



CATHOLIC JUSTICE AND PEACE COMMISSION OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF BRISBANE

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Media Statement

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Commission Expresses Solidarity with the People of West Papua

On this day in 1963, Indonesian security forces first set foot on the land of Papua officially. Since that day up to the present, the peoples of West Papua have lived with much violence, repression and marginalisation. We understand the immense frustration and anger that so many Papuans feel after decades of this injustice and thousands and thousands of lives lost.

Regrettably, this frustration has boiled over in the last couple of years. It has resulted in the killing of a number of members of Indonesia's security forces by armed members of the Free Papua Organisation (OPM). Papuan civilians have also been killed by Indonesian security forces in their pursuit of the OPM.

This violence reached new heights with the killing of a senior Indonesian intelligence officer in West Papua a few days ago. In the wake of this killing, the President of Indonesia has ordered a "crackdown" on the armed resistance in West Papua. The Indonesian Government has also officially branded members of the OPM as "terrorists". Fighting between the Indonesian security forces and the armed Papuan resistance has escalated and has been described by some as "war".

Thousands of Papuans have fled their villages in the past two years to escape sweeping operations and violence by Indonesian security forces. These internally displaced women, men and children are very vulnerable and have faced deprivation and even death despite the efforts by churches and community organisations and groups to provide them with support. The pain of the Papuan people can only get worse if this violence continues.

This violence and displacement must stop!

We echo the calls of church leaders in West Papua for international intervention, especially from the United Nations. This is needed to end the violence, to provide humanitarian support and to investigate human rights violations in West Papua. We appeal to the Indonesian Government to end its use of military force in West Papua. We urge it to withdraw its troops. We encourage it to accept the intervention of the United Nations to arrange humanitarian support, to investigate credible claims of human rights abuses and to arrange negotiations with Papuan leaders to find a peaceful solution to the conflict.

We urge the Australian Government to play its part in encouraging the Indonesian Government to end its security approach in West Papua and to work with the United Nations and other Governments to end the conflict.

We urge Catholics, our fellow Christians and people of faith to join with Papuan churches in seeking God's mercy through prayer and fasting. We also ask them to approach their Federal MPs and Senators to urge them to encourage the Australian Government to engage with the Indonesian Government and other Governments, especially in the Pacific, to pursue this alternative course.

We will continue to communicate with our Catholic and Protestant sisters and brothers in West Papua to offer them our support and solidarity. May our loving and merciful God bless the people of West Papua with peace!

For further information or comment, please contact the Commission's Executive Officer, Peter Arndt, on +61 409 265 476.

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