



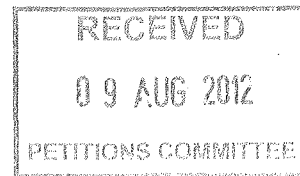
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SENATOR THE HON BOB CARR

MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
CANBERRA

27 JUL 2012

The Hon John Murphy MP  
Chair  
Standing Committee on Petitions  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600



Dear Mr Murphy

Thank you for your letter of 25 June 2012 concerning the Standing Committee on Petitions' consideration of two petitions regarding Indonesia's Papuan provinces.

The Australian Government strongly supports Indonesia's territorial integrity and recognises its sovereignty over the provinces of Papua and West Papua, which resulted from the 1969 United Nations' sponsored Act of Free Choice. The Act of Free Choice was supervised by the United Nations and conducted in the context of broad international support for finalising the decolonisation process of Indonesia. At that time, Australia voted with 83 other nations at the UN General Assembly to accept the outcome of the Act of Free Choice. There were zero votes against and 30 abstentions. The Australian Government has no intention of raising this issue in the context of the United Nations.

The Australian Government supports training for Indonesian security forces and military that emphasises human rights awareness, accountability and respect for the rule of law – including in Papua and West Papua. We do not train the Indonesian police or military to counter separatist groups or organisations. The focus of Australian engagement with these forces is combating terrorism. Against the tragic history of terrorist activity in our region, including the loss of 88 Australian lives in the first Bali bombing, such engagement is crucial in protecting the safety of both Indonesians and Australians. The results of these efforts are clear: Indonesia has been both effective and determined in its response to terrorism, arresting around 700 people on terrorism-related charges over the last decade and convicting close to 500. The Australian Government is committed to working with Indonesia to boost its capacity to contribute to regional security and will continue our collaborative and multilateral engagement with its security forces and military in preventing the broader regional threat of terrorism.

The Australian Government supports a vigorous and free press as a key feature of modern Indonesian democracy and will continue to highlight the importance of vibrancy and diversity within its media. We regularly underline the value to Indonesia of being seen to be open to international media. Australia raises with the Indonesian Government the importance of allowing credible observers access to the Papuan provinces, including by foreign journalists, Australian Government officials, and non-governmental organisations. On 23 May 2012, the Australian Government participated in the UN Universal Periodic Review of Indonesia, which included providing key recommendations to help bolster Indonesia's human rights record throughout the country. Australia's recommendations to Indonesia included improving the access of local and international media organisations throughout the country, and its engagement with key international organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross and the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Thank you for bringing the petitions to my attention.

Yours sincerely

Bob Carr