

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-09-29/west-papua-independence-petition-reports-false-say-un/9001538>

By Indonesia correspondent Samantha Hawley



Photo: Benny Wenda told the press the petition had been passed between homes and villages. (Reuters: Tom Miles)

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The head of the United Nation's decolonisation committee has rejected reports of a secret petition demanding a free vote for independence in West Papua.

Exiled West Papuan independence campaigner Benny Wenda had told the press 1.8 million West Papuans had signed the secret petition that was passed between homes and villages across provinces.

In the reports, Mr Wenda said he presented the petition to the UN Special Committee on Decolonisation.

But from New York, the chairman of the committee said no petition had been received and the report, which first appeared in The Guardian newspaper, was a manipulation.

"Some people are trying to use me and trying to manipulate or whatever," Rafael Ramirez said.

"I'm concerned because some people are trying to use me as propaganda."

Mr Ramirez said West Papua was not on the agenda for the committee and it had a very good and strong relationship with Indonesia.

"Indonesia is a very good friend of ours," he said.

The Indonesian Government condemned the reports of a petition and said it was a political stunt with no credibility.

A spokesman for the Indonesian embassy in Canberra said the chairman's statement had "busted the false claim of the ULMWP".

"This group unfortunately likes to spread hoaxes and lies including by manipulating the media," the spokesman said.

He alleged the group falsely claimed in 2016 that it had delivered a document to the UN secretary-general but it was proven to be untrue.