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The West Papua Report August 2005

The following is the 18th 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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Summary/Contents

- **Thousands of Papuans March to Reject "Special Autonomy"**
- **Parliamentarian Reports on Arrival of Troops in West Papua**
- **Troops Intimidate Local Population in Biak**
- **President Yudhoyono Insists Division of West Papua is "Legal"**
- **Security Force Intimidation of Civilians in Central Highlands Continues**
- **Indonesian Academic Acknowledges Papuan Grievances**

Thousands of Papuans March to Reject "Special Autonomy"

In what Indonesian media portrayed as "one of the largest such demonstrations ever in the province," over 10,000 Papuan protesters, calling "special autonomy" a "total failure," on 12 August marched 25 kilometers from outside the provincial capital Jayapura to the provincial parliament. Throughout the route local people provided food and water to the marchers.

The *Jakarta Post* and other Indonesian media reported the peaceful demonstration conveyed support for the recommendation of the Papuan Tribal Council (also known as the Papuan Customary Council) that the West Papuan Provincial government "return" (reject) the largely unimplemented 2001 offer of "special autonomy" to the central government. The demonstrators briefly and peacefully occupied the provincial legislative parliament in Jayapura. Demonstrations also took place in other West Papuan towns.

The demonstrators also called on the government to stop violence in the province, restore Papuans' democratic rights and hold a dialogue with leaders of Papuan civil society to listen to Papuan aspirations. A spokesman for the Papuan Tribal Council explained that "special autonomy" had not lived up to people's expectations. The government has yet to establish the Papuan Peoples Council, a key institution promised under "special autonomy." (That institution's powers have been significantly weakened from those as originally promised under "special autonomy" - see the *West Papua Report* for July 2005.)

Moreover, the central government has established a separate province, a step that the special autonomy law had maintained could only be approved by the yet-to-be formed Papuan People's Council. The Indonesian Supreme Court has termed

establishment of the new province (effectively dividing West Papua) illegal.

Speaker of the Papuan provincial council Jhon Ibo argued that it was premature to say that the Special Autonomy Law was a failure and that the implementation process was still ongoing. He also pledged that the provincial council would intensify its dialogue with the Papuan Tribal Council in order to discuss the future of special autonomy.

Parliamentarian Reports on Arrival of Troops in West Papua

According to an August *Jakarta Post* report, a member of the Regional Representatives Council (DPD) has expressed concern over what she claimed was the arrival of troops in the troubled province of Papua, saying that local people are feeling ill at ease. Ferdinanda Ibo Yatipay, the DPD representative from Papua, stated that soldiers arrived in Manokwari regency on 12 August and that their number continued to grow. "People feel intimidated by their presence. We know it as we have experienced it for years." Maj. G.T. Situmorang, spokesman of the Trikora Military Command overseeing security in Papua, denied the report. The local Parliamentarian insisted, however, that she was certain of the deployment of troops aboard five ships arriving in Manokwari. The DPD member demanded that the Indonesian military withdraw its troops from Papua. "People must be invited for a dialogue [to resolve the separatist problem in Papua]," she said.

The deployment report conforms to broader TNI plans recently announced by TNI chief Gen. Endriartono Sutarto regarding the establishment of a new division of the Army's Strategic Reserves Command (Kostrad) in Papua this year. The new Kostrad division is to be based in Sorong. The TNI will also set up a number of district military commands (Kodim) in several new regencies across West Papua. The new commands would result in a 50 percent increase in the number of troops stationed in Papua, from the current 30,000, according to the *Jakarta Post* report. Analysts question the plan for a massive augmentation of the TNI presence in Papua absent any foreign military threat and an armed insurgency that the TNI acknowledges numbers less than 700 personnel.

Troops Intimidate Local Population in Biak

According to a report from Biak, West Papua that was translated and published by the international human rights NGO Tapol, conditions throughout West Papua have deteriorated in August, in conjunction with the dispatching of troops that are based in the province (known as "organic" troops) and those that are brought in from the outside ("non-organic") throughout West Papua. The troops arrived on the instructions of President Yudhoyono and armed forces commander-in-chief, General Endriartono Sutarto. Their actions have intimidated local populations, including in some instances prompting some civilians to flee their homes.

Army Intelligence has reinforced its presence throughout West Papua with the creation of a Regional BAKIN (Intelligence Coordination Agency) for West Papua, according to a presidential decision on 10 June this year.

Specifically with regard to Biak, a collection of over 20 separate reports indicate a pattern common throughout West Papua entailing operations by the military, including the Kopassus or special forces, that include firing of weapons near villages, arbitrary detention and beatings of civilians.

President Yudhoyono Insists Division of West Papua is "Legal"

President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, in a speech on 12 August before the Indonesian DPD (Senate), declared the status of Western Irian Jaya Province to be "legal," notwithstanding a decision by the Constitutional Court which declared the formation of the province unlawful. The president stated that the legal basis for the Western Irian Jaya Province was Law No. 32/2005 (the revised Regional Autonomy Law). Meanwhile, local elections organized by the central government are proceeding.

The president's statements conflicted with assurances he offered Papuan leaders with whom he met days earlier (including Governor Solossa, Provincial Parliament Speaker John Ibo, former University of Papua Rector Frans Wospakrik, and retired

Ambassador Bas Suebu). The president had told the Papuan officials that the "special autonomy" law was still the best solution for Papua, and that "all problems" (including the issue of the formation of "Western Irian Jaya" Province) should be solved using the "special autonomy" law.

A senior Papuan academic reported to the RFK West Papua Advocacy Team that "by making such a contradictory statement, the president paralyzes efforts to [win acceptance] of the separate issue, the much delayed formation of the Papuan People's Council, the MRP." The academic concluded that in the face of the president's statement, the putative MRP was "nothing more than a rubber stamp." He reported that teams of the Democratic Centre of Universitas Cenderawasih (Uncen), currently traveling in different regencies in Papua to win acceptance for the legislation establishing MRP, would not continue their assignments in light of the president's statement.

Resistance/rejection of "special autonomy" appears to be galvanizing around the formation of the new province, "West Irian Jaya" absent consent of the Papuan people. Local analysts contend that pressures from the Papuan Tribal Council (DAP) on the provincial parliament (DPRP) are mounting. Moreover, members of DPRP, including its speaker John Ibo, have repeatedly stated in the past that if the central government were to continue to support establishment of West Irian Jaya Province, they would join the people in rejecting Special Autonomy.

Security Force Intimidation of Civilians in Central Highlands Continues

Local sources have told the RFK West Papuan Advocacy Team that police and TNI in Enarotali in the Central Highlands district of Panai have arrested, intimidated, and interrogated civilians there. TNI and police personnel also reportedly intimidated local civilians and prevented villagers from selling their produce and forbade people from wearing clothes inscribed with church logos.

Despite security force intimidation, violence and leveling of false accusations of support for the armed resistance, the populations of Nabire, Paniai, and Mimika regions have rejected efforts by the central government to win support for the delayed establishment of a much diminished Papuan Peoples Council.

Indonesian Academic Acknowledges Papuan Grievances

Vidhyandika D. Pericasa, a senior Indonesian academic reacting to growing international concern over the plight of Papuans, published an op-ed in the *Jakarta Post* on 11 August that candidly admitted the bases for Papuan grievances against Jakarta. Pericasa holds a doctorate in anthropology from Monash University, Australia. He is a researcher at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies in Jakarta. A portion of the op-ed follows:

“. . . [H]ow should we picture a more realistic socio-economic condition of Papua? Direct observation shows us that Papua is in fact a region that has received only a minimal ‘development touch.’ It becomes more ironic as this province is very rich in natural resources. We can witness that the cities at the regency level – let us say, in the Baliem valley area – are supported with sparse infrastructure. There is a lack of clean water facilities, nearly daily power blackouts, waste can be seen everywhere, while health care and education are only minimal.

“The condition becomes more frustrating if we are to witness the ‘human’ aspect. Economic disparity seems glaring between the local indigenous people and the migrant inhabitants – ‘the newcomers.’ The indigenous Papuans believe that if they receive the same opportunities and equal treatment, they can also be as successful as the newcomers.

“In reality the Papuans have to pay tax, but can only sell their goods on the side of the street, while the newcomers sell their products in permanent shops. The Papuans can only sell small amounts of commodities with a relatively low selling value, like vegetables and fruits. Inhabiting remote locations in the mountain range, which depends on air transportation, the price of staple foods has become a heavy burden for the Papuans.

“The unemployment rate is very high. The dropout rate among elementary and high-school students is also very high. Those few who are lucky enough to maintain their working spirit would do whatever possible to earn a living.

“There are some of us who think that the Papuans' miserable conditions – poverty, backwardness, ignorance – are caused by their own ‘mentality.’ The Papuans are seen as drunkards, lazy people who love to gamble away their money. They are not capable of planning for the future and are mostly spendthrifts.

“We should debate, however, whether that kind of ‘mentality’ does exist. Is it a natural trait of the Papuans, or has it become ‘a design for living’ or an adaptive strategy in society due to the scarcity of jobs?

“The time is ripe for the government to be more serious in dealing with Papua's problems. Papua should not be managed only through economic means but also using socio-cultural means. The character and mentality of indigenous Papuans should be nurtured after being ‘oppressed’ for decades.

“The special autonomy arrangement is the right formula upon which the Papuans have pinned their hopes for a real change. Problems arise when bad implementation causes them to feel that they are being tricked into this arrangement. For the Papuans, like all of us anywhere, a promise made is a promise kept.

“Once promises are left unfulfilled, the trust has been broken. It seems that right now there is mistrust between the Papuans and the government – in Jakarta and in the province itself.

“Papua's problems are our own, not the problem of the U.S. Congress. It is time for the Papuans and the government to find a solution to deal with the situation in Papua. This is no time to blame or accuse each other of wrongdoings, but the time to build a solid partnership for the sake of this nation's integrity.”