

Report from GKI, Christian Evangelical Church, 19 February 2009

### THE TRIAL OF BUCHTAR TABUNI BEGINS

The first hearing in the trial of Buchtar Tabuni (30) opened at the Jayapura District Court on 18 February 2009. This hearing was devoted to the presentation of the charge sheet against the accused which was delivered by prosecutor Maskel Rambolangi SH.

He accused Buchtar of being the coordinator for the International Parliamentarians for West Papua (IPWP), the evidence being that he had twice coordinated mass demonstrations at the University of Cenderawasih campus at Ekspo Waena on 16 October and had delivered political speeches that were deemed to be a threat to the sovereignty of the Republic of Indonesia.

Additional evidence consisted of banners on which the following were written: 'Referendum Yes, Otonomi Khusus (Special Autonomy) No', 'West Papua Problem is not Indonesia Problem', 'We want to International dialog' There was also a large poster bearing the flags of the USA, the UN, the UK, as well as the Dutch and Indonesian flags, with the words: The UN Invasion of West Papua. We Want Peace.

Buchtar Tabuni was charged under Article 106 of the Criminal Code regarding subversion, Article 160 of the Criminal Code regarding acts of incitement and Article 212 of the Criminal Code regarding resisting personnel of the state.

The judges hearing the case were Manungku P, SH, Hotman Simamora SH and Lucky R SH. A team of 17 lawyers defending Buchtar Tabuni was also present.

The trial will continue on 25 February when the defence will deliver their response. At the end of the hearing, Paskalis Letsoin PH called on the judges to bear in mind the rights of the accused. The hearing was scheduled to commence at 8.30am but did not commence until 10.00am because of the late arrival of Judge Maskel Rombolangi SH

In order to guard the courthouse, the Police Force deployed two companies consisting of 200 Brimob members and anti-riot police, armed with rifles, under the coordination of the deputy police commander of Jayapura, Andreas Paru. Members of Brimob searched all those who attended the hearing.

Paskalis Letsoin, a defence lawyer, asked the police and Brimob to respect the court hearing by not using such a large number of troops at future hearings, because this was an act of terror against the accused.

The accused was wearing a brown jacket, not the military attire which he usually wears when

leading demonstrations. His sideburns had been shaved off and he was clean shaven.

The accused almost fell to the ground when the wheel-chair which had been provided for his use broke down; it was also very dirty. It had to be replaced with another chair.

After the hearing, the accused was driven back to Abepura Prison, while a crowd of about 100 people shouted, 'Long Live Buchtar, Free Buchtar' The coordinator of this action, Victor Yelmo said that he and his colleagues would organise a similar demonstration on the occasion of the next hearing.

Buchtar was arrested on 2 December in connection with a mass demonstration which he coordinated in support of the International Parliamentarians for West Papua which took place on 16 October in London. While Buchtar has survived, a colleague of his, Yosias Syef was murdered in Sentani District after he had finished distributing leaflets calling on people to attend the IPWI on 16 October 2008.