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Climate litigation against Holcim

The four plaintiffs are granted legal aid

After four inhabitants of the sinking Indonesian island of Pari filed a lawsuit against the Swiss cement company Holcim in January 2023, there is first news from the court. In October, the Zug Cantonal Court approved the request of Asmania, Arif, Bobby and Edi for legal aid. For the four plaintiffs, this is an important interim step in the continuation of the proceedings against the Zug-based Holcim AG. The case represents the first time a Swiss court addresses the question of whether a corporation can be held liable under civil law for its contribution to climate change.

In its decision on the legal aid, the court considered the financial situation of the four plaintiffs and the prospects for the lawsuit. It concluded that the plaintiffs are legally "lacking of means" and that their case does not seem devoid of any chances of success. Therefore, they are entitled to legal aid. This decision confirms the human rights entitlement to access to an independent court in Switzerland for people from the Global South.

Holcim had opposed the granting of legal aid but was defeated in its argumentation. The court expressly did not follow Holcim's view that the legal claims were devoid of any chances of success. The court held, amongst others, that it is irrelevant that there are other companies besides Holcim which the plaintiffs could sue on the same grounds. The plaintiffs are free to decide whom they want to sue, even if other parties - jointly and severally liable - could be considered.

Meanwhile, the civil action of the four Indonesians against the Swiss cement manufacturer continues. They are demanding compensation for climate damages they have suffered, a financial contribution to flood-protection measures, as well as the rapid reduction of Holcim's CO₂ emissions. Swiss Church Aid HEKS/EPER, the European Centre for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR), and the Indonesian environmental organization WALHI are supporting the demands of the plaintiffs with the campaign "Call for Climate Justice."

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More information and materials can be found at

- callforclimatejustice.org