

## **AUSTRALIA WEST PAPUA ASSOCIATION WA**

### **Statement to the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties with regard to The Agreement between the Republic of Indonesia and Australia on the framework for security cooperation**

#### **Introduction:**

Notwithstanding the concept of cooperation between neighbouring countries for security purposes, it is with some concern for a genuine, growing understanding with the Republic of Indonesia and its people, that some Articles in the Agreement appear contradictory and probably premature.

While the Australia West Papua Association WA may concern itself primarily with the welfare of the West Papuan peoples, our concerns are also with the Indonesian people who are also trying to establish a life where the principles of respect, fairness and real democracy can be appreciated.

#### **Article 2 Principles: No. 3**

With regard to “their domestic laws and international obligations” it is apparent that there is a great discrepancy between the way the two nations perceive and actively respond in implementing their respective constitutions and their international responsibilities.

If the two democracies were as robust as one another, for example, in the area of free speech and problem solving through constructive dialogue, then there wouldn't be our concern for the safety of people in Ambon, Sulawesi and West Papua when they express their genuine concerns to the often extreme situations they find themselves in. The situations mentioned in this section of Article 2 would not be a problem between true representative democracies. In Indonesia at present it would be neglectful of Australian obligations under international law for our government to support the Indonesian interpretation of what constitutes “a threat to the stability, sovereignty or territorial integrity” of a country. Helping to strengthen the Indonesian approach to democracy will not be achieved through acquiescence to their abuse of it.

#### **Article 3 Areas and Forms of Cooperation: Nos. 1, 2 & 3**

Defence cooperation between countries is also a practical notion if those two countries have a similar concept of defence. We have seen in the recent past in Java, East Timor and West Papua that defence, to the Indonesian government, means brutal subjugation of its own people through annihilation and terrorisation. These methods of suppressing dissent and cultural expression are perpetrated by the military, the police and their militias who they recruit, train and arm. These same military, police and militia are also engaged in corrupt practices that rob the Indonesian people of their resources, culture and dignity.

Cooperation and training of Indonesian military and security personnel should be conditional to proven reform of the military, and proven reduction of military from the areas of tension to enable a democratic engagement with the locals as a means to finding peaceful solutions to their concerns.

The international community has an obligation to ensure that peremptory norms of international law are enforced and protected. Australia therefore has a responsibility to ensure that the Agreement will not continue to give the Indonesian government the impression it can allow its military to act with impunity in the violation of human rights.

### **Conclusion**

With regard to the above, and the difficulty that Australian government departments have in obtaining verifiable information in many regions of Indonesia due to restricted access and communication, the Agreement would be an appropriate opportunity for Australia to press for greater general access and freedom of movement in regions like West Papua so that mutual confidence could be established between the governments and the populations of Indonesia and Australia.

Polls have indicated that over 70% of Australians have empathy with the plight of West Papuans, and many would agree that the Australian government should be more proactive in its Foreign Relations dialogues with the Indonesian government. Pressing for troop withdrawals from troubled regions and for the establishment of inclusive dialogue with the peoples of these regions should be a priority concern for the Australian government in supporting Indonesians and West Papuans, and as a reassurance for the many Australians who feel our country is not participating with integrity in the upholding of the rules of International law and human solidarity.

This Agreement presents itself as an opportunity to create a new phase in Australian Indonesian relations that could lead to a more transparent and genuine cultural understanding for the benefit of the whole region.

Written on behalf of the Australian West Papua Association WA

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