
Human Rights Guarantees for the Protection of Indigenous Peoples as Climate Change Refugees in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Climate refugees have the human right to a decent life free from threats. Their human rights are currently enshrined in international human rights law and the Refugee Convention, which require states not to repatriate to countries or territories of origin where the impacts of climate change expose them to life-threatening risks or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment. Even though it has been regulated in international law, it does not mean that their human rights are fully fulfilled. Existing laws still need to be refined and regulated by each country so that each country truly guarantees its rights and prevents persecution. The study in this paper analyses the Human Rights Guarantee of the Protection of Indigenous Peoples as Climate Change Refugees in Indonesia by using the research type. The purpose of the research is to prepare legal arrangements in Indonesia regarding the regulation of climate change refugees by analyzing events that occur in Indonesia in particular due to the existence of several areas that are sinking due to climate change by implementing Resource-Based Theory.

KEYWORDS

Climate Change, Environment, Refugees, Human Rights, Indonesia.

INTRODUCTION

Climate change has a serious negative impact on environmental sustainability, and Indonesia's smallest and outermost islands are no exception. Indonesia, as an archipelago, has a very high vulnerability to the impacts of climate change. Referring to BPS data, around 42 million people live in areas less than 10 meters above sea level. (Ria Tri Vinata, 2023) The USAID projection study confirms that sea level rise will submerge 2,000 small islands by 2050, which means there are 42 million people at risk of losing their homes. (USAID, 2017) There are Around 75% of Indonesia's major cities located in coastal areas that are very vulnerable to climate change. (The World Bank Group and Asian Development Bank, 2021) The impact of climate change that is most felt by coastal communities is high sea waves as well as large waves and strong currents, which can cause coastal abrasion and damage settlements. Abrasion can cause many coastal areas to be submerged. For fishermen, the direct impact of climate change in coastal areas is the higher risk of going to sea in weather uncertainty, which can cause fishermen to no longer be able to go to sea and lose their livelihoods.

Norman Myers has predicted that by 2050, more than 150 million people will be forced to migrate due to the effects of global warming. (Kolmannskog, 2008) Furthermore, the Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change predicts that the number of people migrating due to climate change will reach 200 million by 2050. (Simon Dietz,2007) Indonesia has a high vulnerability to the impacts of climate change, especially in coastal areas. The results of the 2021 Bappenas study related to the Coastal Vulnerability Index (CVI), which classifies the level of vulnerability based on physical and oceanographic parameters, show that the length of the affected coastline with the highest CVI category (index 5) is 1819 km long. Sulawesi Island has the highest vulnerability index, with 904.51 km. (Idrus, 2021)

The climate crisis brings a signal of loss of existence for people living on small islands. Rising sea levels have the potential to submerge some or all small island land masses. According to the data, one-eighth of the current 29 square kilometres of islands will be submerged by 2050. (IPCC, 2018) In 50 years, the

sea level in Indonesia has jumped from 0.8 mm per year to 7 mm per year in 1993. In fact, according to one study, by 2050, sea level rise will reach 90 cm. Meanwhile, the findings of the National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN) estimate that around 115 small islands in Indonesia are in danger of disappearing or sinking. (A'an, 2020) Hundreds of islands are potentially affected by multiple impacts of sea level rise as well as land subsidence. (BRIN, 2024) Geologically, small islands in Indonesia have different characteristics, so the resilience of an island to marine disaster phenomena is also diverse.

BRIN's research confirms that during 1993-2009, the land area of Rondo Island, located at the western end of the Malacca Strait in Aceh, continued to decrease by 1,856 m² per year. It was due to sea level rise of 1.30 mm per year. (Arsana, 2013) The trend of seawater rise also occurred in Berhala Island located in the waters of eastern Riau Province, by 3.46 mm/year, and also Nipah Island in the Riau Islands by 3.48 mm/year. (Purba, 2021) Meanwhile, Miangas Island (3.2 km²), located on the border of Indonesia and the Philippines, has decreased in area by 0.02% of its total area since 2004, or about 0. Sekatung Island (1.65 km²), located in the North Natuna Sea, Riau Islands, also experienced a decrease in area of 0.66% of the total area (about 0.01989km² per year). Then, Berhala Island, located in the Malacca Strait also experienced a decrease in the area of 0.002 km²/year.

Indonesia's eastern regions are also at risk. For example, Workbondi Island, with an area of 1.62 km² in the north of Cenderawasih Bay, Papua, experienced a decrease in the area of 0.004 km² / year. In the Java Sea, Candikian Island and Gosong Island in Indramayu, West Java, are also close to sinking, with only a few square meters remaining with a land height of no more than 2 meters. Meanwhile, on Biawak Island, which is also located in Indramayu waters, there is a decrease in area of 0.22 km² / year. We even believe that a 0.5-meter rise in sea level would submerge half of this 120-hectare island. (The World Bank Group and Asian Development Bank, 2021) Climate change is currently fuelling the challenges communities living on small islands must face. Climate change issues experienced by communities in small islands range from water availability, unpredictable tropical storms, shoreline erosion and low-lying flooding, and relocation of coastal settlements.

The National Disaster Management Agency (BNPB) recorded 588 disaster events in 2023 until 13 March. (Gabrielle, 2023) All disasters concentrated in

Java Island are hydrometeorological disasters consisting of floods, landslides, droughts, and extreme weather. Currently, all communities in Indonesia have the potential to become climate refugees both soon and in the future. By 2020, there will be around 20 million climate refugees, 80% of whom will come from Asia and Africa. They are displaced from their homes due to extreme weather. This condition forces refugees to relocate and migrate abroad. Climate change is one of the biggest factors of mass migration. Climate refugees are forced to find a new place to live that is both permanent and temporary. Those who do not need to move permanently may be more fortunate because they can still occupy the same area, although the threat of climate change impacts is not guaranteed.

METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH

The research method in this paper is descriptive and explanatory. Descriptive research is to present a complete picture of the problems that focus on refugees that occur in Indonesia affected by climate change. The data obtained related to several climate change conditions related to refugees will be analyzed by international law and Indonesian national law in analyzing climate change refugees. Related to the innovation of this research is the preparation of legal arrangements in Indonesia regarding the regulation of climate change refugees by analyzing the events that occur in Indonesia in particular due to the existence of several areas that are sinking due to climate change by implementing the Resource-Based Theory.

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

CLIMATE CHANGE REFUGEES UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW

Based on the definition of a refugee in the 1951 Refugee Convention, several elements must be met to be categorized as a refugee, including persecution or torture, race, religion, nationality, or membership of a particular social group or political opinion and is outside his country and is unable or because of fear, not willing to be protected by the country. (UNHCR's mandate) The explanation of Environmental Refugees are refugees who are forced to leave their homes due to natural destruction due to climate change or global warming, drought, floods, tsunamis, volcanic disasters, and others so that their place can no longer be inhabited. Meanwhile, another term for environmental refugees is

Environmental Displaced Persons, which is already contained in a draft convention entitled Draft Convention on the International Status of Environmental Displaced Persons. (Prieur, 2008) Although the terms regarding this are already known internationally, the definition is not included in the refugee group. While the potential formation of stateless groups due to the influx of environmental refugees poses a hazard, it goes against the goals of the Convention on Citizenship.

According to the International Organizations for Migration, climate refugees are divided into three forms, namely environmental emergency migrants, which means that immigrants from a place are forced to move because of natural disasters that occur temporarily, such as floods, tsunamis, landslides, and so on where the disaster is temporary. The second is forced environmental migrants, which are people who are forced to move because of the worsening natural conditions due to environmental damage caused by deforestation, soil erosion, and global warming. (International Organization for Migration, 2009) The third is environmentally motivated migrants, which are migrants who are based on the environmental damage that causes their economy to be disrupted, so they move to avoid future problems. In addition, environmentally displaced people are thought to be more appropriate because the description is quite under the reason why people become refugees, namely because of the coercion that forces the person to move.

Based on the definition of a refugee in the 1951 Refugee Convention, several elements must be met to be categorized as a refugee, which will be explained in the table and explanation below. The Elements of a Refugee under the 1951 Refugee Convention:

Alienage

Eligible as a refugee because they cannot qualify as Statelessness, Displaced persons, or Asylum seekers.

Well-founded fear

Have a legitimate fear of becoming a refugee due to environmental change, such as rising sea levels, a country in danger of sinking, or various impacts of environmental damage.

Unable or Unwilling

There is an understanding of the judgment about the inability of the country or unwillingness to return to the country. Motivated by the reason that the country has sunk or has been inhabited or is afraid to return to the country regarding the anxiety that there will be danger again.

GUARANTEEING HUMAN RIGHTS TO CLIMATE REFUGEES

Some of the impacts that climate change has on the socio-culture of coastal communities are:

First, Reduced income of capture fishermen due to changes in water temperature that damage coral reefs and will lead to a decrease in fish populations.

Second, Increased repair costs for infrastructure that have been damaged due to high sea waves, for example, pond areas hit by tidal waves and boats damaged by waves.

Third, Disruption of farmers' livelihoods due to changes in the time and location of fishing. Another impact is the impact of shifting the type of livelihood of the population due to problems arising from global warming. Common livelihoods in coastal communities cannot be separated from the fisheries and marine sectors.

As a natural right, human rights have constitutional protection in Indonesia. The 1945 Constitution and its Amendments have further elaborated human rights. It is the implementation of the Republic of Indonesia's state responsibility in law. The amendment and development of human rights in the 1945 Constitution is a follow-up to human rights norms in international law as stipulated in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Covenant On Economic and Cultural Rights, Covenant On Civil And Political Rights, and International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination. To harmonize international legal norms with national law, the Government of Indonesia issued Law No. 39/1999 on Human Rights, Law No. 29/1999 on the Ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination Against Women, Law No. 11/2005 on the Ratification of the Covenant On Economic and Cultural Rights and Law No. 12/2005 on the Ratification of the Covenant On Civil And Political Rights. (Komnas HAM, 2017)

Today, there has been no coordinated response from the international community to address the problem of Environmental Refugees arising from climate change, which in many cases depends solely on the goodwill of individual countries to accept these outcasts. Under the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, states have an obligation not to return a refugee to a country where he or she will be prosecuted, ill-treated, or tortured. The fundamental difficulty for victims of climate change impacts to obtain refugee status is due to the threat of prosecution in their home countries. Legally, the universal nature of natural disasters related to climate change cannot be used as a reason for obtaining refugee status because these disasters are not categorized as refugees.

Climate change refugees can be categorized under the general protection obligations of states under Article 7 of the ICCPR, which prohibits inhuman, cruel, and degrading treatment and punishment. The UN Human Rights Committee has interpreted the provisions of Article 7 as prohibiting states from exposing people to the risk of being returned to another country or the country of origin of the refugee. Returning climate change refugees to their country of origin is considered by the UN Human Rights Committee to be a violation of human rights because these refugees are blatantly unlikely to return to their uninhabitable country of origin. (UNHCR, 2023)

The complexity of the issue or practice of handling foreign refugees in Indonesia, ranging from discovery, shelter, security, and immigration control, makes the Perpres insufficient. The Perpres has developed detailed procedures for the central government but not for other parties. Moreover, in terms of the human rights foundation, it is still necessary to regulate the basic rights of refugees as Indonesia's global commitment. Therefore, the amendment of Presidential Regulation No. 125/2016, which the government has discussed, is a good opportunity to strengthen further the role of the Indonesian government in refugee management in Indonesia.

INDONESIA'S NATIONAL LAW REGULATIONS IN THE RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE REFUGEES

Indonesia's constitutional basis addresses environmental issues. This provision carries important meaning for the availability of constitutional guarantees for the sustainability of the natural environment in Indonesia. Article 33, paragraph

(4) of the 1945 Constitution explains that the process of sustainable development in the country relies on 3 (three) main factors, namely the condition of natural resources, environmental quality, and population factors. Thus, sustainable development will not have any meaning if it does not pay attention to the existing environmental aspects. (Kate Schuetze, 2020) Thus, in sustainable development, the government needs to pay attention to the following factors: Natural resource management needs to be planned under environmental resources; The need for the application of Environmental Impact Assessment and Development of environmental law that promotes judicial bodies to resolve disputes through the application of environmental law and development of foreign cooperation.

Indonesia has specifically regulated climate change in Law No. 31/2009 that the government is obliged to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Then, to support mitigation and adaptation, the government is obliged to do the following: Formulation of national policies, strategies, programs, and activities to control climate change; Coordination of climate change control activities; Monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of policies on climate change impacts. The formulation of national policies is carried out with activities such as inventory of greenhouse gas emissions, monitoring of climate change symptoms and greenhouse gases, data collection, and data analysis. The formulation and implementation of policies in the field of climate change control is carried out by the Directorate General of Climate Change Control.

In terms of environmental refugees and Indonesia as a temporary host country, the Government of Indonesia has provided various forms of assistance in dealing with the problems faced by refugees. For example, during this pandemic, the Ministry of Health issued a Circular Letter dated 10 June 2020 on providing access to health-related services for registered refugees. As of September 2021, a total of 5,262 refugees received financial assistance, and a total of 1,155 vulnerable refugees received monthly financial assistance since June 2020. (Rafał Baum, 2021) Furthermore, to follow up on the Circular Letters of the Minister of Home Affairs Number 300/2307/SJ and Number 300/2308/SJ concerning the Establishment of a Task Force for Handling Refugees from Abroad, several regions have established Task Forces for Handling Overseas Refugees (Satgas PPLN), such as Semarang City and South Tangerang City. With the Task Force, it is expected that coordination between

agencies in the regions will become more integrated and unified in handling foreign refugees in Indonesia. (Fact Sheet Indonesia)

The regulation of Presidential Regulation No. 125/2016 has provided a corridor for the handling of overseas refugees in Indonesia. The regulation provides a legal basis for the protection of foreign refugees in Indonesia. It can be seen that after Presidential Regulation No. 125/2016, asylum seekers who were initially placed in Immigration Detention Centres (IDCs) were moved to shelters so that they could be facilitated and financed by IOM. Given the increasing trend of foreign refugees in Indonesia and the problems that arise, it is necessary to amend Presidential Regulation No. 125/2016. The amended Perpres will regulate in detail, especially regarding the determination of status, the period of stay for refugees, and the contribution of budget allocation to the Regional Government.

In connection with this, it is hoped that the revision of Presidential Regulation No. 125/2016 can regulate more explicitly matters relating to emergency status, an emergency period for handling overseas refugees, roles and responsibilities of stakeholders, formation of PPLN Task Force, fulfilment of the rights of overseas refugees in Indonesia; budget use by Regional Governments; burden and responsibility sharing relationships with International Organisations and other matters that can improve the quality of handling overseas refugees for the better. (Rizka, 2019) In the context of better handling of refugees and the planned revision of Presidential Regulation No. 125/2016, several things need to be considered for strengthening policies for handling foreign refugees in Indonesia, among others. *First*, there is a mapping related to the number of refugees and their distribution in Indonesia, the treatment of asylum seekers who are not yet refugees because IOM has not funded them, and the treatment of refugees who decide to leave the shelter and become independent refugees. *Second*, Improved coordination and affirmation of the division of authority between the Central Government, Regional Governments, and International Organisations, including UNHCR and IOM. *Third*, Additional arrangements related to the allocation/use mechanism of the state budget, especially for Regional Governments (Provincial and Regency/City Governments).

Improved treatment and more coordinated and integrated arrangements for overseas refugees allow Indonesia to demonstrate better its commitment to play a role in international humanitarian missions and the protection of human

rights. The problems of handling refugees are not only faced by the Central Government but also by the Regional Government, where refugees are temporarily resettled. (Afriansyah, 2022) Some of the problems in handling overseas refugees in Indonesia can be mapped as follows:

The status and data of refugees and the waiting period for determining the status of refugees or asylum seekers from UNHCR are unclear, and it is difficult to collect data on independent refugees because they live outside the designated shelters, and refugee data owned by UNHCR or the International Organization for Migration (IOM) is not immediately submitted/reported to the Local Government.

Placements to refugee-receiving countries related to the period of placement to third countries/destination countries are unclear/uncertain. Some refugees have been in Indonesia for more than ten years. The COVID-19 pandemic has further slowed down the placement process, and refugee-receiving third countries, such as Australia and the United States, have tightened and reduced the quota of refugees entering the country.

Social problems include some shelters being substandard and over-capacity, the emergence of mental and physical health problems experienced by refugees as well as limited access to health and education services, and various other social problems between refugees and the community and local authorities.

Coordination between agencies related to coordination and communication between the Central Government, Local Governments, and IOM in handling foreign refugees in Indonesia has not been maximized; there is no clear division of roles, responsibilities, and budget allocations between the Central Government and Local Governments (Provincial and Regency/City Governments) in handling refugees from abroad; and not all regions that have refugee shelter centres have formed a Refugee Handling Task Force, as an effort to encourage better coordination at the regional level.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN HANDLING CLIMATE CHANGE REFUGEES

Until now, Indonesia has not ratified the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951 Convention) and the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees (1967 Protocol), so Indonesia has no obligation to accept refugees who enter its territory. However, Indonesia is willing to be a country that

temporarily hosts foreign refugees on humanitarian grounds. It is following the provisions of the 1951 Convention which requires countries that are not State Parties to adhere to the principle of non-refoulement, namely not forcibly repatriating all migrants who come seeking asylum to their country of origin. (Mohammadi, 2022)

The handling, protection, fulfillment of rights, and determination of the status of overseas refugees in Indonesia are carried out by UNHCR in collaboration with IOM. UNHCR and IOM are obliged to finance, facilitate, and find long-term solutions for refugees in temporary host countries until they are placed in third countries/refugee-receiving countries. (Heriyanto, 2023) Based on international law, asylum seekers who have obtained refugee status will be placed in third countries/refugee-receiving countries, such as Australia, Canada, and the United States. (Amir, 2022) According to UNHCR data, in September 2021, only 375 refugees in Indonesia have been placed in refugee-receiving countries.

In addition to working with the Government of Indonesia, UNHCR and IOM also collaborate with the private sector and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in Indonesia in handling and financing overseas refugees. However, the main funding for overseas refugees in Indonesia and the operationalization of UNHCR and IOM is obtained from donor countries, such as Australia, Canada, Denmark, the European Union, Japan, the United States, and others. Although conceptually, the definition of an asylum seeker is different from a refugee, based on observations in the field, there is no differentiation in treatment by the Indonesian government towards both. In Indonesia, refugees from abroad consist of

- i. Refugees funded by IOM and
- ii. Independent refugees, i.e., refugees who fund their own lives.

Establishing trust and a sense of belonging among the parties will reduce bad practices, including transnational crimes and criminal acts of violence among refugees. In addition, it opens up the potential for increasing the roles and relations of the parties, especially the government, with the support of international institutions in handling foreign refugees in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

Indonesia sebagai negara dengan letak geografisnya yang strategis menjadi tempat bertemu banyaknya pergerakan manusia dari berbagai tempat, termasuk pengungsi yang datang ke Indonesia. Kebijakan penanganan para pengungsi luar negeri menjadi penting ketika mereka transit di Indonesia. Diperlukan dukungan segala pihak mulai dari pemerintah, organisasi non pemerintah, kerja sama internasional, dan segenap lapisan masyarakat demi tercapainya pemberdayaan para pengungsi tersebut. Walaupun Indonesia bukanlah negara pihak dari Konvensi Internasional dan Protokolnya tentang pengungsi dari luar negeri, tetapi Indonesia merupakan negara pihak dari hampir semua konvensi HAM Internasional, termasuk konvensi hak eksoab yang merupakan elemen-elemen hak atas kehidupan minimum yang layak, yang seharusnya dijamin oleh negara.

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