

STATEMENT ON VIOLENCE FOLLOWING THIRD PAPUAN PEOPLE'S CONGRESS, OCTOBER 2011

We the undersigned New Zealand human rights, development and peace organisations call for the Indonesian government to immediately investigate allegations of excessive force and human rights violations by police and military personnel in breaking up the Third Papuan People's congress on 19 October 2011 in Jayapura, Papua.

We also deplore the entry by military forces – without permission or prior notice – into the nearby Yerusalem Baru seminary and Fajar Timur School of Philosophy and Theology and associated facilities within the Catholic mission compound in the area.

We call for an immediate dialogue between the Government of Indonesia and Papuan leaders to prevent further instances of unnecessary violence; and to address the issues that underpin conflict in Papua.

At least six deaths have been reported and hundreds of people were initially detained when security forces moved in with guns and violence to disperse several thousand unarmed people who had gathered peacefully for the congress on 17-19 October. Video and documented evidence shows that police and military officers used pistols, canes and batons to beat congress participants, and threatened them. Such actions are a violation of rights to freedom of expression, opinion and peaceful assembly guaranteed under both the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Indonesian Constitution.

A statement from the Rector of Fajar Timur School of Philosophy and Theology, Father Dr Neles Tebay, and the Provincial of the Franciscan Order in Papua, Father Gabriel Ngga OFM, documents the violence with which security forces entered Catholic mission buildings, and the fear and intimidation imposed on occupants and those who sought refuge there. Bullets shattered windows, items were damaged, teargas was used, and one Franciscan brother was so badly beaten that he was admitted to intensive care at the local hospital after being released from overnight detention.

We endorse the statement and measures called for by Fathers Tebay and Ngga, in particular, we:

- Reject repressive means to deal with issues because such violent acts undermine the human dignity of both victims and perpetrators.
- Affirm the right of religious and other organisations to provide asylum where necessary, based on the universal humanitarian principle that a person exposed to a life-threatening situation is to be given protection and sanctuary. (The protection provided by the religious brothers and staff was given for humanitarian not political reasons, as congress participants sought refuge from persecution and threats.)
- Ask the Indonesian Human Rights Commission (KOMNAS HAM) to investigate the violent incidents post-congress to look at how such serious human rights abuses have occurred.
- Support a peaceful dialogue between the Government of Indonesia and Papuan leaders to stop violence and prevent a recurrence of such acts in Papua. This is in line with the Indonesian government's own commitment, as expressed by President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, to deal with Papua 'with heart'.
- Ask for all people of goodwill and justice to support the implementation of such dialogue. 'Because only through dialogue, issues that underpin conflicts in Papua can be identified and proper solutions can also be found without resorting to violence and bloodshed' say Fathers Tebay and Ngga.

We are deeply concerned about the situation in Papua and the underlying tensions that impede Papuans' access to development. We urge all parties to take immediate steps to prevent violence and enter into dialogue to resolve the serious underlying tensions.

JOINT STATEMENT OF:

Michael Smith, Director, Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand
Maire Leadbeater, Spokesperson for the Indonesia Human Rights Committee
Edwina Hughes, Coordinator, Peace Movement Aotearoa
Pat Jackman, President, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Aotearoa
Judith Crimmins, President, Pax Christi Aotearoa New Zealand
Peter Hosking, Executive Director, Human Rights Foundation of Aotearoa New Zealand
Pauline McKay, National Director, Christian World Service
Leigh Cookson, Director, Arena (Action, Research and Education Network of Aotearoa).

3 November 2011