

West Papua Report April 2015

This is the 131st in a series of monthly reports that focus on developments affecting Papuans. This series is produced by the non-profit West Papua Advocacy Team (WPAT) drawing on media accounts, other NGO assessments, and analysis and reporting from sources within West Papua. This report is co-published by the East Timor and Indonesia *Action Network* (ETAN). Back issues are posted online at <http://www.etan.org/issues/wpapua/default.htm> Questions regarding this report can be addressed to Edmund McWilliams at edmcw@msn.com. If you wish to receive the report directly via e-mail, send a note to etan@etan.org. Link to this issue: <http://etan.org/issues/wpapua/2015/1504.htm>

The *Report* leads with PERSPECTIVE, an analysis piece; followed by UPDATE, a summary of some recent news and developments; and then CHRONICLE which includes analyses, statements, new resources, appeals and action alerts related to West Papua. **Anyone interested in contributing a PERSPECTIVE or responding to one should write to edmcw@msn.com. We also welcome suggestions of resources and analysis to for listing in the CHRONICLE section.** The opinions expressed in Perspectives are the author's and not necessarily those of WPAT or ETAN. *For on-going news on West Papua [subscribe](#) to the reg.westpapua listserv or visit its [archive](#); the list is also available on [Twitter](#).*

Please note that the March 2015 issue was not published.

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In [UPDATE](#) (covering February and March) the West Papua Advocacy Team [announces](#) that it has awarded its 2015 "John Rumbiak Human Rights Defenders Award" to the people and government of Vanuatu. Security forces in Yahukimo District have [fired on civilians](#) who were raising funds for humanitarian relief in cyclone-ravaged Vanuatu, killing one and wounding four. Indonesia's Foreign Minister was dispatched to three Pacific island states to try [to dampen growing support](#) for West Papua's application to join the Melanesian Spearhead Group. [Archbishop Tutu](#) urged the United Nations to investigate the fraudulent "Act of Free Choice" through which Indonesia forcibly annexed West Papua. Rights groups have called for Indonesia to [address outstanding human rights](#) cases in West Papua. [Four youths were beaten](#) by security forces in Jayapura. Plans by Freeport to [construct a smelter](#) in Papua have not involved the Kamoro on whose land the smelter will be located. The Kamoro have long suffered from the effects of Freeport's mining operations.

In [CHRONICLE](#), we note upcoming [demonstrations](#) in London and New York; an in-depth analysis of Jakarta's [security approach](#) to West Papua; an argument that human rights [violations fuel](#) Melanesian support for West Papuans, and [a look at](#) on-going media restrictions.

PERSPECTIVE

Interview with Octo Mote, General Secretary of the United Liberation Movement for West Papua

The ULMWP has [presented a formal request](#) for West Papua membership in the MSG. What are the prospects that West Papua will become a member at the MSG's next meeting in July?

We are confident that we will become members of Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) because we are Melanesian. We have been a member of the Melanesian family since the 1950's. West Papuans were founding members of the South Pacific Forum. A West Papuan delegation was sent by the Dutch to participate in many such Melanesian meetings. We, West Papuans (through GKI Church), are also founding members of the [Pacific Conference of Churches](#). We are proud to be Melanesian and participate in all aspects of Melanesian and Pacific Islander life. We are unlike other Melanesians in Indonesia such as Malukans, who in their social and political affiliations have always been part of Indonesia and were founding members of the Indonesian state. Therefore, we support the Indonesian government's position as an observer at MSG so that can represent our Melanesian brothers and sisters from Maluku and Timor.

The July decision will only be about West Papua's application for membership that we submitted in 2013 and which we resubmitted in February 2015 in response to MSG leaders meeting both [in Noumea](#) (2013) and in [Port Moresby](#) (2014). That is why wherever you go in the five MSG member countries you will find strong support among Melanesian people including among chiefs, churches and political leaders. The reason for this broad sympathy and support is obvious: Our fellow Melanesians are determined to save us from extinction, a near term prospect due to the Indonesian government's consistent violation of our basic human rights over the past 53 years. Indonesia can't hide the reality that it has committed crimes against humanity as reported by many

international human right NGOs, including Indonesia's own human rights commission.

Does it appear that Indonesia is exerting significant pressure on MSG members to prevent West Papua membership?

Yes it is. Indonesia has employed many means to block West Papua's membership in the MSG, including economic, socio-political, and security assistance. Indonesia gave financial assistance to each country, as well as to the MSG as an institution. This has included building a Melanesian police training centre in Fiji. Indonesia has also manipulated the interest of several MSG members to become members of ASEAN as a trade-off to block West Papuan membership in the MSG. Indonesia has also threatened some MSG leaders by accusing them of interfering in an issue of Indonesian political sovereignty. By these means, Indonesia is seeking to reverse the decisions reached by the MSG leaders at their 2013 meeting in Noumea. That MSG leaders' communiqué recognized Papuans' inalienable right for self-determination, the crisis of human rights violations there, and also committed to considering our application become a member of the MSG.

These Indonesian efforts will fail because Indonesia does not understand that the Melanesian leaders are people of dignity and that they are familiar with Indonesia's record of violating the rights of their brother and sister Melanesians in West Papua. This was underscored by the comments of PNG Prime Minister O'Neill on February 4 when he commented to his Cabinet ministers on the West Papua MSG membership application. He made clear that he considered Melanesians in West Papua to be his brothers and sisters. (See [report below](#).)

So what will happen at the MSG leaders meeting in July 2015 is only the fulfilment of the previous decision in the Noumea 2013 communiqué. The MSG leaders will maintain their credibility and demonstrate that no country can dictate to them what they need to do.

We would like to use MSG as forum where we can solve West Papuan problems. This will be facilitated by Indonesia's observer status in the MSG. In Melanesian custom we sort out all issues in our traditional long houses. For us, the MSG is Melanesian custom house, where we talk peacefully in order to create peace once and for ever in Tanah Papua. This is not only an interest of West Papuans but is in the interest of all Melanesia and the South Pacific in general.

UPDATE

WPAT Awards People and Government of Vanuatu

The West Papua Advocacy Team (WPAT) awards its 2015 "John Rumbiak Human Rights Defenders Award" to the people and Government of Vanuatu. In recent years the people and Government of Vanuatu have emerged as steadfast and courageous defenders of the rights of the people of West Papua. They have welcomed Papuan delegations and provided a venue for critical meetings of Papuans seeking to assert their rights, including the right of self-determination. Specifically the people of Vanuatu have manifested their support for Papuan human rights through their hospitality to Papuans, as well as demonstrations and rallies. The government of Vanuatu has consistently advanced the interests of the Papuan people within the Melanesian Spearhead Group, most recently by advocating for West Papua's membership in the group and assisting Papuans in the unification process that has led to the formation of the United Liberation Movement for West Papua, the new umbrella group working for West Papuan self-determination.

Noting with great sympathy the terrible devastation which befell Vanuatu in the form of Cyclone Pam, WPAT has forwarded the stipend that accompanies this award to Oxfam USA with specific instructions that the money be directed to relief operations in Vanuatu.

Previous winners of the award are [Carmel Budiardjo and Tapol](#) (UK, 2008), [John M. Miller and the East Timor and Indonesian Action Network](#) (U.S., 2009), [Andreas Harsono](#) (Indonesia, 2010), [U.S. Congressional Delegate Eni Faleomavaega](#) (American Samoa, 2011), the [Australia West Papua Association](#) (2012), and [Powes Parkop](#), Governor of the Port Moresby and the National Capital District of Papua New Guinea (2013). In 2014, Catherine Delahunty and the Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand and Maire Leadbeater also from New Zealand [received the award](#).

Indonesian Police Shoot Papuans Fundraising for Vanuatu Relief

On March 19, Yahukimo District police [fired on civilians at a rally](#) in Dukai, Yahukimo district in West Papua, killing one and wounding four. The group had been raising funds for relief efforts in Vanuatu following the massive destruction caused by cyclone Pam. The United Liberation Movement for West Papua (ULMWP) and West Papuan church groups coordinated the fundraising. The West Papua National Committee (KNPB), a member of the ULMWP alliance, organized the Yahukimo rally. Its offices were subsequently raided and ransacked by the security forces. The KNPB [accused](#) the police of stalling money during the raid.

On March 30, Jubi [reported](#) that the KNPB reported the Dukai incident to the National Commission on Human Rights (Komnas Ham) accusing the police of violating human rights. That report put the number of wounded at four rather than three as initially reported. Natalius Pigai, a Komnas Ham commissioner, told Jubi that he would ask the Papua police chief to investigate the incident.

Benny Wenda, ULMWP spokesperson [said in a statement](#): "No matter how brutal the Indonesian response, we West Papuans will continue to mourn and raise funds and support for our people in Vanuatu and other Cyclone affected areas. No-one can stop us struggling for freedom and no-one can stop us from supporting our Pacific brothers and sisters.

Jakarta Acts to Head Off Melanesian Support for West Papua

In February and early March, Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi visited key members of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) bearing gifts in an effort to counter growing support for West Papua's application to join the regional body. The United Liberation Movement for West Papua (ULMWP) on February 4 applied to join the MSG (see [February 2015 West Papua Report](#)). Support for the application has come in the form of public statements by key Melanesian state leaders and ULMWP officials in meetings met with Melanesian leaders.

Marsudi visited Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Fiji. (The other two members of the MSG, Vanuatu and New Caledonia's FLNKS are firm supporters of West Papua's right to self-determination.) During the Indonesian Foreign Minister's swing through the region, Indonesia said it would [disburse \\$20 million in financial assistance](#) to support capacity-building of MSG nations.

Prior to Marsudi's visit to Papua New Guinea, comments by Prime Minister O'Neill appear to have been particularly jarring for Jakarta. On February 4, O'Neill [underscored to cabinet members](#) his sympathy for the plight of West Papuans, saying "Sometimes, we forget our own families, our own brothers, especially those in West Papua. I think as a country, the time has come to speak for our people about the oppression there. ... Pictures of brutality of our people appear daily on social media and yet, we take no notice. We have the moral obligation to speak for those who are not allowed to talk. We must be the eyes for those who are blindfolded."

Later, the PNG Prime Minister told [Radio New Zealand](#) that he had raised the issue of human rights in West Papua in February talks with the visiting Indonesian Foreign Minister. He also said he had urged the Indonesian government to support the Papuan application for MSG membership. The PM maintained, however, that his views only had to do with human rights, not sovereignty.

A joint statement by PNG and the Indonesian Foreign Minister indeed included standard language regarding respect for "territorial integrity," a formulation Jakarta has regularly insisted on in formal international statements. In addition, the PNG Foreign Minister told journalists not to raise West Papua in their questions during a joint press conference. [Similar restrictions](#) were apparently imposed at similar joint press conferences in Fiji and the Solomon Islands where West Papua was never mentioned.

By the end of March, Prime Minister O'Neill was [calling on Indonesia](#) to reduce troops stationed in West Papua. He told Radio Australia that President Yudhoyono had told him during a state visit by O'Neill to Jakarta of plans to reduce the number of troops in West Papua. O'Neill said he hoped current president Joko Widodo would keep his predecessor's promise. "I'm certain that Indonesia as a member of the international community will do the right thing, they've committed to us," O'Neill said.

"We will try and hold the Indonesian government to that, to make sure that the current government also has the same view about a reduction of presence of military on the island, and of course more autonomy for the people of West Papua," O'Neill said.

O'Neill said he planned to take a diplomatic approach to the issue of the future of West Papua. "We all need to have a very cordial relationship with Indonesia and we will continue to maintain that," he said. "But that does not mean we will not keep quiet about the abuses that are taking place."

A joint communiqué issued during Marsudi's visit to Fiji made [no mention](#) of the issue of West Papua. Marsudi met with Fiji's Foreign Minister Ratu Inoke Kubuabola and [offered](#) closer co-operation and military training.

Prior to the Marsudi's visit, Foreign Minister Ratu [told parliament](#) "I cannot confirm if Fiji will support the application of West Papua. The application [is] to be considered by senior officials of the MSG and then it goes out to the foreign ministers and then the MSG leaders. We have to follow the process so I can't confirm whether Fiji will support the application."

In the Solomon Islands, Marsudi and Foreign Minister Milner Tozaka "[discussed](#) how to increase cooperation between the two countries, particularly, through capacity building and technical support." They also agreed on further development cooperation, visa exemptions for diplomats, and cooperation in the education sector.

Responding to Marsudi's diplomatic tour, Octo Mote, secretary-general of the ULMWP, expressed confidence that Melanesian leaders would pay attention to growing support for West Papua membership in the MSG. Octo Mote told [Radio New Zealand](#) that "it's really embarrassing that the Indonesian way of doing the lobbying is bribing leaders that West Papua is facing. So I trust the Melanesian leaders. They know how to make a distinction between bilateral relations and the human rights situation West Papua is facing."

Grassroots groups, religious organizations, and politicians are increasingly speaking out in favour West Papua's application to the MSG in all three countries.

Tutu Supports for West Papua Self-Determination

Nobel Peace Prize laureate Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu renewed his call for a United Nations investigation of the "Act of Free Choice," the fraudulent, Indonesia-coerced vote through which Jakarta annexed West Papua in 1969.

In a statement released at the end of February, Tutu stated:

"I'm shocked to learn that West Papua is still not free. I didn't think that things like this still happened. I call on the United Nations and all the relevant bodies, please, do what is right, as they know, for West Papua.

"We can't have some people in the world free and others not free. As long as there is one person not free, we are all not free.

"I am very, very distressed and pray that Indonesia and other countries will do what is right, because it is not their (West Papua's) gift, it is their right as the children of God."

"Next time I see you (Benny), you will have a West Papuan passport"

Tutu made his renewed pleas for UN action on February 27 in the context of a meeting in Cape Town with Benny Wenda, spokesperson for the United Liberation Movement of West Papua.

Tutu has [long supported](#) self-determination for West Papua. In 2004, Tutu told the UN, "It is with deep concern I have learned about the United Nations' role in the takeover of West Papua by Indonesia, and in the now-discredited 'Act of 'Free Choice' of 1969. Instead of a proper referendum, where every adult, male and female had the opportunity to vote by secret ballot on whether or not they wished to be part of Indonesia, just over 1,000 people were hand-picked and coerced into declaring for Indonesia in public in a climate of fear and repression."

Rights Organizations Call on Jakarta to Settle Past Cases

Two prominent human rights organizations, the Commission for the Disappeared and Victims of Violence (KontraS) in Papua and Bersatu Untuk Kebenaran (BUK/Unite for Truth), have [urged the government](#) of President Joko Widodo to address unresolved human rights cases in Papua.

BUK Coordinator Peneas Lokbere told Jubi "For example the case of Wasior, I thought we had a progress in handling the case but the execution is stagnant by the Indonesian State Attorney as well as the several cases occurred in Wamena in 2001, Biak in 1998, and Paniai in 2014."

Both organizations asked the governor and the Papua Legislative Council to evaluate the security approach in Papua and urged the military and police to end repressive approaches by their officers and promote human rights by removing officers who are frequently involved in violence.

KontraS Papua Coordinator Olga Hamadi recalled President Widodo's promise that "he would be more focused to solve the human rights violation cases. But we saw he has no courage to solve the cases in Papua or outside of Papua."

She added that civil authority in Papua was weak: "The civil authority has no courage to speak. They always use the military approach. Whenever they encounter a problem, they must assign the police to handle it. So, where is the civil authority

Human Rights Group Accuses Police of Beating Four Papuan Youths

[Jubi](#), March 28, reported that members of the Police Mobile Brigade (Brimob) beat four Papuan youths without cause in Cigombong, Jayapura, on the evening of March 18. One of the youths was critically injured and needed surgery for a stab wound to his lung. KontraS (the Commission for the Disappeared and Victims of Violence) reported the case to the police and said the beating followed a Brimob conflict with other highland-origin youths that night in the vicinity of Abepura Mall. Papua Brimob Deputy Chief Adjunct Commissionaire Tono Budiarto denied his officers involvement, saying that his officers came to save the boys. Amnesty International has issued [an urgent appeal](#) on behalf of the four youths.

Smelter Construction To Worsen Tribal Suffering

Local groups are protesting plans by Freeport McMoRan to construct a massive smelter in Mimika. Freeport has been under significant Indonesian government pressure to [process ore](#) in Indonesia. While Freeport would prefer to build a more cost effective smelter in East Java, some officials, [including Provincial Governor](#) Lukas Enembe, are pressing for it to build in Papua.

Opposition to the plan has developed over the lack of consultation with the local people on whose traditional land the proposed facility would be built.

[Jubi on March 21](#) reported that the Kamoro indigenous consultative organization (LEMASKO) and local villages are invoking Sasi customary law. "The Kamoro people in Timika will gather to use their traditional way of calling on their ancestors and... establish Sasi for the Timika area. It is to oppose Freeport and the smelter and any sort of investment in the area, in order to save the mangrove swamps and sago groves", said Dominikus Mitoro, acting chair of the LEMASKO leadership council. "After this Sasi ritual, Freeport or any other investor will encounter endless problems. The main thing is [that] no business will run smoothly until it leaves Mimika," he explained.

The Kamoro people have long lived along the Arafura seacoast and the rivers which flow into the sea south of the Freeport mining operation. The area [has the status](#) of a "marine area of documented biological significance." Nevertheless, the Kamoro homeland, since the beginning of mining operations over 40 years ago, has suffered from [poisonous pollution](#) due to Freeport tailings dumped into the Ajkwa river system.

Those tailings have created a vast desert on which grow only a few grasses. The area is devoid of fish, mammal, bird, reptile and even insect life. Thousands of sago palm trees, the inner pulp of which is a Kamoro diet staple, have been destroyed by tailings which periodically overflow the Freeport-constructed dike system meant to keep the tailings within the Ajkwa channel. The tailings extend for over 20 miles down the course of the Ajkwa to the Arafura Sea. Tidal action has caused the tailings to spread along the coast where they are killing the mangrove trees which promote the growth of crustacean and other sea creatures important to the Kamoro diet. The trees, when healthy, also protect the coast against tidal surges and storms. In addition to the problems caused by tailings, acid mine drainage from the mine has polluted ground water and rendered some shellfish, a staple in the Kamoro diet, poisonous.

[Jubi also reports](#) that Laurenzus Kadepa, a member of Papua Legislative Council, said that if the Kamoro people are not involved, the smelter should not be built. He said that "indigenous peoples in Mimika, especially Kamoro, are suffering from Freeport waste. If the Kamoro, as customary owner is not involved, I am worried they will be suffering. ... Rivers and the sea as their livelihoods are now polluted. Their survival is threatened."

CHRONICLE

Demonstrations to Call for Open Access to Papua

On April 29, Demonstrations will be held in [London](#) and [New York](#) calling for an end to 50 years of isolation and

free and open access to Papua. The London protest will take place at noon, outside the Indonesian embassy, 38 Grosvenor Square; the New York protest will begin at 6 pm at the Indonesian consulate, 5 E 68th St. (near 5th Ave.) in Manhattan. Additional protests may take place elsewhere. Tapol, which initiated the protests, is organizing the London demonstration. ETAN is organizing the one in New York. Additional events may be organized elsewhere.

West Papua is one of the world's most isolated conflict spots. For decades, indigenous activists campaigning for their rights have been arrested, disappeared, tortured and killed. Local journalists who uncover the truth face lethal risks. Foreign journalists trying to report on Papua have been arrested, deported and even imprisoned.¹ One by one, international humanitarian organizations have closed their Papua offices. Access for UN human rights observers has been closed for eight years. Until Indonesia lifts the repressive restrictions on access to Papua, Indonesian security forces and paramilitaries are free to act with total impunity, and indigenous Papuans will continue to be killed. Demonstrators will be wearing all-black clothing to protest the media blackout in Papua. They will be carrying placards, some of which will be 'censored,' and have their mouths taped shut.

Price of Protest

A new paper, "[The Price of Protest in West Papua](#)," (PDF) published in the Griffith Journal of Law and Human Dignity highlights Indonesia's security approach in the region "to silence voices of dissent and suppress efforts toward West Papuan independence." Gemima Harvey writes this approach "has multiple facets including sweeping operations that result in rampant human rights abuses, the use of torture to extract information and force confessions, and the imprisonment of peaceful protestors based on trumped up charges of treason and conspiracy.... Another aspect is the way development projects are imposed, without the free, prior, and informed consent of traditional landowners whose livelihoods depend on the forests, with large corporations employing security forces to defend their interests." Restrictions on foreign media and international aid agencies also play a role.

Domestic Solution Key to Keeping Papua, Not a Pacific One

Johannes Nugroho argues in a [Jakarta Globe op-ed](#) that Indonesia's continued poor human rights record in West Papua will undermine efforts, such as the recent visit of Foreign Affairs Minister Retno Marsudi to three Pacific nations (see above), to forestall action by the Melanesian Spearhead Group. He writes, "the Indonesian government would be foolish to believe that, should it fail to improve its human rights record in Papua and West Papua, the MSG nations could refrain from voicing their protests indefinitely. Jakarta must consider the possible domestic pressure under which the MSG governments could find themselves, if the cause of Melanesian solidarity gains momentum in the Pacific region."

CPJ on Media Restrictions in Papua

At the end of March, Bob Dietz of the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) [wrote](#) that "Indonesia's leaders appear determined not to lose another part of its far-flung archipelago by having troublesome reporters, international or Indonesian, expose what is happening in Papua." He added that "Without open media access in the Papua and West Papua provinces, alleged abuses by security forces operating without media scrutiny will hound any bid by President Joko Widodo to bring peace and prosperity to the resource-rich region: a promise he made on assuming office in October." Dietz, CPJ's Asia Program Coordinator, places restrictions in the context of assaults on freedom of the press in Indonesia.

This issue can be found at <http://etan.org/issues/wpapua/2015 /1504.htm>

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