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**Media release**

**INDONESIA: Sidoarjo mudflow victims must be provided with adequate rehabilitation and compensation**

28 May 2009: On the third anniversary of the Sidoarjo mudflow disaster human rights groups have once again called on the Government of Indonesia to provide all affected persons with immediate assistance and rehabilitation.

Three years ago on 28 May 2006, a gas eruption at a PT Lapindo Brantas drilling site in Sidoarjo, East Java resulted in an upsurge of hot volcanic mud which continues to flow to date. The mud volcano, which on average discharges 150,000 cubic metres of mud per day (enough to fill forty Olympic-sized swimming pools),<sup>1</sup> has submerged an estimated 15,000 land holdings. All measures to stop the mudflow have been unsuccessful and it is unknown when, if ever, it can be stopped. "In fact several levees created to check the further spread of the volcanic mud are on the verge of collapse thus placing at risk the lives and livelihoods of several hundred more families in the area" said Siti Maemunah of the Justice Movement of Lapindo Victims.

PT Lapindo Brantas, the company operating the drilling site argues that the gas eruption and the mudflow were a result of an earthquake measuring 6.3 on the Richter scale on 27 March 2006 in Yogyakarta, approximately 260 kilometres away from the eruption. While arguments and counterarguments abound between the company and human rights groups on the cause of the eruption, thousands of persons displaced by the mudflow, or at risk of displacement, remain without access to remedy. Mudflow-affected persons have experienced displacement from their homes, as well as secondary displacement from the places where they sought shelter. Livelihoods have been destroyed as paddy fields and factories have been submerged.

"The absence of a coherent response from the Government of Indonesia as well as PT Lapindo Brantas has ensured that three years later thousands of families continue to suffer human rights violations including violations of their right to adequate housing, right to mental and physical health and right to remedy and restitution as internally displaced persons" said Wardah Hafidz of Indonesia's Urban Poor Consortium.

As per Indonesia's international human rights obligations, it is the primary duty of the Government to respect, protect and fulfil human rights. Specifically the duty to protect obliges the Government to ensure that human rights are not infringed upon by third parties, including private corporations. Where human rights violations do occur, it is the Government's responsibility to provide access to remedies for those affected in the form of interim measures and compensation.

"Therefore, regardless of whether the mudflow is a natural or man-made disaster, the Government of Indonesia must take urgent and concrete steps to address this crisis through meaningful consultations with all those affected and likely to be affected with a view to providing them adequate compensation and rehabilitation" said Malavika Vartak of the Geneva-based Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions.

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COHRE is an international human rights NGO focusing on the right to housing. COHRE is headquartered in Geneva, and has regional offices across the world.

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The Justice Movement of Lapindo Victims is a coalition of Indonesian NGOs working with the victims of the mudflow disaster to find an adequate solution for those affected.

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<sup>1</sup> *Learning from the East Java Mudflow: Disaster Politics in Indonesia*, Schiller, K., Lucas, A. and Sulistiyanto, P. in: Indonesia, April 2008, p. 1.