

*In the lead-up to the elections, Papua was hit by terror. The OPM was accused of involvement, but its leaders behind bars deny it.*

A fleeting shadow made its way through the heavy rain in Jayapura City on Monday night last week. The machete in the hand of the figure with unkempt hair sliced through the falling rain, puncturing the right armpit of Alexander Pong alias Ongko, 64. The resident of Jl. Cenderawasih who was cleaning the drain in front of the house collapsed in a pool of blood. A moment later, the machete still dripping with blood was thrust into the back of Ngatiman, 36, a resident of Jl. Kasuari. Several hours earlier, 29-year-old Maria Waren was stabbed by a man whose entire body was smeared with mud. The resident of Jl. Proyek Karsatama, Perumnas II Waena, fell flat on her face. Sustaining grave injuries, the victims were rushed to Dian Harapan Hospital.

By night the terror tightened its grip on the housing complexes of Heram district, Padang Bulan and Abepura. Residents were evacuated, the lights in the houses were turned off, while others stood guard on the streets. The residential areas stand adjacent to the Cenderawasih University rectorate building that was set on fire on voting day. The following day, three residents of Skow, Muara Tami district, who were riding a motorbike, were caught in a volley of gunfire. The rounds damaged the motorbike but the riders, 35-year-old Alimuddin and his wife and child, were unhurt.

When police attempted to pursue the perpetrator who seemed to move like a ghost, the terror attacks turned on the police. Papua Police Mobile Brigade (Brimob) officers were fired on in the village of Lumbuk in Tinggimambut district, Puncak Jaya. Second Brigadier Musa Aninam was struck down dead by a bullet and six of his colleagues wounded. "They had wanted to pick up a colleague who was sick," said Puncak Jaya District Police Chief, Deputy Sr. Comr. Chris Rihulay.

One after another, the terror spread in the leadup to the legislative elections on April 9. The day before the elections, a bomb exploded on the Muara Tami Bridge. That night, three ojek (motorcycle taxi) drivers in Wamena were stabbed to death and two of their colleagues seriously wounded. The perpetrator left behind a piece of paper with the message reading "From the West Papua Liberation Military Commander".

On voting day itself the Abepura Police Station was attacked. Four of the perpetrators Yance Yogobi, Andi Gobay, Dino Agobi and Erik Logowere arrested after being shot. A machete and homemade bomb were confiscated. One of the perpetrators who managed to get away is known to be Nahason Mabel, a private tertiary education institution student in Jayapura.

Up until three days after the election, the bombings and killings were still spreading. Three homemade bombs were discovered near the Abepura Police station. Nearby a sheath of a knife made from wood with the picture of the Morning Star flag was left lying on the ground. On that day also, 31-year-old Supandi Juhari, an ojek driver in Wamena, was stabbed to death on Jl. Sanger. "Possibly the perpetrators were members of the Free Papua Organization National Liberation Army (TPN-OPM)," said Jayawijaya District Police Chief, Deputy Sr. Comr. Mulia Hasudungan Ritonga.

That night, the Pertamina oil company's depot in Bo village, Biak, was set on fire. Sarini, a 4-year-old child died in the blaze when scores of houses were burnt to the ground. Around midnight, an armed contact between the Indonesian Military (TNI) and 'ghost militia' took place at the Wutung Police post near the Indonesia-Papua New Guinea boarder.

The elections, a special day held amidst the riots, were also seriously affected. According to the head of the Jayapura City Elections Supervisory Committee, Moses Youmunga, reports of election violations after polling day increased from 20 to 30 cases; Most occurred in Abepura.

The violations occurred as a result of panic. After voting had finished, precisely at 12 noon, all of the polling stations rushed to count the votes, which were then secured at the respective district offices. Aside from many witnesses failing to attend – which meant there was no independent verification of the data – no official reports were made out. "It was a state of force majeure, panic as a consequence of the rioting," said Moses.

Strangely, the Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal & Security Affairs, Widodo A.S., has asserted that there was no link between the acts of terror and efforts to thwart the elections in Papua. "There's no connection," he said. Romulo Simbolon, Widodo's secretary, added that separatist issues have long existed in Papua. "We don't yet know who the perpetrators are, whether it was the OPM or not." According to Romulo, there were no actors from Jakarta involved in the Papua riots. There was also no connection with the earlier golput (non-voter group) student demonstrations in Papua. "The riots were because of the idea of separatism," said Romulo.

On Wednesday last week, the Papuan regional government, the Trikora XVII Regional Military Command and the Papua Regional Police gathered to discuss the issue. The result was that the police were still unable to reveal the perpetrators behind the riots and the acts of terror. "We will be calling on public figures throughout Papua to contain the panic," said Papua Police Chief, Insp. Gen. Bagus Ekodanto.

A number of parties are suspected of being behind the terror and rioting. One is a group acting in the name of Mathias Wenda, which distributed a leaflet containing a threat to prevent the elections from going ahead. "They had already carried out an attack against members, right... I mean ojek drivers," said Bagus.

Koteka Lani however, who claims to be the spokesperson for the commander of the TPN-OPM group led by Goliath Tabuni from Wamena, has stated that the attacks, the shooting of ojek drivers and Brimob officers, as well as the other acts of terror, were carried out by his group. "The one running the OPM leadership is General Goliath Tabuni," said Lani. "These were TPN-OPM attacks against Brimob, TNI, Polri (National Police)." He also claimed that the six Brimob officers who were shot in Tinggimambut died on the spot rather than just being wounded as reported by police. "The six Brimob officers died instantly."

But is it true that the perpetrators were OPM? OPM Tapol Napol (OPM Political-Convicted Prisoners) Secretary Filep Karma, in a letter sent to Tempo from Abepura Prison, said he does not believe it. According to Filep, since the 1980s the OPM has abandoned violent means to achieve its political goals. "OPM figures are now in their 70s and are complying with a leadership instruction to struggle through diplomacy and dialog," wrote Filep. He says there is a group claiming to be the OPM that is spreading terror and carrying out the attacks. Their goal, "So that there will be security projects in Papua with huge budgets."

The Papua People's Council (MRP) also doubts the involvement of OPM militia members. "The OPM only attacks the headquarters of security personnel," said MRP Chairman Agus Alue Alua. "It has never murdered civilians or damaged public facilities."

The police are indeed continuing to increase troop numbers. On polling day, 105 Brimob officers from the Southeast Sulawesi Regional Police were deployed in Papua. On Wednesday last week, National Police Headquarters sent 80 Brimob personnel from Kelapa Dua in Jakarta to Papua. "Their arrival coincided with the shooting in Tinggimambut," said Bagus Ekodanto.

Papua Deputy Governor Alex Hesegem views the perpetrators of the riots as being highly organized. "We invite the Papua Traditional Council and the Papua Presidium Council to give it consideration," he said. The tight organization of the network of rioters has been confirmed by Cenderawasih XVII Regional Military Commander Maj. Gen. A.Y. Nasution. In order to assist police, the TNI has deployed thousands of personnel throughout the territory. "This is not a state of emergency, but of civil order," he said. "The police are still in the front line." The high level of security however, does not appear to have prevented

further acts of terror. On the day of the arrival of the Brimob officers from Kelapa Dua, the Asologaima I State Junior High School was burnt to the ground. Yet the school had no electricity, stove or fireplace.

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