

Two courageous scientists, forest fire expert Bambang Hero Saharjo and pharmacist Olivier Bernard, awarded the 2019 John Maddox Prize for Standing up for Science

Bambang Hero Saharjo, who is the Indonesian lead expert witness on environmentally catastrophic peatland fires has been awarded the 2019 John Maddox Prize for his courage and integrity in standing up for sound science in the face of harassment, intimidation, and law suits. The judges awarded a further prize, for exceptional communication of evidence by someone early in their career, to Olivier Bernard, a Canadian pharmacist who challenged high dose vitamin C injections for cancer patients.

**Prof. Dr. Ir. H. Bambang Hero Saharjo**, Bogor Agricultural University, is the foremost expert on illegal and destructive forest and land fires in Indonesia, and the winner of the 2019 Maddox Prize. Peatland forest fires, which are often started by companies who want to clear land cheaply and quickly, including palm oil companies, cause enormous environmental damage; up to 5 September, global fires this year have released more carbon dioxide [than annual emissions from the EU and Japan combined](#). They are also incredibly dangerous, recent Indonesian fires are said by Unicef to be putting [10 million children at risk](#). Bambang's expertise allows him to trace the route and source of fires and he has testified in 500 court cases investigating fires. He has also helped local groups to understand the evidence about health and environmental damage. In 2015 Bambang's testimony was instrumental in palm oil company JJP's guilty verdict; in 2018 they filed a \$33.5 million lawsuit (SLAPP) against him on a technicality. He continues to testify and stand up for the Indonesian people's constitutional right to a healthy environment, one of the very few scientists in his field who are prepared to do so.

**Olivier Bernard**, a pharmacist from Quebec, has been awarded the John Maddox Prize for an early career researcher for standing up to alternative health proponents who lobbied for the government to "approve and reimburse" high dose vitamin C injections for cancer patients, which have no basis in evidence. Olivier spoke out repeatedly, describing the scientific evidence and speaking directly to politicians and affected groups. He endured a campaign of harassment, including complaints to his employer and professional body, revealing the address of the pharmacy where he works, a smear campaign, calls for a boycott of his wife's books, as well as death threats to him and his family. He stood up to this barrage of harassment, and his strength in speaking out has resulted in the creation of a government taskforce to protect scientists who speak on sensitive topics, and an inter-professional advisory committee to support healthcare professionals who speak publicly.

The John Maddox Prize, now in its eighth year, is a joint initiative of the charity Sense about Science, which promotes the public interest in sound science and evidence, and the leading international scientific journal *Nature*, and is awarded to one or two people a year. This year there were 206 nominations from 38 countries.

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## WINNERS' COMMENTS

**Bambang Hero Saharjo:** “I still do not believe that I am receiving the prestigious John Maddox Prize. Only last year I was criminalised for presenting evidence and being forced to pay nearly rp.510 billion by the palm oil companies, who had been found guilty of preparing to plant palms by burning 1000 hectares of peatland. Finally the lawsuit was rejected and I am free. Using fire for land preparation is so destructive to the environment and it is destroying the health of local people. This is what the evidence shows. The prize will give me more power to say it and to fight the misrepresentation by companies who continue use of fire.”

**Olivier Bernard:** “I was extremely surprised and extremely grateful to be a recipient of the John Maddox Prize! Some of my professional role models have won it in the past, so it’s an immense honour. Throughout the controversy surrounding vitamin C injections in Quebec, I have learned that scientific decisions made by political entities can be easily swayed by interest groups. I’ve also learned that fighting for science can be stressful and scary, and may even come at a personal price. But defenders of science cannot afford to stay in the background. I vow to use this award as an opportunity to engage more people and scientists in defending science publicly, and to show them that even if it can be difficult to do so, the positive outcomes far outweigh the negatives ones.”

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## JUDGES' COMMENTS

**Tracey Brown OBE, director, Sense about Science and judge:** “Our winners exemplify the spirit of the Maddox prize. In Bambang and Olivier we see people standing up for the rights of their fellow citizens and championing the value of scientific reasoning for us all. They saw the easier path of silence or complicity and rejected it to take responsibility for communicating evidence. Our winners are an example of what can be achieved by one person, standing up against misinformation and corruption. We have seen a rapid increase in the global nominations for the Maddox prize. That tells you something about the need to recognize people who take such responsibility.”

**Magdalena Skipper, editor-in-chief, *Nature*, and judge:** “We received many excellent nominations this year from such an inspiring group of candidates, all of whom are making great strides in their area. This year’s winners were chosen for their exceptional efforts in raising awareness of issues they are passionate about and for which they have faced criticism and adversity in striving for evidence-based policy and practices. The John Maddox Prize recognises and rewards those who stand up for scientific rigour and we are delighted to be awarding it this year to two notable and dedicated campaigners.”

**Lord (Martin) Rees of Ludlow OM FRS, University of Cambridge and judge:** “Rain forests are under threat, but their preservation matters to all of us who care about climate and

biodiversity. So it's right that we should acclaim a man who seized the chance to really make a difference – by persistent and effective campaigning against powerful interests.”

**Natasha Loder, The Economist and judge:** “This year we were particularly impressed with the wide range of nominations we received, which came from 38 countries and an array of disciplines. There are some powerful stories here, our winners show what one individual, armed with a scientific approach, can achieve.”

**Professor Sir Colin Blakemore FRS, professor of neuroscience & philosophy, School of Advanced Study, University of London and judge:** “For more senior scientists or journalists, the fight against misrepresentation and prejudice takes courage and conviction. But for a younger person, standing up for the truth can mean risking a career. Olivier Bernard’s crusade against the cruel deception of those who peddle vitamin C injections to vulnerable cancer sufferers is a remarkable example of personal commitment to the fight for honesty and integrity in the application of science.”

**Anin Luo, early career biophysicist, Yale University, and judge:** “I think that the early-career category is critical because we should speak up about evidence not just when tenured or secure in professional life—it should be encouraged from the very beginning. Encouraging those at an early stage of their career to stand up for science is critical in bringing about a culture change in communicating scientific evidence.”

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**Sir Patrick Vallance, UK Government Chief Scientific Adviser (GCSA) and Head of the Government Science and Engineering (GSE) profession:** “The two recipients of the Maddox prize have shown incredible bravery by standing up for the science, even in very testing circumstances. We can only have confidence in policy when it is informed by the very best science which it is why it is vital that scientists have the courage to speak out. These two are inspirational.”

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## **PARTNERS**

The prize is run and funded by Sense about Science, where Sir John Maddox was a founding trustee, and Nature, where he was editor for over 20 years, with support from Clare and Andrew Lyddon.

Source: <https://senseaboutscience.org/activities/maddox-prize-2019/>

Note by GFMC: Prof. Dr. Ir. Bambang Hero Saharjo had been nominated by Dr. Jacob Phelps, (Conservation Governance Lab, Lancaster Environment Centre, Lancaster University) and Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. mult. Johann Georg Goldammer (Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC), Max Planck Institute for Chemistry / University of Freiburg, Germany).



**The John Maddox Prize recognises the work of individuals who promote science and evidence, advancing the public discussion around difficult topics despite challenges or hostility.**

Sir John Maddox, whose name this prize commemorates, was a passionate and tireless champion and defender of science, engaging with difficult debates and inspiring others to do the same. As a writer and editor, he changed attitudes and perceptions, and strove for better understanding and appreciation of science throughout his long working life.

*“Denouncing fearlessly what he believed to be wrong, dishonest or shoddy, he changed attitudes and perceptions, and strove throughout his long working life for a better public understanding and appreciation of science.” – **Walter Gratzer***

The winner of the John Maddox Prize receives £3000, and an announcement of the winner is published in Nature. The award is presented at a reception hosted at Wellcome Collection in November.

Source: <http://senseaboutscience.org/activities/the-john-maddox-prize/>

15 November 2019

## Death threats and lawsuits: John Maddox Prize honours researchers who risk everything to stand up for science

*Nature* and Sense About Science recognize an ecologist who fights fires with witness testimony and a pharmacist who promotes truth in health-care information.

Promoting solid science doesn't always make a researcher popular. The John Maddox Prize for Standing Up for Science, awarded on 12 November in London, celebrates scientists who have risked unpopularity and worse in their pursuit of data-based truth.

Bambang Hero Saharjo, a specialist in fire forensics at Bogor Agricultural University in Indonesia, has spoken out from the witness box more than 500 times about fires potentially caused by agricultural companies. Pharmacist Olivier Bernard of Montreal, Canada, who received the John Maddox early career stage prize, challenges health-care myths through his website, popular-science books and the television documentary series *Les Aventures du Pharmachien*.

The Maddox Prize is a joint project of *Nature* and Sense about Science, a non-profit organization in London that advocates open, honest application of science to public discourse and policymaking. Each winner receives £3,000 (US\$3,850).



Bambang Hero Saharjo received the John Maddox Prize for helping to prosecute companies responsible for peatland fires in Indonesia. Credit: Bambang Hero Saharjo



## ***Fire-fighter***

Indonesia's peatlands host plantations that produce palm oil and paper, and in some cases workers allegedly slash and burn land to make way for new fields and profits. Carbon-rich peat can burn for weeks, creating choking smoke, damaging the environment and releasing greenhouse gases. In 2015, the flames raged for months, causing air pollution as far away as southern Thailand. This resulted in death or illness for thousands of people, and damaged the forests where orangutans, elephants and rhinoceroses live.



Working Scientist podcast: My courtroom battles to halt illegal peatland fires in Indonesia:  
<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-03491-7>

The government fines fire-starters, but must first prove its case. Bambang, who is director of the Regional Fire Management Resource Center–South East Asia, collects soil samples and other materials from burnt sites. He builds a case about how fires started and who might profit from them, and testifies for the government in court.

As a result, Bambang and his family have faced threats and harassment. In 2018, an oil-palm company sued him for 510 billion rupiah (US\$36 million) over testimony that incriminated the company in a forest fire. The suit was later thrown out.

“I will keep fighting for the people’s constitutional right to a healthy environment,” Bambang told environmental-news website Mongabay earlier this year. “We can’t afford to be afraid in the face of lawsuit threats.”

The Maddox Prize judges praised Bambang’s commitment to speaking out, and his ability to provide testimony that non-scientists can understand. “This is a powerful story of what one individual, armed with the scientific method, can do,” said judge Natasha Loder, health-care correspondent at *The Economist* newspaper in London.

## ***Truth injection***

Bernard creates colourful, fun comics to provide science-driven information and debunk health myths on his website, The Pharmafist. For example, the entry ‘[How to make a clinical trial say whatever you want](#)’ describes pitfalls in interpretation of results, and the *Game of*

*Thrones*-themed ‘[Influenza is coming](#)’ explains how seasonal vaccines are developed. Bernard has written four popular-science books, and his television programme, now entering its fourth series, received three nominations for its third series in the 2019 Academy of Canadian Cinema & Television Gemini Awards (Les Prix Gémeaux).

The Maddox Prize judges particularly praised Bernard’s efforts to challenge the idea that vitamin C injections can be used to treat cancer. In May 2018, a petition with more than 50,000 signatures was submitted to the Quebec government, requesting that it allow prescribed vitamin C infusions in the province. A second petition, submitted in March 2019 with nearly 120,000 signatures, requested that the government’s drug-insurance plan support the cost of the treatment.

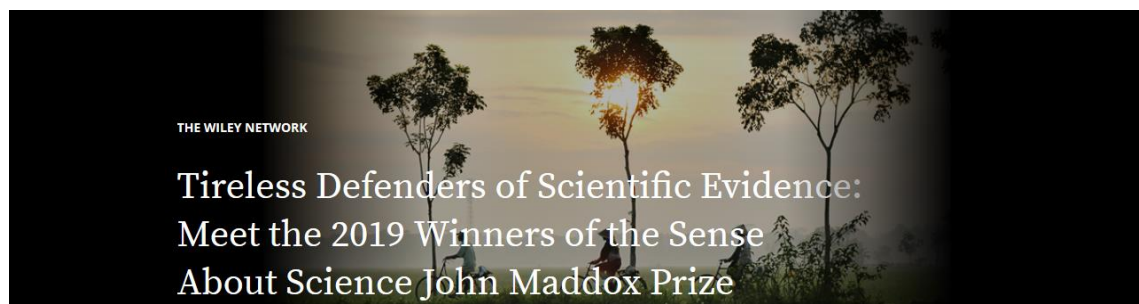
Such injections, as Bernard [explained on his website](#), do not cure cancer. The evidence for their efficacy against certain side effects of chemotherapy is inconclusive, and the vitamin might even interfere with the action of these drugs. As Bernard wrote on *The Pharmacist*, “Applying the scientific approach to our health choices is one of the most helpful things we can do as a society, especially for those in a vulnerable position.”

In response to his call for reason, Bernard endured threats and harassment. Proponents of the petition complained to the broadcaster of his television programme and his professional association, the Quebec Order of Pharmacists. They also publicized the address of the pharmacy where he works, and made threats against him and his family.

When Bernard shared his experiences publicly in March, the scientific community rallied behind him. The National Assembly of Quebec declined to consider the petitions, and created a task force to protect scientists who speak out about sensitive subjects. Several professional associations created a committee with the same goal.

doi: 10.1038/d41586-019-03547-8

Source: <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-03547-8>



We're pleased to share that Sense about Science's (SaS) 2019 John Maddox Prize for standing up for science has been awarded to Prof. Bambang Hero Saharjo and Olivier Bernard.

Bambang, of Bogor Agricultural University, is an expert on illegal and destructive forest and land fires in Indonesia. He won for his courage and integrity in standing up for science despite facing harassment, intimidation, and lawsuits. His expertise allowed him to trace the route and source of fires, and he has testified in 500 court cases investigating them. Importantly, he helped local populations to understand the evidence about health and environmental damage.

Olivier, an early career pharmacist from Quebec, stood up to alternative health proponents who lobbied for the government to "approve and reimburse" high-dose vitamin C injections for cancer patients, which have no basis in evidence. Olivier spoke out repeatedly, describing the scientific evidence and speaking to politicians and affected groups. He endured a campaign of harassment, doxing, and death threats to his family. He stood up to this barrage, and his strength in speaking out resulted in a government task force to protect scientists who speak on sensitive topics.

Doing good science isn't enough. Bambang never shirked from engaging local people in the discussion. Olivier stood up to intense campaigns against him and his family. Both fought for the public interest in science and evidence when it really mattered to people, despite challenges and hostility—that's why they have won the prize.

### *What Is the John Maddox Prize?*

[The John Maddox Prize](#) recognizes the contribution of individuals who promote sound science, advancing the public discussion on a matter of public interest despite challenges or hostility. The prize commemorates Sir John Maddox as a tireless communicator and defender of science. As a writer, editor at Nature for 22 years and founding trustee of SaS, he engaged with difficult debates and encouraged others to do the same.

The winners embody the best of what Sir John stood for. He wrote fearlessly on new scientific discovery and challenged the erroneous, the dishonest and the shoddy. He never shied away from controversial issues where there was a clear public interest in sound science. He changed attitudes and perceptions and strove for a better public understanding of science. There could be no better winners this year, reflecting Sir John's curiosity, courage, and commitment to the public interest.



## *Why Does it Matter?*

Standing up for science and evidence is crucial, but it's not enough to win the Maddox Prize. This is why the choice of winners this year is important to me.

I moved to Singapore in September 2015 and spent two years studying there. As we descended into Changi Airport on that first morning and the pilot deployed the landing gear, I wondered if something was wrong, because it looked like we were still in the clouds. And we were. Fifty feet off the ground, I could not see Singapore, because we were enveloped in thick grey clouds of haze. Outside the airport, I realized that the air even at ground level was almost oozing with this choking haze. I had dropped into the worst month of the infamous Southeast Asian forest fires...

For 26 out of 44 days between September 1st and October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2015, the Indonesian rainforest fires belched out [more carbon dioxide than the entire US economy](#). Under air quality readings closer to New Delhi than the New Forest, thousands of children, older people, and people with respiratory illnesses suffered hazardous risks to their health. Schools routinely closed as far away as Kuala Lumpur. Entire cities were told to sit in their houses as noxious clouds descended to street level and reduced visibility to a few feet. A recent UNICEF study concluded that [ten million children could be at risk](#) from the continuing effects of these fires. The full consequences of exposure to carcinogenic particles may not be realized for decades. This was caused by peatland burning in Borneo and Sumatra to clear land, much of it for palm oil plantations. It was difficult to see a way out of it when incentives for people not to speak out were rife.

This was the context in which Bambang went about his work. It's easy to take the path of least resistance. Bambang not only stood up for the science on the effects of peatland burning, but did so when many others feared to speak out due to the interplay of special interests in the region. In 2015, Bambang's testimony was instrumental in the palm oil company JPP's guilty verdict; in 2018, they filed a \$33.5 million lawsuit against him. He continues to testify and stand up for the Indonesian people's constitutional right to a healthy environment, one of the few scientists prepared to do so.

On being told of his win, Bambang said: "I was criminalized for presenting evidence and forced to pay nearly rp.510 billion by the palm oil companies, who had been found guilty of preparing to plant palms by burning 1,000 hectares of peatland. The lawsuit was rejected and I am free. Using fire for land preparation is so destructive to the environment, and it is destroying the health of local people. This is what the evidence shows. The prize will give me more power to say it and to fight misrepresentation by companies who continue the use of fire."

## *Recognizing People at an Early Career Stage*

Through the [Voice of Young Science](#) network, which I run, we empower early career researchers and professionals with the confidence and skills to take responsibility for public discussions about science and evidence in public life. It's vital for people at an early career stage to do so, because they have the power to take this confidence forwards in their careers. The award to Olivier shows how strong their voices can be.

Olivier himself commented: "I was surprised and grateful to be a recipient of the John Maddox Prize! Some of my professional role models have won it in the past, so it's an

immense honor. Fighting for science can be stressful and scary and may even come at a personal price. But defenders of science cannot afford to stay in the background. I vow to use this award as an opportunity to engage more people and scientists in defending science publicly, and to show them that even if it can be difficult to do so, the positive outcomes far outweigh the negatives ones.”

Our director, Tracey Brown OBE, summed up this year’s awards: “Our winners exemplify the spirit of the Maddox prize. In Bambang and Olivier, we see people standing up for the rights of their fellow citizens and championing the value of scientific reasoning for us all. They saw the easier path of silence or complicity and rejected it to take responsibility for communicating evidence. They are an example of what can be achieved by one person, standing up against misinformation and corruption.”

The Maddox Prize, now in its eighth year, champions the powerful contribution of those who might otherwise have no champion. I hope that the award to Bambang and Olivier will continue to inspire others striving to defend the public interest in sound science and evidence against impossible odds.

Source: <https://www.wiley.com/network/archive/tireless-defenders-of-scientific-evidence-meet-the-2019-winners-of-the-sense-about-science-john-maddox-prize>

# Indonesian fire expert awarded for exposing destruction by plantation firms

by Hans Nicholas Jong on 13 November 2019

- *An Indonesian fire expert who has testified in 500 cases against companies accused of allowing fires on their concessions has been awarded the John Maddox Prize for Standing up for Science.*
- *Bambang Hero Saharjo has weathered a series of threats as well as a retaliatory lawsuit over the years by companies he has testified against.*
- *The award committee lauded Bambang for continuing “to testify and stand up for the Indonesian people’s constitutional right to a healthy environment, one of the very few scientists in his field who are prepared to do so.”*
- *A further prize for an early-career recipient was awarded to Canadian pharmacist Olivier Bernard, who has challenged alternative-health proponents pushing for evidence-free high-dose vitamin C injections for cancer patients.*

JAKARTA — Indonesian forensics expert Bambang Hero Saharjo has been awarded a top environmental prize for his work in delivering justice against oil palm plantations accused of allowing fires on their concessions.

[Bambang](#) was one of 206 nominees from 38 countries for the [John Maddox Prize for Standing up for Science](#), now in its eighth year. The announcement of the award, a joint initiative by the charity Sense about Science and the scientific journal *Nature*, was made at a ceremony in London on Nov. 12.

The judges called Bambang, from the Bogor Institute of Agriculture (IPB), “the foremost expert on illegal and destructive forest and land fires in Indonesia.”

“Bambang’s expertise allows him to trace the route and source of fires and he has testified in 500 court cases investigating fires,” Sense about Science said in a [statement](#). “He continues to testify and stand up for the Indonesian people’s constitutional right to a healthy environment, one of the very few scientists in his field who are prepared to do so.”

It also cited the frequent attempts by companies Bambang has testified against to silence him, primarily through litigation known as SLAPP, or strategic lawsuit against public participation, none of which have held up in court.



Bambang Hero Saharjo, an Indonesian fire expert, speaks during a ceremony in London where he accepted the 2019 John Maddox Prize. Image courtesy of Bambang Hero Saharjo.

Bambang said the “prize will give me more power” to push back against these companies and expose their actions.

“I almost couldn’t believe that I’m receiving this award in London because it feels like a dream to me,” Bambang told Mongabay. “Praise be to God, the panel of judges saw my consistency in using scientific evidence for nearly 20 years, which shows the huge role that science plays in uncovering [forest fires].”

He said receiving the award was even more surprising to him because only last year he was sued by an oil palm company, PT Jatim Jaya Perkasa (JJP), for 510 billion rupiah (\$36.3 million) after he testified against its practices in court. Bambang’s testimony led to the oil palm firm being ordered by a court to pay 491 billion rupiah (\$34.8 million) in fines and restoration fees for fires that occurred on its concession.

The company subsequently [filed a lawsuit against Bambang](#), but not over the substance of his testimony. Rather, it was a quibble over a technicality: the company said Bambang’s evidence was inadmissible because it used the letterheads of both his university and the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (which had commissioned Bambang to carry out a forensic investigation of the fire). The lawsuit was later dismissed.

At the time, Bambang, who has weathered a flurry of similar lawsuits throughout his career, said he “won’t back off, not even one step, because there are already many cases waiting for me.”

It was this determination to get to the bottom of each case in the face of constant threats that won over the judges of the John Maddox Prize.

“Bambang Hero Saharjo stood out to the judges for his decision to dedicate his life to the difficult task of communicating sound science and evidence in many forums, ensuring that communities have access to and understand this evidence and they can use it to safeguard their health and their environment,” said Tracey Brown, the director of Sense about Science and one of the judges.

Fellow judge Martin Rees, a British cosmologist and astrophysicist from the University of Cambridge, called Bambang's work pivotal to protecting Indonesia's rainforests.

"Rain forests are under threat, but their preservation matters to all of us who care about climate and biodiversity," he said. "So it's right that we should acclaim a man who seized the chance to really make a difference — by persistent and effective campaigning against powerful interests."

The judges awarded a further prize, for exceptional communication of evidence by someone early in their career, to Olivier Bernard, a Canadian pharmacist who stood up against alternative-health proponents pushing for high-dose vitamin C injections for cancer patients — a treatment with no basis in evidence.

"Olivier spoke out repeatedly, describing the scientific evidence and speaking directly to politicians and affected groups," Sense about Science said in its statement. "He endured a campaign of harassment, including complaints to his employer and professional body, revealing the address of the pharmacy where he works, a smear campaign, calls for a boycott of his wife's books, as well as death threats to him and his family."



Bambang Hero Saharjo, second from right, and Oliver Bernard, second from left, pose together after accepting the 2019 John Maddox Prize in London. Image courtesy of Bambang Hero Saharjo.

Brown said both Bambang and Oliver exemplified the spirit of the Maddox Prize as they stood up for the rights of fellow citizens.

"They saw the easier path of silence or complicity and rejected it to take responsibility for communicating evidence," she said. "Our winners are an example of what can be achieved by one person, standing up against misinformation and corruption."

*Banner image: Bambang Hero Saharjo, a forestry expert from the Bogor Institute of Agriculture (IPB), speaks during a press conference in Jakarta, Indonesia. Image by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry.*

Source: <https://news.mongabay.com/2019/11/indonesia-forest-fire-bambang-hero-saharjo-john-maddox-prize/>



## Indonesian forestry expert wins John Maddox Prize for testifying against palm oil firms

Jakarta, 13 November 2019



Bogor Agricultural University (IPB) forestry expert Bambang Hero Saharjo is one of the two winners of the 2019 Maddox Prize. (Change.org/Boenk Aldoe)

Bogor Agricultural University (IPB) forestry expert Bambang Hero Saharjo has received the 2019 Maddox Prize for voicing his scientific views on catastrophic peatland fires in Indonesia in the face of harassment, intimidation and a lawsuit.

The John Maddox Prize recognizes individuals who promote sound science and evidence on a matter of public interest in the face of hostility for doing so. The award, now in its eight year, is jointly organized by charity Sense about Science and scientific journal *Nature*.

“Our winners are an example of what can be achieved by one person, standing up against misinformation and corruption,” said Sense about Science director Tracey Brown, who also served as one of the Maddox Prize judges.

Bambang received the prize on Tuesday in London alongside Canadian pharmacist Olivier Bernard, who raised concern about high-dose vitamin C injections for cancer patients that have no basis in evidence.

The jury picked the two winners from a list of 206 nominations from 38 countries.

“I still cannot believe that I received the prestigious John Maddox Prize,” Bambang said in a press statement received by *The Jakarta Post* on Wednesday.

“Only last year I was criminalized for presenting evidence and [threatened with a multibillion dollar lawsuit] by palm oil companies that had been found guilty of preparing to plant palms

by burning down 1,000 hectares of peatland. Eventually, the lawsuit was rejected and I am free.”

Bambang is credited with tracing the routes and sources of forest fires and testifying in 500 court cases as well as helping to understand the health and environmental damage caused by the fires.

He was the expert witness in the case against PT Jatim Jaya Perkasa (JJP) in 2015, which had been found guilty and ordered to pay Rp 491 billion in restitution. In 2018, the company filed a Rp 510 billion (US\$33.5 million) lawsuit against him on a technicality.

In Indonesia, many forest fires are caused by illegal land clearing practices often initiated by palm oil companies. This has caused massive environmental damage and smog crises across Indonesia and neighboring countries like Malaysia and Singapore.

More than 14 megatons of carbon dioxide were discharged from forest fires in Kalimantan on Sept. 5 alone, according to satellite data from the Copernicus Atmosphere Monitoring Service.

The fires also put the health of 10 million children at risk, according to UNICEF.

“Using fire for land clearing is so destructive to the environment and the health of local people. This is what the evidence shows. The prize will give me more power to say it and to fight the misrepresentation by companies that continue to use fire,” Bambang added.

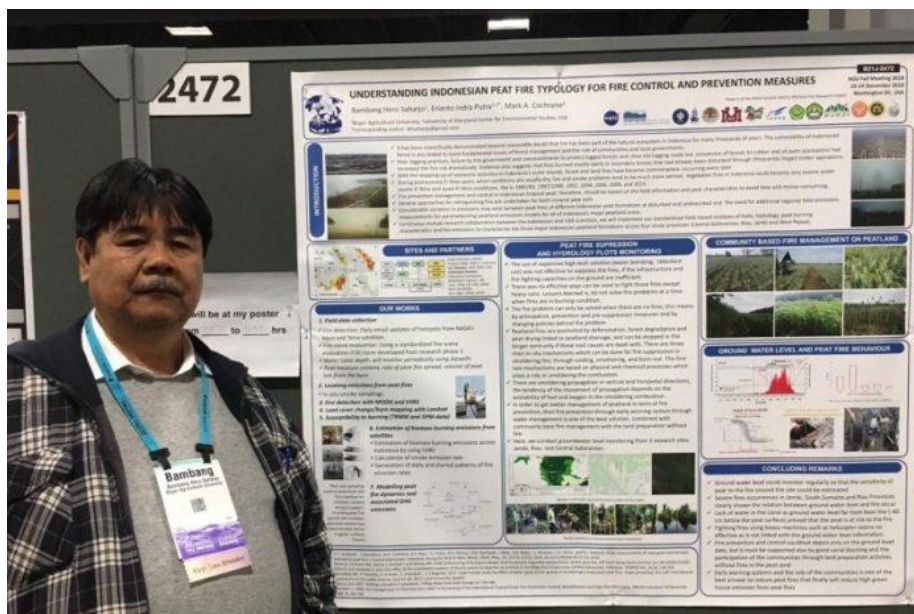
“Rain forests are under threat, but their preservation matters to all of us who care about the climate and biodiversity,” said Martin John Rees of the University of Cambridge, who served as a Maddox Prize judge.

“So it's right that we should acclaim a man who seized the chance to really make a difference – by persistent and effective campaigning against powerful interests.” (ami)

Source: <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2019/11/13/indonesian-forestry-expert-wins-john-maddox-prize-for-testifying-against-palm-oil-firms.html>

## Indonesian Scientists Win the John Maddox Prize

By LongLiveIndonesia  
14 November 2019



Award winner John Maddox Price 2019 Prof. Bambang Hero Saharjo.  
Source: ANTARA/HO/Dok (Istimewa)

John Maddox Prize 2019 has been rewarded to a Scientist and Professor at the Faculty of Forestry, Bogor Agricultural University (IPB), Prof. Bambang Hero Saharjo. The international award was given at the Wellcome Collection, Euston, London and was the daughter of John Maddox, Robyn Maddox. The award announcement was attended by no less than 100 prominent British scientists and given an introduction from the editor of the leading scientific magazine Nature.

The nomination of Prof. Bambang was carried out by a professor at Lancaster University, England who saw that Prof. Bambang's research and struggle needed to get high appreciation and recognition from other scientists and internationally. Prof. Bambang set aside 206 selected candidates from 38 countries.

The award was won by Prof. Bambang was conveyed by the Education and Culture Attache of the Indonesian Embassy in London, E. Aminudin Aziz in a written statement received by Kompas.com. According to Aminudin, the jury consisted of figures from British scientists gathered by the non-profit organization, Sense about Science.

The jury named Prof. Bambang as the winner because of his persistence to use his research data as evidence to counter wrong views related to forest fires in Indonesia. "Prof. Bambang has used many scientific facts in the courtroom to show the truth," Aminudin said.

The award of the John Maddox Prize has been given over the past eight years to scientists who persist in defending their opinions based on scientific facts and obtained based on accountable research.

Prof. Bambang Hero Saharjo is a fire forensic specialist at Bogor Agricultural University (IPB) and Professor of Forest Protection at IPB. Bambang was born in Jambi on November 10, 1964. Bambang completed his undergraduate education at the Faculty of Forestry of IPB in 1987 and then took his Masters (S2) in the Division of Tropical Agriculture (Kyoto Division of Tropical Agriculture) in 1996. After that, he continued his doctorate in the Laboratory of Tropical Forest Resources and Environment, Kyoto University Division of Forest and Biomaterial Science in 1999.

Prof. Bambang was recorded to receive a number of awards such as the 10 years Satya Karya Stayalencana Honorary Award, Canadian Forest Service (CFS) Merit Award from Canadian Forest Service-Natural Resource Canada in 2004. In 2006, he was selected as an outstanding lecturer III of IPB and Lecturer of Interpretation I of the Faculty of Forestry IPB.

Reference: [kompas.com](http://kompas.com)

Source : <https://longliveindonesia.com/john-maddox-prize/>

Jumat 15 November 2019, 07:20 WIB

## Prof Bambang Hero Saharjo Beri Inspirasi pada Dunia

Zubaedah Hanum | Humaniora



MI/BARY

Prof Bambang Hero Saharjo

Anugerah John Maddox Prize diberikan kepada para ilmuwan yang gigih mempertahankan pendapatnya berdasarkan fakta ilmiah yang diperolehnya. Dalam ajang bergengsi itu, Bambang berhasil menyisihkan 206 calon terpilih dari 38 negara.

SEPERTI mimpi, itulah perasaan ilmuwan spesialis forensik kebakaran hutan dan lahan (karhutla) Profesor Bambang Hero Saharjo, 55, ketika didapuk sebagai peraih penghargaan anugerah sains bergengsi John Maddox Prize 2019 di London, Inggris, Selasa (12/11).

"Saya hampir tidak percaya menerima award tersebut di London karena seperti mimpi dan tidak pernah berpikir untuk menerima award tersebut," ujar Bambang kepada Media Indonesia dalam pesan singkatnya, Rabu (13/11) sore.

Guru Besar Fakultas Kehutanan Institut Pertanian Bogor (IPB) itu dinilai aktif mengungkap kebenaran berbasis fakta ilmiahnya di ruang pengadilan dalam menghadapi berbagai intimidasi dan tuntutan hukum terkait karhutla.

"Hampir 20 tahun saya menggunakan bukti ilmiah dan mencoba menunjukkan peran besar sains untuk mengungkap itu (kasus-kasus karhutla). Apa yang saya lakukan adalah memulihkan hak publik agar mereka mendapatkan hak konstitusinya atas lingkungan yang lebih baik," serunya.



Di mata publik, Bambang dikenal sebagai salah satu pejuang lingkungan tangguh di negeri ini. Tahun lalu, Bambang menggegerkan dunia sains Indonesia saat ia digugat karena keterangannya sebagai saksi ahli.

Bambang Hero menjadi saksi ahli Kementerian Lingkungan Hidup dan Kehutanan (KLHK) untuk menghitung kerugian negara atas kebakaran hutan yang disebabkan PT Jatim Jaya Perkasa (JJP) pada 2013 silam.

Pengadilan memenangkan KLHK dan menyatakan PT JJP bersalah sehingga dihukum denda Rp1 miliar. Namun, yang terjadi malah perusahaan berbalik menuntut Bambang sebesar Rp510 miliar pada 2018.

Pantang mundur, Bambang menghadapi kasus kriminalisasi saksi ahli itu dengan dukungan penuh KLHK dan simpati publik atas kasusnya. Tidak butuh lama, PT JJP pun mencabut gugatan terhadap Bambang.

"Biasanya setelah membakar nanti diklaim itu perbuatan masyarakat. Tetapi dengan kecanggihan teknologi saat ini, baik citra satelit, Landsat (Land Satellite), atau informasi teknik yang lain, kita bisa memastikan informasi itu. Saya tahu sejak kapan terjadi kebakaran di sebuah tempat, pada tanggal berapa, pukul berapa, semuanya bisa terdeteksi, pergerakannya ke mana, termasuk apakah kebakaran tersebut berdiri sendiri atau bagian dari sebuah rekayasa," beber Bambang dalam wawancara sebelumnya.

### **Kado manis**

Peraih gelar doktor di Laboratorium Tropical Forest Resources and Environment, Division of Forest and Biomaterial Science Kyoto University (1999) itu pun, bersyukur keyakinan dan konsistensinya sebagai ilmuwan sekaligus pejuang lingkungan ini berbuah manis, dengan makin terbukanya mata publik di Tanah Air maupun dunia.

John Maddox Prize 2019, kata Bambang, merupakan bukti apresiasi masyarakat dunia kepada dirinya untuk terus memberikan kontribusinya dengan menyandingkan hukum dengan sains dan teknologi. Meski tidak jarang, ia mendapat ancaman dari para pembalak hutan yang terusik.

Dengan adanya hadiah bergengsi itu, Bambang mengaku makin termotivasi untuk terus memperjuangkan hak lingkungan yang lebih baik pada masyarakat. "Award ini merupakan dorongan yang luar biasa bagi saya untuk terus maju sekaligus bukti nyata bahwa selama kita tetap konsisten menggunakan sains secara benar, support itu akan datang dari mana pun. Dan saat ini saya terima dari Inggris," pungkasnya.

Lahir di Jambi pada 10 November 1964, John Maddox Award 2019 itu pun menjadi kado manis di ulang tahunnya yang ke-55 tahun ini. Ini bukan penghargaan internasional pertama yang diperoleh Bambang. Ia juga pernah menerima Canadian Forest Service (CFS) Merit Award dari Canadian Forest Service-Natural Resource Canada 2004.

Pencalonan Bambang dalam John Maddox Prize 2019 dilakukan Jacob Phelps, pengajar perubahan lingkungan tropis dan kebijakan di Lancaster University, Inggris. Phelps melihat riset dan perjuangan yang telah dilakukan Bambang perlu mendapat apresiasi tinggi dan pengakuan oleh ilmuwan lainnya maupun dunia internasional.

"Karyanya berfungsi tidak hanya untuk membawa keadilan dalam kasus-kasus individual, tetapi telah mengilhami sebuah visi tentang apa yang mungkin terjadi di Indonesia," kata Jacob menjelaskan alasannya memilih Bambang, seperti dilansir dari laman Nature, kemarin.

## Bintang Jasa

Menteri Kehutanan dan Lingkungan Hidup (LHK) Siti Nurbaya mengungkapkan rasa bangganya kepada Profesor Bambang. Bahkan, Siti menyatakan dirinya tengah mengusulkan Bambang untuk mendapatkan bintang jasa dari negara yang akan diberikan langsung oleh Presiden Joko Widodo.

"Saya akan mengusulkan kepada Bapak Presiden melalui Dewan Tanda Jasa dan Kehormatan di Istana Negara," kata Siti kepada Media Indonesia, kemarin.

Siti menyatakan penghargaan berkelas internasional tersebut sangat pantas disematkan kepada Bambang. Ia bahkan menuturkan dirinya mengetahui secara persis upaya yang telah dilakukan Kementerian LHK, Polri, dan Bambang dalam kasus karhutla tersebut. "Saya tahu persis bagaimana kerja keras beliau untuk identifikasi lapangan dan tentu saja berbagai analisis," ujarnya. (Ata/Uca/H-3)

PROF BAMBANG HERO SAHARJO

# Memberi Inspirasi pada Dunia

Anugerah John Maddox Prize 2019 diberikan kepada Bambang Hero Saharjo karena gigih mempertahankan pendapatnya berdasarkan fakta ilmiah. Dalam ajang bergengsi itu, Bambang berhasil menyisihkan 206 ilmuwan terpilih dari 38 negara.

ZUBAEDAH HAMUM  
hamum@mediaindonesia.com

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Source : <https://mediaindonesia.com/read/detail/271707-prof-bambang-hero-saharjo-raih-john-maddox-award-2019-beri-inspir>

## Digugat di Indonesia, Profesor IPB Raih Penghargaan di London

CNN Indonesia | Kamis, 14/11/2019



Ilustrasi karhutla. (CNN Indonesia/Hafidz)

Jakarta, CNN Indonesia -- Profesor kehutanan **Institut Pertanian Bogor** (IPB) Bambang Hero Saharjo menerima penghargaan John Maddox Prize 2019 pada Selasa (12/11) di London, Inggris. Penghargaan tersebut diberikan atas dedikasinya dalam menangani isu kebakaran hutan dan lahan (**karhutla**) di Indonesia.

Dilansir dari laman *Nature*, Bambang dinominasikan oleh Jacob Phelps, pengajar perubahan lingkungan tropis dan kebijakan di Lancaster University.

"Karyanya berfungsi tidak hanya untuk membawa keadilan dalam kasus-kasus individual, tetapi telah mengilhami sebuah visi tentang apa yang mungkin terjadi di Indonesia," kata Jacob menjelaskan alasannya memilih Bambang.

Tak hanya itu, Bambang juga dianggap telah mengilhami bawa pengadilan merupakan pusat keadilan berbasis bukti yang nyata dalam kasus karhutla, dapat membuktikan bahwa akademisi adalah pelayan publik yang tulus, dan sains memiliki peran penting di masyarakat.

Nama Bambang sudah tak asing lagi dalam persoalan kebakaran hutan yang hampir terjadi setiap tahunnya selama musim kemarau di Indonesia. Dirinya kerap menerima ancaman dari pihak yang menentang tindakannya.

Selama kurang lebih 20 tahun, Bambang telah ikut membantu untuk menyelidiki sekitar 500 kasus pengadilan kebakaran hutan dan lahan. Bambang berhasil membuktikan banyak perusahaan yang biasanya secara sengaja membakar hutan untuk membuka lahan yang nantinya dijadikan perkebunan.

Bambang sempat digugat pada tahun 2015 oleh perusahaan yang ia selidiki. Dua tahun sebelumnya ia diminta Kementerian Lingkungan Hidup dan Kehutanan (KLHK) untuk menjadi saksi ahli yang bertugas menghitung kerugian negara atas kebakaran hutan dan lahan di Rokan Hilir, Riau, yang disebabkan oleh PT Jatim Jaya Perkasa (JPP).

Kesaksiannya tersebut kemudian membuat ahli kehutanan ini dituntut denda Rp500 miliar. Petisi untuk membela Bambang pun diteken lebih dari 160 ribu orang. Di penghujung 2018, Pengadilan Negeri (PN) Cibinong memvonis Bambang bebas dari gugatan perusahaan kelapa sawit tersebut.

Selain Bambang, tokoh lainnya yang juga berperan di bidang sains turut menerima penghargaan ini adalah Olivier Bernard. Bernard merupakan seorang apoteker dan penyiar yang kerap membantu masyarakat memahami mitos dan fakta tentang kesehatan.

Ia juga menolak suntikan vitamin C dengan dosis tinggi bagi pasien kanker. Olivier juga menghadapi sejumlah intimidasi dari berbagai pihak.

"Hadiah itu akan memberi saya lebih banyak kekuatan untuk mengatakannya dan untuk melawan penyajian yang keliru oleh perusahaan yang terus menggunakan api," ujar Bambang dalam sebuah keterangan resmi.

Source: <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/teknologi/20191113141025-199-447982/digugat-di-indonesia-profesor-ipb-raih-penghargaan-di-london>

## Science in the Court: forest fires expert ‘criminalised for presenting evidence’ welcomed at guest lecture

13 November 2019 11:31



Lancaster University will welcome a courageous scientist and recent winner of the 2019 John Maddox Prize for Standing up for Science this week.

Forest fire expert Bambang Hero Saharjo and pharmacist Olivier Bernard, were both awarded the 2019 John Maddox Prize for Standing up for Science this week (November 12th).

On November 14<sup>th</sup> at 1pm Professor Hero – who was nominated for the prize by Lancaster University’s Dr Jacob Phelps – will give a lecture at the University entitled ‘Science in the Court’.

Professor Hero, who is Indonesia’s lead expert witness on environmentally catastrophic peatland fires, was awarded the 2019 John Maddox Prize for his courage and integrity in standing up for sound science in the face of harassment, intimidation, and law suits.

Dr Phelps said: “Prof. Hero bucks the trend of what most people tend to expect from scientists. He uses his research to help deliver justice in individual cases, while also demonstrating what is possible—a future in which courts are true centres of evidence-based justice, even in the face of entrenched interests; where academics are genuine public servants, and in which science has a prominent role in the public discourse. He has been an inspiration for my work, challenging us to think about how our science fits with the judicial system. We are now actively designing research to help inform court cases—specifically tackling illegal wildlife trade in both Indonesia and in Nepal.”

Peatland forest fires, which are often started by companies who want to clear land cheaply and quickly, including palm oil companies, cause enormous environmental damage; as of 5 September 2019, global fires this year have released more carbon dioxide than annual emissions from the EU and Japan combined. They are also incredibly dangerous, recent Indonesian fires are said by Unicef to be putting 10 million children at risk.



In 2015 Bambang's testimony was instrumental in a palm oil company's guilty verdict; in 2018 the company filed a \$33.5 million lawsuit (SLAPP intimidation suit) against him on a technicality. He continues to testify and stand up for the Indonesian people's constitutional right to a healthy environment, one of the very few scientists in his field who are prepared to do so.

The John Maddox Prize, now in its eighth year, is a joint initiative of the charity Sense about Science, which promotes the public interest in sound science and evidence, and the leading international scientific journal Nature, and is awarded to one or two people a year. This year there were 206 nominations from 38 countries. This year Prof Hero was awarded the prize alongside Olivier Bernard, a pharmacist and early career researcher from Quebec for his work on Vitamin C and cancer.

**Bambang Hero Saharjo said:** "Only last year I was criminalised for presenting evidence and being forced to pay nearly rp.510 billion by the palm oil companies, who had been found guilty of preparing to plant palms by burning 1000 hectares of peatland. Finally, the lawsuit was rejected and I am free. Using fire for land preparation is so destructive to the environment and it is destroying the health of local people. This is what the evidence shows. The prize will give me more power to say it and to fight the misrepresentation by companies who continue use of fire."

**Tracey Brown OBE, director, Sense about Science and judge said:** "Our winners exemplify the spirit of the Maddox prize. In Bambang and Olivier we see people standing up for the rights of their fellow citizens and championing the value of scientific reasoning for us all. They saw the easier path of silence or complicity and rejected it to take responsibility for communicating evidence. Our winners are an example of what can be achieved by one person, standing up against misinformation and corruption. We have seen a rapid increase in the global nominations for the Maddox prize. That tells you something about the need to recognize people who take such responsibility."

**Sir Patrick Vallance, UK Government Chief Scientific Adviser (GCSA) and Head of the Government Science and Engineering (GSE) profession:** "The two recipients of the Maddox prize have shown incredible bravery by standing up for the science, even in very testing circumstances. We can only have confidence in policy when it is informed by the very best science which it is why it is vital that scientists have the courage to speak out. These two are inspirational."

**Magdalena Skipper, editor-in-chief, Nature, and judge said:** "We received many excellent nominations this year from such an inspiring group of candidates, all of whom are making great strides in their area. This year's winners were chosen for their exceptional efforts in raising awareness of issues they are passionate about and for which they have faced criticism and adversity in striving for evidence-based policy and practices. The John Maddox Prize recognises and rewards those who stand up for scientific rigour and we are delighted to be awarding it this year to two notable and dedicated campaigners."

**Lord (Martin) Rees of Ludlow OM FRS, University of Cambridge and judge said:** "Rain forests are under threat, but their preservation matters to all of us who care about climate and biodiversity. So it's right that we should acclaim a man who seized the chance to really make a difference – by persistent and effective campaigning against powerful interests."

**Natasha Loder, The Economist and judge said:** “This year we were particularly impressed with the wide range of nominations we received, which came from 38 countries and an array of disciplines. There are some powerful stories here, our winners show what one individual, armed with a scientific approach, can achieve.”

Source: <https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/sci-tech/about-us/news/science-in-the-court-forest-fires-expert-criminalised-for-presenting-evidence-welcomed-at-guest-lecture>