The Smoke That Never Clears: When Communities, Workers and Volunteers Bear a Burden That Is Not Theirs



Every dry season, Indonesia is besieged by smoke once again. We count the hectares burned, the suspects arrested and the companies identified as responsible. Yet we almost never count what matters most: who bears the suffering? Who pays the healthcare costs of millions of people? Who replaces the wages of workers who must keep working in the smoke because, without work, they cannot eat? Who cares for the wives and children of volunteers who die after months of fighting fires without pay? This article attempts to answer a question rarely asked, shifting the focus from “who started the fires?” to “who must take responsibility?”

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