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*ETAN is "A voice of reason, criticizing the administration's reluctance to address ongoing human rights violations and escalating oppression in West Papua and against religious minorities throughout Indonesia." - Noam Chomsky*

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### West Papua Report March 2013

This is the 107th in a series of monthly reports that focus on developments affecting Papuans. This series is produced by the non-profit West Papua Advocacy Team (WPAT) drawing on media accounts, other NGO assessments, and analysis and reporting from sources within West Papua. This report is co-published by the East Timor and Indonesia Action Network (ETAN). Back issues are posted online at <http://www.etan.org/issues/wpapua/default.htm> Questions regarding this report can be addressed to Edmund McWilliams at [edmcw@msn.com](mailto:edmcw@msn.com). If you wish to receive the report directly via e-mail, send a note to [etan@etan.org](mailto:etan@etan.org).

The *Report* leads with "Perspective," an opinion piece; followed by "Update," a summary of some developments during the covered period; and then "Chronicle" which lists of analyses, statements, new resources, appeals and action alerts related to West Papua. Anyone interested in contributing a "Perspective" or responding to one should write to [edmcw@msn.com](mailto:edmcw@msn.com). The opinions expressed in Perspectives are the author's and not necessarily those of WPAT or ETAN. **For additional news on West Papua see the [reg.westpapua listserv archive](#) or on [Twitter](#).**

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#### PERSPECTIVE

##### Civilians Suffer as Security Force Sweeps Perpetuate Cycle of Violence

In late February, the Indonesian military (TNI) and National Police (POLRI) launched [new "sweeping operations"](#) in the Central Highlands of West Papua. The security force campaign follows the February 21 attack by the armed anti-Indonesian resistance which killed eight Indonesian military soldiers and two Indonesian civilians in Tingginambut, Puncak Jaya, [reportedly carried out](#) by Goliat Tabuni-led elements of the National Liberation Army of the Free Papua Movement (TPN-OPM). These latest Indonesian security force sweeps are disrupting civilian life in communities around Sinak, Gurage, Mulia and Tingginambut in Puncak Jaya District. Papuan leaders have condemned the violence and called anew for a Jakarta-Papua dialogue. (see for example <http://westpapuamedia.info/2013/03/06/forkorus-regrets-the-death-of-indonesian-soldiers-and-civilians/>)

The latest "sweeping operation" parallels a similar ongoing operation in the [neighboring Paniai area](#), where "helicopters belonging to illegal gold miners in Degouwo were again being used by Indonesian troops to support the operation."

The West Papua Advisory Team (WPAT) condemns the February 21 violence. Such violent acts only perpetuate the cycle of violence that has trapped Papuans, particularly in the Central Highlands, for decades.

WPAT vigorously condemns the actions of the Indonesian state security forces which, regardless of the provocation, have a fundamental international obligation to protect civilian life. The seizure and destruction of civilian homes and communal buildings as well as destruction of civilian food sources inevitably will force the flight of civilians to inhospitable forests and mountains. Many of those caught in such a maelstrom will surely soon begin to die.

We call on governments, especially those like the United States which have [partnered with Indonesian security forces](#), to use the influence garnered by such dubious cooperation to bring an end to these sweeps. The United States government, which [condemned](#) the February 21 attack on the Indonesian military is obliged to forthrightly condemn and seek an end to the Indonesian security forces ongoing assault on innocent civilians.

We urge international bodies, especially the appropriate offices of the United Nations, including the Human Rights Commission, to turn their attention to these sweeping operations and which pose a lethal threat to large numbers of civilians.

Humanitarian mechanisms must be immediately established to provide for the welfare of civilians whose lives have been

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disrupted and the area must be opened to both the humanitarian offices that will undertake that vital work and to credible reporting by journalists and human rights reporters.

As of February 26, the Indonesian security force sweeps had burned at least 18 houses to the ground, destroyed five GIDI (Protestant) churches, and destroyed a library and two schools in Tingginambut, according to reliable church sources who relayed eyewitness accounts to [West Papua Media](#).

The toll on local civilians posed by the military/police operations is grave: "Witnesses have also reported that soldiers are deliberately burning and destroying food gardens and shooting livestock, including over 100 pigs. There are fears of a major humanitarian disaster unfolding with the reports of the destruction of food gardens and livestock, an act of collective punishment on a civilian population," [writes](#) West Papua Media.



TNI 753 Btn interrogating locals in Sinak (photo: Malanesia.com via West Papua Media)

Entire populations in villages the area of Gurake, Sinak, Tinggi Neri, Trugi and Nelekom have fled to the mountains. Several thousand people, mainly subsistence farmers, are said to live in the area. Townspeople from Mulia in Puncak Jaya are preparing to flee. As in the past, civilians who flee to the remote forests and mountains face possibly deadly separation from sources of food, shelter and medical care.

Another trademark of these sweeping operations, also employed in the current military/police campaign, is the prevention of reporting on developments by the authorities. The only media personnel allowed into the operations area are those with approval from the Indonesian army. Independent journalists and human rights workers have been prevented from traveling into the area by a de facto Military Operations Area being applied across the entire highlands, including the regional center of Wamena.

Papuan civil and [religious leaders Rev. Dr. Benny Giay and Rev. Socrates Sofyan Yoman](#), among others, have pointed to the failure of Indonesian authorities to control the illegal sale of weapons in the Central Highlands as contributing to the February 21 attack. They have also noted the government's long term objective of creating a new military command in the Central Highlands, an intention that is well served by violence in the area. "We believe that the Indonesian government and the security forces are *part of the problem of violence* [emphasis in original] which has been created by the state, preserved by the state and allowed to continue in order to legitimize yet more acts of violence in the Land of Papua and to take advantage thereof in order to strengthen the security forces," they wrote. Both leaders called anew for "the Indonesian government to enter unconditionally into a dialogue based on the principle of equality between Indonesia and West Papua, with mediation by a neutral party, which is what happened in the dialogue between GAM (*Gerakan Aceh Merdeka* -- the Aceh Liberation Movement) in Aceh. " They urged the release of political prisoners and an end to the violence. Giay is Chair of the Synod of KINGMI Church, Papua; Yoman, Chair of the Executive Board of the Alliances of Baptist Churches in Papua.

#### [UPDATE](#)

#### **Papuans Seek to Join Melanesian Spearhead Group**

[Radio Australia](#), on February 5 reported that West Papuans are seeking membership in the Melanesia Spearhead Group (MSG), a regional political and trade block which represents Melanesian peoples in the region, with the exception of the Papuan people in Indonesian-controlled New Guinea. The West Papua National Coalition for Liberation presented its petition asking to join the group to the MSG Secretariat in early February.

The MSG is comprised of four nation states: Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Fiji, and the Solomon Islands. The group also includes the FLNKS of New Caledonia. The inclusion of the FLNKS, a non-state actor, could serve as a precedent for inclusion of the Papuan petitioners.

#### **U.S. Author Defames Papuan People; Ignores Consequences of Indonesian Occupation**



London protest at talk by Jared Diamond. Photo from Free West Papua Campaign.

Papuan civil society leaders strongly protested statements in a book by U.S.-based author Jared Diamond [which portray Papuans](#) (in both parts of New Guinea) as warlike and backward. Diamond's argues in *The World Until Yesterday* that "most small-scale societies... become trapped in cycles of violence and warfare" and that "New Guineans (Papuans) appreciated the benefits of the state-guaranteed [Indonesian Government] peace that they had been unable to achieve for themselves without state government."

Papuan leaders noted that Diamond ignored the extraordinary violence meted out to Papuans by Indonesian security forces since Jakarta forcibly annexed West Papua over four decades ago. Diamond also ignored Jakarta's deliberate marginalization of indigenous peoples in favor of non-Papuan "transmigrants" brought to West Papua in a decades-long project that amounts to ethnic cleansing.

Among the many protests was one by Dominikus Surabut, currently jailed for treason for peacefully declaring West Papuan independence. He aptly compared the relationship of Papuans and the Indonesian state to South African apartheid. In a statement smuggled out of his jail cell, [he said](#), "This is the very nature and character of colonial occupation of indigenous peoples, where they are treated as second class citizens whose oppression is justified by painting them as backwards, archaic, warring tribes -- just as suggested by Jared Diamond in his book about tribal people."

Diamond was [sued for defamation](#) by purported "sources" from Papua New Guinea for article published in the New Yorker magazine in 2008. While the suit was withdrawn, it is expected that it will be re-filed soon.

WPAT Comment: *The U.S. government leaders, in justifying the betrayal of Papuan self-determination aspirations in the infamous [New York Agreement of 1962](#), similarly demeaned the supposed backwardness of the Papuan people. Both the U.S. then and Diamond in his recent analysis rely on defamation of the people being victimized.*

See various statements by Papuan leaders at:  
<http://assets.survivalinternational.org/documents/877/papuanstatementsupdated.pdf>

**Tensions Grow Along Indonesia-PNG Border**

The Papua New Guinea government [announced the deployment](#) of new military forces to its border in order to protect PNG citizens located near the border from the Indonesian military. The surprising February 18 announcement was accompanied by a formal protest by PNG Prime Minister Peter O'Neill's government over the Indonesia's construction of new military posts along the border. The protest also addressed Indonesian military harassment of PNG citizens.

WPAT Comment: *The Indonesian military has long operated smuggling operations across the Indonesia-PNG border and has regularly harassed Papuan refugees who have fled military pressure from Indonesia-controlled West Papua to Papua New Guinea.*

**[CHRONICLE](#)**

**A Half Century of Failure**

[Bobbie Anderson in Inside Indonesia](#) provides a detailed and insightful portrayal of life in remote, rural West Papua. Anderson describes how life is extraordinarily difficult and dangerous for Papuans and writes that the population there is completely bereft of government services. The government's neglect of the majority of Papuans who live in rural West Papua over a half century is perhaps the most devastating critique of Indonesian governance.

**Urgent Appeals on Behalf of Papuans Detained and Tortured by Police**

Amnesty International is calling for action to help two men detained in Jayapura. The [February 25 Urgent Action](#) states that "Daniel Gobay and Matan Klembiap are currently detained at the Jayapura district police station in Papua province. Police officers allegedly tortured or otherwise ill-treated them and five other men while interrogating them about the whereabouts of two pro-independence activists." While the other five were released, the other Gobay and Klembiap "have not received medical treatment and they have not had access to a lawyer since their arrest." The Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) also [released an alert on the case](#), as well as a video with an interview with two of those picked up at the same time as Gobay and Klembiap. The two activists, Eneko Pahabol and Obed Bahabol, describe how they "were arrested and tortured by the police on 15 February 2013 on the false allegation of being related with two pro-independence activists." The video is available on AHRC's YouTube Channel on <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eM11HouWMv4>.

**Prison Torture**

On February 22, AHRC has issued an [Urgent Appeal](#) on behalf of prisoners at the Abepura Correctional Facility. The appeal cites allegations of torture by guards. It details how three prison guards "with the acquiescence of the head of the prison," beat the prisoners "with bare hands as well as whipped [them] with thick wire until some parts of their bodies were bleeding. The guards did not give any medical treatment to the tortured prisoners."

**Papuans Behind Bars**

Papuans Behind Bars [published an "Update"](#) in which it reports that "At the end of January 2013 there were 33 political prisoners in Papuan jails." The Update contains important information on prisoners, prisoner releases and ongoing and upcoming political trials in the region. Papuans Behind Bars is a new grassroots initiative of Papuan civil society groups working together as the Civil Society Coalition to Uphold Law and Human Rights in Papua. The project plans to "provide accurate and transparent data, published in English and Indonesian, to facilitate direct support for prisoners and promote wider debate and campaigning in support of free expression in West Papua."

The project will publish records of over 200 current and former political prisoners on [its website](#), which will go live in March.

Link to this issue: <http://etan.org/issues/wpapua/2013/1303wpap.htm>

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