

West Papua News



The Newsletter of **West Papua Action**
> March 2006 - No. 17

Welcome to West Papua News.

This issue is full of news and suggestions on how you can become involved in the campaign to highlight the ongoing human rights abuses taking place in West Papua. No action is too small - never underestimate the difference you can make! If you are not a member please join; if you are already a member of West Papua Action please encourage a friend or family member to join up too.

We appreciate our existing members but it is also really important for the campaign to have new members: that we continue to grow and make our voices heard in Ireland, on West Papua. A lot has happened in West Papua Action over the last few months but the main change has been the resignation of the co-ordinator for 10 years Mark Doris and the appointment of our new co-ordinator Marzia Baldassari.

Goodbye Mark and thank-you for your commitment and inspiration and for putting West Papua on the map! We wish you all the best in your new life and we give a big welcome to Marzia and wish her luck and success in her new job here at West Papua Action.

A warm welcome to you all members of West Papua Action!!

I am honoured to be part of this campaign to promote awareness about the continuous human rights abuses in West Papua. Mark has left me a rich legacy, which I hope to maintain and expand upon - a task I undertake with enthusiasm. This year we will concentrate on human rights education and raising awareness in Irish society as well as increasing our membership.



Your contribution is important! Support us!

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In the beginning...

I am writing this in the heat of Colombo, Sri Lanka. Iva, my new wife, got a job here with Trócaire / Caritas Sri Lanka, and I have accompanied her. Warm greetings to all members, supporters... and funders of West Papua Action! A special word of good luck to our new Coordinator Marzia, who I am sure, will bring new energy and ideas to the campaign to stimulate awareness and action about West Papua.....

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West Papua in Brief

West Papua, a former Dutch colony, just north of Australia, was taken over by Indonesia in 1963. At least 100,000 people have been killed since the takeover.

Rape, torture, extra-judicial killings, curbs on freedom of assembly, on free access to the media and international observers and even researchers continue to the present.

In 1969, just 1,022 people (out of a population of nearly one million) were rounded up by the Indonesian military to declare their loyalty to the Indonesian state. Termed the "Act of Free Choice" - Papuans call it the Act of No Choice - this was what took place instead of a proper independence referendum, something which West Papuans are still demanding.

Five times the size of Ireland, West Papua contains one of the last great surviving tracts of unspoiled rainforest - part of the lungs of the Earth.

For more see:
<http://westpapuaaction.org>

- February 2006

Arrival of West Papuan Asylum Seekers tests relations between Australian government and Indonesia

The Australian Government faces a potential new flashpoint in relations with Jakarta after 43 asylum seekers from West Papua landed by boat at Cape York.

Australian Greens senator Kerry Nettle immediately called on the Government to "do the right thing" and grant the asylum seekers bridging visas. The 43 Papuans now kept on Christmas Island, who include independence activists, say they could be killed or persecuted if they are forced to return home -- a claim rejected by Jakarta. The President of Indonesia, Dr Susilo Yudhoyono, personally guaranteed to the Australia Prime Minister that the asylum-seekers would not be harmed if they returned to Indonesia.

A grant of asylum by Australia would confirm in the minds of some Indonesian policy-makers that Canberra was seeking to undermine Indonesian sovereignty over West Papua and encourage secessionist sentiment.

The Immigration office will make a final assessment on their applications by mid-April.

- January 2006

Papuan rebel commander arrested over mine ambush

TWELVE alleged Papuan separatists have been arrested over the 2002 ambush of a bus near the giant Freeport McMoRan gold and copper mine that left one Indonesian and two American schoolteachers dead.

The ambush had strained relations between Indonesia and the US, which insisted that the FBI investigate after allegations of Indonesian military involvement. Lengthy inquiries instead blamed the rebel Free Papua Movement (OPM) for the attacks.



The head of the human rights group ELSHAM and leader of the suspects' defence team, Aloysius Renwarin, said the 12 had been lured to their arrest by the FBI, which had promised to take them to New York to tell their version of the incident, alleging military involvement.

The men were told to meet at a hotel in the town of Timika, near the mine, in the remote west of the Indonesian province of Papua, where police arrested them.

One of the 12 is a leading OPM commander, Anthonius Wamang, who has been indicted on two counts of murder and eight counts of attempted murder by a US grand jury hearing into the killings. It is unclear whether Wamang will be handed over to the US or face the Indonesian judicial system.

Papua's Police Chief, Tommy Jacobus, said the suspects were tracked until there was an opportunity to arrest them without bloodshed.

The arrests come just under three months after the US announced it was restoring military ties with Indonesia, lifting a 13-year ban imposed because of human rights violations.



- December 2005

Filep Karma and Yusak Pakage jailed for raising flag

Karma and Pakage were among 200 people who took part in a flag-raising ceremony on 1 December 2004, to commemorate the day in 1961 [when West Papuans adopted the Morning Star flag as the symbol of their independence aspirations].

Police advanced on the crowd, firing warning shots and beating people with batons. Filep Karma was arrested at the site of the demonstration and allegedly beaten by police officers on his way to the police station. Yusak Pakage was among about twenty people arrested later at the police station, when they went to protest Karma's arrest.



On 26 May, and Indonesian court sentenced Filep Karma, a 45 year-old former civil servant, to fifteen years in prison on charges of treason and expressing hostility towards the state. Yusak Pakage, a 26 year-old student, received a ten-year sentence.

West Papua Action group has expressed its solidarity to the West Papuans against this act of force that violates basic human rights through sending letters of appeal to the Indonesian government as the closing note of the AGM held on Dec 3rd 2005.

West Papua Action has launched the St. Patrick's solidarity campaign for Yusak and Filep.

See "News from Ireland".

- September 2005

Senior Police Officers acquitted over Abepura killings

In September 2005, Indonesia's second human rights court acquitted Senior Commissioner Daud Sihombing and Brigadier General Johny Wainal Usman of charges relating to the torturing and killing of civilians during a police raid on student dormitories in Abepura, West Papua.

The decision to discharge two senior police officers accused of human rights abuses in West Papua in 2000 has drawn serious criticism throughout West Papua, Indonesia, and the international community.

Sihombing was the police chief in Jayapura in December 2000, when police raided the student hostels, detained over a hundred people - including pregnant women and young children - and allegedly assaulted and tortured them. They shot dead one high school student, two students later died in police custody, and another was paralysed for life.

Amnesty International described the acquittals as 'a worrying illustration of Indonesia's security forces again being allowed to escape justice', and noted that 'not a single member of Indonesia's security forces has been convicted of these horrific crimes after nearly five years of investigations and legal proceedings. The verdict also denied victims any compensation.'

"Today's verdict also risks giving a green light to future human rights violations by the Indonesian security forces."

- August 2005

Ten thousand Papuans criticize special autonomy implementation

More than 10,000 Papuans stormed into the office of the Papua provincial legislative council in Jayapura on August 12, demanding the government to review its Special Autonomy Law. The Jakarta Post described it as 'one of the largest such demonstrations ever in the province'.

No international correspondents were given permission to travel to West Papua to cover the demonstration. Consequently, the demonstration received no coverage in the international media. This highlights the success of the Indonesian government's policy of denying foreign journalists access to West Papua.



- July 2005

Susilo warns U.S. not to interfere in Papua

President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono warned the U.S. not to interfere in Indonesia's domestic affairs.

The U.S. House of Representatives recently approved a bill on Papua, which if passed into law could increase international pressure for the Indonesian government to allow the people of the resource-rich Papua to vote whether to remain a part of Indonesia or become an independent nation.

Section 1115 of Bill No. 2061 especially questions the Act of Free Choice Indonesia held in 1969, when selected Papuan

elders voted unanimously to join Indonesia "in circumstances that were subject to both overt and covert forms of manipulation", according to the bill.

The bill asks the U.S. secretary of state to file a report analyzing the 1969 Act of Free Choice within 180 days after the enactment of the bill.

Speaking to reporters during a visit to Shenzhen, China, Yudhoyono said such intervention could affect relations between the two countries, which have begun to improve since his election last year and a visit to Washington in May.

Indonesian foreign ministry spokesman Yuri Thamrin said he was confident Indonesia had room to maneuver diplomatically to block any potential negative impacts from the bill.

In the beginning...

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I first heard about West Papua when I saw an RTÉ documentary in 1991. A West Papuan made an emotional appeal to the TV screen to the effect that his people were in danger of disappearing if we - those outside West Papua - did nothing. It stuck in my head. However, apart from writing a letter to the Indonesian dictator Suharto and intermittent attempts to find out more, I didn't really do anything until 1995 when, working part-time on a project partly-initiated by the Laois Justice and Peace group, I had the time and opportunity to look into setting up a solidarity organisation for West Papua in Ireland.

I talked to some of those who had already been there, so to speak - Tom Hyland was of course an inspiration about what could be done with some willpower and planning. Other people like Joe Murray, Brendan Butler and Caitríona Ruane had also shown the way.

The launch was planned for January 1996.

Tom put me in touch with Carmel Budiardjo, who accepted an invitation to speak at that year's Afri conference, and to officially launch West Papua Action. Carmel has become a good friend and it is great to have such a wonderful campaigner for human rights and justice as a patron of the organisation. I remember a late night with a friend putting the finishing touches to a homemade banner which, when unfurled by Carmel in Kildare, would announce our existence - in some style.

Literally within days, the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs had passed an unanimous resolution on West Papua, calling for an investigation by the UN into allegations concerning the fraudulent Act of 'Free' Choice, and we had secured a meeting with the then Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, and some press and radio coverage. **It was a good beginning.**

There have been other highlights in the ten years I was coordinating. The initiation of the International Solidarity Meetings for West Papua, the first of which took place in the year 2000 has helped to grow and strengthen the network internationally.

As an organisation, West Papua Action has progressed from being an ad-hoc group of people to becoming a membership organisation with a board, a Coordinator, and a small office. I think the commitment of members



has been a big factor in making West Papua known by a sizeable number of people in Ireland, and through our website, further field.

Although we achieved an all-party majority of signatures for a Review of the UN's role in the Act of 'Free' Choice, the Government still needs convincing to take up the case.

Ireland has the reputation of being a champion for human rights, but rarely will a government take up a difficult cause without constant pressure.

I think it is true to say that the Government has made interventions on West Papua, particularly at official level, but there remains the hope that it will move beyond a comfort zone of silent diplomacy and try to make a real difference for a defenceless people trapped under a military occupation, who continue to be denied their right to self-determination.

Struggling alongside a people suffering daily intimidation, torture, killing, and humiliation is not easy.

People asked regularly, "How is West Papua?", and I was never sure how to respond. That West Papua was still suffering after 40 years of occupation? One almost had to stay emotionally aloof and focused - like a fireman or a surgeon - to be effective.

But I feel the struggle is worthwhile. And it is always a shot in the arm when I meet people from West Papua in the frontline: I think of John Rumbiak - who is sadly not well at present, Fr Neles Tebay, John Ondawame, Grace Roembiak, Fred Korwa, Benny Giay and many more. Struggle is made easier by the friends made on the journey; and I am lucky to have made many friends both in Ireland and overseas through our mutual engagement with West Papua.

I felt it was a good time however to step down from the helm, and re-charge the batteries. When I get back to Ireland, I'll renew my subscription to West Papua Action, and see how I can help out!

- Mark Doris

The hellish truth behind Papua's paradise

- Paul Kingsnorth

We like to feel that an untouched Lost World exists, peaceful and 'primitive'.

The reality is different.

"Tomorrow," said Galile, "I will take you to the Bird of Paradise. We know where they live. You will hear them, and maybe see them too. They are very beautiful."

My Papuan friend and I were sitting in a thatched hut in a tiny village high in the rainforests of West Papua, the western half of the island of New Guinea. I was, I was proudly told, the first white person ever to come here. As firelight flickered on the walls, Galile was telling me about the wildlife that inhabited the rainforests. It was what he thought I wanted to hear, but it wasn't what he really wanted to tell me.

"You see," he said, staring into the fire, "we are happy that you come here to see our forests. But we want to know why the world does not see the other things that happen to us. Why do you not see the killings of our people? Why do you not see how the soldiers destroy our culture? I tell you now - West Papua is being destroyed. And I want to ask you: why will no one listen?"

I had no answer for Galile then, and I have none now. West Papua rarely makes the news.

When it does, the stories are of the kind that made headlines in the Irish and international media: the discovery of new species of Birds of Paradise or tree kangaroo; the "Stone-Age paradise" of tribal New Guinea. Perhaps we like to feel that such an untouched, Lost World exists, outside of time, peaceful and "primitive".

The reality is very different.

West Papua is certainly one of the most remarkable places on Earth. Swathed in tropical rainforest that is second in size only to that of the Amazon, it is home to around 250 tribes, who have inhabited the country for an estimated 40,000 years and speak, between them, 300 separate languages.

Most continue to live in small villages, harvesting sweet potatoes, growing sago and raising pigs as their ancestors did before them.

But paradise stops there, for West Papua is an occupied land, whose people have no freedom to choose their own government and little control over their land and resources.

It is a country in which calling openly for freedom is punishable by torture, or even death. It is a country which is closed to foreign journalists and human rights workers, and which is flooded with thousands of soldiers, ready to strike at the least sign of dissent. Look at West Papua through the travel books, and it looks like paradise. Look a little closer, and it can start to seem like hell.

What the people of West Papua desperately want, as Galile told me in that highland village, is the world's attention. They need our media, our governments and our NGOs to see what is being done to them - and to do something about it.

The world needs to see, and to stop, the genocide that hides behind those images of paradise.

The remote people of West Papua

West Papua is one of the world's most obscure territories, a rain-forested land that is little known except for its exotic beauty.

But human rights lawyer Yan Christian Warinussy says its indigenous people mainly experience the ugliness of poverty and repression, as they struggle for independence from the ruling Indonesian government.

Warinussy, who has been awarded one of Canada's highest honours for human rights advocates, the John Humphrey Freedom Award, called on Canadians to oppose human rights abuses that he said have been "carried out with total impunity by members of Indonesia's armed forces" during Jakarta's 42-year rule in which thousands of native people reportedly have been killed by government forces. The 41-year-old lawyer began his campaign to defend indigenous rights while in university. The son of a civil servant in the former Dutch government, he grew up at the time of transition to Indonesian rule.

The abuses include "torture, rape, summary executions, arbitrary arrests, disappearances, the killing of indigenous leaders and civilians alike, the displacement of indigenous populations and confiscation of their lands."

Since 1998, when Suharto's 32-year dictatorship ended, Indonesia has won plaudits for its efforts to democratize and its co-operation in the "war against terrorism".

But corruption, massive unemployment and catastrophic terrorist attacks, as well as the dire effects of the Asian tsunami have plagued it.

Indonesia claims that West Papua voted to join it in a 1969 referendum, and that the territory has been granted more rights under a "special autonomy" law. The fairness of the referendum has been disputed, and indigenous people insist they have reaped no rewards from their new status.

Bitterness has overflowed into violence with the rise of guerrilla groups, who are responsible for a number of attacks in West Papua.

Human rights groups, including Amnesty International, point the finger at Indonesia for its repressive measures against indigenous people who are seeking their rights, or are victims of military purges.

Since it took over West Papua, the Indonesian government has settled the territory with Indonesians who were provided with jobs, housing and roads, raising tensions among the indigenous people, who feel increasingly disenfranchised. Indonesians now account for at least 40 per cent of West Papua's 2.3 million population.

"Indigenous people are second-class citizens in their own land," said Warinussy "Those who ask for their rights are treated as militant separatists".

(Toronto Star)

Controversial US goldmine a law unto itself

THE closest most people will get to remote Papua, or the operations of the Freeport-McMoRan Grasberg copper and gold mine, is a computer tour that looks down on the rain-forests and glacier-capped mountains where the American company mines the world's largest gold reserve.

Satellite images reveal the deepening spiral that Freeport has bored out of its Grasberg mine in Indonesia most easterly province, as it pursues a virtually bottomless store of gold. They also show a spreading soot-coloured bruise of almost 1 billion tonnes of mine waste that the company has dumped directly into a jungle river in what was one of the world's last untouched wildernesses.

Faced with a scant regulatory regime, and protected by the Indonesian military, Freeport has maintained an almost impenetrable redoubt as it taps one of the country's richest assets.

Months of investigation by The New York Times revealed a level of contacts and financial support to the military not fully disclosed by Freeport, despite years of requests by shareholders concerned about potential violations of US laws and the company's relations with a military whose human rights record is so blighted that the US severed ties for a dozen years until November.

Company records obtained by the Times show that from 1998 to 2004, Freeport gave military and police officers, and military units, nearly \$US20 million. Individual commanders received tens of thousands of dollars, in one case up to \$US150,000.

"There is no alternative to our reliance on the Indonesian military and police in this regard," the company said. "The need for this security, the support provided for such security, and the procedures governing such support, as well as decisions regarding our relationships with the Indonesian government and its security institutions, are ordinary business activities."

When Freeport first moved to Papua in the 1960s, tribesmen swathed only in penis gourds and armed with bows and arrows among the first outsiders encountered its employees. Since then, Freeport has built an enclosed society with its own economy. "If any operation like this was put forward now, it wouldn't be allowed," said Witoro Soelarno, a senior investigator at Indonesia's Department of Energy and Mineral Resources, who has visited the mine many times. "But now the operation exists, and many people depend on it."

To secure Freeport's domain, James Moffett, a Louisiana-born geologist who is the company chairman, assiduously courted Indonesia's longtime dictator, Soeharto, and his cronies.

As Freeport prospered into a company with \$US2.3 billion in revenues, it also became one of the Indonesian Government's biggest source of revenue.

Freeport says it provided Indonesia with \$US33 billion in direct and indirect benefits from 1992 to 2004, almost 2 per cent of the country's gross domestic product. With gold prices now hitting a 25-year high of \$US540 (\$741) an ounce, the company estimates it will pay the Government \$US1 billion this year.

Letters and other documents obtained by the Times from government officials, show that the Environment Ministry has repeatedly warned the company since 1997 that Freeport was breaching environmental laws.

By Freeport's own estimates it will generate an estimated 6 billion tonnes of rock and waste - more than twice as much earth as was excavated for the Panama Canal.

Much of that waste has already been dumped in the mountains surrounding

the mine or down a system of rivers that descends steeply onto the island's low-lying wetlands, close to Lorentz National Park, a pristine rainforest that has been granted special status by the United Nations.

A multimillion-dollar 2002 study by a US consulting company, Parametrix, paid for by Freeport and its joint venture partner, RioTinto, and not previously made public, noted that the rivers upstream and the wetlands inundated with waste were now "unsuitable for aquatic life".

Repeated requests to Freeport and to the Indonesian Government to visit the mine and its surrounding area, which requires special permission for journalists, were turned down.

(The New York Times)

International Solidarity Meeting for West Papua

The 5th international solidarity meeting took place in Manila, Philippines from April 29 - May 1 2005. During the meeting participants had the opportunity to share information and analysis about the many critical challenges facing the people of West Papua, and to agree common strategies.

The themes of the 5th conference were human rights, self-determination, women's rights environment / foreign investment, and solidarity.

Former coordinator Mark Doris attended on behalf of West Papua Action.

News from Ireland

IRISH CAMPAIGN UPDATE

West Papua Action AGM

West Papua Action's Annual General Meeting took place on Dec 3rd in the Central Hotel, Exchequer St. in Dublin. Richard Samuelson spoke in place of Benny Wenda because Benny who had been scheduled to speak found himself unable to attend the meeting at the last moment as his wife was giving birth-early- to their third child, in Oxford! He spoke powerfully on the current situation in West Papua and he told us about Benny's life in West Papua, before he sought asylum, successfully, in the U.K. Benny believes that he is 'carrying the bones of his people on his shoulders.' He sees himself as the voice of those who cannot speak out because of ever-present repression in West Papua. According to Richard and Benny the Indonesians are frightened that there is going to be another Papuan Spring and the tension is constantly increasing. Some key campaigning points were put forward to focus West Papua Action's work in the coming year:

1. Campaign for access to West Papua by journalists and tourists as well as for freedom of expression and assembly
2. Campaign for the withdrawal of the military to barracks and the withdrawal from West Papua of all non-organic troops

3. Campaign for the freedom of all political prisoners
4. Keep up the international pressure for a United Nations review of the Act of Free Choice.

As a symbolic action during the AGM we have given the opportunity to those who attended the meeting to write a letter to the Indonesian authorities urging the immediate release all prisoners of conscience in West Papua. In particular our concerns were focused on Filep Karma and Yusak Pakage, two peaceful protesters that were arrested at a flag-raising ceremony in Papua on December 1st 2004 and that were subsequently sentenced to 15 and 10 years imprisonment respectively.

Currently the two prisoners are still in prison in very bad conditions. One of them, Filep Kama has been hospitalized with injuries. Allegedly he has been beaten during detention, but the source is not confirmed.

Yusak Pakage, on the other side, suffers from a tumour and supposedly the prison authorities won't permit him to have the necessary medicines for his treatment or allow his doctor to visit him.

IRISH CAMPAIGN UPDATE

St. Patrick's campaign

West Papua Action has launched a new campaign to raise awareness about the situation of two West Papuans, Filep Karma and Yusak Pakage that have been condemned respectively to 15 and 10 years of imprisonment for raising the Morning Star flag during a peaceful demonstration. To mark St. Patrick's Day we would ask you to send a postcard to the two prisoners at the following address:

C/O Pascalis Letsoin
LBH PAPUA
JI Sehat I No. 37B
Kotaraja Jayapura, Indonesia

Please tell your family and friends to do the same. It's a small gesture that will tell Filep and Yusak that they are not forgotten.

CD for West Papua

A CD of contemporary, traditional Irish, blues, French, Spanish, Breton, and English folk mostly recorded live at An Cliabhán Folk Club, was launched last year to raise funds for West Papua Action.

An exciting mix of up-and-coming and more established talent, the 15-track CD costs Euro 10 and all proceeds go to West Papua Action. For more information, or to place orders, contact West Papua Action at (01) 860 3431 or wpaction@iol.ie.

Fundraising gig

Coming soon a free gig in support of West Papua Action! All members and intending members/supporters alike are invited to take part and make a voluntary contribution to the campaign.

If you are interested, please **contact Marzia**:
T. (01) 860 3431 or E. wpaction@iol.ie

Display your Free West Papua bumper sticker

Break the silence on the obliteration of a people, and keep the issue alive with the public and with politicians, by displaying your Free West Papua bumper sticker prominently. To order more bumper stickers, contact West Papua Action.



TAKE ACTION

Volunteers WANTED!

Have you an interest in promoting human rights? Would you like to know more about Peace and Justice?

Help us! West Papua is looking for motivated people to support and carry out activities for the campaign in Ireland.

Members WANTED!

Do you want to support the West Papua campaign, but you haven't got time? Now you can contribute in a very simple and important way!

If you haven't already done so, please consider joining West Papua Action. Membership (from January to December) will entitle you to a constant update on West Papua, to receive our Newsletter and be notified of meetings and events.

To join, just send EUR 15 (concessions available) to **West Papua Action**, 134 Phibsborough Road, Dublin 7 along with your name and contact details.

Schools

Are you a teacher or parent? Maybe you would like to involve your school in the West Papua Action Campaign. West Papua Action is enrolling schools to organize joint projects on human rights education.

For any information contact Marzia at wpaction@iol.ie or at 01 8603431.

We would love to hear from you!

Sign the UN petition online
<http://westpapuaaction.buz.org/unreview/index.htm>

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The views expressed herein are those of West Papua Action and can in no way be taken to reflect the official opinion of Development Cooperation Ireland.

The contents of this publication are solely the responsibility of **West Papua Action**, 134 Phibsborough Road, Dublin 7.

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