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The West Papua Report September 2005

The following is the 20th 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.

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Growing Papuan Protest over Central Government Creation of "Papuan People's Council" with Minimal Papuan Input

The *Jakarta Post* (October 27) reported that the Central Government "ignoring public opposition" and announced that 42 Papuans had been "elected" to serve on the Papuan People's Council (MRP). In fact, all 42 members of the body were appointed by local officials, notwithstanding requirements that two-thirds of the body be elected by the people. According to implementing legislation, the 42 members are to include 14 representatives of traditional communities, 14 representatives for women, and 14 others representing religious communities. Representatives of traditional and women's communities are supposed to be elected through a popular ballot, while religious representatives are supposed to be chosen by religious institutions across Papua.

Establishment of the MRP, and rules for election of two-thirds of its membership, is set out under the Papuan Special Autonomy Law (No. 21/2001). Under this law, the MRP would have the power to approve candidates for the governorship and for membership in the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) for Papua though these powers appear to have been substantially watered down.

Various problems immediately arose over qualification of some of those selected with the contention that some tribal "representatives" were not in fact of the region or tribe they were purportedly to represent.

A 28 October *Jakarta Post* report noted that one prominent Papuan opposition figure had rejected the "elections." Tom Beanal, the chairman of the Papuan Customary Council (DAP), said the election was unfair as the government had interfered in the process. According to the *Jakarta Post*, Beanal revealed that government officials through the Nationhood Unity Office had chosen pro-government leaders to represent their constituencies without even a semblance of a fair election. According to the *Jakarta Post* account, Beanal complained that the government failed to provide an opportunity for people to elect their own representatives. As an example, he noted that the appointment of the MRP member for Timika had never been approved by the public. "There was no election, and suddenly an MRP member representing the area has been chosen," he said. Beanal placed the MRP election in historic context noting that the election of MRP members was similar to the so-called "Act of Free Choice" in 1969, which led to the annexation of West Papua by the Indonesian Government under then dictator Soeharto. "The 1969 ballot was unfair as the government had arranged the outcomes to ensure that Papua was incorporated into Indonesia," recalled Beanal.

Adding to the stage-managed nature of the MRP's creation, Papua Governor J.P. Salossa has appointed 13 officials to manage the MRP secretariat in Jayapura.

The *Jakarta Post* reported on 29 October that protests over the MRP's formation were prompting continued protest in West Papua. According to the report, more than 100 people marched to the Papuan People's Representatives Council's (DPRP) office in Jayapura on 28 October to protest the "election" of MRP members. Protesters, organized by the United Front for the West Papuan People's Struggle, rallied outside the DPRP office after being prevented by police from entering the local legislative compound. The protesters demanded that President Yudhoyono stop the establishment process of the MRP, which they called a "puppet government."

The protesters argued that the 28 representatives were selected by local regents instead of being elected by people as required in bylaw no. 4/2005 on recruitment of MRP members. They noted that even the religious representatives to be inaugurated for the assembly were not those selected by religious leaders. Separately, a spokesman for Jayapura Bishop Januaris Youw confirmed that Catholic representatives to the assembly were not recommended by the city's diocese.

Growing International Concern about HIV/AIDS Explosion in West Papua

At the Pan-Pacific AIDS Conference in Auckland, New Zealand in late October, there was extensive discussion in the plenary sessions and workshops regarding HIV/AIDS in West Papua. In one important outcome, participants resolved that the organizing committee recommend to the regional and international HIV/AIDS bodies that West Papua be included as part of the Pacific family of nations.

According to statistics presented at the Conference, the problem of HIV/AIDS is greater in West Papua than even neighboring Papua New Guinea, where the infection rates are said to be at epidemic levels. Comparing the prevalence rates of people living with AIDS, the figures for West Papua are at least one and one-half times greater than the Papua New Guinea figures. Moreover, West Papua has recently been determined to have the highest HIV/AIDS incidence in Indonesia, higher even than in metropolitan Jakarta.

While the conference had no formal representation from any of the West Papuan health and community organizations, Adolfina (Dolly) Zongonnau, a West Papuan human rights activist currently based in Vanuatu, participated and was recognized and thanked by participants.

A press release issued by the West Papua Human Rights Committee noted that the HIV/AIDS problem in West Papua is made worse by poor health monitoring and the presence of illegal brothels established by the Indonesian military and staffed by prostitutes brought in from outside the territory. This situation is at its worst in the Timika region, close to the giant Freeport McMoran gold and copper mine. It added that there are also strong cultural taboos which militate against the open advocacy of condom use.

The press release asserted that it was vital that the family of Pacific nations not overlook West Papua, whose people are Melanesian and who are separated from their neighbors in Papua New Guinea only by a colonial-era boundary. The two countries share common cultural traditions and are linked by family and tribal connections. There is a constant flow across the border of migrants, traders, and refugees. The press release argued that the conference must include West Papua in its strategizing for prevention measures, control of the incipient epidemic, and help for the sufferers. It added that "West Papua needs the help of its Pacific neighbors to plan programs which are in line with Pacific values."

University of Sydney Study Discusses Ethno-genocide in West Papua

A University of Sydney study published in summer 2005 (noted in the September *West Papua Report*), *inter alia*, raises concern about ethno-genocide in West Papua. In the report, Michael Rumbiak, formerly a leading Papuan demographer at Papua's Cenderawasih University (now deceased), pointed out that Indonesia's family planning program is seen by Papuans as a depopulation program. The report notes that the Indonesian government program seeks to restrict Papuan families to two children. Rumbiak, as cited in the report, argued that HIV/AIDS, the lack of adequate health services, and the high mortality rates among women and children had already reduced Papua's population growth to zero. Rumbiak recommended that the program in Papua set a target per family of five children with subsidies to support family economic and health needs.

The report notes that according to Rumbiak, HIV/AIDS cases in Papua "are on a sharp increase – a huge, hidden, slow, and silent but sure threat." He warned that there are many hidden sufferers and recommended strong government policies to halt this growth. The main source of the disease is Thai fishermen, but calls by church and community groups to send these fishermen home have had no effect.

The demographer also warned that transmigration policies have impoverished local people due to their loss of traditional land rights. He cites as an example the village of Arso in the Jayapura district, where the population has grown from 1,000 in 1970 to 20,000 in 2000; transmigrants were more numerous and strong, pushing Papuans into the barren hills.

Taking all these points together, Rumbiak said it would lead to depopulation and the extinction of Papuans in the villages unless radical counter-measures are adopted. The report includes interviews with a number of West Papuans including Simon Morin, member of Parliament, a victim of the Wasior human rights abuses case, Mama Yosepha Alomang, an environmentalist who won the Goldman environmental award in 2000, the Reverend Herman Awom, deputy chair of the Evangelical Church in Papua, Lena, an HIV counselor, and Tom Beanal, chairperson of the Dewan Adat and acting chair of the Papua Presidium Council.

A copy of the report is available at <http://www.arts.usyd.edu.au/centres/cpacs/wpp.htm> or from the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Sydney, wpp@arts.usyd.edu.au.

Senior Papuan Faith Leaders Unite to Press for Peace and Address Grievances

A 19 October article published by the Catholic Institute for International Relations (CIIR) reported that in late September, 87 representatives from all five major faith communities in West Papua (Protestant, Catholic, Muslim, Buddhist, and Hindu) joined in an interfaith prayer/march to celebrate their shared commitment to peace. The peace march was also an act of defiance against efforts to divide the community. Approximately 500 people joined a 10-km march on 20 September to inaugurate a week-long series of events related to the "Papua, Land of Peace" campaign.

At the close of the workshop, faith leaders issued a strong statement of their shared concerns and a joint appeal for peace. These concerns included instability in the region, arising in part from a recent decision to increase the number of troops in Papua by as many as 15,000. The leaders also expressed concern about increased military operations and the prospect of communal tensions or conflict.

In their most significant conclusion, the faith leaders asserted: "We have witnessed ourselves how Special Autonomy has failed to improve the plight of Papuan communities." They explained this assessment in the form of a lengthy critique of the state of affairs in West Papua which took the form of a joint statement. It noted in part:

"... [T]he tendency to exploit religion for political purposes [as well as] theological conflict created by government policy that is not in the spirit of rights to religious freedom afforded by the Indonesian Constitution. The leaders also expressed concern about discrimination in the provision of public services to religious minorities (on a national level), and the lack of recognition for those faiths that represent a majority of the population in regional areas."

The leaders criticized manner in which "the law is sold off to the highest bidder." As a consequence, they noted that "the human rights of Papuans have been neglected, customary rights have not been upheld, and those in positions of power enjoy impunity from prosecution."

Regarding the West Papuan economy, the religious leaders expressed concern about the "theft and destruction of natural resources" which they described as "rife." They complained further that "there is no real commitment to promote development in Papua" and that "the majority poor community (indigenous Papuans) have been economically disempowered. . . .The provision of economic facilities and infrastructure is not fair."

The faith leaders' critique of the central government's efforts in the field of education was extensive and detailed:

"We are concerned by the prevalence of falsified degrees and qualifications. There has been insufficient effort to develop a school curriculum relevant to local cultures. The welfare of teachers is poor, and there is a low standard of teacher training and skills. School textbooks are not properly distributed to village areas and there is a low level of support from the government and education foundations for the development of the education sector in Papua. "

Similarly, when discussing the health sector, the community leaders were highly critical of the central government's record:

"We are concerned about the poor availability of drugs, particularly in remote areas and the lack of medical personnel in villages. We are concerned about the poor terms and conditions for medical personnel, low standards of service, the lack of health equipment and facilities, as well as the insufficient funding for the community health sector. We are also worried about the poor awareness among the community of health issues, the high child and maternal death rates, the spread of HIV/AIDS, and the low level of family welfare."

The faith leaders expressed worry over social problems including drug abuse, domestic violence, and child neglect, which they contended "have not been given the serious attention they require." They added in general that "social facilities and infrastructure are also inadequate."

Finally, addressing themselves to politics and the state of governance in Papua, the faith leaders drew attention to "the fact [that] the community regards politics as corrupt." They expressed the view that "the law is compromised to serve the interests of particular people or groups [and that] there is a tendency for politics to create divisions within the community, a prevalence of money politics, and the weakness of democracy given the failure to fully involve the people in decision-making." In conclusion, they added that "customary communities, faith communities, and women have not been given a place in the development process."

The Political Economy of Rice

A recent article published in The Jakarta Post.com, "Rice 'Out of Reach' for Papuan Residents in Remote Villages" (17 October 2005), reflects another strategy to "Indonesianize" Papuan identity. Introducing the Papuan adoption and access to rice as measures of successful participation in the Indonesian nation-making project through the highland development program "rice-for-the-poor scheme" (*Jakarta Post*), Indonesia is engaging in a form of 'rice politics' that is successfully marginalizing Papuans. The *Jakarta Post* article asserts that rice is a luxury item for Papuans: "Don't ask people in Papua's remote areas how rice tastes, because for them, rice is a luxury." The assumption is that all Papuans want rice. The article asserts that the Dryland Rice Cultivation program in Puncak Jaya is making efforts to "improve the lives of residents through rice cultivation." The shift from sweet potato to rice would mark a significant shift in identifying with Papuan (Melanesian) to Asian lifeways, thereby eliminating an important component of Papuan culture.

The article contrasts traditional (i.e., Papuan) and modern (i.e., Indonesian) life, stating that "typical Papuans" work "without pondering [about] their children's future," whereas the Indonesian development programs are implemented so that Papuan parents "will no longer have to worry about their children's education expenses." The fact is that Papuans are benefiting neither nutritionally nor economically from the rice scheme and they are deeply concerned about their children's future, particularly under Indonesian economic and political control. Furthermore, rice has less nutritional value (i.e., amino acids, nutrient density, carbohydrates, and fiber) than sweet potatoes.

Many Papuans refuse to eat rice as a symbolic protest against the encroachment of Indonesian business, culture, and economy in their lives. In contrast to the article's depiction of Papuans as unknowledgeable of agriculture practices, most Papuans have demonstrated significant agency over their lives. They have a history of harvesting that dates back 9,000 years. The article paints a picture of Papuans as needy, hungry people and that their inability to purchase rice illustrates their poverty. However, the Indonesian government introduced rice, which is a high-value item to Indonesians, and measures

Papuan poverty and wealth by Papuan access to it. Given that most Papuans survive on a simple diet of a few items, by introducing a less nutritious, government-subsidized food source that holds high value among Indonesians, and undercutting the price of local agricultural products, Indonesian authorities and business persons have introduced an economic incentive to exchange sweet potato for rice in the Papuan diet. Since rice is sold by transmigrant business persons, the political economy of rice has become another strategy to "Indonesianize" Papuan identity and suggests that, in an attempt to develop an export agricultural sector in Papua, Indonesia is in fact marginalizing Papuans as a pariah class in need of Indonesian overlordship to sustain their lives.

Yan Christian Warinussy to Visit Canada

Yan Christian (Chris) Warinussy, a Papuan human rights defender, is this year's John Humphrey Freedom Award laureate. Chris has played a major role in protecting human rights in West Papua and helping the Papuan peoples struggle against military and corporate oppression in their own land. He will be visiting Canada from 28 November to 10 December 2005 to accept Canada's most prestigious human rights award. His hard work, expertise and commitment make him a most deserving recipient.

As the Executive Director of the Organization for Legal Aid, Research, Investigation, and Development (LP3BH) in West Papua, Chris has been a partner of Alternatives since 2001. Alternatives' CIDA-funded Supporting Peace in Papua project supported Chris's work with remote communities in Bintuni Bay. The project focused on strengthening the human rights of villagers displaced and affected by the establishment of a major Liquefied Natural Gas facility being built by BP (formerly British Petroleum).

Alternatives' and LP3BH's partnership focuses on providing legal support for the villagers, development assistance for cooperative enterprises (such as sugar palm production), and helping the communities to envision a fair and egalitarian development plan. So far the results have been impressive, with over 200 villagers engaging in new economic activities, and five villages setting up cooperatives to manage development assistance funds.

Increased Presence of Indonesian Armed Forces in West Papua

Approximately 1,500 Indonesian troops arrived on 17 October in two different places in Nabire to provide security around the process of the MRP election. Church leaders in Jayapura have rejected MRP's election process because of the lack of transparency (as noted in an item above). Papuans, including students in Jayapura, rejected special autonomy as well as the MRP process of election. Those people who rejected the government's agenda and policy of autonomy for Papua are experiencing intimidation and terror.

Some Papuans are requesting emergency security assistance in West Papua, arguing that the Indonesian government is following a similar strategy as one it implemented during the 1969 self-determination process. Papuans report incidents of intimidation, such as terror and repression of the *Dewan Adapt* (a women's association) and religious leaders. The presence of army personnel in civilian clothing has also increased tensions. From Nabire, army troops plan to spread out to the Puncak Jaya and Paniai regions. The military is requiring traveling papers (*surat jalan*) and strongly encouraging Papuans to neither criticize the government nor raise issues about the ongoing human rights violations in West Papua.

Also in October, a series of Hercules military transport planes landed hundreds of new troops in the region of Merauke, according to local human rights observers on the ground. In a given day, as many as three Hercules planes landed new soldiers. Many of the troops are being sent directly to outlying villages such as Mapi, the home village of the local Papuan source that developed this report. In a press release dated 2 June 2005, the Indonesian military announced the establishment of a new "Korem" Regional Military Command center in Merauke. This new command headquarters will oversee three new infantry battalions in Timika, Merauke, and Wamena as well as a cavalry detachment in Timika.

