

Summary of Human Rights Situation – West Papua – July 2009

By Free West Papua Campaign

Three Year Prison Sentence for Buchtar Tabuni

In stark contrast to Indonesia's claims of respecting freedom and human rights, Buchtar Tabuni, a West Papuan student who has already been held in prison for over six months, including a three day period without water and being beaten by a guard has been sentenced to three years for involvement in a peaceful demonstration supporting the formation of the International Parliamentarians for West Papua. He was accused of "acts of treason, provocation and acts against the state" simply for (in the words of the prosecution) "giving a speech during the demonstration, hint[ing] at calling for separation of Papua from Indonesia, or the handover of part of Indonesia's territories to the foreign side". The very fact of a case like this being brought to court and the treatment of the students prior to the trial speaks volumes about the climate of fear being created in West Papua and Indonesia's current attitude to dealing with freedom of expression.

Three more students, Musa Tabuni, Diaz Servin and Yance Mote, are awaiting trial being charged with treason and incitement, the three face a maximum penalty of life imprisonment simply for being involved in organising demonstrations calling for a referendum in West Papua.

Jakarta Post article: <http://tinyurl.com/l9gqy8>

Critical Situation in Puncak Jaya

We are particularly concerned to hear reports of the serious situation in the Puncak Jaya region of West Papua. Following recent clashes between the Indonesian army and Papuan independence fighters (OPM) in this remote highland region, the Indonesian military has begun a swathe of attacks against villagers. It has become standard practice for the military to seek revenge by targeting local villages. We understand that hundreds of people including women and children are hiding in the jungle as large influxes of Indonesian troops carry out sweeping operations in their attempts to find OPM leader General Goliath Tabuni. Women and children have been raped, a village chief killed, homes destroyed and livestock killed. More troops are reported to be entering the area and the situation is deteriorating with people now lacking access to food.

Report: <http://tinyurl.com/menmnz>

Detainment and Torture of Political Prisoners

Over the last year there has been a huge increase in the detention of political prisoners in West Papua. We know of over 50 political prisoners being held in prisons in Manokwari, Fak Fak, Abepura, Wamena and Timika charged with attending peaceful demonstrations and supporting independence. Torture and mistreatment of prisoners continues to be rife in West Papua and there is particular concern about reports coming from Abepura prison where there appears to be systematic abuse since Anthonius Ayorbaba became the prison warden in August 2008. Human Rights Watch have recently reported on this situation, highlighting particular cases where "a prisoner lost his right eye after being hit by a set of keys,...another prisoner got severe burns on his hands after being forced to put them into a pot of boiling water, [and a] prisoner partially lost his hearing after being hit in the head by a wrench."

Earlier this year, Yuasak Pakage, recognised by Amnesty International as a prisoner of conscience serving 10 years for raising a flag, was beaten by a prison guard for requesting medical attention.

Human Rights Watch reported the situation to the Indonesian Ministry of Justice and have expressed outrage at their decision not to investigate the alleged torture.

Human Rights Watch Report: <http://tinyurl.com/o2e9ha>

Election Protests in Jayapura

Many of the prisoners were arrested following widespread demonstrations during the April elections. Students travelled from across Indonesia to hold demonstrations and boycott the elections. A temporary camp that was set up was violently attacked by police and peaceful demonstrations turned violent following attacks on the crowds by police in which two men were shot dead. Some 100 students are now in hiding and fear they too will be arrested and mistreated. They are unable to continue their education and are living in fear. ILWP Solidarity Demonstrations in Nabire In April a solidarity demonstration was held in the town of Nabire in support of the International Lawyers for West Papua. The demonstration was attacked by police causing a number of serious injuries including a ten year old boy being shot. 15 people are currently being held in prison and are on trial for involvement in the demonstration.

Report and photos of injured: <http://tinyurl.com/kvgysq>

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Red Cross expelled from West Papua and International Journalists Remain Banned

Alarminglly, despite the increase in military in West Papua and the continued reports of torture and violence against native Papuans, the Red Cross were expelled from West Papua earlier in the year. Also the entire of West Papua remains closed to international journalists.

Two Damning Human Rights Reports Released in June 2009

On the 24th June two highly critical reports were released: Unfinished Business — Police Accountability in Indonesia, a report by the London-based International Amnesty, and What Did I Do Wrong? Papuans in Merauke Face Abuses by Indonesian Special Forces, released by the New York-based Human Rights Watch. The first details how impunity is deeply engrained throughout Indonesia's criminal justice system, whereby perpetrators of human rights violations are rarely brought to justice for their crimes. The second documents how Kopassus soldiers operating in the town of Merauke, in West Papua, arrest Papuan citizens without legal authority, and beat and mistreat those they take back to their barracks.

Amnesty report: <http://tinyurl.com/m4cut5>

HRW report: <http://tinyurl.com/mqa7gx>