



DONATE

The West Papua Report January 2006

The following is the 23rd 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, please contact:

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

*Edmund McWilliams, West Papua Advocacy Team Member – (703) 899-
5285 and (703) 237-3913*

If you were forwarded this email and would like to receive the West Papua Report in the future, please [click here to subscribe](#). Remember to click the box labeled "West Papua Report" in the form.

Summary/Contents

- [Australians Reportedly Find Papuan Refugees' Claims of Torture Credible](#)
- [U.S. House Members Express Concern Over Refugees to Australian Prime Minister](#)
- [Retaliation Feared In Shooting of Civilians After Refugees Flee West Papua's Panai District](#)
- [Indonesian Authorities Detain Eight Papuans in August 2002 Attack Near Timika](#)
- [Growing Pressure on U.S. Firm Freeport-McMoRan over its Relationship with Indonesian Military](#)
- [Unarmed Villagers Fired on by Police in Paniai](#)

Australians Reportedly Find Papuan Refugees' Claims of Torture Credible

A group of 43 Papuan asylum seekers, including seven children, landed in the Port York area of Queensland, Australia on 17 January 2006. They immediately appealed for human rights asylum and refugee status on the basis of claims of extraordinary human rights abuses committed by the Indonesian military in West Papua.

Help Support the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial through our Membership Program

Your membership donation will ensure that the Memorial continues its efforts in human rights around the globe. You would join our 36 RFK Human Rights Laureates in 21 countries who are:

Fighting to end slavery in America's produce fields.

Giving New Orleans hurricane victims a voice in their future.

Ensuring the people of Chad benefit from the revenues of the Chad/Cameroon pipeline.

Protecting human rights defenders and promoting rights of those displaced by the ongoing conflict in Colombia

Supporting constitutional reform and curbing corruption in Kenya.

Fighting for the implementation of land reform that strengthens human rights and environmental stewardship in Brazil.

Strengthening the peace

The Australian daily *The Age* reported on 30 January 2006 that according to a senior Australian immigration official, the refugees provided "graphic and disturbing accounts of beatings and torture by the Indonesian military." According to this account, an official told *The Age* that the Papuans had a "very strong case" to be granted refugee status. The official added that "some of what has come out of the interviews has been absolutely heart-wrenching." The refugees gave accounts of "vicious bashings while in prison and attacks on villages and livestock in retaliation for the Papuans agitating for independence."

An earlier report in *The Age* on 29 January quoted an Australian official involved in the refugee interviews as stating: "The claims they [the refugees] are making are believable and tally with what Australian intelligence knows about the political situation in the province. Getting out of there is not easy."

The Age describes Australian intelligence officers and immigration officials as particularly impressed by the detailed nature of the asylum seekers' claims, including the account of their escape, which involved making an outrigger canoe from a tree. An Australian source told *The Age*: "This was a remarkable group of people. The boat was seven meters long . . . and it took them four days in stormy weather. They are a committed group."

U.S. House Members Express Concern Over Refugees to Australian Prime Minister

Ten members of the U.S. House of Representatives wrote a letter to Australian Prime Minister Howard regarding the appeal of 43 Papuans for refugee status in Australia. The Congressional letter noted that the Papuans, who endured a harrowing five-day journey in open ocean, were fleeing "unacceptable human rights abuse." The text of the 26 January 2006 letter follows:

Dear Mr. Prime Minister:

We write to you in regards to the asylum appeals of the 43 Papuan men, women, and children who arrived at Port York on January 17. These refugees reached the Australian mainland after an extraordinarily dangerous 220-mile voyage in a small, open boat. We commend the Australian government for its timely and successful efforts to assist these men, women, and children after their harrowing journey; however, we strongly feel that it is equally important that they now be accorded the full rights and privileges which accrue to their refugee status.

Their decision to undertake the arduous ocean voyage during the monsoon season could not have been taken lightly, and reveals the increasingly desperate plight of Papuans facing unacceptable human rights abuse in Papua, Indonesia. The U.S. State Department's most

effort in Liberia.

Eliminating the practice of forcing *dalits* (the untouchable caste) to handle human waste by hand in India.

Fighting for access to medical care and proper public health in Haiti.

Strengthening freedom of expression in Viet Nam.

[Click here to donate using our secure site.](#)

recent Human Rights Report notes that in Papua, "security force members murdered, tortured, raped, beat, and arbitrarily detained civilians . . ." and that the Government of Indonesia "did not report any progress in prosecuting those responsible for acts of torture" committed in Papua.

Facing continuing human rights abuse by Indonesian security forces, these Papuans have risked everything in a flight to freedom. We hope that the Government of Australia will reject public demands by the Indonesian Government to return these refugees to the control of the very same security forces from which they fled.

We respectfully appeal to the Government of Australia to carefully examine these refugees' claims for asylum status and grant asylum to those that meet the international and Australian standards.

Sincerely,

Patrick Kennedy (D - Rhode Island)

Eni Faleomavaega (D - American Samoa)

Tammy Baldwin (D- Wisconsin)

Sam Farr (D - California)

Chaka Fattah (D - Pennsylvania)

Raul Grijalva (D - Arizona)

Jim McGovern (D - Massachusetts)

Dennis Kucinich (D - Ohio)

Donald Payne (D - New Jersey)

Christopher Smith (R - New Jersey)

Retaliation Feared In Shooting of Civilians After Refugees Flee West Papua's Panai District

Indonesian troops fired on civilians in the Panai area on 20 January, killing one youth and wounding two adults near Waghete in Panai District, West Papua. The incident prompted concern that it was related to the flight from Panai to Australia, days earlier, of 43 Papuans seeking human rights asylum and refugee status (see item above). Reports indicate that one of the Papuans shot was a close relative of one of the refugees. Indonesian authorities claimed that the incident grew out of a demonstration that had turned violent. Some local human rights advocates denied this version. Indonesian and local Papuan human rights monitors have launched investigations.

The Associated Press and other media reported that on 23 January over 200 Papuan demonstrators stormed the provincial Parliament in Jayapura, West Papua to protest the shooting. The AP report quoted

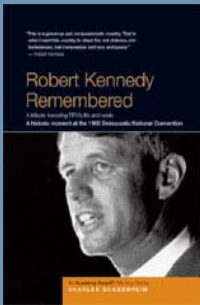
Donate to the Center for Human Rights and Receive a Special Gift.



2005 RFK Human Rights Award and RFK 80th Birthday Ceremony on DVD (Donate \$25)



RFK 80th Birthday Panel Discussion on DVD (Donate \$25)



Robert Kennedy Remembered (Donate \$80 for VHS, \$100 pre-ordered DVD)

witnesses as saying that demonstrators shouted, "Indonesian troops get out of West Papua!"

The Australian opposition foreign affairs spokesman Kevin Rudd expressed concern that the arrival of the refugees might have been linked to the shooting, stating, "It's important for Foreign Minister Alexander Downer, as a matter of absolute priority, to establish who precisely has been killed and were there any connections between these individuals and those who have sought asylum on Cape York."

Indonesian Authorities Detain Eight Papuans in August 2002 Attack Near Timika

Indonesian authorities have detained eight Papuans whom they allege were involved in the 31 August 2002 attack on U.S. school teachers that left two U.S. citizens and one Indonesian dead. Among those detained was Antonius Wamang who was indicted by a U.S. grand jury in July 2004 in the deadly attack. Among the seven others is one child who would have been 12 years of age at the time of the incident and a Catholic priest who had facilitated the surrender of the group to FBI agents in Timika.

Reports from human rights advocates in Papua indicate that the group, plus four others who were subsequently released, were lured to a meeting organized by the FBI under false FBI assurances that the group would be able to surrender to U.S. authorities and then be brought to the U.S. for trial. Instead, the FBI reportedly turned the group over to a special Indonesian security detachment known as "Team 88." That team, established and equipped with U.S. funding, has been the target of recent charges of human rights abuse by Indonesian NGOs, including warrantless arrests. There are well-substantiated accounts that once in Indonesian control, some of the group were mistreated. The eight detainees were transported to Jakarta via Jayapura where Papuans protested the transfer to Jakarta.

Wamang, according to his lawyer, has reiterated contentions made in the past to international journalists and observers that Indonesian military personnel assisted him by participating in the attack.

Human rights advocates have expressed concern that the Indonesian court system, which has historically failed to render justice in many cases involving the military, is highly unlikely to render an honest or just verdict in this instance.

An account on 27 January 2006 in *The New York Times* reported that according to an Indonesian investigator, "The police involved in the investigation still believe the military was involved. . . . But this



Limited Edition (Numbered and Signed) David Hume Kennerly Photo (Donate \$1000)



Limited Edition (Numbered and Signed) Bill Eppridge Photo (Donate \$1000)

A portion of your donation is tax deductible.

Your contribution would help to make a ripple of hope of Robert Kennedy's living legacy.

involves relations between the two countries. It will be difficult for the police to dare to say the military was involved."

Growing Pressure on U.S. Firm Freeport-McMoRan over its Relationship with Indonesian Military

A lengthy report in *The New York Times* on 26 December 2005 and an editorial in that newspaper on 9 January 2006 detailed long-term hidden payments by Freeport-McMoRan to the Indonesian military as well as the ecological devastation caused by its mining operation.

Revelations about Freeport's payments to individual Indonesian military officers, including some widely reported to have committed war crimes, have prompted new government scrutiny in both the U.S. and Indonesia. In the U.S., the Security and Exchange Commission and Justice Department have received complaints from major Freeport shareholders who claim Freeport made "false or misleading" statements about payments to the Indonesian military. Ranking minority member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Senator Joseph Biden (D-Delaware), calling the payments "highly irregular," also called for a Justice Department investigation. Earlier, RFK Memorial West Papua Advocacy Team representatives made similar appeals to officials in the State Department and the National Security Council, noting possible violations of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act.

In Indonesia, senior officials in the Attorney General's Office, Defense Ministry, and Environment Ministry have indicated investigations are, or soon may be, underway.

Unarmed Villagers Fired on by Police in Paniai

A gathering of approximately 20 unarmed villagers were fired on by police in Waghete, Paniai on their way to the local police station recently. Three people were repairing and setting up toll booths (with approval from the village leader) on the only highway that runs from the coast to the interior. Once completed the task, the three walked to the local police station to submit a letter to the police from the village leader giving the three permission to undertake the road project. A police officer, upon receipt of the letter, tore it up and forced them to leave the premises. They departed and walked to the market, where they told what had transpired to approximately 17 other people who were present in the market at the time. Upon hearing the story, all 20 began walking back to the police station to peacefully protest the police action. Before they got to the station, police and military opened fire on them. The villagers tried to hide and run away but the shooting continued. One middle-school boy was killed and two people are being treated in the hospital as a result of bullet wounds to their backs. The incident occurred between

the market and the police station (a distance of approximately two blocks), near the Wakei River.

1367 Connecticut Avenue, N.W. Suite 200 | Washington D.C. 20036
Phone: 202.463.7575 | Fax: 202.463.6606