



CATHOLIC JUSTICE AND PEACE COMMISSION OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF BRISBANE

*194 Charlotte Street
Brisbane QLD 4000
GPO Box 282 Brisbane QLD 4001
Ph. 07 3324 3441
Fax 07 3336 9177
ABN 25 328 758 007*

West Papua Action Team, Australia

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The Catholic Justice & Peace Commission of the Archdiocese of Brisbane is a body established and supported by successive Catholic Archbishops of Brisbane to promote social justice, human rights, peace and ecological sustainability. It began its work in 1985.

The Commission began to focus on the human rights situation in the Papuan provinces of Indonesia, commonly known as West Papua, in 2001.

Its work is grounded in on-going consultation with churches, human rights defenders and both survivors of human rights violations in West Papua and the families of victims of human rights violations in West Papua.

Since 2019, its advocacy work on human rights in West Papua has been conducted through a collaboration between representatives of the Commission and a small group of advocates in West Papua and Australia called the West Papua Action Team Australia (WPAT). WPAT Australia has focused most of its work on engaging with the Australian Government and the Australian Parliament on their responsibility to protect and promote human rights in West Papua.

Since Indonesia's last periodic review in 2017 the human rights situation in West Papua has declined despite the Government's development policy for the provinces.

1. In a statement on February 2018 the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein stated that the OHCHR had been invited by the Indonesian Government to visit West Papua amid growing concern over human rights abuses [1]. Since this invitation the human rights situation in West Papua has only declined. Mass anti-racism demonstrations and subsequent civil unrest in 2019, ongoing conflict between Indonesia security forces and the West Papua Liberation Army, and the recent demonstrations against the Indonesian Government's Special Autonomy laws have all raised international concern, however Indonesia has still not granted access to the OHCHR despite ongoing requests. Instead, thousands of Indonesian security forces have been deployed to West Papua to crack-down on the West Papua Liberation Army resulting in thousands of indigenous Papuans being displaced by the escalating conflict. According to human rights defenders inside West Papua more than 60,000 indigenous Papuans have been displaced in the last three years as conflict has spread through the regencies of Yahukimo, Maybrat, Pegunungan Bintang, Nduga, Intan Jaya and Puncak. It remains unsafe for people to return to their homes, and many remain in jungle camps without humanitarian assistance, resulting in hundreds of deaths [2]. The Indonesian Government also continues to restrict access to international humanitarian organisations, NGOs and media making it impossible to get a clear picture of conditions on the ground [13].
2. Despite President Widodo's commitment to a "comprehensive and multifaceted policy to accelerate development in Papua and West Papua provinces" [12], indigenous Papuans continue to protest many aspects of the development process, being enacted through the Indonesian Government's

Chairperson: Maree Rose – email marose@bne.catholic.edu.au
Executive Officer: Peter Arndt – email arndtp@bne.catholic.net.au

Special Autonomy legislation (OTSUS). Numerous reports have outlined the ongoing human rights abuses surrounding different elements of the development regime including, increased militarisation, further division of administrative provinces and districts [3], Indonesian government concession and permit scheme corruption [4], environmental destruction [5], economic discrimination [6]. OTSUS was introduced in 2001 as a solution to the continued self-determination struggle of indigenous Papuans and involved the forming of the Papuan People's Assembly (MRP) to represent the rights of indigenous Papuans. After twenty years new OTSUS legislation was passed in July 2021 by the Indonesian Parliament, with indigenous Papuans excluded from the process. In July 2021 two MRP members, including and their staffers were arrested on allegations of treason when they attempted to hold a public meeting about the implementation of special autonomy in Merauke in November 2020. They were eventually released without being charged [7]. Papuan students and civil society, including the West Papua Council of Churches and a group of Catholic pastors [8] have rejected the passing of the new OTSUS legislation, which was passed without their involvement in evaluation or amendment processes. The Indonesian Government continues to oppress the Papuan peoples' political and civil rights to freely assemble and express their right to self-determination.

3. Despite efforts to address the issue of injustice, including human rights violations in Papua no cases have yet been resolved. In March 2020 the Attorney General's Office (AGO) returned a report by the National Human Rights Commission stating insufficient evidence of gross human rights abuses by the Indonesian security forces in Paniai in 2014. Then, in December 2021 the AGO announced that a team had been appointed to re-investigate the case, however the Asian Human Rights Commission has raised concerns about the transparency and independence of the process, as well as the participation of victims [9]. Members of the West Papua Action Team have visited the victim's families in Paniai as they continue to fight for justice for their children. Other historical human rights cases including Biak 1998, Wasior 2001, and Wamena (2003) remain unresolved.
4. Since 2017 Indonesian police and military have continued to respond to demonstrations with mass arbitrary arrests, ongoing intimidation and at times excessive use of force against peaceful protestors. In August 2019 West Papuans protested in multiple locations against systemic racism sparked by slurs against Papuan students in Surabaya [10]. An extra 6,000 Indonesian security personnel were deployed to Papua in response, leading to mass arrests and dozens of deaths across West Papua. Groups of activists were charged with treason and put on trial, including the Balikpapan 7 who were sentenced to 10-11 months in prison for their involvement in the demonstrations. West Papua National Committee (KNPB) leader Victor Yeimo has also been arrested and charged with treason for calling for a referendum on West Papuan independence during the demonstrations. In September 2021 Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders Mary Lawlor raised concerns over Victor Yeimo's health condition and called on the Indonesian Government to provide him with appropriate care [11]. He remains behind bars.

To address the matters raised above the Indonesian Government should:

- Allow the OHCHR access to Papua and West Papua provinces without further delay.
- Sit down with MRP and other civil society representatives to discuss and re-evaluate OTSUS.
- Resolve historical human rights abuse cases, including Paniai 2014, Biak 1998, Wamena, Wasior 2001.
- Grant access to Papua and West Papua provinces to:
 - humanitarian aid to be provided to internally displaced people.
 - human rights organisations to independently investigate the human rights situation.
 - international media to independently cover the ongoing conflict and humanitarian crisis.

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