

**PASTORAL LETTER**  
**WEST PAPUA COUNCIL OF CHURCHES**  
**In the Context of Easter; Remembering the Passion and the Story**  
**The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ**

*“The righteous perish, and no one ponders it in his heart; devout men are taken away, and no one understands that the righteous are taken away to be spared from evil. Those who walk uprightly enter into peace; they find rest as they lie in death” (Isaiah 57:1-2).*

In April, Christians commemorate the Story of Jesus' Passion and the Work of Salvation in Christ. We, the Church Leaders in the Land of Papua have recorded a number of incidents that have resulted in the people of the Land of Papua carrying the cross of suffering for 58 years due to the political policies of systemic racism of the Unitary State Government of the Republic of Indonesia. Year after year, the Papuan people mourn their deep, prolonged sorrows. The two important Christian celebrations, Christmas and Easter, are never celebrated peacefully. With our eyes fixed on the Cross of Christ, We have recorded just a small part of the suffering of the Papuan people as follows:

**1. The deployment of Army (TNI) and Police troops**

From 2019 to 2021, non-organic army and Police troops continued to be deployed to the Land of Papua after the Papuan people carried out peaceful demonstrations as a form of protest against the systemic political racism of the Indonesian rulers. The repressive action of the State towards Papuans started specifically against Papuan students in the Papuan student dormitory in Surabaya, Indonesia.

During this three year period, the deployment of Army and Police troops to the Land of Papua totalled 2,603 people. The number of deployed troops, the dates of deployment and the destination of the troops are as follows:

- a) Deployment of the Indonesian National Police forces between August 12, 2018 to March 9, 2019 included 200 BRIMOB (Mobile Brigade) who arrived in Timika. Their destination was the conflict areas of Nduga, Puncak Papua and Puncak Jaya. 100 personnel (1 company) joined the Papua Task Force (SATGAS) in the Nduga region.
- b) On Tuesday, December 4, 2018, 153 Police and Army joint personnel were sent to Nduga Papua as special forces to face the TPNPB / OPM.
- c) On Saturday 9 March 2019, 600 additional soldiers from the 431 Battalion Kostrad Makassar and Zipur 8 Batallion Makassar arrived in Timika with the destination of Nduga.
- d) On February 17, 2021, 100 personnel of Special forces (Brimob) from East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) were released by the NTT Regional Police Chief to be sent to Intan Jaya.

Hundreds of NTT Police Special Forces personnel will be seconded to Intan Jaya over the next six months. Their assignment is to tighten security in Intan Jaya.

- e) On February 17, 2021, the Jambi Regional Police Chief released 100 personnel of their Special forces (Brimob) to be assigned to Puncak Jaya.
- f) On March 10, 2021, 1,350 Army personnel (TNI) arrived at the Papuan port of Jayapura. The military leadership in Papua said the presence of 1,350 new soldiers are to replace the Mechanical Raider Battalion 413 / Bremoro, Yonif Raider 312 / KH, and Raider 100 / PS Yonif Raider who are part of the Task Force Operations at the border between Indonesia and Papua New Guinea.

The conflict between the security forces and TPNPB in Nduga Regency between December 2018 and March 2021 has resulted in:

- The death of more than 480 civilians, most of whom died in the location where they fled to.
- 34,461 people were displaced from their homes and sought refuge in the forest or fled to Jayawijaya, Lani Jaya, Timika, Yahukimo and other surrounding Regencies.
- The houses of civilians have been burned and destroyed.
- A number of houses of worship, healthcare and education facilities have been taken over and are being used as Army and Police posts in Intan Jaya, Puncak Jaya and surrounding areas.

The impact of conflict in Intan Jaya has resulted in:

- 10 civilians shot dead by the Indonesian National Police detailed as follows:
  - a. The shooting of 2 servants of God in Intan Jaya; Pastor Jeremiah Zanembani on September 9, 2020 by a member of the army (TNI) and on October 2020 an officer of the Catholic Church (Catechist) Rufinus Tipagau was shot dead by members of the TNI.
  - b. On February 15, 2021 three civilians, Janus, Justinus and Soni Bagau (Puskesmas), were shot dead by the TNI in Sugapa.
  - c. On February 27, 2021, Donatus Similar (who was physically disabled, mute and deaf) was shot by the TNI.
  - d. On March 6, 2021, Melianus Nayagau, a young male junior high school student was killed.
  - e. There were also victims and displacement of civilians in Puncak Papua District. A student was shot by a member of the TNI as he returned to school. Atanius Murib and Amanus Murib survived the disaster of death.

- More than 1000 people were displaced in Intan Jaya. They fled to the courtyard of the Pastoral House and Convent of the Bilogay Catholic Church. About 300 families fled to Nabire. Hundreds of heads of families fled to Paniai, Puncak Papua and surrounding areas.

During the enactment of special autonomy laws in Papua, Papua has been surrounded from all directions, land, sea and air. There has been an increase in territorial units. There has been the addition of new Kodam (Provinsial Military Command), Korem (Area Military Command), Kodim (Regency Military Command), Batallions, Yonif Combat Units and increased combat assistance provided from Military District Commands to the Air Force. For the Army, there are plans over the period 2021-2024 to build 4 Regency Military Commands in Lanny Jaya, Tolikara, Star Mountains and Nduga Regencies. There has also been an increase in the Navy: Lantamal, Koarmada (Command Armada) III. While for the Air Force there will be an addition of Pangkoopsau (Commander of the Air Force TNI Operations Command), Airbases and Radar.

At the same time the addition of infrastructure and personnel are also occurring in the police force. There has been additions to the Regional Police, City Police, Departmental Police, and local Police Posts. Also the police special forces troops, Brimob, have decentralised their Headquarters to Companies so that they are spread throughout the Land of Papua. Active army and police members are also the main suppliers of weapons and bullets to TPN / OPM.

As well as the addition to these three forces, the TNI headquarters also opened new Kogabwilhan (Coordination of the Defence Region) at the end of 2019. Kogabwilhan III is headquartered in Timika, Papua. This agency now determines all military operations in Papua and is bringing in thousands of troops.

## **2. Politics of systemic racism**

The Government of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia has not learnt any lessons or made a persuasive approach to respond to the peaceful and open resistance protests held by Papuans in response to the racist incidents against Papuan students in Surabaya August 2019.

Racist speech about Papuans are still being uttered by state officials, political figures and even Indonesian civil society. At the start of 2021, Natalius Pigay experienced racist speech from the Chairman of the Supporting Group of President Jokowi, Ambrose Nababan reported by Abu Janda, from Jokowi's Buzzer team.

Racist views and policies also came out of the mouth of the former head of BIN (State Intelligence Agency) Hendropriyono, who wanted to resolve the problems in Papua by forcibly moving 2 million Papuans to Manado so they can become "Indonesian People."

On March 26, 2021 racist statements were made by supporters of Persija Jakarta at the Stadium Kanjuruhan Malang, East Java, towards Patrick Wanggai, the Papuan player who with Makassar PSM after he scored a goal against Persija Jakarta.

On March 8, 2021, the Chief of Police in Malang, Sr. Comr. Leonardus Harapanua Simarmata Permata committed racist speech and intimidation towards Papuan students who held demonstrations in Malang, East Java. From his mouth, the police chief stated that the blood of Papuan students was 'halal' so therefore they could be shot if they dared to enter the property of the Malang Police Station.

The deployment of security forces to Papua without the approval of the Peoples Representative Council of Indonesia (DPR-RI), the forced expansion of the number of districts and provinces in Papua, and the efforts to impose an extension of Special Autonomy funds by the Indonesian Government in Papua is proof of the racist character of the Indonesian rulers in Papua. The Rulers and the Indonesian people still look at Papuans as second class citizens in Indonesia and liken them to certain types of animals. Papuan people at all levels have experienced Indonesia's racial politics for 58 years.

### **3. Stigmatization of OPM as a terrorist organisation**

On Monday March 26, 2021, during a hearing with the former House of Representatives Commission III, the Papua Regional Police Chief who currently serves as Head of the BNPT (Terrorism Management Agency), Commissioner General Boy Rafli Amar conveyed the need to raise support through cross Ministry, Departmental and Institutional discussions to push for the National Liberation Army for Papuan Freedom (TPN / OPM) to be equated with other terrorist groups in Indonesia. OPM is fighting for what is in the preamble of the Constitution.

The basis of the creation of Indonesia in 1945 "that independence is the right of all the people and because of this colonialism must be abolished worldwide because it is not in accordance with humanity and fair justice." The struggle of the OPM and the Papuan people is also part of upholding the Declaration of Universal Human Rights December 10, 1948 and the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights.

### **4. Violations of civil and political rights**

We have witnessed the security forces continue to contract the democratic space. They have limited the space for Papuans to convey aspirations peacefully without any intimidation. Demonstrations to reject Papuan Special Autonomy Volume 2 were forcibly disbanded in several cities in Papua and in Indonesia including Manado, Makassar, Jakarta, Malang and Yogyakarta. Likewise, those organising the Listening to Opinion Meetings (RDP) on special autonomy by the Papuan People's Assembly were intercepted, terrorized and arrested by security forces in Merauke, Wamena and several other districts.

Throughout 2020 there were 42 cases involving: the right to life, the right to freedom of expression and gathering, the right to security, the right to a more prosperous life and the rights to a decent job.

We have also recorded the flood of migrants who continue to arrive in the land of Papua. From 2010 to 2020 according to the population census data of 2020, the population of Papua

increased by 1,470,000 with a total population in Papua in 2020 of 4,300,000.

## **5. Deforestation and environmental crime**

Between March and May 2020 satellite imagery found that 1,488 ha of land had been deforested for Oil Palm. The largest area is in Manokwari (372 ha), then the Merauke region (372 ha), Boven Digoel (222 Ha) and Bintuni (110 ha). We have read the Report of the Indonesian Monitoring Coalition (this coalition consists of 11 NGOS) which shows that deforestation in Papua has greatly increased during the administration of President Jokowi.

Over the last 20 years 663.433 ha of the forest area was damaged; 71% of this deforestation occurred between 2011 and 2019. The average deforestation rate in Papua is around 34,000 ha per year; The peak was in 2015 with 89,000 ha deforested. During the 2015-2019 (Jokowi I Cabinet I) Papua lost 298,600 ha. The biggest deforestation took place in the Merauke region (123,000 Ha), Boven Digul (51,600 ha), Nabire (32,900 ha), Bintuni Bay (33,400 ha), Sorong (33,400 ha) and Fakfak (31,700 ha).

The Indonesian government has also offered the company of Elon Musk a location for a rocket launch site. Responding to this plan, the Biak Customary Council and the owners of the cultural rights of the land carried out open protests. This launch site would cause destruction of the environment for the community, and the submission and emptying of customary land. A minimum area of 700 ha of empty land is needed for the 'rocket launch' site and other strategic projects.

Based on the reality that we have described, and in order for the Land of Papua to heal and become peaceful, we, the Church leaders in Papua request the following:

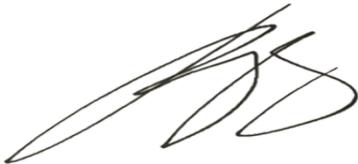
1. The UN Commissioner for Human Rights should visit the Land of Papua to carry out an investigation of human rights violations in Papua.
2. The involvement of an independent team as a third party to carry out accompaniment, health services, education and other needs of the residents living as refugees or those who are victims of violence in Nduga, Intan Jaya, Puncak Papua, and Timika.
3. That President Joko Widodo keeps the promise that he made on September 30, 2019 that the State is ready to "dialogue with the Papuan Pro-Referendum group, ULMWP."
4. The Indonesian government should carry out a dialogue with ULMWP to find a solution to the problem of Papua in the same way as the government of SBY (Yusuf Kala) resolved problems with GAM and Aceh mediated by a third country.
5. The leaders of the Melanesian Sphere Group (MSG) should accept ULMWP as a full member of the MSG at the MSG summit in April 2021.

6. Papuans should pray and fast from 11 April 2021 for the healing of the land and people of Papua and for the unity of all cultural leaders, church leaders, government leaders, NGO leaders, women leaders and youth leaders.
7. The Papuan People, starting from their own family, should practice principles of a peaceful life and avoid things that can destroy their future. They should protect and guide all of their family members in a responsible way.
8. Prayer and fasting support from the people and church leaders in the Pacific.

Finally, we would like to express our respect and thanks to the cultural leaders, church leaders, the media, government leaders, communities and academics in the Pacific region, and to all parties involved in international solidarity for the People of Papua from Africa, Australia, Europe, America and Indonesian Civil Society who have demonstrated true solidarity in the long journey of suffering of Gods People on the Land of Papua.

Jayapura-Papua, 2 April 2021

West Papua Council of Churches



Pdt. Benny. Giay



Pdt. Andrikus. Mofu



Pdt. Dorman. Wandikbo



Pdt. Socratez.S.Yoman