

4 Dutch journalists released in Indonesia's Papua

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THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) -- Indonesian authorities released four Dutch journalists who were detained for hours in Indonesia's Papua province while covering a pro-independence rebel's return from exile, one of their employers and the Netherlands government said late Tuesday.

The four, including the NRC Handelsblad newspaper's Jakarta correspondent Elske Schouten and three documentary makers, 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.

Steketee said later that Schouten was released after about 12 hours along with the other three, who were believed to be from the VPRO television network.

"From what I hear from the Dutch embassy they have left police custody," he said. While Schouten was free to return to Jakarta, the other three still "have to sort out some paperwork" with Indonesian authorities, Steketee added.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Herbert Brinkman said he also had heard the four were free but had no further details.

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.

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

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