophe in Sumatra offers an important lesson for Muslims: disasters do not arise solely from natural factors, but from the political system and ideology chosen by a nation. When a country embraces a secular capitalist political system, it becomes a servant to capital holders. As a result, various crises emerge—poverty, social decay, and environmental disasters born from excessive exploitation.

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