



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: July 28, 2005

Washington, D.C. -- United States House of Representative passes H.R. 2601, the State Department Authorization Bill

Congressman Faleomavaega announced that the U.S. House of Representative passed H.R. 2601, the Department of State Authorization Act for FY 2006 with a vote of 351 to 78 in favor of the bill. This bill included historic language submitted by Congressman Faleomavaega and Congressman Donald Payne regarding West Papua. Excerpts from Congressman Faleomavaega's floor statement following the passage of this significant bill appear below.

“At the outset, I want to first extend my congratulations, and I commend the good people of Indonesia for having achieved this new milestone in their political development towards a democratic form of government. I commend the newly elected President of Indonesia, President Yudhoyono, and I wish him well in all his efforts to fight corruption and bring about democratic reforms in the new government.”

Congressman Faleomavaega emphasized the role of Indonesia's Pacific neighbors in addressing problems in West Papua:

“It is my sincere hope that the Australian Prime Minister will seriously rethink his government's policy towards West Papua New Guinea, and I urge all Pacific nations of the Forum Organization not to turn their backs on West Papua New Guinea. As former colonies themselves, the Forum nations should take the matter of West Papua New Guinea before the United Nations for reexamination, especially regarding the faulty policies that were implemented by the United Nations towards West Papua New Guinea in years past.”

“History has been kind neither to the people of Indonesia nor to the people of West Papua New Guinea. Under the military dictatorships of Presidents Sukarno and Suharto, some 1 million Indonesians were brutally murdered, similar to the killing fields in Cambodia under Pol Pot. And by the same token, since the military takeover of West Papua by the Indonesian Army in 1969, approximately 100,000 West Papuans were murdered and tortured; and it continues even as I speak today. In fact, according to human rights reports and West Papuans themselves, approximately 300,000 to 400,000 West Papuans have been murdered, tortured to death, and have disappeared at the hands of the Indonesian military.”

“I am delighted to say that this bill requires Secretary Rice and the Department of State to reexamine the special autonomy law that was supposed to give autonomy to West Papua. It is my understanding that the autonomy law that was passed by the Indonesian parliament, while substantive, is worth nothing more than the paper that it was written on. The autonomy law is nothing but a sham, a complete farce, and the Indonesian government should be ashamed of its actions.”

Drawing attention to ongoing human rights abuses perpetrated against the indigenous people of West Papua, the Congressman continued:

“We cannot allow the repeat of history. Rather, we must work to ensure that the central government acts in concert with the needs of the indigenous people of West Papua. Human rights abuses committed by the Indonesian military over decades, including those related to environmental degradation, still continue today. Under the repressive regimes of Presidents Sukarno and Suharto, military brutality continues. The Indonesia military and special forces have in the past 3 years alone murdered 81 indigenous Papuans, tortured, beaten and jailed 34 more Papuans, displaced some 6,393 families from their homes, and burnt down 23 churches and 370 traditional houses.”

“For too long, the cries of the West Papuans have fallen on deaf ears, and I pray that with the concerted attention of the Congress the international community will support this effort.”

With the passing of H.R. 2601, Congressman Faleomavaega continues his pursuit of international support and attention for the people of West Papua. This represents an important step for the U.S. Congress on the road to gaining justice for West Papuans.