

Morris Kaloran, Debate-speech, Yarra Room, Melbourne Town Hall, 30 October 2022
(video-recording 36:29—43:24)

Sarah Muyunga: Our next speaker, Morris Kaloran, works for the West Papua Provisional Government in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Prior to that was the Vanuatu Coordinator of the United Nations Women Project. In 2002, Morris' delivered his first speech on West Papua while still a student at Victoria University. On Aboriginal land in Maribyrnong, Morris and Uncle Larry Walsh opened the 'right road' for West Papua to take its position in Australian foreign policy.

Morris Kaloran

Let me give you some information on how we indigenous people of Pacific feel about Australia's involvement in West Papua's struggle for self-determination and independence.

In 1962, when Australia signed the New York Agreement along with the rest of the UN General Assembly, we Pacific Islanders were still colonies. We had a close relationship with West Papuans through seminars organised by the South Pacific Commission. We were all in independence mode and none of us heard about the United Nations transferring West Papua to Indonesia.

Everybody knows that we in the Pacific have a lot of reservation over Australia's climate change policy. But not everyone knows how angry we are about Australia's denial of the West Papuans right to self-determination.

In 2015, we were pleased, and proud, when Solomon Islands Prime Minister, Mr. Manasseh Sogavare made a stand and found a way to bring West Papua into the Melanesian Spearhead Group. That put West Papua on the map as a serious independence-seeking colony.

And it was a proud moment in 2019 when the Pacific Islands Forum passed its first motion on West Papua, demanding that its members investigate and address the "root cause of the problem" and "encourage Indonesia to facilitate the UN Fact-Finding Mission which it had agreed to in 2017".

The African Caribbean Pacific Group passed a similar motion. That meant nearly half of the members of the UN General Assembly were alert to, and thinking about West Papua, gearing up for action. Except Australia. We in the Pacific don't understand why the Australian government, and indeed the Australian people, ignore how the West Papuans are approaching their independence.

The West-Papuans self-determination path is not the usual form taken by colonies. In 2020, they established the West Papua Provisional Government that is capable of negotiating with the Indonesian Government under the auspice of the United Nations.

It is obvious that Indonesia will always deny the existence of a West Papuan state. And will keep on denying it until Australia starts taking its own national security interests seriously and examines what is happening just 72kms across Torres Strait.

Australians need to know that the state of West Papua is a legal entity under the terms of international law, in line with modern international legal principles and conventions.

As I speak, 83 governments are now calling for Indonesia to grant the United Nations access to West Papua for the generation of an informed evidence-based report. This includes the Pacific Islands Forum, the 79 states of the African-Caribbean-Pacific Group, as well as the parliaments of the Netherlands, United Kingdom, Spain, Poland, and the European Union.

Finally, let's talk about the Laws of State Responsibility for internationally wrongful acts, which was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2005. These laws affirm that Third States are obliged to

complain of wrongful acts committed by a sovereign State. They also affirm that sovereignty comes under question where a people within a State are subject to serious violations of their human rights.

Unfortunately, seventeen years after adoption by UNGA, Australia has failed its obligation to complain about the wrongful actions committed by the Indonesian Government regarding violation of human rights in West Papua. Australia should have played an important role during its term on the UN Human Rights Council between 2017 and 2020, but failed profoundly to recognize what is happening in its own back yard.

The Lombok treaty ignores the fact that Australia signed the International Criminal Court Act in 2002, thus determining to end acts of violence such as torture, rape, enforced disappearance, and brutality based on racial, cultural, political or religious bias.

I thank you all for your kind attention.