

# Papua

When Australia granted temporary visas to 42 Papuan asylum seekers in March 2006, Indonesia recalled its ambassador and the country's politicians demanded trade sanctions. The Australians admitted the refugees because it considered them to be in danger of persecution. The Indonesian government regarded the recognition of the Papuan refugees as a challenge to the country's territorial sovereignty and integrity.

The decision by Australia gives support to the allegations of frequent human rights abuses in West Papua by the Indonesian authorities. It might also encourage protests by the West Papuan independence movement and, thus, impact the tight grip of the Indonesian authority on the province. The harsh Indonesian reaction may reflect the island nation's fear that West Papua will follow the path to secession laid by Timor Leste.

## 1.1 Historical developments

West Papua annexed by Indonesia after the Netherlands transferred authority over the archipelago to the Indonesian government during the 1962 decolonization. The New York Agreement was brokered by the United States and envisaged that the Papuans would decide on independence at the end of a seven-year transitional period.

Two years before the Act of Free Choice was voted upon and instituted, Indonesia signed an agreement with the US company Freeport-McMoRan Cooper and Gold Inc. The contract included a 30-year exclusive mining license for the world's largest copper and gold mine. When the plebiscite over Papua's future was held in 1969, the indigenous population's desire for independence was not a determining factor. It is widely recognized that the Indonesian authority corrupted the plebiscite over Papuan sovereignty. Indonesian interests in the West Papuan mineral resources and the Cold War politics of the international community prevailed.

It was only in the wake of long-time dictator Suharto's overthrow that a short political space opened up for the West Papuans. A public congress was held in 2000, uniting civil, church and independence movement leaders. Fearing secession, the Indonesian army cracked down on the congress members. At the height of disintegration anxiety, the Indonesian government granted special autonomy to West Papua in 2001. Due to a lack of political will in the central and provincial authorities, the law has still not been fully implemented. The key institution of the Special Autonomy Law, the Papuan Peoples Council, was finally established in 2005. Another provision of the new law, the re-allocation of revenue from the province's vast natural resources in favor of the native population, has not yet entered into effect.

## **1.2 Major problems**

Transmigration, uncontrolled commercial logging and mining have had a disastrous effect on the environment and culture of West Papua. Close to 1 million people from Java and Sulawesi were moved to Papua in the framework of the Transmigration Program during the Suharto era. Transmigrasis, mostly Muslims, account for approximately 40 percent of the West Papuan population and dominate the territory's economy and civil and military administration. The indigenous population, which is mainly Christian or Animist, suffers from racial and cultural discrimination, seizure of lands and other human rights abuses.

The West Papuan province has the poorest health standards of all 27 Indonesian provinces. The population is in decline. While this can be traced back to factors such as poor health care, alcoholism and HIV/AIDS, the principal factor is the Indonesian military.

Furthermore, with the Indonesian government holding the political control and a 20 percent share at Freeport, very little of the mineral revenue returns to West Papua. It is in that light that the violent crackdown by the army and the mine's security forces on the peaceful student protests in March 2006 has to be seen.

Patricia Moser  
ISN Editor

## **1.3 Governments and independence movement**

The Government Statement on the Regional Development Policy, by the Republic of Indonesia  
This speech by Indonesian president Dr Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono in August 2006 outlines the government's regional development policy. With regard to West Papua, it touches upon the advancement of welfare and democratization in Papua as well as the special autonomy law and funds for the province.

Papua Province, by the Government of Papua Province

This website offers information on the Indonesian province of West Papua. It provides details on the profile of the region and its natural resources potential. The website also contains links to the Indonesian government and its agencies as well as to maps of the Papua's sub-districts.

The Free West Papua Movement (OPM)

This website by the Free West Papua Movement explains the mission and vision of the pro-independence movement.

Liberation Army of West Papua's Free Papua Movement (TPN/OPM)

This website provides an overview of the aim and history of the Liberation Army of West Papua's Free Papua Movement

## 1.4 Academia

Building Human Security in Indonesia: West Papua/Irian Jaya, by the Harvard Program on Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Research, Cambridge, MA, US

This project by the Harvard Program on Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Research focuses on developing human security strategies as the basis for dialogue on conflict prevention and resolution. The website provides an overview of the conflict's background, actors and impact. It lists the most important news sources, organizations and portals.

Assessment for Papuans in Indonesia, by the Minorities at Risk Project (MAR), University of Maryland, College Park, MD, US

The Minorities at Risk (MAR) project tracks politically active ethnic groups since the end of World War II and identifies their location, their activities and impacts on their movements. The website assesses the history and risk of the Papuans in Indonesia. It also provides a chronology covering the period between 1990 and 2000.

Genocide in West Papua?, by the West Papua Project at the Center for Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Sydney, Australia and ELSAHAM Jayapura, Indonesia

This report by the West Papua Project focuses on the allegations of genocide against the Indonesian government and army. It covers the threats to the indigenous people in West Papua and assesses the role of the Indonesian security apparatus in illegal logging, manipulation of local politics, illegal arms trade and militia training, and the spread of HIV/AIDS.

Papua Web

Papua Web is an information network hosted by the University of Papua, Cenderawasih University and the Australian National University (ANU). It provides dissertations and reports as well as research material in the field of science and humanities. The website also offers a chronology covering the 16th century until today, an overview of the Indonesian administration and legal instruments and a links collection. The website is available in Bahasa Indonesia and English.

Indonesia at the ANU, by the ANU College of Asia and the Pacific, Canberra, Australia

The ANU College of Asia and the Pacific is an institution dedicated to Indonesian studies. The center features research on political, security and economic developments in the archipelago as well as on society and culture.

Papuan Refugees and Australia-Indonesia Relations, by Asean Focus Group

Asian Analysis is a monthly virtual magazine produced by Asean Focus Group in cooperation with the ANU Faculty of Asian Studies. It aims to inform the reader about the developments on the Asian markets. This report by Harold Crouch assesses the strained relations between Australia and Indonesia.

Decentralization and Elite Politics in Papua, by the State, Society and Governance in Melanesia Project (SSGM) at the Australian National University, Canberra

This discussion paper by Jaap Timmer examines conflicts in the province of Papua that were stimulated by the devolution of administrative power in the post-Suharto era. It investigates the histories of regional identities and Papuan elite politics and looks at the behavior of key Papuan

political players. It concludes that the aspirations of the legislators are often detached from the reasons for sovereignty demands cherishes among the majority of Papuans.

**Peace in Papua: Widening a Window of Opportunity**, by the Council on Foreign Relations, US  
This report discusses ways to achieve a comprehensive solution to the conflict in Papua. The report urges the Indonesian government to engage legitimate representatives of Papuan society, fully implementing special autonomy, improving local governance and reforming security arrangements. The author calls on the US, the EU, Japan, Australia and ASEAN member states to encourage Jakarta with quiet diplomacy, and provide technical and financial assistance on issues such as professional training, natural resource management, public sector reform and civil society development.

**Indonesia Commission: Peace and Progress in Papua**, by the Council on Foreign Relations, US  
This report discusses ways to avoid conflict in the impoverished yet resource-rich Indonesian province of Papua. Written by a Council on Foreign Relations-sponsored independent commission, it recommends that the Indonesian government grant Papua special autonomy status and a stake in the development of its vast natural wealth. This would preserve Indonesia's territorial integrity while advancing the needs of Papuans. The authors also urge international actors to launch a "Preventive Development Program" for Papua to link donor contributions with conflict-prevention strategies.

## **1.5 Non-governmental organizations**

**Asia Briefing, Nr. 53: Papua – Answers to Frequently Asked Questions**, by International Crisis Group, Brussels, Belgium

This briefing examines what lies behind some of the most commonly held assumptions about Papua and the Papuan independence movements. It argues that Papua is neither a place of persecution and oppression controlled by non-Papuans, nor are allegations of genocide by security forces well-founded. It suggests that correcting these misconceptions can lead to better policies on the part of Indonesia and the international community.

**Asia Briefing, Nr. 47: Papua – The Dangers of Shutting Down Dialogue**, by International Crisis Group, Brussels, Belgium.

This briefing examines the Papuan People's Council, which is the centerpiece of the November 2001 law on special autonomy. The authors warn that this key institution charged with easing tension between Papuans and Indonesia's central government may be close to collapsing. They point out that the council is the most representative body to emerge so far and has the support of key Papuan institutions although it has already faced huge challenges. Given the region's current volatility, this briefing argues that if this institution does not become a dialogue partner with Jakarta, its legitimacy will diminish and the Papuan resentment against the Indonesian government would increase.

**Watch Indonesia**, by the Working Group for Democracy, Human Rights and Environmental Protection in Indonesia and East Timor, Berlin, Germany

Watch Indonesia is a forum for discussing issues of democracy and human rights in Indonesia and East Timor. The website provides a range of information on the conflicts in West Papua. Apart from

a bimonthly newsletter, it offers background material on the Indonesian security sector, human rights and democracy. It also includes a handbook on Indonesia, which features a chapter on Papua.

West Papua – Swept Under Batik Carpet?, by the South Asian Human Rights Documentation Center, New Delhi, India

This news feature analyzes the March 2006 student protests and violence over the Freeport mine. It urges the international community to take action. Human Rights Features is a bimonthly news feature service, which focuses on human rights, democracy and good governance.