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Get up, Stand up: West Papua Stands up for its Rights: A Rebuttal of the International Crisis Group Report No. 188, Radicalisation and Dialogue in Papua: West Papuans Unite against Special Autonomy and for a Referendum on Independence

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Abstract

This report addresses the momentous events that have transpired in West Papua and its diaspora in recent months. A response to the recent International Crisis Group (ICG) report entitled Radicalisation and Dialogue in Papua¹ is also necessary as it is being used as justification by the Indonesian government in two serious initiatives currently underway: the prosecution of activist leader Victor Yeimo on charges of 'rebellion' and the unfolding TNI military operations in the highlands of West Papua. One initiative may unjustly deprive a man of his liberty; the other will almost certainly cost the lives and livelihoods of innocent Papuan civilians. The ICG report is biased, poorly conceived and researched. Its conclusions are therefore questionable even while the consequences of those conclusions are potentially so dire. A rebuttal is essential.

Keywords

188, no., report, group, radicalisation, dialogue, get, papuans, unite, against, special, up, referendum, independence, stand, up:, west, papua, stands, crisis, up, autonomy, its, rights:, rebuttal, international, papua:

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Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies
The University of Sydney



Get up, stand up: West Papua stands up for its rights

*A rebuttal of the International Crisis Group Report No. 188, Radicalisation and
Dialogue in Papua: West Papuans unite against Special Autonomy and for a
referendum on independence*

By Jim Elmslie and Camellia Webb Gannon with Peter King

A report prepared for the West Papua Project at
the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies,
The University of Sydney, July 2010

Note on the title: West Papuans, since the late 1970s (initially through the music of West Papuan fusion band the *Black Brothers*), have been inspired by the Rastafarian politics and music of Jamaica, particularly Bob Marley. As such, the Bob Marley and Peter Tosh song *Get up, Stand up*, is an apt reference and title for this report. As West Papuans peacefully fight for their rights in the 47th year of their struggle for self-determination, the movement is building momentum through increased unity and proactive resistance.

Get up, stand up: Stand up for your rights!

Get up, stand up: Don't give up the fight!

- Bob Marley and Peter Tosh, 1973

Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies



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Indonesian military monument in Merauke, West Papua

**A report for the West Papua Project of the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies (CPACS),
The University of Sydney, July 2010**

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Executive summary

This report begins with a response to ICG Report No. 188, *Radicalisation and Dialogue in Papua*, released in March 2010. It finds that the ICG report is flawed in declaring the KNPB (*Komite Nasional Papua Barat*—the West Papua National Committee) responsible for several recent acts of violence in West Papua. These include: an attack on the police station in Abepura in April 2009; arson at the Cenderawasih University in Abepura in April 2009, and killings around the Freeport mine since June 2009 through to January 2010. The ICG's evidence supporting these assertions is examined in detail and found to be insufficient.

The evidence the ICG relies upon includes selective quoting from Indonesian tabloid press reports, hearsay and discredited interrogation testimonies. A major omission of the ICG's report is that its authors did not interview the person they identified as the main actor in these events, Victor Yeimo, to give him a chance to respond to the allegations made against him.

The ICG report characterises the KNPB and its vice chairperson Victor Yeimo as militantly radical, promoting the use of violence for achieving the political goal of a referendum on Papuan independence. We have found instead that the KNPB is primarily a media and information clearinghouse that expresses mainstream views held by a wide spectrum of Papuan civil society and political organisations, as well as the armed wing of the OPM. The KNPB also organises peaceful demonstrations promoting such developments as International Parliamentarians for West Papua, launched at Westminster in 2008.

All this matters because the ICG is widely considered to be a definitive voice in conflict analysis internationally, and its findings are therefore to be taken very seriously. Only weeks after the ICG report was released, major military operations commenced in the highlands of Papua, with very grave consequences for civilian populations living in those areas. The ICG report strengthens the Indonesian government's position that they are fighting violent guerillas in West Papua rather than a legitimate, popularly backed resistance movement and the ICG's views have been echoed in international reporting on the conflict. Furthermore, Victor Yeimo himself is facing serious charges of rebellion for exercising his democratic right to peaceful demonstration, and the ICG report can be seen as compromising the legitimacy of his trial by dangerously skewing perceptions of him and his organisation.

In fleshing out the reality of the KNPB, we have interviewed various key Papuan activists, both in country and in the diaspora, to canvass their views on the KNPB and the level of support for its goals. We have found a high level of support for the organisation and its aims, which undermines the ICG claims that the KNPB's views are somehow extremist. All this was brought into sharp relief on June 18, 2010 when a landmark meeting of the peak Papuan representative bodies including the MRP (*Majelis Rakyat Papua*—the all-Papuan upper house of the Papuan parliament in Jayapura) and leading West Papuan intellectuals and theologians issued 11 recommendations rejecting Special

Autonomy and calling for a referendum on independence in West Papua. A march of some thousands of people formally delivered these findings to the Papuan People's Representative Council, the lower house or DPRP, demanding that the legislators in turn 'give back' Special Autonomy to the central government in Jakarta.

Reflecting the level of West Papuan internal and external coordination, almost simultaneously in Vanuatu, which hosts a representative office of the West Papuan National Coalition for Liberation, a motion was passed in parliament explicitly supporting independence for West Papua and committing the Vanuatu government to work towards that goal, regionally and internationally. This latter commitment would include sponsoring a motion at the United Nations General Assembly to ask the International Court of Justice for an 'advisory opinion' on the legality of Indonesia's official takeover of West Papua in 1969.

The above events taken together represent a huge challenge for the international community which to date has endlessly repeated its support for the Special Autonomy package as a legitimate, viable way to resolve the West Papua conflict. Indonesia's obstinacy in failing to implement much of the package has shredded any credibility it may have had in the eyes of Papuans. While not universally dismissing the Indonesian Institute of Social Sciences (LIPI) Papua Road Map that advocates dialogue, mainstream West Papuan opinion, as evidenced by the June demonstrations and recommendations, is calling for a referendum for independence in addition to dialogue with Jakarta. This will prove a considerable challenge for President Yudhoyono.

In this pressure-cooker situation, the simmering discontent of the West Papuans may well explode. The ICG report has correctly identified the specter of a civilian massacre along the lines of the Santa Cruz cemetery massacre in Dili, Timor Leste, in 1991. The Papuans have already indicated they intend to push their demands further through non-violent mass protests, which in the past have incurred a heavy-handed military and police response. However the Papuans feel a sense of desperation in their need to attract international attention to their cause in the face of stonewalling by Jakarta and the ongoing massive inward migration by Indonesians from other provinces. The problems in West Papua were initially created through colonial interference. Should the situation in West Papua deteriorate radically, there would be profound implications for Indonesia as well as Australia, the United States, Papua New Guinea and the European Union. West Papua has become a serious and seriously neglected international issue. It is time to treat it accordingly.

Introduction

This report addresses the momentous events that have transpired in West Papua and its diaspora in recent months. A response to the recent International Crisis Group (ICG) report entitled *Radicalisation and Dialogue in Papua*¹ is also necessary as it is being used as justification by the Indonesian government in two serious initiatives currently underway: the prosecution of activist leader Victor Yeimo on charges of ‘rebellion’ and the unfolding TNI military operations in the highlands of West Papua. One initiative may unjustly deprive a man of his liberty; the other will almost certainly cost the lives and livelihoods of innocent Papuan civilians. The ICG report is biased, poorly conceived and researched. Its conclusions are therefore questionable even while the consequences of those conclusions are potentially so dire. A rebuttal is essential.

The report blames an upsurge of violence in West Papua since 2009 on “the radicalisation of a group of Papuan students and ex-student activists from the central highlands” and their organisation, the West Papua National Committee (*Komite Nasional Papua Barat* or KNPB)². There is no mention that this violence is occurring in the midst of a massive influx of Indonesian settlers, soldiers, logging companies and mining operations, which have already probably made the Melanesian Papuans a minority in their own land. The Papuans have endured 48 years of Indonesian occupation (their words), the death, torture and rape of tens of thousands of innocents, the theft of their lands and forests, and marginalisation within a foreign culture, all of which they see as an ongoing and intensifying process of Asian colonisation.

To blame the violence in West Papua on those Papuans who are opposing the demographic and political annihilation that they are facing almost defies belief. They are engaged in a legitimate struggle for self-determination such as has occurred in East Timor, Aceh and South Africa. It is incumbent on such a prestigious organisation as the ICG that research and analysis of conflicts like the one in West Papua be conducted in a rigorous and objective manner, with a high degree of academic discipline. In this case the ICG has failed to achieve these standards.

We intend to outline the main charges the ICG makes against the KNPB and its vice chairperson Victor Yeimo, examine the evidence to support those charges, and assess the ICG’s argument. We then intend examining Report No.188’s second analysis regarding the shootings around the Freeport mine since July 2009 that have left a least three dead, including an Australian, Drew Grant. The ICG has alleged these killings were most likely the doing of the TPN/OPM, with only flimsy evidence. It is a claim that even the Indonesian police have been reluctant to make, and certainly one that has not been proven. We will then look at the KNPB itself and seek to understand its true nature, goals and policies. Finally, the consequences of recent developments, these being the current military operation underway in the central highlands, a significant motion in support of

¹ ‘Radicalisation and dialogue in Papua: Asia Report No. 188’, International Crisis Group, Brussels, March 11, 2010.

² *ibid*, p.1.

West Papuan independence in the Vanuatu parliament and a call for a referendum by key groups in West Papua, will be examined to see where the conflict might go from here.

The ICG report finds several violent incidents in 2009 “directly attributable to the KNPB”³. These events occurred on April 9, Indonesian election day, when the police station in Abepura, Jayapura, was attacked and the rectorate at Cenderwasih University was burnt down. The evidence that the ICG uses to substantiate these claims is extremely weak.

The April 9 attack on the Abepura police station

At 1.00am on April 9, the Abepura police station was attacked by several dozen men reportedly armed with bows and arrows and Molotov cocktails. Police opened fire on the ‘attackers’ and shot five men, one of whom died later from his injuries. The police arrested and interrogated the other four wounded men.

In one of the “interrogation depositions” a suspect claimed that he had attended a meeting of some 20 people led by Victor Yeimo in the Tanah Hitam area of Jayapura earlier on the night of the attack. Allegedly, at this meeting, it was agreed that the police station should be the target and a detailed plan of attack was made. At his trial however, “the same suspect said he had not taken part and had no idea it was being planned”. He said he “happened to pass by the station as he was going home and was shot as he was watching the incident unfold”⁴. The suspect, along with all the others, was acquitted on January 18, 2010. This implies that the Indonesian court believed the suspect and that the “interrogation deposition” had been fabricated by the police: a common practice in West Papua.

The ICG saw further confirmation of the KNPB’s involvement in statements made by Victor Yeimo on his website and blog. In fact, all Yeimo said on April 13 in a statement on the West Papua Today website was that “both the police station and the rectorate attacks were purely the work of the West Papuan people”⁵. Later, on April 18 after police raided his house and while he was still in hiding, Victor sent a text message asserting “that the two attacks on 9 April were carried out spontaneously by Papuans and not by KNPB as an organisation”⁶. More apparent ‘evidence’ of the KNPB’s role was found in an article in the *Cenderawasih Pos*, one of West Papua’s local newspapers, which quoted the KNPB secretary, Demus Wenda, as saying “that the KNPB was responsible for most of the major political acts, violent and non-violent, that had taken place in Papua in 2009, including the attempted assault on the Abepura police station; [and] the arson at the university”⁷.

³ *ibid*, p. i.

⁴ *ibid*, p. 9.

⁵ *ibid*, p. 10.

⁶ *ibid*, p. 10.

⁷ *ibid*, p. 11.

This evidence, a retracted statement supposedly made to the police, and quotes from a tabloid Indonesian regional newspaper, was deemed enough for the ICG to “directly attribute” the police station attack to the KNPB. This level of research is hardly rigorous. The claim of KNPB involvement in an incident in which a man was killed should have been the subject of further ICG investigation before reaching this damning conclusion.

The ICG researchers could, for instance, have asked Victor Yeimo for his thoughts. We interviewed him on June 1, 2010, and found that the ICG report has profoundly misunderstood the role and functions of the KNPB. The truth, as so often in West Papua, is more nuanced and complex than Report No 188’s rather superficial analysis suggests in this instance.



Victor Yeimo in Abepura Prison, November 2009

Victor Yeimo describes the KNPB as being the “West Papuan people’s media for struggle”⁸. It disseminates information from West Papuan “civil” groups about their actions, as well as from the various commands of the TPN/OPM (*Tentara Pembebasan Nasional/Organisasi Papua Merdeka*), the armed wing of the West Papuan resistance movement. The KNPB sees itself as having a prime responsibility to distribute information on anti-Indonesian actions, not as being *responsible* for those actions.

Yeimo told us,

“I...made [a] statement after [the] attack on [the] post in Abepura. I said that I [was] responsible for it...not because I [was] involved in the attack, but because

⁸ C Webb Gannon, ‘Interview with Victor Yeimo’, June 1, 2010. This interview was conducted via phone from Sydney to Jayapura.

KNPB... is the media for every action in West Papua. So we [are] responsible for every people's action, whether TPN, whether it comes from civil [society]"⁹.

And further,

"We are media for civil and everything, so we have to say to the media...what is behind their aim to attack the...police, but we never command to the civil [society] to attack there, ...KNPB never involved in attack"¹⁰.

The ICG was also mistaken to take tabloid newspaper articles at face value. Victor Yeimo contends that Papuan newspapers, such as the *Cenderawasih Pos*, have Indonesian intelligence officers who vet the news and engage in generating propaganda that portrays the Papuan nationalists in a poor light¹¹. This seems highly plausible in such a politically tense situation as that which currently exists in West Papua. Victor Yeimo explains the statements purported to having been made by Demus Wenda in this way:

"Indonesian media...they don't publish true statement that Demus Wenda talk. Demus Wenda talk[s] about KNPB...responsib[ility] to say to the world what is really happening. But KNPB [is] not involved in the attack. But as you know...in local media, they have many, many intelligence involved in the media in *Cenderawasih Pos*, and *Papua Pos*, they are always making up propaganda to say to the world that KNPB is the destroyer or something like that"¹².

This means that not only have the ICG misinterpreted Victor Yeimo's own statements, confusing what he is accepting responsibility for (putting out news on incidents, not the incidents themselves), but they have also been unwittingly duped by misinformation and propaganda put out by Indonesian intelligence agents monitoring and manipulating local media. According to Victor Yeimo he was never approached by the ICG for an interview¹³, which seems a glaring lapse given so much of the report concerns him and the organisation that he represents, the KNPB. As a result of this oversight, Yeimo endeavoured to clarify in his interview with us any ambiguity that may have been perceived by the ICG around the special sense in which the KNPB assumes "responsibility".

The April 9 arson attack on the Cenderawasih University rectorate

About half an hour after the Abepura police station attack, the rectorate at Cenderawasih University was set alight. No police arrived until 6.15am. No one else attended the fire either, as people were too scared to approach the rectorate after the shootings at Abepura. The three-story building suffered substantial damage.

⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹ *ibid.*

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ *ibid.*

The ICG report found that this attack too was “directly attributable to the KNPB”¹⁴. They drew this conclusion from the statements we have quoted above from Victor Yeimo on his website and also the *Cenderawasih Pos* newspaper article misquoting Demus Wenda.

For Victor Yeimo the reason behind the attack was clear, which he posted on his website under the title ‘Main Reason for the Burning of the Cenderawasih University Rectorate.’ The reason was that Papuan students at the university were angry at being discriminated against by the rector and took their revenge. It was not an action planned or co-ordinated by the KNPB.

One or more ICG researchers obviously did not believe Yeimo. In response to Yeimo’s above statement they wrote in the report, “While the KNPB was not taking responsibility, it could explain why the rectorate became a target”¹⁵. The ICG sensed KNPB involvement; a hunch that they felt was ‘confirmed’ by yet more Indonesian tabloid journalism:

“Another article quoted Wenda as saying that these actions [the rectorate fire; police station attack and others] were endorsed at a meeting of pro-independence elements, including the OPM and KNPB”¹⁶.

The source (footnote 64 in the ICG report¹⁷) is “OPM-KNPB Bukan Separatis”, *Papua Pos*, June 3, 2009. Yet again the ICG was taking unverified tabloid newspaper reports as ‘evidence’ to support their claims of the KNPB’s violent actions. At the least the ICG researchers should have known that in such politically fraught circumstances all publicly released information on the independence movement published in local papers would be subject to Indonesian government scrutiny and manipulation. Given that, it is bewildering that the ICG has presented dubious information as fact. At its worst interpretation the ICG is recycling Indonesian intelligence misinformation and propaganda, whether consciously or not, and giving that misinformation greater weight under the imprimatur of the ICG.

The actions taken by the ICG in drawing its conclusions on the nature of Papuan resistance to Indonesian rule are either incompetent or willfully ignorant. They tend to blame the Papuans for the terrible situation in which they find themselves. Instead of trying to understand the Papuans’ position the ICG has cast the KNPB as almost a terrorist organisation, which is engaged in violent actions against the Indonesian state driven by violently radical revolutionaries. This is playing into the Indonesian government’s hands as this is how they also portray Papuan nationalists.

¹⁴ International Crisis Group, op. cit., p. i.

¹⁵ *ibid*, p. 10.

¹⁶ *ibid*, p. 11.

¹⁷ *ibid*, p. 11.

The TPN and Drew Grant's death

The ICG contends that the "[KNPB's] dissemination of information on the shootings in 2009 and 2010 in the area of the giant Freeport copper and gold mine is one of the main indications pointing to the involvement of the late Kelly Kwalik's TPN/OPM unit rather than or perhaps in addition to members of the Indonesian military"¹⁸. That it is a non sequitur is the least problematic aspect of this statement. The KNPB is as closely linked with the TPN as it is with any other Papuan independence group¹⁹. This is because, as previously stated, the KNPB describes itself as a media organisation that is mandated to report to the world on issues of relevance to the independence struggle. According to Victor Yeimo, such issues or events may concern the TPN or Papuan civil society which all "have the same goal...they fight for freedom, they fight for dignity, they fight for self-determination"²⁰. Despite having a similar vision, Yeimo is clear that the KNPB has no say in the TPN's actions – "we never command, they have a structure in their military command so we cannot, I mean we cannot intervene in their command"²¹. Therefore the link remains obscure between the KNPB's "dissemination of information on the shootings", and alleged TPN culpability.

The closest the ICG report comes to providing a rationale for its allegations is on page 12 when it suggests "the presence of highland activists in the KNPB makes the guerilla activity in Puncak Jaya of particular interest"²². It implies that the KNPB is primarily a highlanders' organisation, and that that is why highlands-based protests connected to TPN commander Goliat Tabuni receive strong KNPB press coverage. That Tabuni apparently entreated Papuans not to vote in the presidential elections "almost certainly reflected communication with KNPB and its election boycott" according to the ICG report²³. While communication between the two groups undoubtedly occurred (not necessarily because of the KNPB's highlander membership but due to its commitment to relaying news of TPN activities), as Victor has pointed out, the TPN does not take instructions from the KNPB.

The report also raises the question of why the KNPB secretary Demus Wenda claimed responsibility for the occupation of the Kapeso airstrip, which the KNPB seemed to have little if anything to do with. Again this is a misunderstanding on the ICG's part about the role of the KNPB; the KNPB was not responsible for this action, but understood the rationale behind it and was responsible for reporting both Papuans' reactions to the Indonesian occupation and their rationale. The report offers zero evidence for the claim that communication between the TPN and the KNPB indicates TPN responsibility for the spate of shootings around Freeport between July 2009 and early 2010 (injuring many and claiming three lives including that of Drew Grant).

¹⁸ *ibid*, p. 1.

¹⁹ Webb Gannon, *op. cit.*

²⁰ *ibid*.

²¹ *ibid*.

²² International Crisis Group, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

²³ *Ibid*, p. 15.

The ICG proposes four possible culprits for Grant's death (in addition to the other shootings): Kelly Kwalik and those under his command; people working on orders from someone who had once worked with Kwalik; the Indonesian military or any combination of the above but maintains that "the case for the involvement of Kelly Kwalik and his men is stronger than for any of the alternatives"²⁴. Before he was assassinated (to use Neles Tebay's description)²⁵ by Brimob officers in Timika on December 16, 2009, Kwalik denied that his forces were involved in Drew Grant's death. The denials were made both in a meeting with the provincial police chief and in a comprehensive press statement dated July 15, 2009, addressed to "the world community, United Nations, Australia, USA, Uni Europe and the Asian Pacific as well as the Nation Colonial Indonesia"²⁶.

The ICG offers as evidence against Kwalik several questionable items:

- First, an exhortation on July 12, 2009 by Kwalik to Papuans to "revolt against all powers, Western and Asian" that have contributed to the demise of West Papua and its people;
- Second, an interview on Australian ABC radio from July 13, 2009 in which Victor Yeimo states it is unclear whether the TPN/OPM attacked Drew's car;
- Third, an email to activists, "reportedly" from a KNPB member who had "apparently" joined Kelly's forces, who criticised the "KNPB's attacks" on the university and the Abepura police station;
- Fourth, testimonies from seven Papuans arrested for one of the attacks; and
- Fifth, a quoted *Cenderawasih Pos* article with another statement from the KNPB secretary Demus Wenda²⁷.

We counter this evidence consecutively. First, Kwalik's call to Papuans to revolt against oppressive powers comes as no surprise from a leader of West Papua's resistance movement against foreign, that is Indonesian - and American (PT Freeport) - colonialism in West Papua. Resistance and rebellion (not necessarily violent) have been Papuan responses since Indonesian occupation in 1962; consequently, this statement of Kwalik's has no particular application to Drew Grant's death (or those of the other victims).

Second, neither does the ABC interview with Victor Yeimo, which cites other TPN/OPM attacks "far from Drew's car" as implicating the TPN in Grant's murder. Yeimo claims the ABC interview misrepresented the nature of the TPN and its capacity, and that it served purely to further "stigma[tise] the Kelly Kwalik struggle"²⁸.

Third, a claim (hedged with qualifiers such as "reportedly and "apparently") that a KNPB member in cahoots with Kwalik's forces chastised other activists for criticising the KNPB's alleged Abepura attacks is difficult to take seriously as evidence of TPN

²⁴ *ibid*, p. 22.

²⁵ N Tebay, 'The killing of Kelly Kwalik and Papua conflict', in *Jakarta Post*, December 24, 2009.

²⁶ K Kwalik, 'Freeport and Indonesia responsible of the all incidents in West Papua', fPcN intercultural (https://www.fpcn-global.org/Statement_GEN_KELLY_KWALIK_TPN-OPM-West_Papua), July 15, 2009.

²⁷ International Crisis Group, *op. cit.*, 20-2.

²⁸ Webb Gannon, *op. cit.*

responsibility in the Freeport attacks. As previously discussed, the April Abepura attacks were not in fact the doing of the KNPB and it would seem that KNPB members were aware of this.

Fourth, even the ICG admits that the testimonies from the seven Papuans arrested in relation to the shootings (who were later released), including an indication from Amungme man Simon Beanal that their orders came from Kelly Kwalik, are too weak to hold up in court. The ICG cites Papuan police as dismissing allegations, from Beanal's family, that he is 'mentally ill'. Surely his family would likely be in the best position to assess his mental health, and if indeed Beanal was/is unwell, this would seriously call into question the legitimacy of testimonies and re-enactments of the attacks he may have been coerced into providing. Indonesian human rights monitor and Papua expert, Brother Budi Hernawan OFM, refers to Simon Beanal as being "mentally disabled". Great weight must be given to Hernawan's assessment after 12 years of on the ground experience of investigating human rights abuses in West Papua for the Catholic church²⁹.

Fifth, the report again cites a statement by Demus Wenda (in what we know to be a biased media source, the *Cenderawasih Pos*) as "an indication of Kelly Kwalik's involvement". But what Wenda said, according to the report, does not indicate this at all: "The resistance undertaken was a protest over injustices perpetrated on the people as holders of customary land rights. To resist various forms of injustice, a component of the Papuan people, backed up by the forces of the TPN/OPM, will continue to resist in whatever way they can"³⁰. This again is not an unusual statement coming from the resistance movement's media organisation, and it does not specifically indicate the use of violent resistance methods. It is not surprising that the *Cenderawasih Pos* seems to have manipulated this statement (as they have his previous statements) to claim that Wenda attributes the Freeport attacks to Kelly Kwalik.

When even the Papuan police are reluctant to allege TPN guilt, given the lack of evidence, it seems misguided for an observer body such as the ICG to do so. The then provincial police chief, Brigadier General Bagus Ekodanto, said he believed Kwalik's denial of taking any part in the attacks. Kwalik has since been scapegoated as a primary suspect in the attacks and was killed by police on December 16, 2009, temporarily saving face for police who have thus far been unable to resolve the case. According to Papuan priest and intellectual Neles Tebay, this is entirely inadequate as a final conclusion³¹. Eben Kirksey, an expert on what has been described as an "analog"³² for the recent attacks, the 2002 Freeport shootings in Timika that killed three teachers (also blamed without solid evidence on the TPN) claims that the TNI (Indonesian armed forces) were the ones with "financial incentive to stage the attack...that left Drew Grant...dead"³³. An ongoing battle has been raging between Indonesian army and police in Papua for

²⁹ B Hernawan, 'Melbourne man's shooting lost in a Papuan puzzle' in *Canberra Times*, October 7, 2009.

³⁰ International Crisis Group, op. cit, p. 21

³¹ Tebay, op. cit.

³² E McWilliams, 'Statement on International Crisis Group report – and its coverage', West Papua Advocacy Team (<http://www.etan.org/news/2010/03wpaticg.htm>), March 16, 2010.

³³ E Kirksey, 'Indonesia's police and military at open war', (<http://ebenkirksey.blogspot.com/>), July 13, 2009.

lucrative security contracts, and in this case the army may have been trying to show the police up as incompetent providers of Freeport security. After the 2002 Freeport shootings at Timika, the TNI's role at Freeport was taken over by the Indonesian police, denying the TNI the financial benefits of association with Freeport. Since the 2009 shootings however, the TNI has reestablished its presence at Freeport³⁴.

The KNPB

What is the West Papua National Committee, or KNPB, that preoccupies the ICG so much? Is it really “a militant group of highlanders”³⁵ disenchanted with West Papua's peaceful struggle for self-determination as the report claims? We understand the KNPB to be an organisation that is already unifying factions among West Papua's independence leaders, within West Papua and the diaspora. Therefore it is important to offer an alternative analysis to that of the ICG, based on discussions with the KNPB's vice chairperson Victor Yeimo, and other Papuan leaders in 2010.

The KNPB was set up on 19 November 2008 by Buchtar Tabuni and Victor Yeimo, both of whom currently share a cell (along with 15 others) in Abepura Prison. Tabuni has been sentenced to three years in prison for peaceful “provocation” during a demonstration in support of the International Parliamentarians for West Papua (IPWP). Yeimo is currently on trial for *makar* or rebellion for leading a peaceful demonstration on March 10, 2009. The KNPB was formed specifically to organise demonstrations in support of the IPWP launch throughout West Papua³⁶. Its genesis was not therefore ideological but rather, functional, hoping to elicit widespread support from Papuan society. The KNPB has since evolved to be a mouthpiece for various other Papuan organisations, including the TPN. It is comprised of both young and older people, students and non-students, highlanders, islanders and ‘coastals’ (despite the fact that its leaders originate from the highlands)³⁷. Its goals are twofold: first to build a united front of West Papuan independence groups and factions in their struggle for a free West Papua; and second to participate in and champion this front through medial coverage in the fight for self-determination by way of a national referendum³⁸.

In Yeimo's words:

“KNPB calls for justice, peace and human rights, including the right to self-determination...KNPB formed because of Indonesian occupation and exploitation...I mean people of West Papua live under suffering, and you know people of West Papua want the right of self-determination, same as the other nations of the world”³⁹.

³⁴ International Crisis Group, op. cit., p. 19.

³⁵ *ibid.*, p. 1.

³⁶ *ibid.*, p. 6.

³⁷ Webb Gannon, op. cit.

³⁸ *ibid.*

³⁹ *ibid.*

The KNPB sees itself as a coordinating body for its member organisations. It serves as West Papua's resistance "media", reporting on all independence related activities in West Papua - their execution and rationale. The KNPB also has a mobilising function, organising peaceful demonstrations and campaigns throughout West Papua for *merdeka* which, in Yeimo's words, is "freedom from everything...from exploitation...and from operations, the campaign that people of West Papua can live by themselves [through] self-determination without colonisation by Indonesia"⁴⁰.

By KNPB leaders' own account, they are radical in ambition – "yeah, we want independence, but we have to walk through the peaceful actions...we are not violent physically, we are not radical physically. But we are radical in talk, in faith"⁴¹. Being radical and being peaceful are not mutually exclusive as the ICG suggests is the case with the KNPB. The KNPB claims on its website that it "is open to every component of the national liberation movement of West Papua and does not distinguish [between] ideological roots, [and] historical and political roots that occur in [factionalism]"⁴². While it does not subscribe to any particular ideology, says Yeimo, the KNPB is committed to working non-violently for peace with justice (although its leaders are well-schooled in all kinds of liberation theories) toward a referendum on independence for West Papuans, which, it believes, is the democratic solution for Papua⁴³.

The KNPB coordinates campaigns among groups and individuals that have at times disagreed due to ideological and personal differences, including the West Papua National Coalition for Liberation (WPNC - an umbrella organisation comprised of groups working for independence in West Papua and committed to peaceful campaigning); the West Papua National Authority (WPNA - West Papua's self-described transitional government); Benny Wenda in the UK and his followers; highlander-based organisations; student organisations; the OPM, and the TPN. We asked representatives of several of these organisations to verify and expand on the information we have received about the KNPB.

Jacob Rumbiak, Foreign Affairs Coordinator for the WPNA, who is based in Melbourne, Australia, confirmed that the WPNA and the KNPB work closely together in West Papua, organising peaceful demonstrations for self-determination, supporting each other's political, cultural and organisational strengths, and coordinating information dissemination. The KNPB is "part of the people power" in West Papua, according to Rumbiak, and their membership is comprised of people from tribes all around West Papua. He described Buchtar Tabuni and Victor Yeimo as

...great young Papuan leaders who are well educated and have a deep appreciation of West Papuan cultures and political ambitions and aspirations.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*

⁴¹ *ibid.*

⁴² KNPB, Facebook home page, (<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Mount-Hagen-Papua-New-Guinea/West-Papua-National-Committee-WPNC/106873489341438?v=info>), Accessed June 28, 2010.

⁴³ Webb Gannon, *op. cit.*

They are good organisers, who are respected by people, and they understand nationalism. They were organising the peace movement very well until they were incarcerated”⁴⁴.

Rumbiak’s endorsement further discredits allegations of KNPB’s supposedly violently methods.

Benny Wenda of the Free West Papua Campaign in Oxford, England, confirms that the KNPB is a media organisation that also “facilitates all the...demonstrations about...the human right[s] issue[s] in West Papua including supporting self determination ([through a] referendum)”⁴⁵. He lists as one of the KNPB’s qualities a lack of “self-interest” – claiming that it is honest, truthful, and works on behalf of all activist groups in West Papua who share the goal of independence, regardless of whether such groups and their membership hail from coastal or highland areas⁴⁶.

John Ondawame, vice chairperson of the WPNCL, verified that the KNPB is a member of the WPNCL, and that Yeimo in particular has a working relationship with WPNCL. Ondawame maintains that the KNPB carries out peaceful campaigns with the endorsement of WPNCL’s leaders and “is not a radical group as ICG blamed them...they are merely a nationalist group that work[s] closely with other nationalist groups...keeping the spirit of the struggle alive at the [level of] civil society”. He contends that the KNPB is a powerful organisation, “full of energy and bright ideas” and popular with young people, while still working closely with other groups too⁴⁷.

Frederika Korain of the *Forum Demokrasi Rakyat Papua Bersatu* (FDRPB), was part of the Papuan People’s Consultative Assembly consultation in Kota Raja on June 9-10 this year that produced 11 recommendations for West Papua, and was a signatory to these recommendations, one of which called for a referendum on independence (the consultation and recommendations are referred to below). Korain, Benny Giay (one of West Papua’s most respected intellectuals and theologians) and various church “moderates” are part of this inter-denominational forum, which advocates dialogue with Indonesia while simultaneously calling for a referendum on independence, and which has a nuanced view toward negotiation with Jakarta. Says Korain,

We don’t [fully] agree with the ideas in the LIPI [the Indonesian Institute of Sciences based in Jakarta] Road Map [an Indonesian initiative calling for dialogue between Papuans and Jakarta which specifically omits reference to independence] because they don’t match with Papuan views. LIPI sees the Papuan conflict as only a development issue and discrimination against Papuans. But it’s also about the political process from 1961. But the idea of dialogue with Indonesia is a good

⁴⁴ J Elmslie & C Webb Gannon, ‘Interview with Jacob Rumbiak’, June 18, 2010. This interview was conducted via email.

⁴⁵ J Elmslie & C Webb Gannon, ‘Interview with Benny Wenda’, June 22, 2010. This interview was conducted via email.

⁴⁶ *ibid*.

⁴⁷ J Elmslie & C Webb Gannon, ‘Interview with John Otto Ondawame’, June 23, 2010. This email was conducted via email.

idea...the challenge is how to create the moment that Papua and Indonesia can sit together and talk about our problems and what to do”⁴⁸. When asked directly whether the majority of Papuans support a referendum for independence, she said “absolutely”⁴⁹.

FDRPB’s views then, while expressed in moderate tones, essentially express the aspirations of the KNPB.

Although the KNPB has the utmost respect for Papuan priest Father Neles Tebay’s work⁵⁰, which links with the LIPI initiative, it does not agree that dialogue is the route to peace with justice in West Papua. It asserts that the problem in West Papua is not just between Papua and Jakarta, nor is it purely about quality of life in Papua. Because of this, the KNPB does not want an Aceh-like solution, which they anticipate could be the outcome of dialogue. Instead, Yeimo on behalf of the KNPB explains that “the main problem in West Papua is about the political status, it is about the law, political law, legal international law. So we need international solidarity to solve the problem...no talk or dialogue between Jakarta and Papua”⁵¹. The KNPB wants a referendum for independence, along the lines of Timor Leste, but without the use of violence on either side.

Lack of a united front among West Papuans has long been a stumbling block in gaining international support. Unity is currently coalescing in West Papua and the KNPB is proving to be a contributing force. Because of this, the reasons for the misgivings the KNPB has about dialogue as the appropriate way forward (and its preference for a referendum) must be taken into consideration if the outcomes of the conflict in West Papua are to be seen as legitimate and just by the majority of the West Papuan nation. However, as we will discuss in the following section, a united Papuan voice *is* taking up the call, in a way unprecedented since the fall of Suharto, for both dialogue and a referendum for West Papua, accommodating the strategic preferences of diverse West Papuan groups with a common aspiration – self determination.

Recent significant events for West Papua

In June 2010, two highly significant events occurred which will have a lasting impact on the political/civil conflict between the West Papuan nationalists and the Indonesian state. On June 18 the largest mass demonstration by Papuans in over ten years occurred in Jayapura. The Papuan Spring, the period following President Suharto’s downfall, culminating in the *Musyawaharah Besar* (Grand Consultation, known as *Mubes*) of February 2000 and the Second Papuan Congress of May/June 2000 saw many thousands

⁴⁸ J Elmslie and C Webb Gannon, ‘Interview with Frederika Korain’, June 24, 2010. This interview was conducted via phone from Sydney to Jayapura.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*

⁵⁰ Webb Gannon, *op. cit.*

⁵¹ *ibid.*

of Papuans on the streets of Jayapura. Some reports put the number of peaceful demonstrators in June 2010 as high as 10,000⁵².



Thousands demonstrate near Jayapura to 'give back' Special Autonomy to Jakarta on June 18, 2010
(Images copyrighted from a protected source)

Demonstrators included members from the *Majelis Rakyat Papua* (MRP or Papuan People's Assembly), the Papua Presidium Council (PDP), and the WPNA. They walked for 17 kilometers from Kota Raja to Jayapura to the offices of the DPRP (Papuan People's Representative Council), demanding that the local legislators symbolically 'give back' Special Autonomy to the Indonesian government. The second event was the passing in the Vanuatu government of a special bill that officially changes government policy to one of supporting, and working for, West Papuan independence.

June 18 demonstration

The momentous events of June 18 had been a long time coming. The Special Autonomy legislation was devised by Jakarta as a move to satisfy Papuans' demands for independence following the end of the Suharto regime. It was meant to be a win-win situation whereby West Papua stayed within the Republic of Indonesia but more revenue

⁵² Australia West Papua Association, '10,000 Masa aksi turun jalan kendaraan mokok atas penyerahan hasil pleno MRP', Email network correspondence, June 19, 2010.

flowed to the province, which also was to have a much greater degree of local control. The first draft of the legislation, drawn up by Papuan intellectuals, was largely ignored and the final version, with diluted local powers, basically imposed by Jakarta. Still many moderate Papuans, and much of the international community, felt that Special Autonomy would deliver real benefits to the Papuan people and satisfy their calls for independence. In reality very few benefited and many Papuans were actually worse off.

Much of the Special Autonomy legislation was never enacted for lack of necessary regulations, but the financial aspects of the package were, and a large portion of the royalties received from the logging and mining industries was returned to the province. Suddenly the provincial government was awash with funds, supposedly for development, education and health. Instead the pot of money became a catalyst for corruption. Bureaucracy proliferated as the number of regencies grew from nine to thirty, each one with its own public service departments as well as its own military, police and intelligence agencies. Money supposed to be allocated to health and education expenditure was swallowed up in public servants wages, in buildings and even in funding local military operations. Health and education services reportedly declined in many areas. Special Autonomy (or *Otonomi Khusus* in *Bahasa Indonesia*, shortened by Papuans to *Otsus*) led to a fall in people's living standards.

Otsus also failed to empower the Papuans politically. The MRP was supposed to be the local political assembly that reflected the aspirations of the Papuans and was their voice in dealing with Jakarta, yet it was hamstrung from the start. Because so many enabling regulations for *Otsus* were never enacted the MRP remained powerless and largely ignored by Jakarta and the Indonesian political and military bureaucracy on the ground. This was a result of fears held by powerful Indonesian nationalists in Jakarta that the MRP would become a stalking horse for Papuan independence. Even the insipid version of *Otsus* forced on the Papuans by Jakarta proved too much of a threat and turned out to be a hollow promise.

Meanwhile large numbers of Indonesians from other parts of country flooded into West Papua, making the Papuans a minority in all major urban areas and by 2010 probably a slight overall minority in the province⁵³. Massive plans for the clear felling of millions of hectares of rainforest for oil palm plantations and 'food estates', with little or no compensation for the traditional owners, continued to proliferate. Along with migrants the number of troops and police continued to increase, with new posts and commands opening across the province. The province of Papua itself was split into two when the new province of West Papua was created in 2003 (in this report however we use West Papua to refer to both provinces collectively). This was in complete violation of Article 76 of Law 21/2001, the Special Autonomy law, which said that such an action could only proceed with the approval of the MRP. Jakarta was treating the Papuans with utter contempt, not even paying lip service to *Otsus*. So much for a win-win situation.

⁵³ J Elmslie, 'Not just another disaster', in *Inside Indonesia*, (<http://www.insideindonesia.org/edition-97/not-just-another-disaster>), July/September 2009.

While the Papuans, including the chairperson of the MRP, Agus Alua, criticised *Otsus*' severe shortcomings, the rest of the world, including the Australian government, lauded *Otsus* as the solution to West Papua's problems. After nine years this absurd charade has finally been formally rejected by the Papuans through their own official legislative body, the MRP. The MRP had asked LP3BH, the Institute for the Study, Advocacy and Development of Legal Aid in Jayapura, to evaluate *Otsus*. On June 9 and 10, 2010, LP3BH's report was discussed at the MRP building in Kota Raja (near Jayapura) in a consultation with indigenous Papuan people coming from all over West Papua. They decided to reject *Otsus* by 'giving it back' to the central government and to instead call for a referendum on independence: the Papuans had been pushed too far.

The LP3BH report found that *Otsus* had:

...been a failure because the law has not been implemented in such a way as to deal with urgent and substantive problems in the socio-economic, political and cultural aspects of the lives of the indigenous Papuan people. The reason for this is that no regulations have been enacted to provide the political back-up of OTSUS regarding initiatives by the provincial government while the government in Jakarta has failed to provide any political support for the implementation of OTSUS⁵⁴.

In view of all this, the MRP in collaboration with peak Papuan representative groups developed the following 11 recommendations:

1. That the Special Autonomy Law should be handed back to the Government of the Republic of Indonesia;
2. That the Papuan people demand that dialogue be held [and] mediated by a neutral international mediator;
3. That the Papuan people demand the holding of a referendum directed towards political independence;
4. That the Papuan people demand that the Government of the Republic of Indonesia recognise the restoration of the sovereignty of people of West Papua which was proclaimed on 1st December 1961;
5. That the Papuan people urge the international community to impose an embargo on international aid being provided for the implementation of Special Autonomy in the land of Papua;
6. That there is no need for revisions to be made to Law 21/2001 on Special Autonomy for the Province of Papua and West Papua with reference to Law 35/2008 on Revision of Law 21/2001 bearing in mind that the said Law i[s] proven to have failed;

⁵⁴ LP3BH, 'Towards a New Papua' (translated by TAPOL), June 14, 2010.

7. That all proceedings for the election of heads of district throughout the land Papua should be halted and call on the Governor of Papua and Governor of West Papua, the DPRP, the DPRD-West Papua and district heads and mayors throughout the land of Papua [to] immediately discontinue the provision of funds for the holding of these elections;

8. That the central government, the Province of Papua and the Province of West Papua as well as districts and municipalities in the land of Papua end transmigration from outside Papua and impose strict supervision on the flow of migration by people from outside the land of Papua;

9. That the Papuan people urge the Central Government, the Government of Province of Papua and the DPRP and the DPRD West Papua to release all Papuan political prisoners being held in prison everywhere in Indonesia;

10. That the Central Government immediately carry out demilitarisation throughout of the whole land of Papua;

11. That the consultation held by the MRP and Papuan indigenous groups calls for the Freeport Indonesia company to be closely down immediately⁵⁵.

The formal handing back of *Otsus* by marching the 17 kilometers from the MRP building to the DPRP, the provincial parliament of Papua, happened on Friday June 18, 2010. The 11 recommendations made by the MRP on June 14 represent the strongest statements since 2000 made by official Papuan civil society organisations to the Indonesian government. The Papuans are rejecting the status quo imposed by Indonesia. They are calling for dialogue with an international mediator. They are demanding that the issue of independence be put back on the table. They are urging the international community to stop financing Special Autonomy as it has become a tool of repression, not of empowerment. They are demanding the closure of the Freeport mine. These demands are all hugely significant and Jakarta will ultimately have to respond. Marching with members of the MRP was also the *Dewan Adat Papua* (DAP), the Papuan Customary Council, whose chairperson, Forkorus Yoboisembut, declared:

Since the central government is not serious about our autonomy, we want a referendum on independence for Papua.⁵⁶

This was a momentous event because such a broad cross section of Papuan people, particularly the MRP (which had been created by the *Otsus* legislation) and the DPRP (which is widely seen as a tool of Jakarta) are engaged in the 'return' of *Otsus*. So too was the WPNA and the PDP, known collectively now as the Papuan Consensus Team.

⁵⁵ Papuan People's Consultative Assembly and Indigenous People of Papua, 'Recommendations', June 14, 2010.

⁵⁶ B Ambarita & AFP, 'Papuans march on provincial capital to demand independence', *Jakarta Globe*, June 18, 2010.

The KNPB were also present, its spokesman Mako Tabuni saying that the universal aspiration of the seven traditional regions of the Land of Papua was that a referendum is the best solution for the Papuan people.⁵⁷



Demonstrators call for a referendum in Jayapura on June 18, 2010

(Images copyrighted from a protected source)

The decision to hand back Special Autonomy and demand a referendum on independence has huge implications for Jakarta and the Papuans. The charade of Special Autonomy as the panacea for West Papua's ills is over; the wafer thin shield it provided for the international community to hide behind now shattered. A deeper look into the quagmire is now needed to see what the future might hold. The Indonesian government has a tricky problem on its hands, a problem of its own making through its contemptuous treatment of Papuans for so long.

Vanuatu resolutions

While Papuan activists on the ground were responsible for the events in Jayapura on June 18, their expatriate counterparts in Vanuatu also achieved a major victory the following day. A motion was introduced into the Vanuatu Parliament that strongly supports West Papua's independence, complete with concrete measures aimed at achieving that goal.

⁵⁷ Tapol, 'JUBI: KNPB says referendum must be held; Journalists in Timika and Merauke intimidated', Tapol, June 16, 2010

This is a major change in policy by the Vanuatu government. While an independent West Papua was widely supported by the general population of Vanuatu, including the powerful Council of Chiefs, the government had been more circumspect. Ever since Vanuatu's own independence in 1980, successive governments had spoken out on West Papua's behalf, given refuge to Papuan activists and sponsored trips by Papuan politicians to the United Nations and elsewhere, but never had they previously officially enshrined a foreign policy goal of assisting in fostering an independent West Papua. This policy was made clear with the passing of the landmark *Wantok Blong Yumi* (Our Close Friends) act⁵⁸.

During an extraordinary parliamentary sitting, the head of the Government, Hon. Prime Minister, Edward Natapei MP, and the leader of the Opposition Hon. Maxime Carlot Korman MP, jointly sponsored a motion in parliament to clarify Vanuatu's foreign policy regarding West Papua. It was passed with bipartisan support to become an Act of Parliament. The initial move was proposed by Independent Member for Port Vila, the Hon. Ralph Regenvanu MP. During the May 13 ordinary session, Hon. Regenvanu tabled a Petition of the People of Vanuatu calling for clear foreign policy on West Papua⁵⁹.

This was a significant development and indeed a historic one. The *Wantok Blong Yumi* act will allow the government to develop specific policies on how to support the independence struggle of West Papua. The following proposals from the Peoples' Petition could also become policy instruments of the bill, including to:

1. Sponsor and pass a motion in national Parliament officially declaring that Vanuatu's foreign policy is to support the achievement of the independence of West Papua;
2. Sponsor a resolution at the 2010 Melanesian Spearhead Group's Leaders Summit that the independence movement in West Papua be given Observer Status at the MSG;
3. Sponsor a resolution at the 2010 Pacific Island Forum Leaders Summit that the independence movement in West Papua be given Observer Status at the Forum;
4. Sponsor resolutions at the Melanesian Spearhead Group's Leaders Summit, the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Summit and the United Nations calling for fact-finding missions to be sent by each of these bodies to West Papua to investigate alleged violations of the human rights of its Melanesian populations;
5. Become the official state sponsor of the case of West Papua in the International Court of Justice seeking a judgment on the legality of the 1969 "Act of Free Choice";
6. Sponsor a resolution in the United Nations to put West Papua back on the United Nations' list of Non Self-governing Territories;

⁵⁸ West Papua National Authority, 'A Motion on Foreign Policy on West Papua has been passed in the Vanuatu Parliament', WPNCL Press Release, June 20, 2010.

⁵⁹ *ibid*

7. Create a West Papua Desk in the Department of Foreign Affairs with a budget sufficient to facilitate the Government's international advocacy efforts in support of West Papua's independence;
8. Ratify the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, to provide Vanuatu with an avenue for additional support to the people of West Papua⁶⁰.

While all these proposals will cause consternation and even fury in Jakarta, it is point five that will have the most impact. What is being called for here is an “advisory opinion” from the International Court of Justice on the legality of Indonesia's claim of sovereignty over West Papua. This entails a member state putting a resolution to the General Assembly of the United Nations requesting such an advisory opinion, and Vanuatu has expressed its willingness to be that member state and the official sponsor of such a resolution. While it probably will not threaten Indonesia's control over the territory, recognised as it is by almost all UN members, a negative finding will deeply undermine Indonesia's legitimacy. It will be a decisive blow in the ‘history wars’ that rage between Indonesia's view of West Papua's incorporation into the Indonesian Republic and the views held by the Papuans themselves.

Advisory opinions can be requested by other member states without needing the consent of an interested party, such as Indonesia in the case of West Papua⁶¹. Other recent examples have been when Kuwait sought an opinion on the legality of Israel building the security wall in Palestine, as well as advisory opinions on territorial disputes in Namibia, Western Sahara and Kosovo⁶². Such an opinion holds great weight. The support of Vanuatu in pursuing this action is a major coup for the West Papuan nationalists, and a bitter setback for Jakarta.



A demonstration in Port Vila, Vanuatu, in support of West Papuan independence, on March 5, 2010
(Photo courtesy of ASAP – Action in Solidarity with Asia and the Pacific)

⁶⁰ *ibid.*

⁶¹ J Robinson, ‘Self-determination and the limits of justice: West Papua and East Timor’, in, Helen Sykes, ed., *Future Justice, Future Leaders*, Sydney, 2010, p.181.

⁶² *ibid.*

TNI ‘sweeping’ in Puncak Jaya

Shortly after the release of the ICG report on March 11, a major military “sweeping operation” began in the central highlands area aimed at capturing Goliat Tabuni and his forces. This followed a series of deadly attacks during the course of 2009 on Indonesian drivers, construction workers and military personnel, which extended into early 2010. The latest attack on February 15 resulted in a Brimob officer being killed and his assault rifle being stolen in Mulia, the capital of Puncak Jaya. All of these attacks have been attributed to Tabuni’s forces, although tension and competition between Brimob and the TNI in the region is endemic. As so often is the case in West Papua, the true perpetrators of these crimes is unclear, although Tabuni, Brimob and the TNI would all have had possible motives for perpetrating these attacks. The regent of Puncak Jaya, Lukas Enembe, has blamed the TNI and Brimob for inflaming the situation, and has asked them to withdraw from the area to allow for local government negotiation with Tabuni: his calls however have been ignored.

In this context, the ICG report can be seen as legitimising the TNI’s military operations in the central highlands. By both blaming the violence around Freeport on Kelly Kwalik and emphasising the relationship between the KNPB and Goliat Tabuni (and his followers), while characterising each of the groups as extremist and violent, this report provides a rationale for military presence in the highlands, thereby serving to exacerbate civilian suffering. And indeed, rather than following Enembe’s diplomatic approach, Indonesia has once again chosen to pursue the hard line security option with all that that entails. Following is an excerpt from a report by the West Papua Advocacy Team in Washington DC dated June 18, 2010:

[Puncak Jaya’s] civilians, in particular those who have fled to the forests, face health and possibly life threatening conditions including lack of access to food, adequate shelter, and medical services. In...past such "sweeping operations", Indonesian security forces prevented provision of humanitarian assistance to these besieged populations.

Reports from the field also tell of security forces targeting...civilians through widespread arrests.

In addition:

- A church in Kayogwebur district Tingginambut has been taken over as headquarters for the BRIMOB. Local people [are] unable to worship there;
- Local people are forced to do labour tasks for Indonesian military;
- In the district of Kampong Tinggineri Tingginambut, a pregnant woman was raped by BRIMOB personnel in the first half of June;

- 12 houses and 2 churches have been burned by security forces in Gwenggu Pilia;
- In Pos Nalime Tingginambut District residents have been forced to clear their gardens and prepare landing positions for military helicopters;
- On June 11, BRIMOB conducted a residential sweep search of all houses on the road between Ilu and Mulia, detaining anyone without identification, putting them on army trucks. (Most local people do not have ID and [are] now afraid to leave their homes. As a result, gardens are untended and local commerce is crippled⁶³).

We believe that the ICG report has not only had the effect of encouraging TNI operations in the highlands but has also ignored the effects of these “sweeping operations” on the civilian population in the area. The report has also led to a distortion in the coverage of the conflict in West Papua as a whole. For instance, a recent report in *Asia Times* by Sarah Schonhardt relies heavily on ICG Report No 188 and on comments by the ICG’s Southeast Asia specialist Sidney Jones in its portrayal of West Papuan activists, in particular the KNPB, as being “at the forefront of efforts to use conflict to achieve greater sovereignty”. It even describes the KNPB as “an armed guerrilla group” similar to the OPM/TPN⁶⁴. This is grossly misleading and without foundation, demonstrating how a supposedly neutral body such as the ICG is creating a self-reinforcing bias in the media against Papuans.

Conclusion

This report shows how the ICG has played a counter-productive and misleading role in what is a pivotal moment in the political revolution in West Papua. Internationally funded organisations like the ICG have a responsibility to analyse conflicts across the world from a balanced and objective perspective. By their very nature, political conflicts are complex, contentious and (often) apparently intractable. The conflict in West Papua certainly suits these descriptors, and appropriate ICG analysis could potentially be very valuable in bringing a resolution closer, however this has not been the case with regard to Report No.188.

As we have demonstrated in this report, the ICG’s portrayal of the KNPB as a militantly radical organisation is wrong. Its goal of a referendum for independence for West Papua is shared by organisations representing Papuans across the political spectrum. There is no evidence that the KNPB endorses violent resistance to Indonesian rule, contrary to ICG claims, despite its empathy for Papua’s freedom fighters. Likewise, there is no strong evidence that the OPM/TPN under Kelly Kwalik was responsible for the death of

⁶³ West Papua Advocacy Team, ‘Concerns about operations in Puncak Jaya region of West Papua’, WPAT, June 18, 2010.

⁶⁴ S Schonhardt, ‘Papua’s separatist fires burn bright’, in *Asia Times*, (http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast_Asia/LF24Ae01.html), June 24, 2010.

Australian Drew Grant. Kwalik's own statements make clear that he (Kwalik) was involved in separate armed conflict around the mine, but his denial of involvement in Grant's death was accepted by the Indonesian police that were working on the case. His subsequent killing is widely seen as a political assassination in West Papua; a means of scapegoating the OPM/TPN for Grant's murder to appease Western interests. The ICG's belief that the OPM/TPN was responsible for Grant's murder in effect laid the ground for the recent TNI operations in the central highlands, and has discredited legitimate West Papuan resistance in the eyes of the international community.

The ICG report, by portraying the KNPB led by Victor Yeimo as a dangerously radical and violent organisation with direct links to armed insurgents such as Goliat Tabuni and Kelly Kwalik clearly impacts on Yeimo's trial. When it became obvious after his arrest that police did not have the evidence to prosecute him for masterminding the Abepura police station attack, his charges mysteriously switched to 'rebellion', ostensibly for leading a peaceful demonstration on March 10, 2010. In this report we have rejected the accusations that the KNPB endorsed violence as being unfounded, yet we see such accusations and characterisations repeated in international media sources quoting the ICG report. This will obviously be counterproductive for Victor's presumption of innocence.

We do however share the ICG's fears of the potential for escalating violence in West Papua. Since the ICG report was published in March, a pivotal point in Papuan history has been reached. This is the result of two groundbreaking events: the Vanuatu parliamentary motion and the MRP resolution calling for a referendum on independence. Together, these two events shatter the status quo that has prevailed since the repression of the Papuan Spring from August 2000. Jakarta's contemptuous refusal to engage in any meaningful dialogue with the Papuans has caused complete disillusionment with the Indonesian government. Demands to make Special Autonomy work have now given way to demands for a referendum on independence.

The Vanuatu motion, in effect officially sponsoring West Papuan independence, will cause heartache in Jakarta but jubilation in Jayapura. Never before has such a high degree of international recognition been achieved by the Papuans. The sponsor of the Vanuatu motion, Ralph Regenvanu, represents the views of a new generation of Melanesian leaders spread throughout the Pacific, including, leaders from Papua New Guinea, Fiji and West Papua. The issue of West Papuan independence, instead of dying out on the international stage, is currently experiencing a second wind.

The calls by the MRP for a referendum on independence, and the "giving back" of Special Autonomy to the DPRP mark the final demise of the Special Autonomy initiative of 2001. Jakarta's obstinate refusal to fully implement its own package ultimately caused Special Autonomy's comprehensive failure. This is a huge setback for Indonesia because it has discredited what had formerly been seen by many, including the international community, as a viable and just compromise in the West Papua conflict.

The real danger in Papua is that all of the events discussed in this report will lead to even larger-scale demonstrations that run the risk of increasingly violent military responses. The ICG, in raising the specter of the Timor Leste Santa Cruz Massacre of 1991, is disturbingly apt. This report has found that what the Papuans want is meaningful dialogue with Jakarta, with international mediation and without preconditions, including an agenda canvassing the most contentious of issues including their political status and history since 1962. Ramifications of an escalating conflict in West Papua will affect Australia, the USA and the Pacific Island states. Therefore it is both appropriate and morally incumbent on the international community to at least listen to West Papuans' legitimate demands for dialogue and a referendum, coming as they are from an increasingly unified West Papuan body politic.

This report is dedicated to the memory of Kelly (Kletus) Kwalik, long-time OPM-TPN commander, West Papuan patriot and a national symbol of resistance against oppression. Kelly Kwalik was assassinated by Indonesian police in Timika, West Papua, on December 16, 2009.

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About the West Papua Project

This project seeks to promote peaceful dialogue between the people of West Papua and Indonesia, and to promote conflict resolution as a viable alternative to the current and escalating conflict.

Objectives

- Establish relevant links with concerned NGOs, academics and parliamentarians in Australia, West Papua and Indonesia. The resulting networks will serve as a conduit for the dissemination of public information and as a key source of support for conflict resolution
- Raise public awareness of the conflict between West Papua and Indonesia with particular reference to the human rights implications and the threat to the stability of the South Pacific region.

Project description

This project aims to put in place concrete strategies near achieve the goal of peaceful dialogue between Indonesia and West Papua. These strategies will consist of strengthening networks, addressing the information deficit on West Papua through research and a public awareness campaign, and promoting education on conflict resolution.



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