



**UNITED LIBERATION MOVEMENT FOR WEST PAPUA
PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT**
International Secretariat, Winston Churchill Street, 1571 Port Vila, Republic of Vanuatu.

West Papua Situation Update: March 2023

Ten West Papuans killed by Indonesian police in Wamena

Ten indigenous West Papuans were massacred by Indonesian security forces following unrest in Wamenaⁱ. Police opened fire on civilians after an incident involving the abduction of a Papuan child, which saw conflict erupt between the local community and occupying forcesⁱⁱ.

The notorious paramilitary Brimob force were described by a local human rights defender as firing 'continuously' on protesters. At least nine died at the scene, while more passed away later in hospital. One Papuan witness to the shooting stated, "All they [Papuans] had was rocks in their hand to try to defend themselves, but it was the police and soldiers who started to shoot brutally at the people... It was a battle between rocks and weapons."ⁱⁱⁱ

Indonesia's offer of compensation was heavily criticised by Gustaf R Kawer, Director of the Association of Human Rights Advocates (PAHAM Papua)^{iv}. Indonesia has a history of using compensation to silence victims' families in the wake of atrocities^v. During sixty years of colonial rule in West Papua, Indonesia has committed countless such massacres. Papuans still seek justice for Bloody Paniai^{vi} in 2014, Bloody Abepura^{vii} in 2000, and Bloody Wamena^{viii} in 2003.



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Fiji Prime Minister announces support for ULMWP full membership of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG), Vanuatu reaffirms support

In a major breakthrough for the West Papuan liberation movement, Fiji Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka publicly announced his support for the ULMWP gaining full membership of the Melanesian Spearhead Group. In a Twitter post, Rabuka said he would support full membership because West Papuans 'are Melanesians'^{ix}.

The ULMWP have sat as an 'observer' member of the MSG since 2015 – West Papua's first international recognition as a 'state-in-waiting' since the Indonesian occupation began in 1963. The ULMWP's application for full membership has been outstanding since 2016, with the group's most recent application coming in 2019.

Under previous Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama, Fiji had opposed extending full membership to the ULMWP. Indonesia has held associate membership of the MSG since 2015, a move widely understood as part of an attempt to undermine solidarity for West Papua from fellow Melanesian nations.

The Indonesian government has expressed 'deep disappointment' over Rabuka's meeting with ULMWP President Benny Wenda and decision to support full membership^x. Wenda responded by accusing Indonesian President Widodo of gross hypocrisy, comparing his meeting with Rabuka to Widodo's oft-repeated support for the Palestinian struggle^{xi}.

Vanuatu's Prime Minister Ishmael Kalsakau also reaffirmed Vanuatu's support for the ULMWP gaining full membership of the MSG. On the same lobbying trip to the Pacific, Benny Wenda met with Kalsakau and Vanuatu Foreign Minister Jotham Napat, both of whom issued statements of solidarity and support for West Papua returning to its Melanesian family.



New Zealand pilot captured by TPNPB group

A New Zealander pilot named Phillip Mehrtens was captured by a faction of the TPNPB in Nduga Regency on February 7th^{xii}.

Mehrtens, a pilot for the Indonesian Susi Air, was transporting construction workers to build a health centre for Indonesian settlers and soldiers when the runway was stormed and his plane torched^{xiii}. The TPNPB had warned the Indonesian military for months to stop using civilian facilities for military operations, but had been ignored^{xiv}. There are numerous links between the Indonesian government and Susi Air, which is owned by Susi Pudjiastuti, current Minister for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries^{xv}.

At the time of writing, Mehrtens was still in the TPNPB's custody, as negotiations between the group and Indonesia had not made progress^{xvi}. Indonesia has a history of violent and escalatory responses to such incidents, but the New Zealand government urged them to seek to resolve the situation peacefully^{xvii}.

ULMWP Interim President Benny Wenda has called for Mehrtens' immediate and unconditional release^{xviii}, clarifying that the ULMWP are committed to their peaceful diplomatic strategy for liberation^{xix}. He also urged the world not to lose sight of the fact that Indonesia uses such incidents to intensify their colonial military rule in West Papua. Military buildup in the wake of the abduction saw the displacement of residents in five Nduga districts. UN figures estimate that between 60,000 and 100,000 people have been displaced by Indonesian military force^{xx}, including 50,000 in Nduga Regency alone^{xxi}.



Papua Governor Lukas Enembe arrested by Indonesian state

Lukas Enembe, the Governor of Papua Province, has become the latest Papuan leader to be criminalised by the Indonesian state.

Governor Enembe was arrested and abducted by the Corruption Eradication Committee (KPK) while at a restaurant in Jayapura on January 10th. Enembe's arrest follows his criminalisation in September 2022^{xxii}, when he was accused of corruption and banned from travelling abroad for vital medical treatment^{xxiii}. A

month after he was taken into custody, the Governor was hospitalised after experiencing extreme ill health^{xxiv}.

Governor Enembe's lawyer stated that Indonesia was trying to find corruption where there is none, given that he had previously been vetted and cleared by the Indonesian Supreme Audit Body^{xxv}. Enembe's treatment stands in stark contrast to the Indonesian response to the corruption that exists in their military and economy. For instance, Luhut Pandjaitan, a retired General who is now the Minister for Maritime Affairs, is one of the biggest investors in the vast Wabu Block gold mine in Intan Jaya^{xxvi}, where thousands of people have been displaced by military operations.

Enembe has been increasingly vocal in his criticism of Indonesia's colonial policies in recent years. Whilst continuing to work within Indonesian institutions, he opposed the creation of three new provinces in West Papua. In his public comments, he echoed widespread criticisms that the plan was a 'divide and rule' tactic designed to intensify military control over West Papua. Enembe also instituted a popular scholarship programme that allowed Papuan University students to study abroad. The programme was later discontinued by the Indonesian government, leaving forty-two Papuan students stranded in foreign countries^{xxvii}.

There were widespread protests in response to Enembe's arrest. Mass arrests were made, and one indigenous protester was killed by a police officer, in what the Regional Police Chief described as a 'small incident'^{xxviii}.



Papuan woman decapitated, eight shot by Indonesian military

A 35-year-old mother was murdered and mutilated by Indonesian soldiers during military operations in Puncak Jaya^{xxix}. A local church leader stated, "After searching for her body which had disappeared,

residents found it on Saturday 4 March 2023. The body of Ms. Tarina Murib was found naked and the victim's head was cut off and missing". Eight other Papuans were also shot during the raid.

Military operations in rural West Papua have increased since the kidnap of New Zealand pilot Phillip Mehrtens by a TPNPB group in February.

The murder echoes the brutal killing and mutilation of four indigenous Papuans by colonial forces last August^{xxx}.

Journalist Victor Mambor's home bombed in Jayapura

The home of Victor Mambor, a West Papua-based reporter and recipient of numerous journalism awards^{xxxi}, was bombed in January^{xxxii}.

In a marked escalation of harassment and violence against domestic journalists, Mambor's home was targeted by an improvised explosive device^{xxxiii} placed by unknown assailants. Mambor is well known for uncovering human rights abuses in occupied West Papua. He regularly receives death threats and hate speech on social media, and has previously been the target of violent attacks^{xxxiv}.

Foreign media is banned in West Papua – part of a sixty-year blackout on all NGO investigation and reportage that has helped protect Indonesia's occupation from international censure.



- ⁱ <https://www.vice.com/en/article/88qwe3/mass-killing-civilians-indonesia-papua>
- ⁱⁱ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-02-24/indonesia-tightens-security-in-papua-after-nine-killed-in-riot/102021114>
- ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.vice.com/en/article/88qwe3/mass-killing-civilians-indonesia-papua>
- ^{iv} <https://www.benarnews.org/english/news/pacific/fiji-papua-indonesia-03012023000023.html>
- ^v <https://www.ulmwp.org/president-wenda-whats-the-difference-between-jokowis-support-for-palestine-and-rabukas-support-for-west-papua>
- ^{vi} <https://mobile.twitter.com/srabuka/status/1628892732633780224>
- ^{vii} <https://en.jubi.id/gustaf-kawer-criticizes-mediation-for-wamena-shooting-victims/>
- ^{viii} <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/feb/14/indonesian-separatists-release-video-of-nz-pilot-they-took-hostage>
- ^{ix} <https://en.jubi.id/tni-puts-money-on-coffin-disrespectful-and-demeaning-oap-theo-hesegem/>
- ^x <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/new-zealand-pilot-taken-hostage-indonesia-papuan-rebel-group-2023-02-07/>
- ^{xi} <https://www.ulmwp.org/president-wenda-captured-new-zealand-pilot-must-be-unconditionally-released>
- ^{xii} <https://www.ulmwp.org/president-wenda-sympathy-for-hostage-pilot-abduction-a-result-of-indonesian-colonialism>
- ^{xiii} <https://en.jubi.id/negotiations-with-tpnpb-to-free-susi-air-pilot-not-yet-succeeded/>
- ^{xiv} <https://jubi.id/tanah-papua/2023/ulmwp-perjuangan-tpnpb-murni-untuk-kemerdekaan-papua/>
- ^{xv} https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Susi_Pudjiastuti
- ^{xvi} <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-02-23/indonesian-security-forces-rescue-hostage-pilot-philip-mehrtens/102013054>
- ^{xvii} <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/03/1113062>
- ^{xviii} <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/Solidarity%20for%20Indigenous%20Papuan%202.pdf>
- ^{xix} https://www.tapol.org/sites/default/files/Justice%20for%20Paniai%20Berdarah.web_.pdf
- ^{xx} <https://www.hrw.org/legacy/reports/2001/papua/PAPUA0701-05.htm>
- ^{xxi} <https://www.tapol.org/news/press-release-12-years-after-wamena-4-april-2003>
- ^{xxii} <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-04-20/west-papuan-students-dreams-dashed-after-scholarships-cancelled/100997776>
- ^{xxiii} <https://en.tempo.co/read/1678293/lukas-enembes-arrest-prompts-riot-papua-police-arrest-19-people>
- ^{xxiv} <https://www.pasificpos.com/dokter-gubernur-bebeberkasn-kondisi-terkini-lukas-enembe/>
- ^{xxv} <https://www.ulmwp.org/interim-president-lukas-enembe-is-innocent>
- ^{xxvi} <https://en.jubi.id/lukas-enembe-hospitalized-suspended-detention-by-kpk/>
- ^{xxvii} <https://asiapacificreport.nz/2022/09/18/jakarta-bans-papuan-governor-enembe-from-vital-medical-treatment-trip/>
- ^{xxviii} <https://www.law-justice.co/artikel/115177/terhubung-dengan-luhut-kuasai-emas-papua-ini-jejak-tobacom-del/>
- ^{xxix} <https://jubi-id.translate.goog/polhukam/2023/seorang-ibu-tewas-dan-dimutilasi-delapan-warga-lainnya-tertembak-di-pamebut-distrik-yugumuak/? x tr sl=id& x tr tl=en& x tr hl=en-US& x tr pto=wapp>
- ^{xxx} <https://www.ulmwp.org/interim-president-brutal-killing-of-four-west-papuans-is-a-reminder-of-the-reality-of-indonesian-colonialism>
- ^{xxxi} <https://asiapacificreport.nz/2023/01/24/terror-bomb-explodes-near-papua-journalist-victor-mambors-home/>
- ^{xxxii} <https://asiapacificreport.nz/2022/09/02/papuan-journalist-victor-mambor-wins-udin-award-for-dedicated-journalism/>
- ^{xxxiii} <https://cpj.org/2023/01/journalist-victor-mambors-home-bombed-in-papua-indonesia/>
- ^{xxxiv} <https://asiapacificreport.nz/2021/04/23/tabloid-jubi-journalist-victor-mambor-terrorised-over-papua-reports/>