

### Pacific Press Release – West Papua Media Alerts

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There have been several reports during the past week in /Bintang Papua/ about a growing sense of dissatisfaction with the MRP, Majelis Rakyat Papua, the Papuan People's Assembly. The newspaper reported that on Thursday, 29 October, on the occasion of the MRP's fourth anniversary, students from Cenderawasih University and from the University of Science and Technology held demonstrations in Jayapura demanding that the MRP be disbanded. Several speakers said that although the Assembly was set up four years ago, it has done virtually nothing to give a voice to the aspirations of the Papuan people.

Besides calling for the MRP's disbandment, the demonstrators called on President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, who has just begun his second term, to take action to resolve the human rights problems in Papua and to immediately release all the political prisoners now imprisoned in Abepura Prison, those already tried as well as those awaiting trial, to be released.

One speaker said that the function and role of the MRP is unclear, it appears to be powerless and has done nothing to side with the interests of the Papuan people.

During the demonstration, demonstrators unfurled a banner saying: "Papuan People Should Immediately Hold Third Congress"

Another article in Bintang Papua on 29 October points out that the MRP has faced many problems because of the limits to its authority.

The deputy chair of the Assembly, Hanna Hokoyabi said that she and her colleagues feel that their powers are very limited, that they are "trapped".

One problem is that even though it has been stipulated by law that indigenous Papuans should occupy eleven seats in the Papuan Legislative Assembly (DPRP), when Papuans raise this, they face problems.

She said that since the time that West Papua was incorporated into Indonesia, very little in the way of development has taken place. Indonesia sees Papua as nothing more than a source of abundant natural resources while the conditions of the people are ignored.

The MRP played no role in decisions such as increasing the size of the DPRP from 45 to 56 seats or in the choice of the governor of the province.

[NB: Special Autonomy Law 21/2001 states in Article 20 (a) that the MRP shall give its views and approval for the candidates for governor and deputy governor; Article 20 (b) states that the MRP shall "give its views and approval for candidates for the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR), the regional representatives of the Papuan Province as proposed by the DPRP" and Article 20 (f) states that "it shall give its views to the DPRP, the Governor, the Regency/City DPRP and Regent/Mayor on matters related to protecting the rights of the indigenous Papuans

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Hokoyabi said that as things stands, it is as if all the MRP is doing is using up money allocated for Special Autonomy while many of its proposals and recommendations have been ignored. "It is as if the MRP is a body without any function which plays no role in the governance in Papua." She said that it has not been able to act in any way to provide protection to the people, while none of the (drafted) provincial regulations (perdasus) have been introduced.

It often faces the stigma of having hidden intentions about seceding from Indonesia though no one says this openly.

The report goes on to mention a number of recommendations regarding for instance the recruitment of indigenous Papuans for jobs, or its opinion regarding the persons being nominated as governor and deputy governor, or its proposals for the adoption of regional decrees (perdasus) about the use of funds for the province or about economic policies promoting the interests of the Papuan people or protecting their natural resources. In such matters, the views of the MRP have simply been ignored. Nor have they been consulted on the recruitment of officers in the police force.

For nine years since the Special Autonomy Law was introduced, it has had no impact at all, she said.