

Article

# Law Enforcement Against Illegal Logging that Occurs in the Forest Area of Kwala Sefruh Village

Joe Van Rajs Hutabarat<sup>1</sup>, Selfiei Helfianto Simarmata<sup>2</sup>, Suci Ramadani<sup>3\*</sup>

<sup>1-3</sup> Universitas Pembangunan Panca Budi Sumatera Utara, Indonesia; email: [suciramadani@dosen.pancabudi.ac.id](mailto:suciramadani@dosen.pancabudi.ac.id)

\* Corresponding Author : Suci Ramadani

**Abstract:** Illegal logging is a form of environmental crime that has a serious impact on forest destruction, loss of biodiversity, and disruption of ecosystem balance. This study aims to analyze law enforcement efforts against illegal logging practices in the Kwala Serapuh Village Forest area. The method used in this study is an empirical juridical approach with data collection through interviews, field observations, and documentation. The results of the study show that despite the existence of regulations governing forest protection, law enforcement still faces various obstacles such as weak supervision, limited resources of law enforcement officials, and the involvement of individuals in these illegal practices. Efforts made include taking action against perpetrators, increasing patrols, and empowering communities around the forest. However, the effectiveness of law enforcement still needs to be improved through inter-institutional synergy, strengthening the capacity of the apparatus, and increasing community participation. This study concludes that law enforcement against illegal logging in the Kwala Serapuh Village Forest is still not optimal and requires a more comprehensive approach.

**Keywords:** Corrupt Crimes, Environmental Crimes, Illegal Logging, Law Enforcement, Village Forests.

## 1. Introduction

Logging is the activity of harvesting biological processes and ecosystems that have accumulated during their life cycle. This activity must be achieved with a plan so that it causes minimal negative impacts. Logging can be carried out by anyone as long as it follows the criteria for sustainable forest management. Illegal logging or better known as illegal logging is the activity of harvesting forest trees, transportation, and selling illegal timber and processed timber products and without a permit from local authorities. In general, this activity is carried out on forest areas that are prohibited for timber harvesting. The concept of illegal logging is the harvesting of forest trees without a permit without replanting so that it cannot be categorized as sustainable forest management.

Logging activities have been regulated in Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 18 of 2013 concerning the Prevention and Eradication of Forest Destruction. According to the law, illegal logging is all organized activities of illegal use of timber forest products. This means that this activity can be carried out by a group consisting of two or more people who act together to harvest wood as a forest destruction activity. The legal basis of illegal logging is the eradication of illegal logging activities that can be eliminated with a firm legal basis and strict supervision. The law on illegal logging has been regulated in Law Number 18 of 2013 concerning the Prevention and Eradication of Forest Destruction (P3H Law).

This legislation is a special provision (*lex specialis*) of Law No. 41 of 1999 concerning Forestry. The P3H Law is a continuation of the Law on the Eradication of Illegal Logging proposed in the mid-2000s. The new things that were regulated and included included minimum penalties, corporate crimes, institutionalization of forest destruction eradication, and

Received: 12 May, 2025

Revised: 15 June, 2025

Accepted: 13 July, 2025

Online Available : 15 July, 2025

Curr. Ver.: 15 July, 2025



Copyright: © 2025 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY SA) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)

substantial weaknesses. According to the Law on the Prevention and Eradication of Forest Destruction (P3H), illegal logging is an activity that is prohibited in article 17 paragraph 1 letter b which reads "Everyone is prohibited: b. Carrying out mining activities in forest areas without the Minister's permission," Everyone said meaning that it can be done by individuals or cooperatives. The punishment for those who violate these rules is criminal threats, which are as follows:

If committed by an individual or individual, the threat of imprisonment is a minimum of 3 (three) years and a maximum of 15 (fifteen) years and a fine of at least Rp1,500,000,000.00 (one billion five hundred million rupiah) and a maximum of Rp10,000,000,000.00 (ten billion rupiah). If the logging is carried out by a corporation, the threat of imprisonment for a minimum of 8 (eight) years and a maximum of 20 (twenty) years as well as a fine of at least Rp20,000,000,000.00 (twenty billion rupiah) and a maximum of Rp50,000,000,000.00 (fifty billion rupiah).

In this context, the existence of forest police is very important as the front line in preserving forests and enforcing the law in conservation areas and protected forests. Forest police, or often referred to as Forest Ranger or Forest Police, have the main task of supervising, protecting, and enforcing the law in forest areas. They not only act as field officers, but also as intermediaries between the government and the community in conservation efforts. However, the role of forest police is often faced with various challenges, ranging from limited human resources and facilities, to security risks due to confrontations with forest criminals. WALHI (Indonesian Environmental Forum) is the largest independent and non-profit environmental organization in Indonesia. Founded in 1980, WALHI is a forum for a network of civil society organizations that care about environmental issues, ecological justice, and people's rights to natural resources.

WALHI was formed to fight for ecological justice in Indonesia by protecting the environment and strengthening the position of indigenous/local communities as the main guardians of natural resources with the aim of:

- a. Encouraging government policies that favor the environment and society
- b. Voice violations of the ecological rights of the community.
- c. Encourage the sustainable preservation of natural resources.
- d. Reject the exploitation of nature that harms the community and damages the ecosystem.
- e. Supporting communities in fighting for the right to manage their own territory

With all this, WALHI becomes an important actor in preserving the environment while fighting for justice for the affected communities. This study aims to examine the strategic role of forest police in the protection of forest areas in Kwala Serapuh village forest area, the challenges they face in the field, and the efforts that can be made to improve the effectiveness of their work. With a deeper understanding of the work dynamics of the forest police, it is hoped that policy recommendations will be born that can support the strengthening of this institution in preserving Indonesia's forests..

## 2. Literature Review

### 1. Definition and Legal Aspects of Illegal Logging

Illegal logging or illegal logging is a logging activity that is carried out without official permission from the competent authorities. This activity violates the applicable legal provisions and has a negative impact on the environment and the country's economy. According to Law Number 41 of 1999 concerning Forestry, especially Article 50 paragraph (3), everyone is prohibited from carrying out activities that cause forest destruction, including logging without a permit. Criminal sanctions for this violation are regulated in Article 78 of the same law.

## 2. The Role of Law Enforcement Officers

Law enforcement against illegal logging involves several agencies, including the National Police of the Republic of Indonesia and the Civil Servant Investigators (PPNS) in the forestry sector. They have the authority to investigate forestry crimes as stipulated in Law Number 18 of 2013 concerning the Prevention and Eradication of Forest Destruction. However, the effectiveness of law enforcement is often hampered by limited human resources and available infrastructure.

## 3. Obstacles in Law Enforcement

Some of the main obstacles in law enforcement against illegal logging include:

1. **Limited Facilities and Infrastructure:** Lack of adequate facilities and equipment to support investigation and enforcement activities.
2. **Lack of Cooperation Between Agencies:** Less effective coordination between relevant agencies and local governments in handling illegal logging cases.
3. **Low Public Legal Awareness:** Many people do not understand the negative impact of illegal logging and the importance of preserving forests.
4. **Presence of Individuals Involved:** Some illegal logging perpetrators get support from irresponsible individuals, making it difficult for law enforcement to proceed.

## 4. Prevention and Countermeasures

Prevention efforts against illegal logging include legal and non-legal approaches. Legally, strict enforcement is needed against the perpetrators of forestry crimes. Non-legally, the approach through education and community empowerment is very important. For example, socialization on the importance of forest protection and training on alternative livelihoods can help reduce community dependence on illegal logging activities.

## 3. Research Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive analysis method to explore in depth the dynamics of law enforcement against illegal logging that occurs in the forest area of Kwala Serapuh village, with a focus on the process, and factual context that surrounds it. Data was obtained through interviews, data collection, related news, and analysis of environmental legislation. Which is then critically analyzed to identify patterns, obstacles, and find solutions in the implementation of law enforcement against cases of environmental destruction in Kwala Serapuh village.

## 4. Discussion

### Illegal logging

Illegal logging is one of the most destructive and difficult to control forms of environmental crime, especially in developing countries that have vast tropical forests such as Indonesia. These measures include various logging activities, transport, processing, and trade in timber forest products that are carried out without official permits or in contravention of applicable legal regulations. The problem of illegal logging not only damages forest sustainability, but also triggers various complex ecological, social, and economic crises, both on a local, national, and global scale (Wirawan sinaga, 2022).

Normatively, the practice of illegal logging is a violation of the law regulated in various laws and regulations in Indonesia, such as Law Number 41 of 1999 concerning Forestry, and Law Number 32 of 2009 concerning Environmental Protection and Management. In the legal context, illegal logging contains elements of actions without permission from the competent authorities, violations of legal forest management procedures, and the real impact of damage to the ecological function of forests. This activity also often involves organized

crime syndicates that take advantage of surveillance loopholes and weak law enforcement (Irwan Triadi & Irwan Triadi, 2024). In terms of terminology, the term "illegal logging" itself comes from English, where "illegal" means illegal or contrary to the law, and "logging" means the activity of cutting and transporting wood. In practice, illegal logging is not only limited to cutting down trees without permits, but also includes manipulating documents, forging permits, and smuggling forest products to the international market. This makes illegal logging a complex cross-sectoral crime that requires a multi-disciplinary approach in handling it

The impact of illegal logging on forest areas is huge. Ecologically, degraded forests result in the loss of important environmental functions such as carbon sequestration, biodiversity protection, and water cycle control. These impacts in turn trigger natural disasters such as floods, landslides, and extreme droughts. In addition, forest destruction also means habitat loss for many endemic flora and fauna species, leading to population declines to the extinction of rare species.

In addition to ecological impacts, illegal logging also has social consequences that are detrimental to the communities around the forest. The loss of forests as a source of livelihood and living space leads to social inequality, agrarian conflicts, and the expulsion of indigenous peoples from their managed areas. Often, local communities that do not actually benefit from this practice are instead used as shields or forced to work by the main perpetrators of illegal logging who have capital and power. This phenomenon reinforces the cycle of poverty and structural injustice in the interior of Indonesia (Ratna et al., 2021).

From an economic perspective, the state's losses due to illegal logging practices are very significant. Studies show that Indonesia's losses can reach billions of dollars per year due to the loss of tax potential, non-tax state revenue, and damage to ecosystems of high economic value. Most of the illegal logging proceeds are not even enjoyed by the state or society, but flow into overseas accounts through international illegal timber trade networks. This shows that illegal logging is not just an administrative offense, but also part of a systemic organized economic crime.

Efforts to eradicate illegal logging in Indonesia face various obstacles, ranging from weak field supervision, budget limitations, corruption in the forestry bureaucracy, to conflicts of interest between business people and officials. Although the government has issued various policies such as a forest moratorium and the implementation of the timber legality verification system (SVLK), its success is still limited because implementation on the ground has not been consistent. Law enforcement often only targets actors in the field, while intellectual actors or main financiers often escape the snare of the law (Frenky Sinaga, 2021).

Thus, illegal logging is a complex and multidimensional problem, which cannot be solved by a repressive approach alone. An integrated strategy is needed that includes forestry policy reform, local community empowerment, strengthening forest governance transparency, and collaboration between countries, NGOs, businesses, and the international community. An approach based on ecological justice and sustainable development is the key to ending Indonesia's decades-long cycle of forest destruction.

Law enforcement against illegal logging activities in Kwala Serapuh Village shows various complex obstacles, both in juridical and implementation aspects. Although the regulations governing the prohibition of illegal logging have been expressly regulated in laws and regulations, law enforcement practices at the local level are still not optimal. This is due to weak coordination between law enforcement agencies, limited human resources and budget, and indications of the involvement of officials in illegal logging activities. This creates a climate of impunity that encourages perpetrators to continue to exploit forests illegally, without fear of real legal consequences.

In addition to institutional factors, low legal awareness and community involvement in forest conservation efforts also worsen the situation. Local communities, who are economically dependent on forest products, often do not have adequate alternative options to meet their livelihoods. Therefore, law enforcement strategies cannot stand alone, but must be integrated with participatory approaches that involve community empowerment and the provision of sustainable livelihood alternatives. Thus, law enforcement against illegal logging in Kwala Serapuh Village will be more effective if accompanied by a structural and transformative approach.

**Illegal Logging Practices** Illegal logging activities in the Kwala Serapuh Village Forest are carried out secretly by individuals and groups who use heavy equipment and transport timber illegally. The lack of supervision and the large area of the forest make this activity easier. Perpetrators often take advantage of legal loopholes or cooperate with officials.

**Law Enforcement Efforts** Law enforcement efforts are carried out through joint operations, forest patrols, and arrests of perpetrators. Some perpetrators have been prosecuted, although the number is still small compared to the scale of the damage that has occurred. In addition to repressive measures, there are also preventive efforts such as legal socialization to the community and citizen involvement in a community-based supervision system.

**Obstacles to Law Enforcement** The main obstacles in law enforcement include limited human resources and logistics, lack of inter-agency coordination, and intimidation of witnesses and officials. In addition, many people are still economically dependent on forest products, so they are reluctant to report or even engage in illegal activities.

Law enforcement against illegal logging in the Kwala Sefraguh Village Forest still faces many challenges. To overcome this, it is necessary to strengthen the capacity of the apparatus, better collaboration between institutions, and empower local communities to become partners in preserving forests. Law enforcement must go hand in hand with an educational approach and the provision of sustainable livelihood alternatives for citizens.

Countering illegal logging in the Kwala Serapuh Village Forest requires a multi-sectoral and sustainable approach. Strategies that can be carried out include

1. Community empowerment through alternative economic programs, such as agroforestry and village-based ecotourism, to reduce dependence on illegal forest products.
2. Establishment and strengthening of forest supervisory community groups (Pokmaswas) that are legally and logistically supported by the government
3. Capacity building of law enforcement officials, including training and provision of technological facilities such as drones and GPS for surveillance of forest areas.
4. Massive and sustainable socialization of law and environment to the community, especially the younger generation.
5. Synergy between government agencies, NGOs, and the private sector to create a transparent and integrated monitoring and reporting system.

In this case, the people of Kwala Sefruh village are assisted by an environmental organization called WALHI (Indonesian Environmental Forum). WALHI is Indonesia's largest independent environmental organization engaged in advocacy, protection, and preservation of the environment and the rights of indigenous and local peoples. WALHI has a mission to fight for ecological justice through campaigns, litigation, and community empowerment.

The Indonesian Forum for the Environment (WALHI) of North Sumatra plays an important role in law enforcement against illegal logging practices in the forest area of Kwala Serapuh village, Langkat Regency. Here are some concrete steps that WALHI has taken:

#### 1. Case Reporting to Law Enforcement Officers

WALHI North Sumatra together with the Nipah Forest Farmers Group and the Sri-kandi Lestari Foundation have reported the destruction of mangrove forests in Kwala Serapuh Village to the police. This action is a response to illegal activities carried out by a group of people who are destroying the mangrove forest area in the area.

#### 2. Community Advocacy and Assistance

Since 2016, WALHI North Sumatra has assisted the Nipah Farmers Group in efforts to rehabilitate and preserve mangrove forests in Kwala Serapuh. They pushed for legal recognition of forest management through the Forestry Partnership (Kulin KK) scheme, which was finally recognized by the Decree of the Minister of Environment and Forestry in 2018 for the management of an area of 242 hectares.

#### 3. Rejection of Forest Conversion

WALHI actively opposes the conversion of mangrove forests into oil palm plantations and ponds. They highlighted that this conversion has been going on since the late 1990s and has caused ecosystem damage and loss of livelihoods for traditional fishing communities.

#### 4. Highlighting the Weakness of Law Enforcement

WALHI North Sumatra highlighted the weak law enforcement against forest destruction perpetrators, including intimidation experienced by the North Sumatra Environment and Forestry Service (DLHK) while carrying out their duties in the field. They emphasized the need for firm action from law enforcement officials to crack down on illegal logging and mangrove forest destruction.

#### 5. Support for Environmental Fighters

WALHI provides support to individuals who have experienced criminalization due to maintaining mangrove forests, such as the case of Samsul and Samsir in Kwala Serapuh. They face intimidation and criminal charges while trying to protect forest areas from illegal encroachment.

Through these various efforts, WALHI North Sumatra plays an active role in protecting the Kwala Serapuh village forest from illegal logging practices and environmental destruction, as well as fighting for the rights of local communities in sustainable natural resource management

Here are some more detailed conclusions regarding WALHI's role and attitude in the illegal logging case in Kwala Serapuh Village:

#### WALHI's Conclusions in the Case of Illegal Logging in Kwala Serapuh Village

1. **WALHI Assesses Illegal Logging as a Serious Threat to the Ecosystem** WALHI emphasized that the practice of illegal logging, especially the destruction of mangrove forests in Kwala Serapuh, is a real threat to biodiversity, coastal stability, and the lives of traditional fishing communities.
2. **Unfirm Law Gives Space for Environmental Destroyers** WALHI concluded that weak law enforcement and lack of action from law enforcement officials caused illegal logging perpetrators to continue to feel free and undeterred, even daring to intimidate the public and officers.
3. **Indigenous and Local Peoples Become Victims of Injustice** WALHI stated that communities that protect forests are often criminalized, while perpetrators of major destruction often escape the snares of the law. This shows the inequality of legal protection in the field.
4. **Recognition of Forest Management Rights by Communities is an Effective Solution** Based on the experience in Kwala Serapuh, WALHI concluded that the legalization of community management rights (through schemes such as Kulin KK) has proven to be able to encourage forest conservation and reduce land conflicts.
5. **WALHI Calls for Environmental Law Enforcement Reform** In many of its statements, WALHI emphasized the need for reforms in environmental law enforcement, including transparency in the legal process, protection of environmental defenders, and strict sanctions against forest destroyers.
6. **Collaboration between Communities and Advocacy Institutions Produces Real Impact** WALHI concludes that the synergy between local communities, environmental organizations, and legal parties produces strength that is able to withstand the rate of damage, although the challenges are still great.
7. **Forest Areas Like Kwala Serapuh Must Be Protected as Ecological and Social Assets** WALHI assesses that areas like Kwala Serapuh are not only important in terms of the environment, but also social and cultural. The destruction of this area means damage to the identity and livelihood of its people.

## 5. Conclusion

Law enforcement against illegal logging activities in the Kwala Serapuh Village Forest is a serious challenge due to the complexity of the problem involving various parties, such as local communities, business actors, and law enforcement officials. Although laws and regulations are available, their implementation often faces obstacles such as lack of resources, weak coordination between agencies, and the influence of certain actors with economic interests on the forest area.

Illegal logging in the Kwala Serapuh Village Forest area is a serious violation of forestry laws that threaten environmental sustainability and local communities' rights to forest management. This activity continues due to weak supervision and lack of firmness by the

authorities in providing appropriate sanctions. Law enforcement has not fully provided a deterrent effect for perpetrators.

Local governments and law enforcement officials have made various efforts such as routine patrols, socialization of forestry laws, and crackdowns on illegal logging perpetrators. However, its effectiveness is still limited. One of the reasons is the low active participation of the community in forest monitoring and the lack of legal protection for those who try to report illegal logging activities.

In addition, weak law enforcement is also influenced by social and economic factors. Many villagers are economically dependent on forest products, prompting them to engage directly or indirectly in illegal logging practices. In this context, it is not enough to carry out law enforcement through a repressive approach alone, but also needs to be accompanied by a preventive approach and community empowerment through alternative livelihood programs.

Law enforcement against illegal logging in the Kwala Serapuh Village Forest must be carried out comprehensively, involving all relevant parties, and prioritizing the principles of social justice and environmental sustainability. Synergy is needed between the government, communities, and non-governmental organizations to create an effective monitoring system and community economic empowerment so that the pressure on forest areas can be significantly reduced.

WALHI's relationship with law enforcement against illegal logging in the Kwala Serapuh Village Forest area is very close and strategic. As an environmental advocacy institution, WALHI plays an active role in protecting the forest area from destruction, through reporting of violations of the law, assisting local communities, and pressuring law enforcement officials to act decisively against illegal logging perpetrators. WALHI also fights for the recognition of community management rights over forests as a legal and sustainable long-term solution. Through this role, WALHI becomes a bridge between the community and the legal system in an effort to maintain ecological justice in the region.

The conclusion of this study is that the success of law enforcement against illegal logging in the Kwala Serapuh Village Forest does not only depend on the law itself, but on strong collaboration between the authorities, the village government, and the community. There needs to be an approach based on empowerment and restoration of legal trust so that the community feels part of the solution, not just the object of action.

## References

- [1] CITES, *Rules and Regulations of CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) Related to Ramin and Other Plant Species*, 2002, pp. 1–43.
- [2] Forester Act, *Illegal Logging (Illegal Logging) Definition, Impact, and Legal Basis*. [Daring]. Tersedia: <https://forester-act.com/illegal-logging-pembalakan-liar/>, diakses 26 Mei 2025.
- [3] Irwan Triadi dan Irwan Triadi, “Law Enforcement Against Illegal Logging for Environmental Sustainability in Indonesia,” *Amendment: Indonesian Journal of Defense, Political and Legal Sciences*, vol. 1, no. 3, pp. 264–282, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.62383/amandemen.v1i3.302>
- [4] Jaka Kelana, N., *The Role of WALHI in Handling Illegal Logging Cases that Occurred in Kwala Sefrub Village (in the Form of Interviews)*, 26 Mei 2025.
- [5] Lestari, N., Rahmatiar, Y., dan M. A. Yuniar, “Environmental and Social Consequences of Illegal Logging: Legal Implications and Nopita Enforcement Strategies,” *Patimura Magister Law Review*, vol. 4, no. 3, 2024.
- [6] Ratna, I. A., Dewi, N., Ratna, D., dan Hariyanto, S., “Analysis of Illegal Logging Law Enforcement in Criminal Law,” *Journal of Kertha Semaya*, vol. 9, no. 11, pp. 2062–2071, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.24843/KS.2021.v09.i11.p06>
- [7] Sinaga, H. F., *Law Enforcement by the Langkat Resort Police Against Illegal Logging in the Jurisdiction of the Langkat Police*. Master's Thesis, University of Medan Area, 2021, pp. 1–85.
- [8] Sinaga, N. W., *Enforcement of Illegal Logging Criminal Law from a Positive Legal Perspective and Islamic Law (Analysis of Decision No.139/Pid.B/LH/2020/PN Sdk)*, 2022. Copyright © 2017–2003–2005.