

Rallies and arrests in West Papua coincide with establishment of 'International Lawyers for West Papua' (www.ilwp.org)

Reports from West Papua today indicate that 10,000 people are staging a rally in Nabire, while another rally planned for Wamena is occurring in the grounds of the Efata Church after a joint Police and Military security operation to block that rally.

Other reports from the capital Jayapura say that Police have arrested 11 West Papuans off the street in Abepura & a further 2 are detained at Police Headquarters in Jayapura, apparently in relation to the organisation of these rallies.

Reports from West Papua over the last few days had indicated that a rally would be held today in Wamena to coincide with the establishment of 'International Lawyers for West Papua' reportedly occurring in the US.

The large rally of 10,000 people in Nabire is said to have been ongoing since 8.00 am local time. Banners reported on display say: "West Papua people support the launch of International Lawyers for West Papua"; 'Review the Act of Free Choice'; 'Demand that Human Rights cases in West Papua be fixed' and also 'West Papua people demand Independence'. West Papua women speakers were addressing the rally at the time of the report.

A report, provided this morning from Wamena, indicated that there was a very large contingent of police and military presence on the streets of Wamena. These report said that there were checkpoints on the roads and that security forces were present on the road intersections(corners). These extra security forces were said to be stopping any people beginning the planned rally.

It is also noted that media reports have said that the Local Government in Wamena, had banned the rally and that Police commanders also reportedly stated that the Wamena rally and other Pro-Independence rallies could not proceed.

The names of the two West Papuan men detained in Jayapura at Police Headquarters were Musa Tabuni and Dias, who were both arrested at the harbour. Of the 11 detained at the Abepura Police station only Robert Takimai and Made Agapa were named. As no rally was being staged in Jayapura or Abepura it is speculated that these arrests in the capital were related to the other rallies.