



Submission No 38

Inquiry into Australia's Relations with Indonesia

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Australia's Relations with Indonesia

Submission to the Joint Committee for Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade

Terms of Reference:

The Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade shall inquire into and report on Australia's relationship with the Republic of Indonesia, focussing in particular on building a relationship that is positive and mutually beneficial.

The Committee shall review the political, strategic, economic (including trade and investment), social and cultural aspects of the bilateral relationship, considering both the current nature of our relationship and opportunities for it to develop.

This submission supports the development of closer and stronger relations with the whole of Indonesia but focuses on issues relating to the Province of Papua.

Please find below:

- 1. Summary and recommendations**
- 2. Discussion of media criticism of NGOs involved in Papua**
- 3. Discussion paper on Papua**

Summary and Recommendations

With the realization that immediate and direct Australian security problems exist in Indonesia the Australian-Indonesian relationship has entered a new era. The Bali bombing has cast a long shadow. Along with these threats, however, opportunities are also emerging. As a result of shared suffering in the Bali bombing collaboration in the search for justice is taking place. There has been a shared sense of outrage. Joint efforts to prevent further terror attacks will be needed and this appears to be likely. There is great potential for a changed relationship based on collaboration and openness.

This is a critical time for broadening Australian involvement with Indonesia in as many ways as possible and for investing more of our resources in the relationship, particularly through working with the people of Indonesia to strengthen Indonesian civil society.

This submission suggests the need for a more open and frank dialogue with a clear goal of building a democratic and free society throughout Indonesia. This goal is also the policy of the Australian Government's aid program. Caritas Australia supports human rights education and monitoring in Papua. This is not the same as supporting independence. Caritas Australia does not take any position on that issue. Good governance in Indonesia, however, must include the promotion and protection of human rights.

Caritas Australia is currently increasing and broadening its own involvement in human development work in Indonesia. This submission focuses on the Province of Papua because that is the part of Indonesia where Caritas Australia has been involved the longest. We have had a long relationship with the Catholic Church in Papua. Out of this experience we are able to comment on existing problems and to identify ways in which both the Australian Government and civil society organisations can work for a positive and mutually beneficial relationship.

We should not let the current strong focus on terrorism and security obscure less dramatic issues. East Timor appeared to be a minor irritation for many years. Yet, in the end, Australia had to side with the Timorese, placing the whole relationship with Indonesia under enormous strain

Papua is rapidly becoming a cause for concern both for the social and political conditions of people living there and for Australian-Indonesian relations. The primary cause of this concern stems from:

- the lack of development progress of indigenous Papuans;
- political violence and abuse of human rights primarily caused by Indonesian military forces
- widespread social, economic and cultural discrimination against indigenous Papuans.

The continuation of these factors is leading to further conflict and abuse of human rights. While this conflict may not currently have the media presence that the situation in East Timor generated it is likely that Australian public sympathy will rest with the Papuans, and not with the Indonesian military or government, because they are clearly the victims of repression. This will harm Australian-Indonesian relations, in the broadest sense, in turn causing the same problems for intergovernmental relations that East Timor presented for so long.

At the center of causes for concern in Papua is the Indonesian army (TNI). Indonesian repression in Papua is well documented. According to ELSHAM 136 people have been killed and 838 incarcerated and/or tortured over the last four years. Large parts of the province have been closed to foreigners for years. Local resentment against the military, especially the KOPASSUS, is intense.

If Papua is to become free of fear and discrimination the military presence must be reduced. There is in fact no military threat to Indonesian interests. The Organisasi Papua Merdeka (OPM) is not an effective fighting force and has been penetrated by Indonesian Intelligence. Since the Second Papuan Congress (June 2000) the OPM has halted operations, joining the strategy of creating a Zone of Peace in Papua. This presents an opportunity for military withdrawal.

If there proves to be an on-going Islamic Fundamentalist threat in Indonesia the TNI is unlikely to be a prime mover in countering it. Of more importance will be the police force, legal systems, intelligence services and public education. The TNI, as a result of many years of involvement in illegal business, including extortion, prostitution and logging as well as having a central political role, is ill suited to working closely with Australian institutions. It has in fact engaged in its own terror campaigns over many years.

In order to construct a collaborative and open relationship it is important to appreciate the difficulties, which are many. Unfortunately the recent history of Papua is not conducive to optimism for the future. Indigenous Papuans have not experienced the role of the Indonesian government, in particularly the military, positively. Ever since the Dutch promise of independence in the 1950s Papuans have talked about pursuing the same path that the other Melanesian countries have taken with the understanding that this alone will solve their problems. The desire for independence is an expression of the desire to live free of discrimination and fear. The practicalities – economic, political, security, language – are ignored and subsumed by the intense and understandable desire to live free of repression.

Australian Government relationships with the Jakarta based center of government have for too long been restricted by Australian hesitation to address difficult issues like human rights abuses in Papua and military repression. Australia was manoeuvred into becoming an ally during the Timorese struggle but had to turn against Indonesian interests in the end under the weight of public opinion.

Australian Government attention has also been too easily focused on narrowly conceived national interests such as the perceived need to prevent asylum seekers from reaching Australian territory. As a result, from an Indonesian perspective, Australia has little or no interest in genuinely assisting Indonesia. It tends to see Australia as selfishly following its own interests, giving enormous weight and resources to a handful of asylum seekers, but doing comparatively little for the massive problems of Indonesians.

The issue of HIV/AIDS in Papua, for example, is a major one. Yet there is very little action from the Indonesian Government. HIV/AIDS is perhaps the single greatest direct threat to Papuan livelihoods. It requires a concerted, collaborative effort from all sectors of Papuan society and will require substantial foreign assistance.

This submission does not present any easy solutions nor suggest that an adversarial attitude should be utilised. Building closer and more open relations with Indonesia requires bridging an enormous cultural chasm. It will require the highest level of diplomatic skill, the contribution of substantial resources and much good will from the Australian Government.

Australia has a legitimate, and strong, national interest in helping to build peace and respect for human rights in the SE Asia and Pacific region

- Civil disturbance there can easily overflow into Papua New Guinea.
- HIV/AIDS does not respect national borders.
- Human rights violations are offensive to Australians and as long as they continue will colour Australian perspectives of Indonesia.

It is time to understand our national interests more broadly and to see that we cannot isolate ourselves from human rights abuse next door.

Openness and transparency must be encouraged so that human rights abuses cannot be hidden. The Indonesian security forces are the prime agents of repression and will attempt to close off areas of operations. Australian assistance to Indonesia must not

collude with repression. It should encourage outside observation and reporting at all times.

Civil society has a crucial role to play in this as it has in other countries. Ultimately it will be civil society organisations which will monitor and publicise human rights issues. It will be through having their own effective organisations that Papuans will feel strong enough to engage in their self-determination without necessarily demanding secession. Australia needs to support Indonesian civil society as well as the important linkages with Australian organisations without heavy-handed governmental restrictions.

Churches have an important role in this. Indonesian churches have a strong and legitimate base in Papua. They have played a very positive role. They are often called on by the government and military to solve problems, such as hostage situations, because of their standing. It is crucial that this continues.

Both the Protestant and Catholic Churches in Indonesia are recognised in the Indonesian Constitution. They are key elements of civil society with a long and positive history of engagement throughout the country. They are likely to play a key role in Australia's engagement with Indonesia.

Recommendations

The Australian Government should:

- 1. Encourage Indonesia to relax its security dominated policy towards Papua and help build cultural respect and development. A key strategy should be to open Papua to the outside world.**
- 2. Encourage Indonesia to withdraw the Kopassus troops from Papua and reduce military numbers substantially.**
- 3. Offer Australian development assistance for peacebuilding, reconciliation and the promotion and protection of human rights in Papua.**
- 4. Encourage Australians to visit Papua and encourage PNG cultural institutions to enhance Papuan relations with Melanesia and Australia.**
- 5. Australia should encourage a strong and independent civil society in Papua.**
- 6. Australia should support a strong anti-HIV/AIDS program in Papua.**

31 October 2002

Media criticism of Australian Government and Non-Governmental Organisations engaged in development assistance work in Papua

The play of identity politics in Indonesia, unleashed since the downfall of Suharto, has resulted in some strong rhetoric regarding Australian (government and non-government) intentions towards Indonesia. Suspicion of Australian intentions has been heightened by the East Timor situation. One way to deflect criticism of government policies is to blame others.

Consequently there have been allegations that Australia is attempting to undermine Indonesia and that NGOs have been assisting the independence movement in Papua. Some of this rhetoric has been repeated by Australian lobbyists pursuing an anti-NGO ideology with the result that the integrity of NGO development work in Papua has been questioned.

It has even been suggested (eg Robert Gottlieb in *The Australian* 16/10/02) that government aid funds have been misused by aid agencies to support secession in Papua, even terrorism. These allegations are false. They are also dangerous because they could lead certain elements in Indonesia to take action against NGOs or Churches thinking there may be substance in them or that such action may even be welcomed in Australia.

The allegations have been answered by the Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs the Hon. Chris Gallus MP¹, denying that any government funds have been used to promote secession.

The following points need to be considered:

- There is a very wide range of NGOs in Australia as well as Indonesia. Australian aid agencies that have development projects in Papua do not provide assistance to the independence struggle. Some solidarity groups and individual activists in Australia do support the struggle for independence in Papua. To our knowledge this assistance is essentially moral support and publicity to that cause, in Australia and internationally. The fractured and ineffective OPM has always been short of resources – clear evidence of a lack of support from Papuans in exile and from other supporters.
- There has been almost no activity from the OPM since the decision by Papuan leaders to restrict their campaign for independence to a non-violent one (June 2000). The increase in outside attention to Papua has resulted in a more peaceful approach from the Papuan leadership. Foreign solidarity groups mostly play a positive role in this by raising the profile of the issue. OPM activities have traditionally been limited to hostage taking (usually released after generating sufficient publicity) and small scale ambushes of military patrols. Some OPM members are Indonesian collaborators and have undertaken armed operations in coordination with the TNI.

¹ Letter to *The Australian* Fri 18 Oct 2002

- Due to the undisciplined and corrupt military forces operating in Papua, particularly the Kopassus, some sections of the Indonesian Catholic Church, as well as NGOs, have taken on the role of monitoring human rights violations. In this they seek to bring to outside attention breaches of international and national law with a view to promoting and protecting human rights in Indonesia.
- Caritas Australia supports human rights monitoring and greater public awareness of Papuan issues. This strategy aims to promote good governance, a concept which includes the acceptance by governments of their responsibilities under international law. This is also the policy of the Australian Government. In the words of Alexander Downer²:

“The critical importance of good governance in reducing poverty and promoting development is reaffirmed. Governance is now the largest focus of our aid and underpins all of our aid investments.”

NGOs which assist human rights monitoring work, such as Caritas Australia, are not supporting secession by assisting that work.

One result of the Australian media attention given to this issue AusAID has suddenly changed its policy regarding co-financed NGO projects. As of September 2002 NGOs utilising AusAID funding in Papua need to gain approval from government authorities in Indonesia before undertaking that work.

This is likely to prove impractical in the field. It undermines legitimate development work by NGOs and constitutes an intrusion on the operations of Indonesian organisations, such as the Indonesian Catholic Church agencies, which may need to access such funding.

Consider the following examples.

1. HIV/AIDS in Papua, particularly in the southern areas (Merauke, Timika, Fak Fak as well as Sorong) is a much larger problem than the government is admitting. There is little interest from government in this crucial issue. By having to request government approval development NGOs run the risk of delays, or even rejection, of projects which have not yet entered into government consideration, and on which there is a certain level of denial. It is not difficult to envisage important project work being stopped by embarrassed government officials whose own inaction may be revealed.
2. The monitoring of human rights violations is rarely easily accepted by government authorities, even in Australia. Even though Caritas Australia has never included this work in its AusAID co-financed projects we believe this is an important element in the promotion and protection of human rights and good governance in Indonesia and should be able to be supported by AusAID. It would be quite wrong, and counterproductive, to make human rights organisations seek government approval for their work.

² Media release following his address to Parliament 24 Sept 2002

3. AusAID's new policy places local Indonesian Church agencies in a new position – of having to seek approval from government for their work. They have not had to do this before. Even if it is only for AusAID funding it sets a dangerous precedent which some elements of the Indonesian administration would welcome. It would be different if it were the Indonesian Government wanting to impose that rule. It has not done so. This rule will interfere in Indonesian Church work and undermine its position in society. Indonesian institutions should be able to work out their own arrangements without Australian political concerns affecting their work.

25 October 2002

Tanah Papua ³

Socio-political situation in Papua

One's first, superficial impressions of Papua, particularly for those with experience in Papua New Guinea, are ones of calmness; busy, street level commerce; and a strong military presence. In the interior, where most Papuans⁴ live, life has changed little, even during the Dutch colonial times. There are no roads connecting the coast with the highlands, very little commerce and few government services. Non-Papuans tend to live in towns on the coast. They rarely live inland. There is only one sizeable inland town – Wamena (pop. approx. 10,000), in the Baliem valley.

There is an underlying tension, however. This can be seen in the strong military presence; in the fact that certain areas are off-limits; in the uneasy separation of cultures; in the lower position of Papuans throughout society; in the public "sweeping operations" (checking personal papers such as drivers licenses).

Papuans live in a state of intimidation and discrimination. Intimidation comes from:

- Covert actions by security forces aimed at paralyzing the Papua Movement, including killings and torture.
- State-sanctioned stigmatization of certain groups (eg Highlands Dani tribe members - eg Abepura Case of 2000)
- The increasing presence of Laskar Jihad
- Impunity of perpetrators of human rights violations over a long period of time
- Security forces actions, particularly in remote communities (eg Star Mountains)⁵

Newcomers to Papua are of two broad types – transmigrants and 'spontaneous migrants'. Transmigration centres are small, discrete, fairly dense population areas. This program of resettling people from, mostly Java or Bali, was commenced in the 1960s. When criticism caused the cancellation of its funding by the World Bank, the Indonesian Government continued it, although at a lower level. It appears to have largely halted in the last decade and is probably finally brought to an end with the Special Autonomy program which starts this year. It is hard to assess the transmigration program's final impact without a thorough study. On the surface it appears to have failed on almost every level. Many transmigrants have returned home (usually after gaining title to land which they can sell); most require government food assistance during drought; most fail to integrate into Papuan communities.

³ Tanah Papua means Papua Land, perhaps the most common, and neutral, name for the territory sometimes called West Papua, Irian Jaya, Irian Barat or Papua (now the official name of the province).

⁴ In this paper 'Papuans' refers to the indigenous inhabitants of the Province of Papua.

⁵ 136 people have been killed by security forces and 838 people have been incarcerated and/or tortured over the last four years (Elsham - Annual report 2001).

Of more importance for immigration, however, is the flow of "spontaneous migrants". These are people attracted by the prospect of a better life, particularly traders and shopkeepers able to buy and sell goods, and civil servants. Some migrants, such as those living at Timika, depend on major foreign-owned operations (eg Freeport). Most, though, have the capacity to live anywhere. They are resourceful, busy and keen to improve their lot in life. They also tend not to integrate into Papuan communities and tend to attract the most opposition from Papuans, for their dismissive attitudes to the local people. Perhaps the closest analogy is with the Chinese traders in other parts of Melanesia.

There are no reliable population figures for Papua. The most common non-official estimate (used by the European Commission) is 1.8 to 2 million, divided roughly 50:50 between Papuans and newcomers. Papuans are nearly all Christian. Non-Papuans are nearly all Moslem. There are over 250 tribal languages. Bahasa Indonesia is the most common language, however, Papuans in remote communities tend not to speak it.

The average life span of a Papuan is approximately 42 years⁶. HIV/AIDS is rampant throughout the south, and probably further afield. Papuans are rarely involved in formal commerce (ie through a registered business, or in shops. There is almost no tourism industry (some adventurous backpackers go to the Baliem Valley). It is one of the most isolated places on the planet.

Papua is extremely rich in natural resources. The world's largest gold mine, rainforest areas only exceeded by the Amazon, vast oil and gas fields make it a hugely valuable part of Indonesia. There is also a great deal of potential for eco-tourism.

Papuans mostly live a traditional lifestyle, with 73% living in rural areas.⁷ With little or no communication between coastal towns and the interior life has changed little for some communities in the last few decades. There is an almost total absence of a cash economy in the interior and few services.

A political synopsis

When Indonesia became a nation state in 1949, after a brief war of independence against the Dutch, returning after the Pacific War, it did not control West New Guinea. Promoting the idea of a separate nation state of West Papua, the Dutch trained some local people to undertake administration when independence could eventually be granted. Indonesia, however, insisted that the territory be part of Indonesia as it had been an integral part of the Dutch East Indies. Australia supported the idea that it be separated from the new state of Indonesia, mainly for strategic reasons (at that stage Australia was interested in keeping military bases in the archipelago), but also because they saw that Papuans had more similarities to Papua New Guineans than they did to Indonesians. They thought it could possibly become part of a larger PNG, and so remain within Australia's influence. Australia supported a UN trusteeship for the territory and an Act of Self Determination to decide its future. The Papuan elite clearly favoured independence.

Indonesia occupied parts of the territory, starting in 1962, with American political support designed to create an ally in SE Asia where the threat of communism was becoming an important issue. Australia followed in step and the issue was referred to the

⁶ Source: Sue O'Farrell, NGO development consultant, Merauke.

⁷ Report of European Commission Conflict Prevention Assessment Mission, March 2002, page 32.

United Nations when it became clear there was a stalemate - Indonesian troops were unable to defeat the Dutch and Papuans. The UN Temporary Executive Authority was created. Under the New York Plan the Indonesian flag could be flown from January 1963 and an Act of Self-Determination would have to take place before the end of 1969. Dutch administrators left, some encouraging Papuans to conduct a guerilla war, and the first prominent West Papuans chose to go into exile rather than face Indonesian reprisals. In 1969 a farcical referendum was stage-managed by the Indonesian government and subsequently ratified by the UN. West Papua became Irian Jaya and the 26th province of Indonesia.

Guerilla fighting and rebellions have continued haphazardly ever since. In the mid 1980s approximately 10,000 Papuans crossed into PNG. Smaller groups have come and gone at regular intervals, depending on events and military behaviour. Now, there is very little actual fighting. There are occasional hostage takings. The guerilla fighters appear to have been penetrated by Indonesian intelligence. Some Papuan leaders play both sides.

Despite there being no research on the subject it is safe to say that most Papuans favour 'independence'. Non-Papuans are likely to favour continued integration with Indonesia, although some may see their interests coinciding with enhanced local control. However, life is not so simple and neither are the choices. There is no substantive debate on independence. There is little or no discussion about how independence might work; what role non-Papuans might have; economics; security etc.

The fall of Suharto offered new hope to Papuans, as it did to Indonesians throughout the country. In 1999, with President Habibie offering East Timor a referendum, a wave of intense expectation swept Papua, amounting almost to a cult. Rumours flew – that the Americans were going to chase out the Indonesians – that independence would arrive on Dec 31 2000. President Wahid offered erratic support for greater Papuan involvement in government and a form of autonomy. He allowed the use of the West Papuan flag and changed the name of the province to Papua. Militia groups started to emerge (eg around Papuan leader Theys Eluay) and even larger numbers of Indonesian military arrived.

Under President Megawati these hopes have been dashed. Special Autonomy has been offered and independence is clearly not an available option. International attention has increased, particularly after the assassination of Theys Eluay, making Papua, along with Aceh, one of the most prominent international issues for Indonesia. The European Union has made a fact-finding mission. The American Ambassador has visited.

A Papuan Council, called the Presidium, emerged after the Second Papuan Congress (a large, all Papuan meeting which had been supported by President Wahid) in June 2000. This is the only group able to provide a Papuan voice in politics however it is not easily compared with the Timorese umbrella body the CNRT⁸ which carried Timorese aspirations to the international community. It contains some Papuan leaders based overseas. Its membership is variable in quality (at least one has criminal links). Theys Eluay, who named himself as chairman, was formerly linked to Golkar, the party of Suharto. He formed his own militia (the Satgas Papua). His murder has yet to be solved

⁸ The unity and sophistication of the Timorese leadership presented a strong, simple case to the international community. By comparison the Papuan leadership is divided, often naive and their case is complex.

and neither those responsible, nor the reasons for the murder, have become clear. The most common opinion is that it was a Kopassus operation.

Women were poorly represented at the Papuan Congress and, apart from the famous 'Mama Josepha', a thorn in the side of Freeport, are almost completely by-passed by the Papuan movement.

Recently concerns have arisen regarding the Laskar Jihad, a fundamentalist Moslem organisation which has played a violent role in the Moluccan conflicts. Reports of Laskar Jihad members infiltrating Papua, conducting training and education, and forming militias, have become more frequent. ELSHAM and University of Queensland academic Dr Greg Poulgain have suggested there is TNI support for Laskar Jihad. Catholic Church sources are also concerned, fearing the possibility that an Ambon style conflict could be engineered, particularly in the Sorong area.

There is an unfathomable depth to the various conspiracies and subterfuges adopted by Indonesian authorities and powerful individuals in Papua. One will simply never know the truth of events. While there may be some TNI involvement in Laskar Jihad this does not necessarily indicate a strategic choice has been made, or that this linkage is centrally controlled.

The emerging political situation in Indonesia is characterized by a weakening center - both for the national government and for the TNI. It is possible that regional TNI commanders have greater scope for decision-making than in the past. The TNI has extensive links to business interests, both legal and illegal. Senior members are able to grow rich through military service. These factors play out on a local, regional and national level. In Papua there is evidence that the TNI is involved in illegal logging, extortion, prostitution and other harmful activities.

For too long Papua has been a restricted area of Indonesia. The grievances of the indigenous Papuans are real and should not be countered by military repression. This, as was shown in East Timor, is a self-defeating strategy. Human rights abuses flourish in conditions of secrecy and the sense of grievance will only increase. Knowledge of human rights abuses cannot be kept secret and lack of transparency only increases public concern. The TNI does not have a clean reputation so the assumption is easily made that much more lies below the surface. A far more constructive strategy is to reduce the military presence and open the province to outside observation.

Special Autonomy

Some form of 'autonomy' has been on offer almost continually since 1998 when the latest widespread protests by Papuans started to emerge. The central government's view appears to be based on the following assumptions:

- That 'problems in Papua' originate in lack of 'development'
- That Papua is, and always will be, a permanent part of Indonesia
- That autonomy will become common in other parts of Indonesia as well

In Papuan circles autonomy came to be labeled as "not independence". Simplistic understandings and naivety, combined with an atmosphere of rumour and cultish behaviour, caused much misunderstanding in the period from 1999 to now. This led to

some violent conflicts and much jockeying for position among the Papuan elite. Theys Eluay emerged as a big chief and his SatGas militia enforced the pro-independence line.

The notion of 'Special Autonomy' came after the Governor, Mr Jaap Salossa, having gained some support in Jakarta for an autonomy package, asked the Cenderawasih University, in Jayapura, to undertake a public consultation and to articulate a more appropriate form of autonomy. Only three months were allowed for this task and the report was due on May 1 2001. The working group engaged on this task traveled widely, experiencing at first hand popular discontent with any form of autonomy (rather than independence), and became more aware of what might and might not work.

Key issues emerged about Papuan attitudes. These included the need for:

- Respect for local expression, such as flying the Papuan flag and singing a Papuan national anthem.
- An effective voice in political decisions – especially over migration and the deployment of security forces
- Sharing in the profit from natural resource exploitation
- Revisiting the history of the 'Act of Free Choice' (called the 'rectification of history'.
- Justice to be done and human rights violations halted
- Need for a referendum if special autonomy is not implemented properly

A Congress on Special Autonomy held on 28 March 2001, was disrupted by pro-independence demonstrators and police. This effectively returned the situation to that immediately after the Papuan Congress of June 2000 when "going international" (ie seeking support from the UN and international community) and rejecting any form of autonomy were the key Papuan positions.

Jakarta politics then impacted on the Special Autonomy proposal which was endorsed on 22 Oct 2001. The return of a strong emphasis on economic issues and reduction or elimination of references to Papuan culture or rights reduces the package's scope and almost certainly only postpones the Papuan movement's desire for independence.

Of course one never knows, in Indonesia, how a governmental program, or law, is likely to be implemented. The actual result may well be entirely different to what was planned or envisaged. One element, at least, is clear. There will be much larger sums of money available to be spent in Papua. Some of this may find its way into services or infrastructure but, going on past experience, very large sums of money will almost certainly be corruptly manipulated and stolen. The scope for corruption is now much wider than before. This will be open to both Papuans and non-Papuans.

The Papuan Movement

There are three important points to note about the understandings of Papuan people to the complex socio-political issues in which they find themselves:

1. Papuans are very strongly aware of the fact that they have never had a free and fair choice to determine their own fate. They view the 1969 Act of Free Choice as a shameful and illegal event. From this understanding flows the demand for independence and 'rectification of history'.

2. The collective experiences of Papuans. These include not being considered as real, equal human beings; being considered only as subjects for 'projects'; living in fear of the security forces; denial of speech and assembly. Independence is an expression of the desire for a life free of discrimination and fear.
3. Indonesia lacks a development policy or capability which is able to raise Papuan living standards. Centralised policies rarely contribute to local poverty alleviation. Newcomers dominate commerce and foreigners exploit natural resources. Independence is also understood as shutting off the siphon of Papuan resources to outside groups.

Non-Papuans

Papuans tend to live separately to non-Papuans (some of whom have lived in the territory for a very long time). In Papua the distinction is very marked because Papuans dominate the hinterland and non-Papuans live on the coast. Even in the towns separation is the norm. This is not unusual. In Indonesia separate communities, often living as neighbours for decades, show superficial tolerance and respect for each other. This can easily be broken however. The success of agitators, particularly those connected to the military, is well known. Riots and inter-communal violence are easily brought into existence by rumours and minor incidents. Criminal gangs and militia groups operate with impunity, often respecting these communal borders and forming themselves along communal lines.

At no stage does it appear that non-Papuans living in the territory have been consulted about the future of Papua. Even those Papuans most directly involved in these issues rarely have any depth of knowledge about non-Papuans and their needs. It appears to be assumed that they will simply go home once independence comes.

Non-Papuans actually drive the economy of Papua. It is very rare for a Papuan to own a shop or business. Many Non-Papuans also possess farming skills which might modernize the agricultural sector of Papua. Some Papuans have learned modern work skills at Freeport⁹ but the supervisory positions are inevitably held by Indonesians or foreigners. The new British Petroleum project at Tangguh will employ 31,000 people but Papuans are unlikely to benefit through skilled work.

Perhaps the most influential group of non-Papuans is the Indonesian military and police. Their involvement in Papua is almost entirely negative and they are undoubtedly responsible for gross violations of human rights over a long period of time¹⁰. In particular the Special Forces (Kopassus) demonstrate an arrogance and insensitivity to local concerns which is breathtaking. Young soldiers placed in remote communities, lacking any understanding of the local people, are out of sight of independent observers. There is very little actual fighting with the guerillas but that excuse has been given for numerous massacres and individual murders. The TNI also participates in illegal logging operations and is beyond the reach of local civil authorities.

There is a small number of displaced persons in Papua - approximately 16,600 people, who fled from the Moluccas.

⁹ Freeport, an American company, is now owned by Rio Tinto. It plays a similarly dominant role as did the CRA mine at Panguna, in Bougainville)

¹⁰ Ref Amnesty International ASA 21/010/2002 April 2002

Comparison with PNG

Papua is, by comparison with PNG, a peaceful and tranquil place. One does not see groups of disaffected young men gathered on street corners, bored and dangerous, as is common in PNG. Shops can keep cash and people travel with large amounts of cash (credit cards are unknown) without fear. The town streets are busy with traffic and people going about their business. Guns are not available. Alcohol is not a feature of life in Papua and it is rare to see a drunk.

The reasons for this state of comparative calm are undoubtedly complex. It is often suggested that the heavy military presence keeps criminals at bay. This is probably not the case. Factors which may contribute to peace include:

- A comparative lack of movement of rural people to the towns creating squatter settlements and unemployed youth
- Lack of easy transportation between towns and the hinterland (there is not one usable road into the highlands)
- Limited availability of alcohol
- Lack of cash economy in the hinterland (traditional lifestyle continues)
- Strong individual, commercial work ethic among Non-Papuans leads to a vibrant economy of small shopkeepers and traders.

Papua New Guinea does, however, provide positive examples of democracy and a modern legal system in comparison with Indonesia. The absence of the rule of law is stifling the economy and culture of Indonesia. Subservience to authority and class is the norm. PNG is, by comparison, egalitarian, open and transparent.

Other places, which might provide useful comparisons with Papua include Fiji and New Caledonia. Both these countries have indigenous Melanesian populations in a 50:50 balance with newcomers. In Fiji the Indian community dominates small farming and commerce and has a strong education ethic. In New Caledonia the Caldoche are French settlers. Both Fiji and New Caledonia possess living standards that are above average in the South Pacific, mainly due to the influence, modern skills and work discipline of the settler communities. Political problems have certainly emerged but it is also apparent that very few people have been casualties of political violence and negotiated settlements are well underway.

Human development

The Papuan community is undoubtedly among the poorest in Indonesia. Average life span is approximately 42 years (compared with 62 for Indonesia). Due to government inaction, poor transport and communications, health and education in remote villages is almost completely neglected. Solving a complex problem, such as that posed by bringing modernity to remote Papuan communities, is completely beyond the Indonesian authorities. The question itself is not even asked. Government efforts are too often limited to 'show projects' and exhibitions of military prowess or the corrupt activities of individual officials.

Subsidies from Jakarta have been very important for the economy of Papua for decades. When one views the Jayapura harbour, for example, there is a constant influx of goods, people and consumer items, but little trade going out. Petrol is subsidised, as is rice.

Airflights are subsidised. Some of what goes out is hidden (eg illegal logging). However the main income earners are the Freeport mine and the Sorong oil/gas fields. As a matter of urgency independent studies of the economy are required and a program of bringing Papuans into the cash economy put in place.

NGO life in Papua is not well developed. This reflects the security framework imposed by government authorities (where a travel pass is required for foreigners and certain areas are still closed). NGOs are looked on with suspicion by the authorities. There is no legal protection for civilians, nor are contracts enforced by the courts. Many projects have been funded and many NGOs created over the years but few survive. A 'project mentality' has been created whereby Papuans are able to access funding from outside donor NGOs, and even from official aid sources. These projects tend to last only as long as the funding at which point the NGO concerned looks for another funder. The overall impact is negative because the process robs local people of their own self-reliance.

HIV/AIDS is rampant, especially in the Merauke region, making that province one of the hardest hit areas. On a per capita basis it is the worst in Indonesia. There is no effective government response to this pandemic. Even three years ago the head doctor of the Merauke General hospital estimated that the virus was 'present in every village' throughout his area¹¹. Deaths are not attributed to AIDS but to opportunistic infections (due to the reduced effectiveness of the immune system) such as tuberculosis.

HIV/AIDS is possibly the single most important factor in reducing Papuan life span and development prospects.¹²

There are other severe endemic health problems including malaria, dengue fever and tuberculosis. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs maintains a monitoring role of emergency needs in Indonesia. It reports in its May bulletin (11 May):

- *The Head of the Health Office of Jayawijaya District confirmed the death of 85 people from malaria in the sub-districts of Kelila and Bolakme. A medical team from the local Health Office, assisted by medical staff from MSF Wamena, has been dispatched to the area.*
- *The Cendrawasih Pos reported from Mimika that 14 children in Jila Sub-district died of respiratory infection. The report also stated that 332 people in eight villages in Jila are suffering from this infection.*
- *The Head of the Health Office of Merauke District reported that cases of dengue fever are on the rise since January this year. The public hospital in Merauke has treated 138 children, one of whom died.*

Refugees

Almost from the moment of the Indonesian takeover Papuans have fled to other countries. At first these were the Papuan leaders fearful of Indonesian reprisals. In 1984 a major crossing of approximately 10,000 persons took place (after the murder of Papuan leader Arnold Ap and a number of rebellions and flag raisings had taken place). Many of these people continue to live in PNG today. Border camps were centralised into East

¹¹ Conversation with the author,

¹² Official involvement in the deliberate introduction of AIDS as a form of ethnic cleansing has been alleged. No evidence has been produced for this. HIV does not select only Papuan victims.

Awin, under the auspices of the UNHCR, but this has not prevented the establishment of new temporary border camps in a number of locations.

The border region is mostly extremely mountainous and the inhabitants live a very hard life. On the lowland areas to the south population is sparse. Camps which are able to provide services such as health, education, or food, will attract people whose normal living standards are lower than that in a camp. Consequently it is difficult to provide services to asylum seekers which do not attract more people, from the Indonesian side of the border, or people from the PNG side, needing assistance.

There have been a number of successful repatriations from PNG back into Papua. Some of these have been monitored by the Diocese of Jayapura. There have also clearly been a number of individual cases of reprisals undertaken by Indonesian military.

For people living in the border region, usually having family networks across the border, relocation into PNG is an option which is available to them. This is a considerably easier option for them than for most refugees who cross international borders. There are some communities on the border which appear to inhabit both sides. Consequently the PNG Government usually refers to all those crossing the border as "border crossers". It hesitates to identify any of them as refugees.

In the late 70s and 80s there was some fear in PNG that Indonesia might embark on a military excursion into PNG territory. This led that Australian Government to survey the border and, jointly with the Indonesian Government, to mark the border clearly.

Attitudes

From a Melanesian, or wider Pacific, viewpoint Papuans have been denied their Right to Self-Determination and should, like all other South Pacific peoples, be given the opportunity to decide their own fate through a referendum. The presence of large numbers of Indonesians in Papua is usually ascribed to forced migration policies (such as transmigration) but their interests are usually ignored due to the greater, or prior, right of the indigenous inhabitants to rule in their own land.

Events in Papua are usually reported as a series of incidents of State-sponsored violence. Claims of genocide have been made, usually with little evidence. Exiled Papuan spokespersons contribute to these attitudes. Support for "West Papua" is viewed in the same way as the invasion of East Timor and its subsequent repression. Indonesia is viewed as an aggressive, military dominated state.

Consequently Pacific governments have taken an interest in events in Papua. These are, in fact, the only governments doing so. Papuan representatives have been invited to Pacific Forum meetings, as observers, causing Australia, and usually PNG, to definitively restate their support for Indonesian territorial integrity.

In Indonesia educated attitudes to Papua, even among NGOs, can be quite nationalistic. The possible break-up of Indonesia into a number of separate states is usually viewed with horror. Indonesia is viewed as the legitimate successor state to the Dutch East Indies and so Papua should be included. East Timor was never part of the Dutch empire and so is understood as a different case.

None of the provinces, or regions, of Indonesia was offered any sort of choice about joining the Republic of Indonesia. Perhaps the area most similar to Papua is Kalimantan where Dayak people are the indigenous inhabitants and a border is shared with Malaysia. However, there is no significant independence movement nor demand for an act of self-determination.

Educated Indonesians recognize the problems caused by military repression throughout their country and tend to view Papua as a problem caused by the military. For many, though, the military role is a price which must be paid to ensure security throughout their country. For Indonesia has thousands of potential separatist groups as well as criminal networks which could flourish without a forceful response. The potential for human suffering in a disintegrating, or anarchical, Indonesian archipelago is enormous.

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