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## **Malaysian government report confirms Penan girls were raped by loggers**

*Bruno Manser Fund asks for legal and political consequences*

One year after the Bruno Manser Fund launched a campaign against sexual abuse of indigenous Penan girls and women by logging company workers in the East Malaysian state of Sarawak, a Malaysian government report confirms the Penan's allegations of sexual abuse by loggers.

According to the independent news service Malaysiakini, a hitherto confidential report by the Malaysian Ministry for Women, Family and Community Development lists at least eight cases of sexual abuse of Penan girls and women by logging company workers and says that several of the victims were schoolgirls as young as 10.

The report concludes that "allegations of sexual abuse of Penan girls and women by outsiders dealing with the Penan, including logging company workers and merchants, did indeed take place." It quotes two victims as saying that it is a regular and common occurrence for logging camp workers to sexually abuse girls who hitch rides to and from school.

The report said the girls' vulnerability, widespread poverty and "dependency on the logging companies for transportation into towns, including sending and ferrying of children to and from school" were among the reasons for incidents of sexual abuse.

The report contains the results of an investigation conducted by the Malaysian ministry for Women, Family and Community Development in November 2008 and was released under growing pressure from civil society groups and the opposition. It contradicts statements by leading Sarawak politicians, including Deputy Chief Minister Alfred Jabu, who had condemned the Bruno Manser Fund for making the Penan's allegations of sexual abuse public.

On 15 September 2008, the Bruno Manser Fund had informed the public on allegations of Penan women that they were being sexually abused by employees of Samling and Interhill, two logging companies operating in Sarawak's Middle Baram region. Both companies denied the allegations.

The Bruno Manser Fund welcomes the release of the report by the Minister for Women, Family and Community development. However, it is disturbing to note that it has taken the Malaysian government a full year to compile this report which apparently has not had any legal consequences for the perpetrators. It is high time that the responsables of the crimes described in the report will face the legal consequences of their conduct. It would also seem appropriate that such a scandal should have political consequences at the state level.

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