

English

Gunarti: Letter from the Kendeng Mountains April 29, 2021

Gunarti is a mother, grandmother and farmer, like her parents and grandparents. Gunarti (who, like many people on the Indonesian island of Java, has only one name) belongs to the Samin indigenous group and is a member of the Network of People who Care about the Kendeng Mountains (JMPPK). JMPPK has been campaigning for years for the preservation of the karst mountains, which with their underground watercourses are indispensable for local agriculture. The construction of cement factories in the Kendeng Mountains, planned among others by Indocement, the subsidiary of the German HeidelbergCement, would deprive the local smallholders of their livelihood. For this reason, Gunarti traveled to Germany in 2017 at the invitation of the transnational solidarity network Save Kendeng and appealed to the shareholders at the annual general meeting of HeidelbergCement not to support the destructive course of the company. Since this appeal has apparently not been successful so far, Gunarti is now once again reminding HC shareholders of their responsibility in this way.

11 years ago, life at the Kendeng Mountains was still undisturbed. In the morning the roosters loudly welcomed the new day. The birds were chirping. And from many springs of the mountain water flowed in streams into the valley. We lived in peace and balance.

The women in the villages started the day by fetching water. They cooked the food that they would later take to the fields. Around five o'clock in the morning, people started to go to their rice and vegetable fields. Families with children and their neighbors walked side by side. Their laughter could be heard loudly when someone made a joke. They were accompanied by cows and goats, which they drove to graze.

We were content with our lives. We lived in prosperity, we had enough of everything we needed. We had fellowship, harmony, peace and serenity. We were far away from problems and threats.

But soon after, everything began to change. Beloved Mother, where has your smile gone, where has your peace and serenity gone? Where has the harmony of your community gone?

I see Mother Earth, I see her exhaustion, her sadness. I see her crying. The wind is not as refreshing as it used to be. The water is not as clear as it used to be. The sky is not as blue as it used to be. And the Kendeng Mountains are not as thickly vegetated as they used to be. So many animals can no longer find a home there.

Who is responsible for all this? It is companies like Indocement that are destroying nature, causing unrest and chaos among the people. Companies like Indocement are responsible - and all those who support these companies.

For years, you HeidelbergCement shareholders have only received reports from your subsidiary in our area, the Kendeng Mountains. And you believe these reports without seeing for yourselves.

Without wanting to know what life is really like here. You don't take time to stop, to feel all the goodness in the life we live. And you do all this only for money, for possessions, for luxuries.

I believe that your hearts can also open. We are children of the same creation. Are you able to imagine the threat, the sadness, the crimes we face? Are you able to imagine them as if they were happening to your own families?

More and more disasters are happening. Last year, the Corona pandemic began. Actually, this could have been a wake-up call for humankind. A wake-up call in the form of a virus that we can't even see with our naked eyes. A wake-up call to show us what we need most: clean water and healthy food. To this day, many people have not understood this wake-up call. And to this day, the pandemic continues.

The year 2021 also began for us with floods. To this day, we have flooded rice fields in the Kendeng Mountains, where the harvest has failed. It is a disaster that is man-made. The flooding of villages and fields happens because people continue to rape Mother Earth. They do violence to her by mining and cutting down forests until whole swaths of land are left bare. And then there is nothing left to stop the water.

If there are no more fields to grow anything, what will you eat? If there are no more farmers like us, who will provide you with food?

The government doesn't seem to care. It changes rules to the detriment of its people and to the benefit of entrepreneurs. Our area once had land use planning that allowed agriculture and tourism there. In 2010, of all years, when Indocement expressed its interest in building a factory, this local spatial planning was changed so that from then on it allowed industry and mining.

The government is hurting us, the people are being oppressed, and you shareholders are enjoying your wealth built on our suffering. On the suffering of us women, the women of the Kendeng Mountains. On the suffering of Mother Earth. Didn't you all come from the womb of a mother? Open your hearts, listen to your hearts! Listen to the voices of your mothers!

And you, who are our brothers and sisters, know that we have been given the mandate by our ancestors to protect the Kendeng Mountains in Central Java. It is called "the rice barn" of Java, even Indonesia, because it is so fertile.

The company you support wants to destroy that by force. Is that how you would treat the mandate of your ancestors? Would you just accept this on your territory?

Therefore, we implore you shareholders* in all humility: stop your support for Indocement! Don't just believe their reports that make everything sound wonderful. Come to us and see for yourselves.

If you don't, your shares in the company will be nothing more than shares in the destruction of our Mother Earth. And the consequences of your actions will eventually be felt by you and your families.

You should honor and preserve the earth, which has given you everything you enjoy in your lives. You should not make the earth angry.

THE EARTH HAS GIVEN US GIFTS.

LET US PROTECT THE EARTH.

SO THAT THE EARTH WILL BE PRESERVED.

Salam Kendeng Lestari!
(Eternal be the Kendeng Mountains!)