

Indigenous Issues Facing Indigenous Peoples of Malaysia

Orang Asli (*lit.* "original people", "natural people" or "aboriginal people" in Malay) are the indigenous people and the oldest inhabitants of Peninsular Malaysia. Officially, there are 18 Orang Asli tribes, categorised under three main groups according to their different languages and customs:

- Semang (or Negrito), generally confined to the northern portion of the peninsula.
- Senoi, residing in the central region.
- Proto-Malay (or Aboriginal Malay), in the southern region.

They represent about 13.8% of 31,660,700 million.

In 2007, Malaysia adopted the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Land rights is most prominent issue including dam construction, large-scale plantations, and large-scale resource extraction. Other issues include violence against women and access to health care.

The government does not recognize the agrarian rights of the Orang Asli.

International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA)

IWGIA is a global human rights organisation dedicated to promoting, protecting and defending indigenous peoples' rights. Since 1968, IWGIA has cooperated with indigenous organisations and international institutions to promote recognition and implementation of the rights of indigenous peoples.

<https://www.iwgia.org/en/malaysia>

“Research by Amnesty has found that indigenous peoples of Malaysia continue to suffer from a wide range of human rights violations, including an absence of formal recognition of their land, as well as threats, intimidation and violence when they seek to claim their rights to the land,” said Rachel Chhoa-Howard, Malaysia researcher at Amnesty International.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-malaysia-politics-landrights/in-a-first-malaysia-sues-state-over-indigenous-peoples-rights-idUSKCN1PC1EX>

Aljazeera. (2018). Malaysia has ‘window of opportunity’ on indigenous land rights.

Malaysia's new government has a "window of opportunity" to address indigenous land rights and stop the intimidation, harassment and arrest of those attempting to defend their land, Amnesty International said at the launch of its latest report into indigenous rights.

Across the country, indigenous people, who make up about 14 percent of the population, are locked in a battle for their land and way of life with companies that want to exploit the forest for its timber and plant agricultural crops like durian, rubber and palm oil.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/11/malaysia-window-opportunity-indigenous-land-rights-181130071817555.html>

Health Issues

Young Soon Wong, Pascale Allotey & Daniel D Reidpath (2019) Why we run when the doctor comes: Orang Asli responses to health systems in transition in Malaysia, *Critical Public Health*, 29:2, 192-204, DOI: [10.1080/09581596.2018.1438588](https://doi.org/10.1080/09581596.2018.1438588)

<https://tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09581596.2018.1438588?needAccess=true&journalCode=ccph20>

Situation of the right to health of Indigenous peoples in Asia

Submission by Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP) for the “Study on the Right to Health and Indigenous Peoples with a Focus on Children and Youth” of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

<https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/IPeoples/EMRIP/Health/AIPP.pdf>

Cultural Survival. (2018). Observations on the State of Indigenous Human Rights in Malaysia. United Nations Human Rights Council

<https://www.culturalsurvival.org/sites/default/files/Malaysia%202018%20UPR%20Report.pdf>

This is Malaysia's third Universal Periodic Review cycle. In its second cycle, Malaysia accepted 116 of 252 recommendations, among which there are only three commitments to improve conditions for Indigenous communities. These include the eradication of poverty and the enhancement of economic and social welfare of Indigenous Peoples. Malaysia voted to adopt the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in 2007, but has not ratified the ILO Convention No. 169.1 Even with its expressed support for the UNDRIP, Malaysia continues to violate its principles, particularly seen in its initiation of and response to land rights abuses, the absence of Free, Prior and Informed Consent, and violence against women.