

West Papua – A Trust Betrayed

We live in times when the right to self-determination and national sovereignty is under increased siege. These are fundamental principles of the United Nations Charter in support of all people striving for or defending their Independence denied by occupation or invasion.

The population of West Papua has for generations been fighting for this right denied. Dag Hammarskjöld, as second Secretary General of the United Nations, was an advocate of decolonization. He supported the Independence of West Papua. His untimely death left it as a mission unaccomplished and kept the West Papua people under foreign rule - in open violation of the normative principles of the UN Charter that Hammarskjöld stood for.

More than sixty years ago, Hammarskjöld died in a plane crash. Its cause remains a matter of renewed investigations by the UN. Mounting evidence suggests that external causes brought the plane down while approaching the airport of the Northern Rhodesian mining town of Ndola. All 16 persons on board were killed. Hammarskjöld's mission remained unaccomplished.

The people of West Papua have since then continued their struggle for self-determination, which Hammarskjöld supported and wanted to achieve. The continued occupation violates their right to freedom and betrays the ethics and conviction of Hammarskjöld as well as the UN Charter.

This ceremony of the Hammarskjöld-West Papua Living Memorial Project pays tribute to the legacy of Dag Hammarskjöld and the values he supported as Secretary General of the UN. It is a reminder that his untimely death prevented the rightful transfer of power and governance to the people of West Papua in a sovereign state.

It remains an obligation for all, who believe in the right of people to govern themselves, to support their continued struggle.

May this solemn symbolic act of today be a reminder that as long as the people of West Papua are under foreign rule, we owe them our solidarity in their demand for Independence.

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