



The Right Livelihood Award

for outstanding vision and work on behalf of our planet and its people

Sahabat Alam Malaysia-Sarawak (SAM) (Malaysia)

(1988)



...for their exemplary struggle to save the tropical forests of Sarawak.

Mohamed Idris, Chairman

The Sarawak office of Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM - the Friends of the Earth organisation in Malaysia) has been involved since 1986 with the native people of Sarawak in a desperate struggle against logging in the province. In 1983 this logging was proceeding at the rate of 75 acres per hour, enabling Sarawak to provide 39 per cent of Malaysia's tropical log exports, which amount to over 50 per cent of the world's total. The logging is systematically destroying the culture and livelihood of the area's native inhabitants, including the Kelabit, Kayan and Penan peoples.

For many years, the SAM Sarawak office was run by Harrison Ngau, a Kayan who has for some years helped the native communities with the problems caused by the logging: pollution, soil erosion, land spoilage and destruction of trees and other forest resources. But when the letters and petitions to government departments which he helped them to draft brought no improvement, the Penan people began in 1987 to blockade the logging camps and roads, bringing much of the logging to a halt.

In June 1987, SAM Sarawak arranged for a delegation of native leaders to go to Kuala Lumpur for talks with the Malaysian government. Though these were fruitless, the trip and the blockades generated considerable publicity at home and abroad. Later the same year, Ngau and dozens of tribals were arrested and the blockades broken in a police crackdown. But they started again a few months later, affecting particularly the operations of a company owned by the then Minister for Environment and Tourism. Ngau left SAM in 1996.

SAM Sarawak has been fully supported by the central SAM office in Penang. SAM itself was founded in 1978 by its President, S. Mohammed Idris, a businessman who also started the influential Consumers' Association of Penang (1969), Asia-Pacific Peoples Environment Network (APPEN-1983) and Third World Network news agency (1984). SAM's other concerns include resource depletion, loss of indigenous seeds, abuse of pesticides in agriculture and soil

contamination. It also has an extensive news service and numerous single publications. SAM also pioneered the concept of 'State of the Environment' reports with its State of the Malaysian Environment in 1983/83.

Quotation

"It is the responsibility of all of us who live in the modern world to heed the call of the world's indigenous peoples, so that a new world will come into being when all peoples can live according to human need and not according to human greed."

Mohamed Idris

RIGHT LIVELIHOOD
AWARD FOUNDATION