



## WEST PAPUA 'Land of peace'

# Suara Demokrasi

## Indonesia Human Rights Committee

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The Morning Star flag has been a potent symbol of West Papuan nationalism since 1 December 1961 when it was raised in a ceremony to install the West Guinea Council. This new body was elected under the Dutch as part of a gradual process of self-determination. But this has been subverted by the Indonesian colonisers. West Papuan have been struggling for self-determination ever since.

Website: [www.indonesiahumanrights.org.nz](http://www.indonesiahumanrights.org.nz)

## Longing for peace and justice

In 1962, the Dutch colonial government handed over the administration of West Papua to the United Nations who subsequently passed the responsibility to Indonesia, which had long claimed a right to the resource rich territory.

In 1969, Indonesia held a so called "Act of Free Choice", but selected only a little over a 1000 men to vote out of a population of nearly one million. The selected representatives were forced to vote for union with Indonesia. The 'Act of No Choice' violated the fundamental right to self-determination guaranteed by the United Nations.

Human rights groups estimate that at least 100,000 have died in the ensuing conflict. A guerrilla resistance has largely given way to peaceful resistance and a call for dialogue with the Jakarta Government.



Special Forces Unit, Kopassus

West Papua is only occasionally in the international spotlight and then usually because of a particularly grievous case of human rights abuse. An example is the 'YouTube' clip circulated in 2010 showing two Papuan farmers being subjected to brutal torture and threats. One has a burning stick held to his genitals.

The Papuan *Morning Star* flag is banned as is the national anthem 'Hai Tanahku Papua'. Filep Karma, who has been sentenced to 15 years for taking part in a peaceful flag raising

action remains in jail along with scores of other Papuan political prisoners.

The notoriously violent Special Forces Unit, Kopassus, operates with impunity in West Papua where residents are regularly taken into custody, beaten and tortured, and often have no idea why they are being abused.

## Pacific Islands Forum and West Papua

The Melanesian West Papuan people believe their destiny lies with other Pacific nations. Ethnically, culturally and geographically they belong to the region. Netherlands New Guinea, as West Papua used to be known was a member of the South Pacific Commission, a forerunner of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community. West Papuans attended the SPC meetings until the Dutch ceded their authority to the United Nations Temporary Executive Authority (UNTEA) in 1962.

West Papuans repeatedly lobby the Pacific Island Forum leaders to urge them to raise the grave human rights situation with Indonesia, a dialogue partner to the Forum.



Between 2000 and 2007, the Forum included at least a brief reference to West Papua in its communiqué every year except for 2004 and 2005.

In 2000, West Papuans were very hopeful of ongoing Pacific solidarity and declared that the Forum's interest was for them a "historical moment". The Forum leaders "expressed deep concern about past and recent violence and loss of life" and called on "the Indonesian Government, the sovereign authority, and secessionist groups to resolve their differences peacefully through dialogue and consultation".

The statement would have been even stronger, if not for the intervention of Australian Prime Minister John Howard who insisted on the inclusion of an

acknowledgement of Indonesian sovereignty over West Papua.

In subsequent years the statements included a hope that Indonesia would “fully implement” the 2001 special autonomy law. Effectively this weakened the appeal since “Special Autonomy” has never delivered a better life for Papuan people. In 2010 in mass demonstrations Papuan people symbolically ‘handed back’ the Special Autonomy Law to their regional parliament.

In 2007 the communiqué only noted that Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea intended ‘to convey the Forum discussions on Papua to the President of Indonesia.’

The Forum can be an effective regional voice. In the 1980s the Forum sent a delegation to Paris to make representations about French nuclear testing and the decolonisation of the French Pacific territories.

However, New Zealand and Australia place high priority on the strength of their relationship with Indonesia. Both nations have defence ties with Indonesia, and in Australia’s case that includes training ties to the Special Forces, Kopassus. It is widely believed that Australian and New Zealand pressure is one reason why the Forum speaks in sotto voice or not at all about West Papua.

See Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Get-West-Papua-on-the-Agenda-at-Pacific-Islands-Forum-in-Auckland/143693292379080#!/pages/Get-West-Papua-on-the-Agenda-at-Pacific-Islands-Forum-in-Auckland/143693292379080?sk=info>

## Melanesian spearhead group and Vanuatu

The Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) was set up in 2007 to represent Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and New Caledonia’s independence movement the Front de Liberation Nationale Kanak et Socialiste (FLNKS).

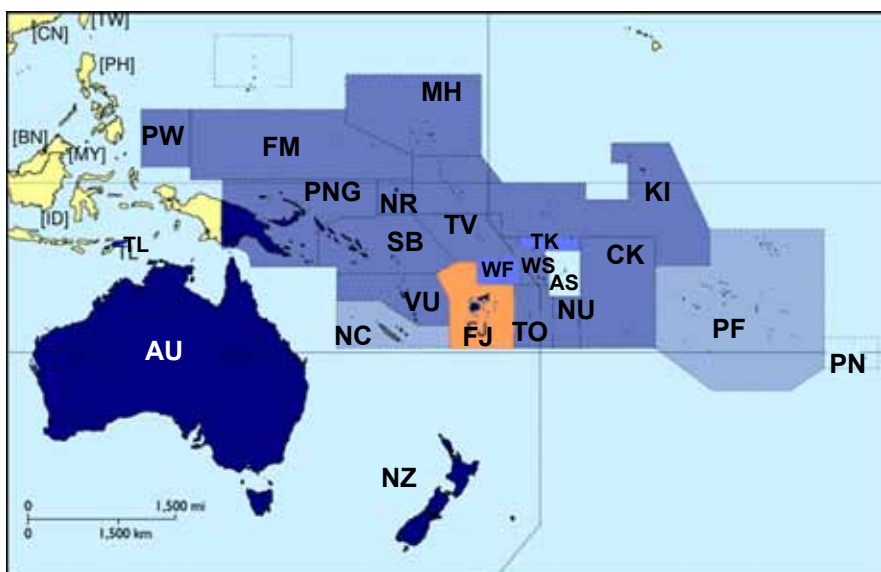
The founding document declares that the MSG will promote ‘Melanesian cultures, traditions and values’ and defend ‘independence as the inalienable right of indigenous peoples of Melanesia’.

However in 2011, the MSG invited Indonesia to become an observer, and turned aside the appeal for West Papuan leaders to be given observer status. Fiji is under military rule and the other Melanesian governments have experienced internal power struggles that have compromised democratic accountability.

The Vanuatu Government has been a strong and consistent supporter of self-determination for West Papua. The first Vanuatu Prime Minister, Fr Walter Lini, said: “So long as any Pacific Islands remain colonised, none of us is free”. Vanuatu hosts an office for the West Papuan representatives and has a strong citizens’ movement, the Vanuatu Free West Papua Association (VFWPA).

In 2010, Vanuatu’s Parliament unanimously resolved to raise the issue of West Papua’s political status at the UN. Vanuatu hopes the General Assembly will agree to request the International Court of Justice to provide an advisory opinion on the controversial process in which the former Netherlands New Guinea was ceded to Indonesia in the 1960s.

This “Wantok blong yumi” resolution has not yet been put into action.



Australia (AU) Kiribati (KI) Palau (PW) Solomon Islands (SB) Cook Islands (CK) Nauru (NR) Papua New Guinea (PNG) Tonga (TO) Micronesia (FM) New Zealand (NZ) Marshall Islands (MH) Tuvalu (TV) Niue (NU) Samoa (WS) Vanuatu (VU) Suspended members Fiji (FJ) (suspended since May 2, 2009) Associate members Observers New Caledonia (NC) French Polynesia (PF) Tokelau (TK) Timor-Leste (TL) Wallis and Futuna (WF)

## New Zealand’s policy

New Zealand’s West Papua policy from the 1960s to the present is based on preserving cordial ties with Indonesia, a policy which does not differ substantially from that of Australia, Britain and the United States.

The policy is bipartisan and did not change when a Labour-led Government ceded office to a National-led government at the end of 2008. This is the official mantra:

‘New Zealand will continue to support peaceful and sustainable development in Papua and the full implementation of the Special Autonomy Law (OTSUS) for the benefit of all those living there.’

In a recent letter to the Indonesia Human Rights Committee, Foreign Minister Murray McCully wrote that Papua and Papua Barat (Indonesia administrates West Papua as two provinces) are ‘inseparable provinces of Indonesia’.

In the NZ Parliament, only the Green Party is a consistent advocate for West Papuan rights, including the right to self-determination.

For the sake of restored defence ties, New Zealand has chosen to overlook the evidence of Indonesian military brutality and lack of accountability for past crimes. All defence ties were suspended in 1999 at the height of the post-referendum violence in Timor-Leste. But in 2007 they were quietly restored. About the same time New Zealand began a training programme for the West Papuan police.

Compared with the military training and equipment supplies provided to the Indonesian security forces by Australia and the United States, New Zealand's support is low-key. The military training is largely limited to officer exchanges.

However, systematic use of violence and torture practised by the mostly migrant police force there has been well documented. The Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation (LBH) states that the security forces routinely torture and beat suspects and convicts to extract confessions or obtain information. This level of structural violence cannot be addressed by the technical "fix" of learning new policing methods.

Maire Leadbeater, IHRC spokesperson, visited West Papua in November 2010, and found that many people were aware of the New Zealand programme, which has been publicised in the local media. For those in the NGO and activist community, training the police was generally seen as equivalent to supporting the coercive arm of the state. Surely New Zealand should choose instead to spend their aid dollars on scholarships for young Papuans to study English in New Zealand?



Fr Neles Tebay

## New Zealand is implicated in West Papua's environmental destruction

The Freeport McMoran mine in West Papua has the world's largest recoverable reserves of copper and the biggest single gold reserve. Each day some 230,000 tonnes of tailings are dumped into the Ajikwa River to be deposited in a vast dead zone in the lowlands.

The Norwegian pension fund has ended its investment in Freeport because of the severe and irreversible environmental damage caused by the mining operation but the New Zealand Superannuation Fund and Crown Financial Institutes (including the Earthquake Commission) invest in the company.

New Zealand also imports kwila (also known as merbau) from the rainforest in West Papua.

Kwila trees are under threat of extinction as a species if current rates of extraction continue, and the forest is the foodbasket and home of tribal people in West Papua. Much of the kwila entering the Auckland market as outdoor furniture and decking has been illegally logged and provided with false documentation.

While several retailers have phased out their supplies of kwila-made furniture, the government does not ban its import.

IHRC has a "Don't Buy Kwila" campaign and carries out demonstrations at stores that continue to stock kwila products.

See website: [www.indonesiahumanrights.org.nz](http://www.indonesiahumanrights.org.nz) for further information

## Dialogue proposal moves forward

An important peace conference took place in Jayapura in July, 2011: 500 participants from religious groups, adat [customary] groups, women, youth, academics, student organisations and resistance groups. The conference, which was addressed by the Governor of Papua and the Chief of Police, identified the problems which need to be resolved in order to achieve the objective of 'Papua, Land of Peace'.

The participants resolved to back a process of peaceful dialogue between the Papuan People and the Indonesian Government, which should be mediated by a neutral third party. Not everyone is happy with this outcome, as the proposed dialogue would not include a discussion about independence

But there is growing support for dialogue from regional and national political figures and key instigators Fr Neles Tebay and Muridan Widjojo (Indonesian Institute of Sciences) remain hopeful that the dialogue will take place.

## Managing Papuan Expectations After Handing Back Special Autonomy

[http://cijj.anu.edu.au/cijj/link\\_documents/IssuesPaper16.pdf](http://cijj.anu.edu.au/cijj/link_documents/IssuesPaper16.pdf)

This excellent paper includes reference to Br Budi's torture research. In his study of 430 cases, he found that most of the victims are Highlanders living in rural areas. Although the military justifies its operations in terms of counteracting the OPM or Free Papua movement, most victims have nothing to do with the independence movement, but instead are innocent farmers.



In West Papua the practise of torture usually takes place in a public space – such as a road, marketplace or other open area that is visible to anyone. Thus the terror is amplified. Br Hernawen concludes that torture in Papua creates a "society of spectacle". The main purpose of such a theatrical brutality is 'a policy of terror' directed against those without power.

Brother Budi Hernawen  
Centre for International Governance and Justice  
Australian National University  
16 May 2011

## West Papuans call for a new referendum

On 2 August 2011, about 10,000 Papuans demonstrated across the territory in coordinated rallies. A support demonstration was also held in Jakarta. The call was for the rejection of the 1969 Act of Free Choice and for a new self-determination referendum.

Protesters also called for the withdrawal of Indonesian troops.

The demonstrations went off peacefully despite an intimidating security force presence. The day before the rallies, four people were killed in an early morning ambush that some blamed on the Free West Papua movement (OPM). Others suggested that military provocation was behind the violence.

Marcus Tabuni, the deputy chairman of the National Committee for West Papua, (KNPB) said the people of Papua wanted the international community to know about their aspiration for self-determination through peaceful means.

"We want to show the world and Indonesia that the Papuan people want to determine their own fate through an internationally sponsored referendum," he said.

In Oxford, UK at the same time, the International Lawyers for West Papua held a conference "West Papua—The Road to Freedom," attended by Papuan independence leaders, international lawyers, parliamentarians and NGOs.

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## Hear West Papuan leaders discuss the road to peace and how the Pacific Island Forum leaders can help.

*The indigenous Melanesian people of West Papua have been forced to live under Indonesian military rule since the early 1960s, but yearn to be part of the Pacific family again.*

**Where:** MacLaurin Chapel, 18 Princes St, Auckland  
(corner of Princes Street and Waterloo Quadrant, close to the Link Bus route)

**Time:** 7.30 pm, Tuesday, 6 September 2011

### Speakers:

**Dr John Ondawame**

West Papua People's Representative Office in Vanuatu



**Rex Rumakiek**

Secretary-General, West Papua National Coalition for Liberation (WPCNL)



**Paula Makabory**

Institute of Papuan Advocacy and Human Rights (IPAHR), Australia, and ELSHAM West Papua. (One of the 1000 peace women nominated for the Nobel Prize in 2005)



The Pacific Islands Forum meets in Auckland 6-9 September at Sky City in Auckland. Forum leaders should not overlook West Papua which is experiencing an unimaginable human rights tragedy: 'slow genocide' What can we do to help?

**Contact:** Indonesia Human Rights Committee, Box 68-419 Newton, Auckland 1125  
or email: [maire@clear.net.nz](mailto:maire@clear.net.nz)