

Onderwerp: PAPUA MERDEKA: February Newsletter

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Dear ,

Welcome to this month's PAPUA MERDEKA newsletter!

Foreign journalists and West Papuans are persecuted for telling the truth about West Papua. We will keep you updated with what is really happening.

FEATURED

President Wenda offers deepest sympathies to friends and family of [New Zealand pilot taken hostage](#)

 Nduga, West Papua



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New Zealand pilot Phillip Mehrstens was taken hostage over a week ago by the West Papua National Liberation Army (TPNPB).

Egianus Kogoya, leader of the TPNPB said he took the pilot hostage as part of their struggle *"to free Papua"*.

President Wenda calls for the unconditional release of the pilot and clarifies that the TPNPB is not part of the United Liberation Movement for West Papua (ULMWP) structure and is not acting under the auspices of the ULMWP.

The President reiterates and reassures the New Zealand government and the world that the ULMWP are committed to a peaceful, diplomatic approach toward national liberation.



Interim President Benny Wenda, ULMWP.

At the same time, the President reminds us that if Indonesia wanted to reduce violence in West Papua, they would listen to the call of more than 80 countries and allow the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to investigate there.

"...They would allow foreign media to report on abuses in West Papua. They would not employ Generals trained in the genocide in East Timor to run their occupation."

You can read President Wenda's full statement [here](#).

Looking forward, comments academic [Camellia Webb-Gannon](#), New Zealand, Australia and other governments close to Indonesia need to commit to serious discussions about human rights in West Papua – not only because there is a

hostage involved, but because it is the right thing to do.

"The kidnapping is not justified, but neither is Indonesia's violence against West Papuans – or the international community's refusal to address the violence," Webb-Gannon concludes.

HUMAN RIGHTS BREACHES 🚨

- **Civilians flee after pilot taken hostage in fear of Indonesian retaliation:** residents in 5 surrounding districts are displaced. In 1996, there was also a hostage-taking in one of the surrounding districts, the result was armed conflict between the Indonesian military and TPNB. Houses and churches were destroyed, farm animals died, and pastors and parishioners were shot and killed. Today, there are over 60,000 internally displaced persons in West Papua, of which 732 have died.



Members of Yonif Raider 514/SY helped cross hundreds of Paro District people who crossed the Kenyam River.

- **Still no health workers in Beoga:** health workers, both doctors and nurses, were withdrawn from Beogain January 2023 following the last firefight in the region.

- **FREE VICTOR YIEMO protests continue:**

Victor Yeimo, a pro-independence political activist from Papua and a spokesman for the West Papua National Committee is facing life in prison for leading the peaceful protest against racism in Jayapura, West Papua in 2019. Since his arrest, he has been suffering from severe health conditions.

For podcast listeners... 📻

- **President Joko Widodo gave a national address in which he acknowledged gross violations of human rights** had occurred in Indonesia and expressed his regret and sympathy for the victims: *What is the significance of Jokowi's acknowledgement and why did he choose to make it now?* You can listen to the discussion [here](#).

Some good news... 🏆

- **Papuan journalist Victor Mambor wins “Oktovianus Pogau” journalism award:** Victor Mambor's name was recently mentioned in the media after a bomb was detonated outside his house on January 23 in Jayapura.

ENVIRONMENTAL THREATS 🌳

- **'Never sell land': Jayapura Bishop Yanuarious Matopai You warns Indigenous Papuans** as fraudulent deals with foreign investors continue and forests are developed into palm oil plantations.
- **Book launch reveals Indigenous efforts to uphold natural resources for future generations** in the midst of Indonesian policies, foreign investments, migrant influx, and vulnerabilities due to narrowing livelihood space and other ecological changes.

DIPLOMACY UPDATE: BRING WEST PAPUA BACK TO THE MSG





Achieving full membership of the intergovernmental organisation, the Melanesian Spearhead Group, would be the movement's **most significant diplomatic achievement thus far !**

Since 2015, the ULMWP has sat as an observer member of the MSG - West Papua's first recognition as a 'state-in-waiting' since 1963.

"Accepting Indonesia into MSG was a mistake", says former Vanuatu Prime Minister [Joe Natuman](#).



MSG Director meets with ULMWP



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