

Nine Christian leaders in Papua have suggested the government hold a dialogue with the Papuan people to find the best solution for the ongoing dispute over the 1965 people's self-determination vote (Pepera).

Although the government insists the result of the Pepera was that Papua belonged to Indonesia, some groups reject the official result, demanding that Papua become a separate and independent state, the Christian leaders said in a statement last week.

The nine leaders are S Karubaba from the Kemah Injil Church synod, JJ Mirino Krey of the Indonesia Christian Church Ministry (GKI) synod, Tony Infanfi of the GBGP Church synod, Father I Sai Doom from the Pantekosta Tabernakel Church, Father Socrates Sofyan Yoman from the Association of Papuan Baptism Churches of the Center of Liturgy Body, Theis Wopari of the GMK Church synod, Andreas Ayomi of the Pentakosta Church synod, Jayapura deputy bishop Neles Tebay and Lipiyus Biniluk of the GIDI Church synod.

The leaders said a proposal by the International Parliament for West Papua to hold a massive rally on Oct. 20, which police rejected, showed there were still many people in Papua who did not accept the result of the Pepera.

The aim of the planned demonstration was to make their views known to the Papua legislative council, asking it to revise the 1965 Pepera.

"We were sorry that the police prevented them from staging a demonstration and expressing their wishes," they said in a statement distributed to related institutions.

The leaders criticized the police, backed by the military, for detaining the activists who planned the mass demonstration.

The group then suggested the government and the Papuan people hold talks to find the best solution to the dispute. -- JP