

Swelling mining, plantation lead to conflicts, damages

The rising number of extractive-based activities has escalated natural-based conflicts and environmental damages across Indonesia, NGOs reported.

The Peace Building Institute, that monitored news in local media on escalating conflicts for the past two years, found that violence patterns no longer see rising religious and tribal-based conflicts, but rather conflicts over natural resources.

In 2009, there were 54 incidents, or 9 percent of 600 total conflicts. The number was recorded to increase to 74 cases as of June 2010.

Provinces with most conflicts on natural-based resources are West Nusa Tenggara, Papua, North Sumatra and Southeast Sulawesi.

Ichsan Malik, the institute's chairman, said that there were several analysis regarding the rising number of natural resource-based conflicts.

First, the capital accumulation requires spatio-temporal fixes and production of new space. It also involves eviction in the process.

Second is the mismanagement of natural resources by the government. Although the Constitution mandates the natural resource management for the people's welfare, in reality people often become the victim of the state's policies.

"Decentralization and regional autonomy that are dominated by economic motives, and disregard environmental concerns and local residents' welfare," Ichsan said.

Local administrations, he said, often involved in concessions with private parties without the consent of residents who own the lands.

The NGO recorded a total of 600 incidents happening in 2009 and 752 incidents until the mid of 2010.

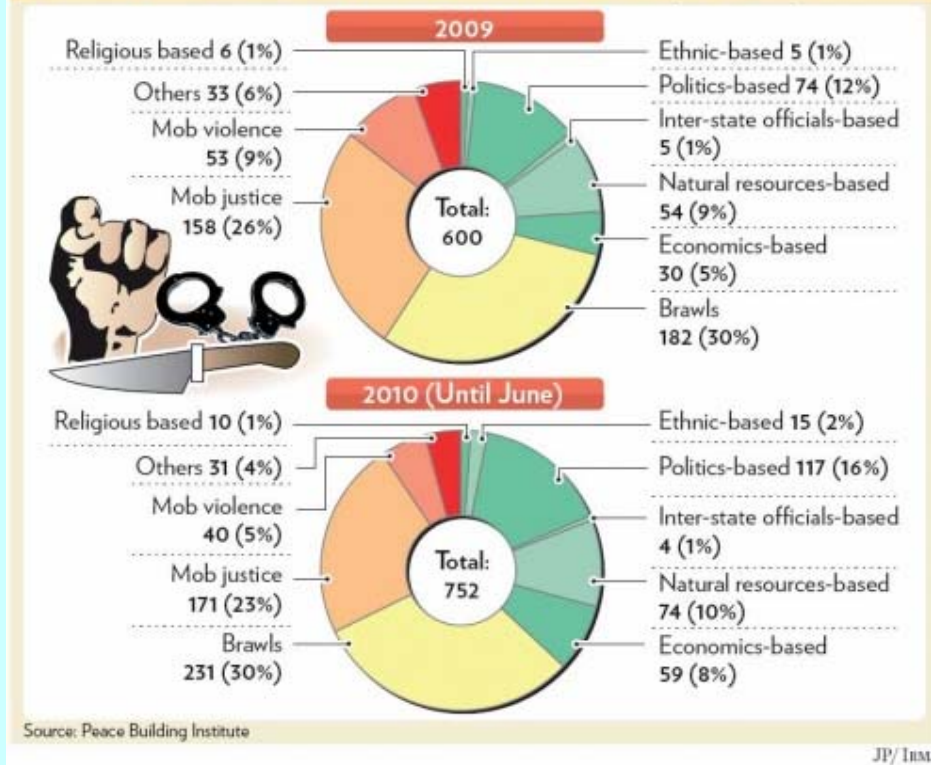
It means that there are four cases of conflict and violence every day. The result was surprising because in 2008, a conflict only happened every one and a half days.

Andrie S. Wijaya from NGO Mining Advocacy Network (Jatam) said that his organization had been recording that 2010 had been the year that recorded the highest permits issuance, especially for coal mining, manganese mining and mine openings in conserved areas.

"From the facts found in the field, we found that there were spatial conflicts and overlapping land use. It turned out that there were activities such as agriculture in the mining concession area. Such a condition has led to conflict," he said.

Andrie said that in order to stop and solve the conflicts, the government should stop issuing new mining concession permits and conduct a thorough review on the issued permits. In 2010, Jatam recorded that the government issued a mining concession for 1.5 millions hectares of forest, including North Sumatra's Batang Gadis National Park, Gorontalo's Bogani Nani Wartabone National Park and Sumba's Wangameti National Park.

Conflict and violence BETWEEN 2009 AND 2010 (until June)



“We believe that 2011 will see more land clearance for mining, because that 1.5 million hectares has yet to include the coastal area,” he said. Rampant extractive activities in Indonesia have been prevalent and difficult to stop since they are also the result of regulation loopholes that the government has in forest-licensing and definition of land.

Earlier, Greenomics Indonesia reported escalating forest-clearance in 2010 that harvested 12.18 million of cubic meters in 2010. With the raising forest-clearing as well as mining and plantation activities, environment activists have doubted that the Indonesia government could realize its commitment to stop forest-clearing for the next two years, starting this year.

Beside the natural resource-based conflicts, other conflicts on the rise were brawls, mass judgment actions and political-based conflicts. In 2009, the NGO found that there were 74 political-based conflicts. The number jumped to 117 cases as of June 2010.

“Nowadays, the conflicts are more dispersed, sporadic, routine and spontaneous, with a larger variety of conflicts and involving various communal and collective actors,” said Ichsan.

With the rising number of conflicts, the number of casualties and loss also increases. In 2009, 70 died and 395 were wounded due to conflicts, while as of June 2010, the numbers were 53 and 1126 respectively.

Mohamad Miqdad, executive director of the Peace Building Institute, suggested that the government strengthen related stakeholders, such as intelligence institutions and the police, in order to create an early warning system of conflict.

“In the past, the intelligence institutions were considered as part of the problems. But in the future, they should play an important role to prevent conflict. Otherwise, we will always have our hands full dealing with conflicts, instead of moving forward,” he said.