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### **Statement on ULMWP arrests**

This morning a peaceful ULMWP meeting in Jayapura was interrupted by heavily armed Indonesian police who made several arrests. Indonesian police have arrested Mr Buchtar Tabuni, one of West Papua's most prominent leaders, along with two other ULMWP Ministers.

Mr Buchtar Tabuni is the Chairman of the West Papua Council, and a member of the ULMWP Council Committee. He was arrested along with Mr Bazoka Logo, the ULMWP Minister of Political Affairs, and Ms Iche Murib, ULMWP Minister of Women's and Children's Affairs.

Indonesian authorities must comply with their obligations under international law, which requires protecting freedom of speech and freedom of assembly and upholding the right to peaceful protest. As the UN has made clear, detaining people for peacefully exercising their rights renders their detention unlawful and arbitrary.

Fundamentally, these individuals have been arrested for expressing their political opinions and advocating for the rights of the people of West Papua. The Indonesian authorities continue to prosecute pro-independence political activists in West Papua simply for peacefully exercising their human rights.

Last year, Ms. Mary Lawlor, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders told the UN General Assembly:

*"Around the globe, human rights defenders have been sentenced, or are at risk of being sentenced, to at least ten years in jail for peacefully advocating for the rights of others. But States are in denial that they are targeting human rights defenders in this way, claiming instead that the defenders are criminals."*

This is the situation in West Papua.

In 2006, Indonesia acceded to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which recognises freedom of speech and freedom of assembly, prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention and protects the right to due process and a fair trial. In its General Comments 34 and 37, the UN Human Rights Committee clarified that the right to freedom of opinion and



expression includes discussion of government policies, political debate and reporting on human rights. Specific obligations relating to participation in peaceful assemblies can also be found in the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Article 5), which Indonesia acceded to in 1999.

The world is watching Indonesia's treatment of West Papuans and violations of international law must be highlighted and responded to.

These arrests must be seen in the context of Indonesia's ongoing illegal occupation of West Papua and violent suppression of local political activism. These arrests continue the mistreatment of West Papuans, including through the violent deployment of the Indonesian military across West Papua. A recent report by the West Papua Council of Churches speaks of a policy of racism and estimates that over 60,000 people have been displaced by this violence since December 2018.

A root cause of the conflict is the denial of the most fundamental and basic human right to self-determination. Mr Benny Wenda, the Interim President of the Provisional Government of West Papua has said *"The only solution for West Papua is a peaceful one, one which respects our human rights, including our fundamental right to self-determination."*

We call upon the Indonesian authorities to uphold the rights of West Papuans and call on other States to consider their obligations under international law. Indonesia has previously agreed to a visit to West Papua by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and should move ahead with the visit immediately. Other States, as well as corporations and foreign investors engaged in West Papua, must support this call for a UN visit and a fact-finding mission to assess ongoing human rights abuses in the region.

In November this year, there will be a review of Indonesia's recent human rights record at a Universal Periodic Review (UPR) session coordinated by the UN Human Rights Council. Cases such as this must be raised as part of the 'recommendation' process.

We call on other organisations to demand the lawful treatment of those arrested and to monitor the situation. The immediate release of these individuals will encourage peaceful engagement and peaceful resolution of the ongoing conflicts in West Papua.

**International Lawyers for West Papua (ILWP)**

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