

4 Dutch journalists detained in Indonesia's Papua

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THE HAGUE, Netherlands—Four Dutch journalists have been detained in Indonesia's Papua province while covering a pro-independence rebel's return from exile, the government of the Netherlands said Tuesday.

Indonesian police have filed no charges against the four -- a reporter for NRC Handelsblad newspaper and three documentary makers from the VPRO television network, Foreign Ministry spokesman Herbert Brinkman said.

"Our ambassador is in contact with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Indonesia to ask for all the details of this action," Brinkman said.

Dutch diplomats also are speaking to authorities in the Papuan capital, Jayapura, and police in Jakarta "to ask how long this custody will last and ... whether they have access to a lawyer," Brinkman said.

The four, including the newspaper's Jakarta correspondent Elske Schouten, had been following Nicholas Jouwe, co-founder of a rebel group that is pushing for independence for the eastern province, according to the newspaper's deputy editor Hans Steketee.

Jouwe returned to Papua on Sunday after 40 years in exile.

Brinkman said the reporters may have recorded a demonstration without proper authorization. VPRO did not have information about the detention.

Indonesia took over Papua from the Dutch in 1963 and formalized its sovereignty six years later through a stage-managed vote by about 1,000 community leaders.

A small insurgency has battled Indonesian rule in the impoverished province ever since. About

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100,000 Papuans -- a sixth of the population -- have died in military operations. Last week, suspected rebels attacked a security post, killing a government soldier. ■