



Indigenous Peoples
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Championing Indigenous Peoples Rights



Civil Society Condemns Human Rights Violations against Indigenous Peoples in West Papua

An ongoing armed conflict in West Papua between the Indonesian military and the separatist movement finds ordinary Indigenous Peoples caught in the middle, resulting in deaths and violations of their rights.

Since 1963, when the Indonesian government formally took administrative control of West Papua¹, the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI) have carried out security operations criticised for their violence and intimidation of Indigenous Peoples² in West Papua. The TNI have stepped up their military operations³ in West Papua with the aim of ending the separatist movement⁴ (including but not limited to OPM). Recently, the Indonesian government created a new category called “KKB” (Armed Criminal Group). The group includes people or groups carrying out any confrontational activity in West Papua, but without clearly identifying who this group actually is. Therefore, anyone and any group can be labelled as terrorists. On April 29th 2021 the Indonesia state officially declared any criminal, armed group (KKB) a terrorist group.⁵ This declaration was announced following the murder of the Indonesian regional intelligence chief⁶, General I Gusti Putu Danny Karya Nugraha.

In response, Indonesia’s President Joko Widodo ordered the police and military “to chase and arrest”⁷ everyone involved in the “KKB”, and 400 members of the elite Infantry Battalion 315⁸ were deployed to the easternmost region of West Papua. Over the past three years, the Indonesian state has sent 21,369 troops to the land of Papua⁹. On the 24th of April 2021, the chairman of the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR), Bambang Soesatyo, added to these orders against the “KKB” in his statement to “destroy them first. We will discuss human rights matters later.”¹⁰ This statement contradicts the role Indonesia has assumed in advocating for human rights and democracy at a regional level. Among other initiatives¹¹, Indonesia has been actively involved in the establishment and development of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR)¹² and was recently elected to represent the Asia-Pacific region in the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) from 2020-2022¹³.

Ongoing Human Rights Violations:

Targeting innocent Indigenous Peoples

Indigenous Peoples have had to flee from their homes as the Indonesian military and police have entered their villages, primarily in the highland region of Nduga and Intan Jaya. This pattern of displacement is not new¹⁴. In the Nduga massacre of 2018¹⁵, the Indonesian government declared a state of emergency in the Nduga regency, which was used as justification for the TNI to launch the Nemangkawi Military Operation¹⁶ that further



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escalated the ongoing armed conflict, which led to the displacement of approximately 5000 villagers, including 700 children¹⁷, into refugee camps. Between 2018 and 2020 an estimated 400 refugees have died¹⁸ in these camps in Nduga.

The displacement of Indigenous Peoples continues with the Indonesian military's more recent efforts to stop the "KKB". Villagers have been driven out of their territories¹⁹ as military and police occupy their schools and buildings for their operations²⁰ to search for the "KKB", putting Indigenous villagers at risk for their lives and removing them from their livelihood. Thus, robbing them not only of their safety and freedom, but also their right to food, housing and education.

Police and military are entering secluded Indigenous villages to search for members of the "KKB", many of whom they claim hide and live amongst other villagers. If and when they cannot find "KKB" members, the military and police are shooting innocent civilians²¹. Although men are the main targets, women and children are also being shot at²², and even babies have lost their lives as a result²³ of the conflict. They are also destroying property and shooting farm animals such as pigs that villagers need for their livelihood.

While some of these deaths are being reported in media, including youth, disabled civilians and pastors²⁴, many are silenced/go unreported. Since the beginning of May, the Internet has been cut off in West Papua's capital²⁵ Manokwari preventing local journalists from reporting on the ongoing human rights violations. Although the internet provider has spoken out and apologized for the ongoing disruptions, the government has previously shut down internet services in West Papua during weeks of protests and deadly unrest in 2019²⁶.

The Indigenous Meepago People of Intan Jaya and the Indigenous Lapago People of Nduga report that they fear for their lives in their own land. A women's community leader from a town near Puncak, described that "Thousands are displaced in Puncak, five villages fled into the jungle. Health clinics and schools have been taken over by the military. Soldiers are everywhere. We are living in a war zone."²⁷

Human Rights Defenders and Freedom of Speech

On May 10th, Victor Yeimo who is the international spokesman of the West Papua National Committee, was arrested in the provincial capital of Jayapura²⁸. Yeimo has been on a police wanted list accused of treason related to his alleged role in the widespread anti-racism protests which were held in August and September 2019²⁹. Authorities say he orchestrated some of the most serious civil unrest in decades during these protests³⁰. These protests, which initially started peacefully but ended in riots, were mass protests that included Indigenous Peoples. Yeimo was present at the first peaceful protest but he claims to have been absent at the riot³¹.

According to Prominent human rights journalist Victor Mambor, he has also been targeted by the Indonesian military, who claim his involvement in the separatist movement. His car



was recently vandalised²², an incident that is not unusual for the journalist who, along with his family, has been harassed since 2007. Mambor's lawyer, Veronica Koman has described the latest car-vandalism as "...another episode of harassment against Papuan journalists. When you report stories not in line with the government's version you'll be attacked." ³³

Law violations:

Contradictory to the ongoing human rights violations, in 2006, Indonesia ratified³⁴ the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights³⁵. Also, in 1998, Law No. 9 on Freedom of Expression in Public was passed³⁶, but no implementing regulations were issued. Instead, according to senior West Papuan lawyer, Yan Christian Warinussey, the police have issued internal guidelines that suppress the freedom of expression³⁷ that has formed the law in West Papua and is used to suppress activism, which can be seen through the state's continuous harassment of human rights defenders.

The ongoing political conflicts are costing innocent lives and displacing Indigenous Peoples throughout West Papua.

The undersigned organisations call for:

1. The Indonesian government to define who the "KKB" is. Without naming the organisations, any group or anyone can be targeted as "KKB".
2. President Jokowi to fulfil his commitment³⁸ (2017) to invite the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to Papua.
3. The Indonesian Military and police to stop killing and harassing innocent villagers.
4. The Indonesian government and United Liberation Movement for West Papua to start peace dialogues.
5. The Indonesian Military and police to leave all occupied public facilities including schools, health centers, and government offices in Nduga, Intan Jaya, Puncak regencies, and ensure the safe return to normal life of the affected communities.
6. The police to release Victor Yeimo and ensure that all human rights are respected for all.
7. Stop stigmatizing Papuan Indigenous journalists as being part of separatism.
8. Restore the internet, ensure freedom of expression for all, ensure the safety and security of journalists reporting from West Papua, and open the access for international journalists to West Papua.



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International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA)

Allansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara (AMAN): Indigenous Peoples Alliance of the Archipelago

Indigenous Peoples Rights International (IPRI)

Asia Indigenous Peoples' Pact (AIPP)

Minority Rights Group International

Survival International

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