

<http://jakartaglobe.id/business/freeport-indonesia-copper-mine-access-resume-clashes/>



**Timika.** Limited access to the giant Grasberg copper mine in eastern Indonesia is expected to resume on Monday (21/08), its operator said, after hundreds of former workers blockaded the site and clashed with police.

Trouble erupted at the mine, which is operated by the Indonesian unit of Freeport McMoRan, during a demonstration over employment terms on Saturday afternoon.

Three former workers were injured after police fired tear gas and warning shots to disperse the blockade, according to a union official representing the ex-workers.

Freeport said at least four contractors were also injured.

Buildings, vehicles and motorbikes belonging to the company and its employees were also torched in the incident in the province of Papua, Freeport said, and access to the world's second-largest copper mine was restricted due to safety concerns.

Freeport Indonesia spokesman Riza Pratama praised local authorities on Sunday for "restoring security control" but also continued to advise workers to avoid travelling to the area.

"The main supply route also has been cleared, and bus and cargo convoys will resume on a limited basis Monday," Pratama said in an emailed statement.

Following export restrictions related to a permit dispute, Freeport Indonesia, which employs more than 32,000 staff and contractors, laid off about 3,000 workers earlier this year. This prompted a strike and high levels of absenteeism.

Freeport has denied that there is a "formal strike," and deemed that approximately 3,000 full-time and 1,000 contract employees who were absent had "voluntarily resigned," but could reapply for positions as contractors.

Arizona-based Freeport, the world's biggest publicly-traded copper miner, has repeatedly said it has acted on labor issues in accordance with Indonesian law and its labor contract.

Tensions around Grasberg could hamper Indonesia's efforts to calm Papua, where a low-level insurgency has simmered for decades. The mine is a major source of revenue for the local economy, but its social and environmental effects also remain sources of friction.

"If indeed we won't be employed again, they must be clear about our rights [and] what we will

receive," one former worker told Reuters on condition of anonymity.

Tri Puspital, a union official representing the estimated 5,000 former workers involved in the near four-month dispute told Reuters his team had not yet made plans to demonstrate again. "We're still waiting."

IndustriALL Global Union, a federation of labor unions, has criticized Freeport's handling of the matter, saying it treated "fired" workers "inhumanely and with contempt," and urged the company to reinstate staff and contractors.

*Additional reporting by Agustinus Beo Da Costa and Wilda Asmarinin in Jakarta*

*Reuters*