

**Organisations concerned for West Papua,  
P O Box 68419,  
Auckland**

14 October, 2006

Rt Hon Helen Clark,  
Prime Minister,  
Parliament Buildings,  
Wellington.

Dear Helen Clark,

We wish to alert you to our concerns about the deteriorating human rights situation in West Papua as you prepare for the forthcoming Pacific Island Forum. We believe it is vital that this issue be on the agenda for discussion by the Pacific Heads of Government.

We recall that last year when the Forum was held in Papua New Guinea you took time out of your busy schedule to visit the Civil Society Forum. Your presence was greatly welcomed by the delegates and you were presented with a briefing kit about West Papua. We understand that you told civil society delegates that you anticipated that the issue of West Papua would come up for discussion. We believe however, that the matter was not considered during the Forum meeting. Unlike the years 2000- 2003 there was no reference at all of West Papua in the Forum Communiqué.

It is true that West Papua has had more international attention this year because of the interest and controversy provoked by the arrival of 43 West Papuan asylum seekers in Australia. But West Papua remains largely cut off from the outside world with access to foreign journalists and humanitarian groups tightly restricted.

On March 16 violence erupted during a protest demanding the closure of the Freeport mine, resulting in the deaths of 5 security force personnel. Since then West Papuans report high levels of tension and harassment and many young people have fled to the jungle or across the border to Papua New Guinea. Amnesty International has raised serious concerns about the conduct of the trials of the twenty three young people who have been charged with offences related to the March demonstration. There have been reports of violence against the defendants while in police custody as well as threats and intimidation against the lawyers and human rights defenders involved in the case.

The International Crisis Group (ICG) ([www.crisisgroup.org](http://www.crisisgroup.org)) has conducted an independent inquiry into the events of 15 May 2006, when police broke up a demonstration of supporters of David Hubi a district head in Wamena who was facing charges of corruption. In the violence that ensued three civilians were killed and several others were wounded. Video footage shows police kicking and beating unarmed demonstrators and ICG obtained evidence which suggests that the police fired on demonstrators without provocation. The ICG maintains that the police response was 'vastly disproportionate.'

It is important to set these recent violent episodes against the ongoing impunity of the security forces in West Papua. You are probably aware of the controversial verdict of the Human Rights Court in Makassar which one year ago acquitted two police commanders. These two men, Police Brigadier General Johny Wainai Usman and Senior Police Commissioner David Sihombing, were charged with responsibility for the violent deaths of 3 students and the torture in custody of over a hundred civilians in Abepura in December 2000. The failure to hold anyone accountable for these crimes was deplored by Amnesty International Spokesperson Natalie Hill who warned that “failures to deliver justice and combat impunity illustrate both a flawed system and a lack of political will”(Media Release 8 September,2005).

The less direct methods of human rights violations must also be taken into account. West Papua’s health statistics are deeply alarming. The infant mortality rate according to a UNICEF official is as high as 117 per 1000. West Papua has by far the highest rate of HIV/AIDs of any province in Indonesia and the rate is some fifteen times as high as the rate in New Zealand and at least on a par with Papua New Guinea. Observers are predicting that the increase in the HIV/AIDs incidence indicates that the problem is approaching what is known as the ‘African curve’.

You will also be aware that the Special Autonomy of Papua Law (UU 21/2001) is widely held to have failed to deliver economic justice or genuine autonomy. It has been weakened from within by the subsequent decision to divide West Papua into three provinces. This attempt to structurally weaken the province has since been declared invalid by the Indonesian Constitutional Court but newly formed West Irian Jaya (the so-called Bird’s Head area) has been allowed to remain in existence.

West Papuan church and civil society groups are united in a call for dialogue with the Indonesian Government and for a process of demilitarisation leading to the formation of a ‘Land of Peace’. They are also united in calling on the international community to support or mediate a process of peaceful dialogue.

As an important regional body whose views are taken seriously by Indonesia, the Pacific Island Forum should encourage the Indonesian Government to dialogue with the West Papuan leadership and to work towards peacefully solving the many issues of concern in the territory. We call on the Forum to seek support from the Indonesian Government for a fact finding mission to West Papua to investigate the current human rights situation.

We also believe that the Forum should grant observer status to West Papuan representatives. In this context we note the guidelines in the newly developed Forum policy about the status of observers and associate members. As the new policy has been articulated specifically to ensure that the Forum is fully inclusive of all nations in the region, West Papua’s right to be included should not be overlooked.

The people of West Papua have great goodwill towards New Zealand and towards you as Prime Minister. They and we are counting on you to take the initiative to raise these concerns at the Forum and to do all you can to ensure that the Forum communiqué and the forum decisions reflect a firm intention to act to help resolve the problems of West Papua.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Riach: East Asia Programme Manager:Barry Coates Director  
**Oxfam New Zealand**

Gillian Southey,  
**Christian World Service, Christchurch.**

Rae Julian,  
**Council for International Development (CID) Wellington**

Leesa Roy,  
**Caritas Aotearoa, Wellington**

Ian Telfer,  
National Officer  
**Corso, Dunedin**

Colin Iles,  
**Spokesperson (Former) East Timor Independence Centre, Wellington**

Jason Mackiewicz on behalf of the  
**Catholic Tertiary Chaplaincy, Wellington**

Fr Terry Dibble,  
**Timor-Leste Support Worker**

Tim Howard,  
**Northland Urban Rural Mission, Whangarei**  
**Network Waitangi Whangarei**

Fr. Brian Vale  
**St. Columbans Mission Society**

Edwina Hughes,  
**Peace Movement Aotearoa**

Valerie Morse,  
**Peace Action Wellington**

Sally Rodwell & Ruby Brunton  
**Red Mole Enterprises, Wellington**

Peter Hosking,  
**Human Rights Foundation of Aotearoa New Zealand (HRF)**

Rev. Norman Knipe,  
**Former missionary in Papua New Guinea.**

Omar Hamed,:  
**Pacific Youth Festival 2006, Aotearoa New Zealand delegation**

Noelene P Landrigan  
**Sisters of St Joseph, Whanganui**

Stuart Sontier,  
**FAIR NZ Sandringham, Auckland.**

Marion Hancock,  
**The Peace Foundation, Aotearoa/New Zealand.**

Megan Hutching  
**President, Womens International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) Aotearoa**

Mike Treen  
**Global Peace and Justice Auckland**

Lois Griffiths and Martin Griffiths,  
**West Papua Support activists, Christchurch**

Hugh Steadman.  
**Sapiens Movement, New Zealand**

Joan Hardiman,  
**New Zealand Dominican Sister, Papakura**

Tim O'Donovan  
**Development Resource Centre, Wellington**

Josephine Karanga  
**Te Korowai Aroha o Aotearoa, Ruatoki**

David Tutty  
**Auckland Catholic Justice and Peace Office**

Judith Crimmins  
**Pax Christi Auckland**

Isabelle Duff  
**The Leprosy Mission New Zealand (TLMNZ)**

Dr Kate Dewes  
**The Disarmament and Security Centre, Christchurch**

George Darroch  
**West Papua Support Group, Wellington**

On behalf of all the above organisational representatives,

Maire Leadbeater  
**Indonesia Human Rights Committee, Auckland**