

Faith-Based Network on West Papua

Geneva Appeal on West Papua
'Papua, Land of Peace'

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Introduction

For over four decades communities of different faiths in West Papua have been longing for peace and justice.

Since 1998 there has been a wind of change in Indonesia, bringing about an expanded degree of democracy. More specifically for the region of West Papua, a law on Special Autonomy (UU 21/2001) was passed which contained within it the promise of realizing social, economic and cultural rights of the Papuan peoples, as well as widening the space for more democratic governance of the region.

Yet this change in policy has not brought about real improvements in the livelihoods, security and dignity of the majority of Papuan people. The ongoing deprivation and injustice experienced by many Papuans, together with the often contradictory policies of the Indonesian state and poor rule of law, is leading to a growing atmosphere of conflict. In contradiction with international human rights standards and the provisions of human rights treaties to which Indonesia is a party, human rights violations have continued to occur in West Papua for over four decades. The Indonesian authorities could make more significant progress in fulfilment of their obligation to investigate, prosecute, try and sentence the perpetrators of these crimes, and to compensate the victims.

In recent years, military operations have increased instead of declined and pose a threat to the Papuan peoples' existence and survival as a cultural and ethnic entity. The security approach to confront so-called separatism and critical voices does not produce security for the population. Negligence of educational and medical facilities by the state has meant that Papuans suffer some of the poorest standards of education, health and life expectancy in Indonesia. Today, three years after it was passed, instead of effective, full and comprehensive implementation of the Special Autonomy law, there is fear for further escalation of the conflict and the violence.

Over the past few years, communal conflict has occurred in various regions in Indonesia. Analysis of these conflicts has shown that even if there is no hostility among people in the same region, certain people with political or power interests can easily orchestrate open conflict along ethnic-religious lines. Often armed militias and gangs were involved in creating conflict. Should a similar scenario develop in West Papua, the result will be further militarization, reinforcing the security approach, and consequently worsening the situation of human rights and peoples' security. This concern motivated religious leaders in Papua to set out an agenda to promote good relations, communion and brotherhood among all people. They are convinced that only if their people are united in fraternal spirit and mutual respect will they easily work together for common good. So they started a movement that they called "Papua, Land of Peace".

Papua, Land of Peace

"Papua, Land of Peace" reflects the deepest desire of Papuans. Peace encompasses trust, mutual respect, also justice, the ending of the practice of impunity, and fair chances for development. It is a dream about an adequate space for political dialogue without fear of stigmatisation. This dream has become a common vision for people of all religions in West Papua, leading to a strong commitment to non-violent ways of conflict resolution in all realms of life. Joint prayers for peace and peace marches demonstrate this commitment on the occasions of February 5th (Papuan Day of Peace) and September 21st (International Day of Peace) by communities of different faiths, celebrating together. As proof of this commitment religious leaders also engage in various activities to promote peace, dialogue and justice in West Papua.

In response to the initiative of Papuan religious leaders, several faith-based organisations around the world have jointly organized a solidarity network that is committed to support this campaign for "Papua, Land of Peace". The network aims to draw the attention of their religious communities, their governments and the international community to the suffering of the peoples of West Papua. The network urges them proactively to assist the Indonesian government and the Papuan community to confront the challenges encountered by the Papuan peoples within the framework of peaceful change.

Together with religious leaders in West Papua, the Faith-Based Network on West Papua identifies three major fields of challenge:

1. Dialogue

The Law on Special Autonomy in West Papua, as adopted by the Indonesian Parliament, is a good start for change. But there are conflicting signals from the government in Jakarta and from military command about the status of the law and about its interpretation and implementation. In West Papua there were concerns about the decision to split Papua into two or more provinces without democratic consultation (an act that contradicts the spirit and letter of the Special Autonomy law), and about the role and mandate of the Papuan People's Council (Majelis Rakyat Papua – MRP). People who expressed these concerns were consequently labelled "separatists" by some authorities in West Papua. So there is an ongoing challenge to clarify the interpretation of the law to ensure coherent policy and to move ahead to ensure full implementation of this law in accordance with the aspirations of the Papuan peoples. There is a pressing need for an open and genuine dialogue between all parties involved, including the national administration, national political parties and the armed forces.

2. Militarization

The disproportionate military (Tentara Nasional Indonesia – TNI) presence in West Papua is a major challenge for the prospects for peaceful development, open dialogue and justice. Such a military presence often generates conflict. Based on its historical roots and TNI doctrine of "People's Army" (Tentara Rakyat) the role of the military is to defend the nation and the people against external threats; the presence of the military should not result in conflict within and with the people. The police are responsible for civic order, and should be equipped to maintain the rule of law professionally. The Indonesian government has accepted this principle as the basis of its efforts for security sector reform. Full realization of this principle and a shift of the military-civil paradigm is imperative to civil supremacy, rule of law and a culture of peace. Then the military presence can be brought back to a sensible and appropriate size. Therefore, the on-going reform efforts within the military to be more professional and better equipped deserve to be strengthened.

3. Peace

The campaign for "Papua, Land of Peace" is not merely a political effort for a specific group of people. It covers social-economic development, cultural rights, justice and peoples' security. To overcome suspicion and divisions on the basis of ethnicity, religion, political aspirations and interests, the notion of "Papua, Land of Peace" should be embedded in the hearts of people of all religious and ethnic communities concerned, and not only in West Papua. The challenge is to make the concept of "Papua, Land of Peace" become the fundamental attitude in the approach to the problems in West Papua, by the people, by the government, by the international community. It should also imbue the attitude of all religious communities and their leaders in West Papua, in Indonesia as a whole, and elsewhere.

The network appeals

To the Indonesian Government:

- Protect and respect the rights of indigenous peoples in West Papua.
- Apply a rights-based approach to development in implementing the Special Autonomy Law (UU 21/2001).
- Fully implement the economic, social and cultural paragraphs of the law.
- Create space for democratic dialogue, in accordance with the spirit of the law.
- Recognise the opposition of the Papuan people to the division of West Papua into separate provinces by ceasing further efforts to divide Papua, and undertake an open and democratic process to review the establishment of West Irian Jaya Province.
- The DPRD Papua and the MRP should decide on the formation of any new provinces and regencies in accordance with the Special Autonomy Law.

- Ratify without reservations all key international human rights treaties, including the two covenants on Civil and Political, and Economic, Social and Cultural rights.
- Withdraw its reservations to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Fully cooperate in the implementation of the Special Procedures by inviting and providing unrestricted access to places, individuals and communities in Papua and all other parts of Indonesia to the thematic mechanisms, particularly to those who have repeatedly requested invitations but have so far not received permission to visit. This includes the Special Rapporteur on Torture, the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Human Rights Defenders and the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its causes and consequences.

To the Secretary General of the UN and the High Commissioner for Human Rights:

- Grant the necessary support to the Indonesian government to promote peace and to solve conflict with recourse to the mechanisms provided by the Special Autonomy Law.
- Grant the necessary support to the Indonesian government to uphold the rule of law so as to combat human rights violations, impunity and rampant corruption.
- Urge the government of Indonesia to ratify all key international human rights treaties, especially the two covenants on Civil and Political, and Economic, Social and Cultural rights.

To the governments of countries with relationships with Indonesia, especially Asian countries:

- In the face of human rights abuses and the potential escalation of violent conflict against the West Papuan population, actively encourage the UN Secretary General to engage in the promotion of peace and human rights in Papua.
- Grant the necessary support to the Indonesian government to uphold the rule of law so as to combat human rights violations, impunity and rampant corruption.
- Consider ways in which the campaign of the West Papuan religious leaders for a Land of Peace can be actively and concretely supported through bilateral and multilateral mechanisms.
- Appeal to the government of Indonesia to commit seriously to the eradication of all forms of discrimination against the indigenous Papuan peoples.

- Monitor the investment of transnational corporations in West Papua, and encourage corporate policies which respect the rights of the West Papuan Peoples.
- Support the European Union Council and Commission to monitor the human rights conditions and the democratic space in West Papua and, based on the findings, formulate aid and trade policy in such a way as to promote good governance and human rights; and to evaluate the implementation of human rights clauses in all multilateral agreements.

To the European Union Council, Commission and Parliament:

- In the face of human rights abuses and the potential escalation of violent conflict against the West Papuan population, actively encourage the UN Secretary General to engage in the promotion of peace in West Papua.
- Monitor the human rights conditions and the democratic space in West Papua and, based on the findings, formulate aid and trade policy in such a way as to promote good governance and human rights; and evaluate the implementation of human rights clauses in all multilateral agreements.
- Evaluate and assess the program of the European Union to support the implementation of the Special Autonomy Law, and report on it in public before the end of 2005 (impact and follow up).

To transnational corporations operating in West Papua:

- Develop a code of conduct for their business and organise their relations with Indonesian state institutions in a way that respects and enhances the rights, dignity, health and livelihood of the Papuan peoples in conformity with the UN norms on the responsibilities of transnational corporations and other business enterprises with regard to human rights.
- Evaluate and assess the implementation of these policies and their impact and provide an annual report on it.
- Provide transparent reports on all financial commitments to Indonesian state institutions.

To religious communities of all faiths:

- Regularly remember the West Papuan peoples in your prayers and intercessions.
- Support in any way possible the effort of the religious leaders in West Papua to realize the campaign for "Papua, Land of Peace".
- Based on close monitoring of the situation in West Papua, raise your prophetic voice in solidarity with the suffering peoples of West Papua.
- Join the Faith-Based Network on West Papua for 'Papua, Land of Peace'.