

Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

16 February 2007

Dear Mr James Rees,
Committee Secretary,
Joint Standing Committee on Treaties

A submission from the Australian West Papuan Association SA (inc) concerning the Agreement between Australia and the Republic of Indonesia on the framework for Security Cooperation

Yours Sincerely

David Arkins

Secretary
AWPA South Australia (inc)

AWPA SA (inc) is most concerned that this treaty will detrimentally affect the lives of West Papuans because there are not adequate safeguards built into the treaty to protect and monitor those people who have already lost basic human rights and continue to be oppressed by an ongoing military occupation of 35,000 troops. There are no clauses that facilitate inspection by third parties to ensure that there is good treatment of the indigenous population. The Indonesia President Yudhoyono in January 2006 placed a ban on visits to West Papua by human rights organisations, journalist and politicians that remains in place until today.

We are also concerned about the renewal of military links with the TNI and in particular with Kopassus forces. We believe that the military have not changed their methods of operations from the days of East Timor occupation. The fact that not one Indonesian soldier or General is in gaol at the moment after the massacre of over 250,000 in East Timor has led the TNI to believe that they will always remain above the law .The also believe they can continue to act with impunity .

We are deeply concerned about clause 2.3 that states “...shall not in any manner support or participate in activities by any person or entity which constitutes a threat to the stability, sovereignty or territorial integrity of the other party,.....encouraging or committing such activities, including separatism” will be used to restrict free speech by Human Rights Groups, such as ourselves, in Australia. We have already noticed that it is harder for West Papuans to come temporarily to Australia, that their visas have not been granted and we believe that this is because of subtle political interference in the administration of the Public Service

We think that greater analysis and attention needs to be placed on existing arrangements for autonomy in West Papua. We need to look at the progress or lack of it in assisting the development of the indigenous population move from being one of the poorest people in the Unitary State of Indonesia to measured improvement. The government needs to examine the existing barriers and why there has been so little progress .

AWPA SA believes in giving the Papuans the right to self determination , the right to choose their own future . That might or might not mean Independence . We have analysed the process of autonomy over the last 5 years through 4 Presidential occupants and do not believe that the Indonesian government is currently serious about the autonomy process. The words are hollow and are not being reflected by any actions. Under President Wahid there was genuine intent to involve the population in the local government , but in the last few years the division of Papua into more provinces has acted counter to the spirit of the proposal. The extra financial aid has not improved the lot of the community, only a squabble for money by an elite at the top.

The presence of such a large military force in West Papua does not assist any process for autonomy. The number of troops is greater per head of population than American forces in Iraq. The fact that the military is only partly funded by government makes it a necessity for them to seek finances from other sources. It is well documented that they rely on funds from illegal logging , prostitution , protection rackets , sale of gold mining licenses , transport barrier points collection , drug sales , sale of fauna etc to supplement their income . And the amount is around 70% of their total funding . While the conditions that create corruption in the fabric of society particularly in the military remain, then the contradiction of trying to make West Papua more democratic will fall at the barrier with corrupt soldiers with guns denying any change .

A recent report by the UN Environment Program released in February 2006 stated that 73 per cent of all logging in Indonesia was illegal . The guardians of the countries wealth are chopping it down, trucking and shipping it themselves. With such vested interest in the resources in West Papua there will be no progress along the autonomy road. Their will be a greater resentment from an exploited indigenous population that sees and feels the bad effects of the military presence. That resentment, as has happened before will lead to greater violence.

If the West Papuans campaigned just to get better health, welfare and education they would continue to be ignored and the wealth generated from the country would continue to be sent to Jakarta. There would not be any reporting of their situation .With an embargo on visits to the country by journalist, Amnesty International, UN human rights members and others reimposed by President Yudhoyono in 2006 there is no ability to get to the truth of stories about torture, murder and starvation that is regularly being mentioned. If Australia signs up to the treaty we are in reality closing our ears to what the West Papuans are trying to tell the world about their treatment

For the West Papuans to demand Independence is a desperate attempt to engage in debate about basic rights. They see little option but to put forward a more extreme position so that there will at least be a level of debate, because without it there would be absolute silence.

Last month Indonesia announced it has put 1,000,000 hectares of forest on the market for sale to provide timber mostly for China. The area is roughly twice the size of Bali Island 25% of the land for sale is in West Papua. The proceeds from this sale will not be given to the Papuans, but it will certainly reinforce the view of Papuans that they are being exploited and that their country destroyed.

AWPA SA believes that it is a mistake to sign a treaty that “ respects territorial integrity” if what this means is ignoring the conditions of the Papuans and in fact their existence .

I was reminded of an email I received late last year from Medecines sans Frontier, Doctors without Borders who were assisting an outbreak of measles in West Papua. Hundreds of people were dying for the lack of a 20 cent vaccine and they were seeking

financial assistance for it. After 43 years of Indonesian Rule there has been so little progress for the Papuans but so many deaths .

Yours sincerely

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