

The Honourable Chrystia Freeland
Minister of Foreign Affairs
House of Commons
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October 7, 2019

Call for Urgent Action to Address Human Rights Abuses and Escalating Conflict in West Papua

To the Honourable Chrystia Freeland,

Pacific Peoples' Partnership (PPP), is a Victoria-based CSO and advocacy organization with more than 44 years of experience working for human rights and the environment in Canada and the South Pacific. We are writing to request your urgent assistance in addressing escalating violence by the Indonesian government against the Melanesian West Papuan peoples. As you may be aware, West Papua was slated for independence until Indonesia took over in the 1960s and annexed it. Independence protests continue in this island, home to some of the world's largest remaining rain forests and richest biological and cultural diversity.

While there has been violent conflict throughout West Papua's period of control by Indonesia, in recent months, Indonesia's treatment of West Papuans has deteriorated to the worst it has been in the last two decades, sparked by racist attacks on Papuan students who have been called "monkey, dog, animal and pig." In late September, at least 27 Papuans were killed by Indonesian government forces in response to West Papuans calling for their rights and at least 70 have been injured. The Indonesian government has deployed over 1,000 security personnel to West Papua, cut internet access and banned journalists and human rights organizations from entering the area. Scores of peaceful protesters have been arrested. More than 22 are facing prosecution for Makar (treason) for exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly. They are considered 'prisoners of conscience' by Amnesty International (Amnesty's Open Letter concerning this rights violation is also attached).

International pressure needs to be applied against Indonesia now to safeguard the lives and rights of West Papuans. Canada, which claims a strong tradition as an advocate of human rights, must take a stand in support of the Melanesian West Papuan peoples and to pressure the Indonesian government to allow for freedom of expression, association and assembly and the right of self-determination for West Papua, in accordance with the principles of UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights.



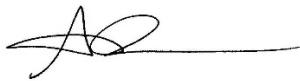
In the light of these ongoing human rights concerns and injustices, we urge your response in the following ways:

- Pressure the Indonesian government to allow for freedom of expression, association and assembly and the right to self-determination for West Papuans;
- Pressure the Indonesia government to immediately release the 22 prisoners' of conscience and drop the Makar charges;
- Pressure the Indonesian government to allow for access to West Papua for journalists and human rights organizations; and
- Pressure the Indonesian government to investigate military and police engaging in human rights abuses.

The situation in West Papua is currently precarious at best and it would not be unreasonable to expect more violence to occur in the region in the coming weeks. We therefore hope that you will treat this as an urgent matter and agree to implement the recommendations outlined above. This is a serious human rights issue that deserves immediate attention.

We are happy to discuss this crisis with you at any time, and we thank you for your urgent attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



April Ingham
Executive Director



Muavae (Mua) Va'a
President

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