

Veronica Koman, pro-Papuan lawyer wanted by Indonesian police, is hiding in Australia

By [Tasha Wibawa](#)

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[Photo: Veronica Koman has been](#)

[sharing information about events in West Papua. \(Supplied: Facebook\)](#)

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Indonesian police are threatening to ask Interpol to issue a red notice for pro-Papuan activist Veronica Koman, who is hiding in Australia, unless she reports to authorities by the end of Wednesday.

Key points:

- Veronica Koman has been accused of inciting the protests
- Indonesian police have asked for help from Australia
- International organisations have rallied in support of Ms Koman

Ms Koman is accused of "provoking" unrest in the restive provinces of Papua and West Papua and has been ordered to present herself to police in East Java.

As well as threats of a red notice, East Java police spokesperson Frans Barung Mangegara told the ABC Ms Koman would also be placed in the national wanted persons database.

Ms Koman, an Indonesian human rights lawyer who has been vocal on West Papuan issues for a number of years, has been charged under Indonesia's [contentious electronic transaction \(ITE\) laws](#) for being a "provocateur" and for "spreading hoaxes".

She broke her silence on the allegations against her for the first time over the weekend, saying in a statement she had been used as a "scapegoat" by the Indonesian Government.

"Over the past 11 days I have chosen not to respond to various accusations aired on an almost daily basis by the Indonesian police through mass media," she wrote.

"This is not because the police's accusations are true, but because I refuse to participate in efforts to divert attention from the real crisis currently gripping West Papua."

The ABC requested an interview with Ms Koman but she has so far declined.



[Photo: Protests in West Papua](#)

[have left dozens arrested, injured and dead. \(AP: Beawiharta\)](#)

Indonesian police seek help of Australian consulate

Indonesian police believe Ms Koman fled to Australia, where it is understood she has family.

They have sought formal assistance from the Australian consulate in Surabaya to track her down.

"We're also in contact with the Indonesian embassy in Australia," deputy police chief Toni Hermanto said.

Police said Australia had agreed not to interfere in the legal process, but it was not clear what, if any, assistance it would give.

The Australian Federal Police (AFP) would not comment directly on the matter when contacted by the ABC but outlined how red notices were handled.

"An Interpol red notice indicates the initiating country is seeking the person's arrest for the purpose of extradition, but in the absence of an enforceable arrest warrant, which in the extradition context is a warrant issued ... (under) the Extradition Act, Australia is not able to arrest the person based on that request," an AFP spokesperson said.

While an extradition treaty between Australia and Indonesia was signed in 1992 and is still effective, the treaty says an extradition can only be granted if the offence is considered a crime according to laws in both countries, and must not be politically motivated.

Last week East Java police said they had gained access to Ms Koman's bank accounts and found a series of "questionable" transactions.

The ABC also received a number of messages directly from government security officials sharing pro-government propaganda about Ms Koman.

West Papua gripped by weeks of violent unrest

Space to play or pause, M to mute, left and right arrows to seek, up and down arrows for volume.

[Video: Officers stormed a West Papuan university dormitory in Surabaya, sparking widespread protests. \(ABC News\)](#)

Papua and West Papua are Indonesia's easternmost provinces, and commonly referred to internationally as West Papua.

'Treated like animals' in West Papua



Why thousands of Papuans have taken to the streets, torching government buildings and violently clashing with police.

Indonesia's acquisition of the region has been a cause of controversy since a United Nations-brokered agreement was struck between its former colonial power, the Dutch, and Indonesia in 1962.

The region has been gripped by weeks of violent unrest between protesters, police and the military, resulting in dozens of arrests, deaths and injuries, and was initially sparked by racist comments made towards a group of Papuan students in Java.

The Indonesian Government reacted by blocking internet access and deploying thousands of troops to the region.

During this time, Ms Koman has been sharing videos of the clashes on her Twitter account, and speaking to foreign media.

Gathering and verifying information about events in West Papua is difficult because of restrictions on press freedom and the remoteness of the location.

'Fabricated' intimidation campaign



[Photo: Ms Koman said Indonesian](#)

[police were intimidating her family in Jakarta. \(Supplied: Facebook\)](#)

Ms Koman said she believed tactics to get her were part of an intimidation campaign by Indonesian officials to silence those who have been vocal about West Papua.

"The criminal case being fabricated against me is only one of many being pursued in a wholesale program of criminalisation and intimidation," she said in her statement.

"It seems the aim is that the clear aspiration for an independence referendum voiced by hundreds of thousands of West Papuans who took to the streets over the past few weeks will be swept from view."

While the protests about West Papua largely began as a call to end racism, restore internet access and remove the extra troops deployed to the region, they soon turned into a rallying call for a new referendum on independence.

Indonesia's Coordinating Minister for Security Wiranto has ruled out an independence vote, and said Indonesia should remain united.

"I think [demands for a referendum] are inappropriate," Mr Wiranto said at the House of Representatives earlier this month, adding that the unity of Indonesia was "final" and "non-negotiable".

Numerous international organisations such as the United Nations are standing behind Ms Koman, saying "Indonesia must protect the rights of Veronica Koman and others reporting on Papua and West Papua protest".

"There is a surprisingly wide government campaign to pressure me into silence, with the Indonesian police intimidating my family in Jakarta while the head of the Department of Immigration and the Minister for Law and Human Rights join in by saying they will agree to a police demand to revoke my passport," Ms Koman said in her statement.



[Photo: The Indonesian provinces](#)

[of West Papua and Papua are often referred to collectively as West Papua. \(ABC News: Jarrod Fankhauser\)](#)