

**British MPs write to Taib on abuse of Penan
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British members of parliament have written to Sarawak Chief Minister Abdul Taib Mahmud expressing their concern over the sexual abuse of Penan women and girls and the marginalisation of the Penan.

NONEspeaking for the British parliament's All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Tribal Peoples, its chairperson Martin Horwood (left) in a letter to coincide with Taib's visit to the UK this week expressed the group's concern for the new cases that have emerged of rape and sexual abuse of Penan women and girls.

Horwood also asked that Taib "take steps to ensure that Penan women and girls are protected from sexual violence and the perpetrator of such abuse brought to justice."

Since 2008 when reports first emerged in the mainstream media of Penan women and girls being subjected to rape and abuse at the hands of logging workers, criticisms have been levelled at the Taib government for failing to acknowledge and investigate the crimes.

On the general marginalisation of the Penan community in Sarawak, Horwood said he was "heartened" to hear of Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's visit to the Ulu Baram on Thursday and "hope that this will be the start of a genuine dialogue in which the tribe's voice will be heard."

NONEwithout recognition of their land rights, however, the Penan are struggling to provide for themselves and are left vulnerable to violence and exploitation," said the APPG chairperson.

"As you will know, logging companies have operated for decades on the Penan's land without their consent and despite their peaceful protests.

"Many are struggling to find enough food, since logging has left the forest with fewer animals and the polluted rivers with fewer fish, and are suffering from poor health as a result.

bn supreme council mt meeting sapp sabah issue 190608 taib mahmud"The effects of plantations growing oil palm and trees for paper production are even more serious, as the forest is clearly completely," Horwood said further.

Horwood urged the Chief Minister (right) to "halt logging and other developments on the Penan's land without their free, prior and informed consent, according to international law."

He also said Taib should "ensure that Penan women and girls are protected from sexual violence and the perpetrators of such abuse brought to justice".

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