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The West Papua Report April 2005

The following is the 14th in a series of regular reports prepared by the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Center for Human Rights (CHR)-West Papua Advocacy Team providing updates on developments in West Papua. The CHR has monitored and reported on the human rights situation in West Papua since 1993 when Indonesian lawyer Bambang Widjojanto received the annual RFK Human Rights Award.

For more information, contact:

Emily Goldman, RFK Senior Program Officer – (202) 463-7575 ext. 235 or 1-800-558-1880

Abigail Abrash Walton, Advocacy Team Member – (603) 357-2651

Summary/Contents

- **Indonesian Government Attempts to Block West Papua Solidarity Meeting in the Philippines; Delegates Support West Papua as Land of Peace**
- **Police Charged with Murder and Other Crimes Remain At Large; Focus of Student Protest**
- **Indonesian Authorities Illegally Transfer Papuan Prisoners; Focus of Student Protest**
- **Marginalization of Papuans in Their Own Land: Wasur Park Case Study**
- **World Evangelical Alliance Warns of Genocide in West Papua**
- **Upcoming in May: A Report from the Field**

Indonesian Government Attempts to Block West Papua Solidarity Meeting in the Philippines; Delegates Support West Papua as Land of Peace

For the first time in its six-year history, the International Solidarity Campaign for West Papua (ISCWP) faced intimidation at its meeting held in Manila April 29-May 1, 2005. By contrast, previous meetings held in Europe and the Pacific have proceeded without threat.

According to the ISCWP's May 1 statement, Indonesian authorities complained to the President of the Philippine Senate and the Filipino government's Department of Foreign Affairs, calling for the government to ban the ISCWP meeting. Indonesian authorities reportedly also approached the Board of the University of the Philippines – the site for the meeting – in an attempt to block the meeting, but board members "were emphatic that the meeting should take place and allowed it to go ahead on their campus. Our organizers and delegates came under some annoying verbal harassment from pro-Jakarta elements but those problems pale into insignificance once we consider that West Papuan people cannot discuss any issues about their political aspirations without facing military repression."

The ISCWP statement quotes Initiatives for International Dialogue, the Filipino host for the meeting, as saying, "We were disturbed that the Indonesian government tried to get the meeting stopped, but we are pleased that the Philippine Government has hopefully learnt the lesson of East Timor, when they tried to stop a similar meeting at this venue from going ahead."

Delegates from 15 countries, including many from Asia, participated in the ISCWP meeting. Participants strongly condemned the decision by the Indonesian government to increase the number of military troops in West Papua, in particular the deployment of KOSTRAD (Strategic Reserve Force) troops there, bringing the planned total number of troops in West Papua to 50,000. They stated their commitment to giving urgent priority to the international campaign for an end to all military co-operation and all arms sales to Indonesia. Delegates also “expressed warm support for calls by the West Papuan people for their homeland to become a LAND OF PEACE, in face of the decision by the Indonesian authorities for the militarization of West Papua.”

Meeting participants further called for:

* stronger support for West Papuan women’s groups and implementation of national and international laws to protect West Papuan women against all forms of violence in the home and from Indonesian state forces;

* the release of all West Papuan political prisoners; and

* open and unfettered access to West Papua.

Police Charged with Murder and Other Crimes Remain At Large; Focus of Student Protest

According to the *Jakarta Post* (April 19), approximately 800 students from the United West Papua Democratic Students Front demonstrated in the West Papuan capital of Jayapura on April 18 to demand that two police officers charged for their roles in human rights abuses more than four years ago in Abepura, West Papua, be imprisoned. Protesting against continued impunity for human rights crimes, the students underscored that the two officers were still free and employed by the national police.

The human rights crimes transpired Dec. 7, 2000, in Abepura, West Papua, after a confrontation between local people and the police. Following the conflict the Abepura police, assisted by the Jayapura Mobile Brigade (Brimob) paramilitary unit, began a hunt for the perpetrators by scouring nearby residential areas and hostels, including a student dormitory. The police arrested, assaulted and tortured at least 99 people, who they claimed were suspects in the police station attack. The police killed three people in these retaliatory raids.

At the time of the incident, the two officers charged with responsibility for the torture and killings were serving as Jayapura Brimob unit chief and local police chief. The trial of these police officials, launched 11 months ago, is currently in limbo. Court proceedings have been suspended before testimonies of expert witnesses from the police and prosecutors were complete.

The case is the first to be tried by the human rights court established by the central Indonesian government as one of its supposed reform efforts to deal with human rights problems. As such, the case is of particular significance, not only as one of the first times that Indonesian law enforcement personnel have been held accountable for criminal acts but also as an indication of Jakarta’s commitment to addressing sincerely and effectively the severe and widespread human rights violations that its armed forces have committed throughout West Papua.

Indonesian Authorities Illegally Transfer Papuan Prisoners; Focus of Student Protest

On April 20, students from West Papua protested the illegal transfer of nine West Papuan prisoners from West Papua to a detention center in Makassar (South Sulawesi) in December 2004. Reports by Detik.com and the British Broadcasting Corporation, which served as the basis for this account, noted that the demonstration took place at the local Parliament in Makassar which thus far has refused to take up this human rights issue, i.e., that the transfer of prisoners, was undertaken without the required government notification to their counsel or their families. The nine prisoners had previously been held in the Wamena jail in West Papua, on charges related to the theft of arms from the Wamena TNI Armory and in connection with the raising of the West Papuan Morning Star flag in 2003.

According to the student demonstrators, the prisoners were beaten when they sought to assert their rights and protested their transfer to Makassar.

Marginalization of Papuans in Their Own Land: Wasur Park Case Study

Recent editions of the RFK Memorial’s *West Papua Report* have noted extensive illegal local logging in West Papua by TNI-

supported firms and others that has severely affected the environment and affected local people in West Papua. The following report notes that it is not only illegal logging that has severely impacted local Papuans.

On April 19, the *Jakarta Post* reported on the marginalization of Papuans residing in West Papua's Wasur National Park. The park, rich in biodiversity, is 13 kilometers from Merauke and home to 14 villages with a population of more than 2,500 Papuans who survive on subsistence agriculture and hunting. The park and its traditional inhabitants reportedly are threatened by illegal hunting and logging.

The local Papuan communities hunt according to traditional methods, which are bio-sustainable. These methods include bans on hunting certain prey at specific times so as to allow animals opportunities to breed.

The threats to the park and local people arise from a rapidly changing demographic situation with origins in the "*transmigrasi*" (transmigration) policies developed under the Suharto dictatorship. Those policies have made Papuans the minority in the Merauke area where they constitute only 30 percent of the population. Javanese make up 40 percent of the Merauke area population, followed by Makassarese (20 percent), and Manadonese, Maduranese, Acehnese, and Chinese (10 percent).

Non-indigenous people have adopted new hunting methods and employ modern weaponry. Typically, the non-indigenous people obtain their arms from the Indonesian state security forces, ignoring hunting restrictions. The refusal to abide by local hunting restrictions has led to severe depletion of deer, tree kangaroo, and wild boar. The scarcity of meat has affected both the diet of local Papuans and their income, as they had previously sold excess meat in the local markets.

Local Papuans also rely on sago flour from sago palms for their carbohydrate intake. Damage to forests has also reduced this key ingredient in the local diet.

The failure of the Indonesian central government to provide for local education since Jakarta annexed West Papua in 1969 has left Papuans unable to compete for local jobs, further complicating their economic plight.

The *Jakarta Post* article notes that Mgr. Nicolaus Adi Seputra MSC, the Catholic Archbishop of Merauke, explained that "modernization represents a point of no return, and this has greatly prejudiced the Wasur people."

The plight of the Wasur people is replicated throughout West Papua, where the indigenous population, long ignored by the central government, faces competition from government-sponsored and other migrants whose skills, close ties to state security, and other government bureaucracy provides them with unfair advantage in the competition for dwindling natural resources.

World Evangelical Alliance Warns of Genocide in West Papua

On April 14, the *The Christian Post* (San Francisco/USA) reported the conclusion of the World Evangelical Alliance that "Papuans are facing genocide while those with worldly power turn away." The contention was made public by the group's Evangelical Alliance Religious Liberty Commission in a recently released report which noted that "Papuans, often Christian leaders, are frequently killed by the Indonesia military" (TNI), which it stated "are constantly trying to provoke retaliation that could be claimed to justify a full scale massacre against the so-called 'separatist threat'."

The report concluded that the TNI "terrorizes Papuans from helicopters, shooting civilians, burning villages and churches, and forcing thousands to flee their homes and hide in the jungle where they die of starvation, illness or injury." According to the report, TNI-created militias, including the Islamic fundamentalist Laskar Jihad, are preparing "a major ethnic cleansing campaign." The report expresses "utmost concern" about the systematic 'ethnic cleansing' undertaken by Indonesian military operations, and the possibly deliberate introduction of AIDS and other diseases.

Observing that the Indonesian government is motivated principally by economic gain, specifically exploitation of vast timber and mineral resources, the report describes foreign governments as having turned a blind eye to Jakarta's policies so as to assure ties to Indonesia.

Upcoming in May: A Report from the Field

A member of the West Papua Advocacy Team visited West Papua in April. We plan to include a report on the trip findings in the *May West Papua Report*.