

S'wak BN under fire over vanishing act
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Sarawak Barisan Nasional (BN) elected representatives have come under fire for allegedly neglecting long-running problems of rural Ibans affected by commercial logging and plantation activities.

Former education officer turned businessman Jacob Emang, 59, claimed they "do not seem to show any concern or interest despite having been elected to look after the interests of the people".

Emang, chairperson of the Abok village development and security committee in Sri Aman, was scathing in his comments following his arrest last Tuesday with three others over an allegation that they had torched mobile camps at a logging camp.

They were remanded at the Sri Aman police lock-up, but were released on police bail on Monday.

"There are 1,001 ways these problems could be solved and yet they (BN representatives) have not come forward to do anything," he told malaysiakini.

"Where are they when we need them? I feel that the people's feelings have reached boiling point while they keep quiet to protect their own interests and positions."

It was previously reported that a DAP elected representative based about 200km away in Kuching had travelled to Sri Aman to find out what had happened to the four detainees.

Emang said those released were told that investigations are continuing and that they may be charged for alleged arson next month.

He said he had made a five-page report to the police explaining the circumstances leading to the alleged torching of the mobile camps belonging to Kortasar Enterprise.

After the company lodged a complaint with the police, Jacob and the three Ibans were told to report to the Sri Aman police station where they were promptly arrested.

"When towkays make a report, the police act. When Iban landowners make a report, they do not react - why?" he said in anger.

There has been a long history of conflicts between Iban landowners and logging and plantation companies in the Balai Ringin area, covering bok, Apeng and Silantek. Similar problems exist in other parts of the state including Lundu, Bintulu, Miri and Baram.

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