

# The struggle for West Papua

## BOOK REVIEW:

*The United Nations and the Indonesian Takeover of West Papua, 1962-1969 - The Anatomy of Betrayal*, by John Salford (London, Routledge Curzon, 2003)

Reviewed by Dr Robert Wolfgramm, Monash University

**W**EST Papua has also been known as West New Guinea, West Irian and Irian Jaya.

It comprises some 47% of the landmass of the island of New Guinea and is an Indonesian province.

The West Papuan population was estimated at 1.6 million in 1990, but this includes a great number of resettled Javanese.

West Papuans are less well known than the people of the independent state of Papua New Guinea to the east, but they are the same Melanesian people -

endants of those who migrated into the Pacific out of Asia some 50,000 years ago.

Between 1828 and 1962, West Papua was a Dutch colony. During World War 2 the Japanese invaded.

In 1969 it became a province of Indonesia. In the intervening years (1962-1969), the West Papuan people were administered by Jakarta and were supposed to have been prepared for a vote on their future - independence or incorporation into Indonesia?

An administration of sorts took place, but preparation for the vote on their future was a 'sham' - as one UN overseer now puts it.

This mal-administrative sham was tolerated and accepted by the UN and this is the 'betrayal' that preoccupies John Salford.

To fully appreciate the scandal of this treachery, some political and historical background is required.

In the post-WWII global decolonisation push, the Dutch had aimed not merely to permit Papuan independence, but to actively facilitate it as they left.

An advisory representative council was established within Papua.

The objective of the council was to devise a framework for independence. In 1961 several regional councils were further established toward that end. And on 4 April, a new peak

body, the New Guinea Council, was formed after provincial elections involving some 100,000 West Papuans.

This council was to function as a parliament to take West Papua to independence.

To this end, the Council drafted a manifesto and set up a 70 mem-

ber National Committee.

This committee established the name 'West Papua' and declared its symbol to be the 'Morning Star' flag. The New Guinea Council was a short-lived parliament.

Without reference to its work, on 15 April 1962 an agreement was signed in New York between Dutch and Indonesian governments pledged to submit Western Papua's future to a plebiscite.

This was to be held before 1969. During 1962 the Dutch territory duly passed into UN hands and then, despite strong, Papuan protest, to Indonesian administration during 1963 and leading up to the 1969 plebiscite.

The agreement to permit Indonesian administration of the plebiscite preparation and electoral process was seen as a gross betrayal of Papuan hopes.

The New Guinea Council's National Committee felt they had little choice but to cooperate. While some indigenous leaders fled, fearful and disillusioned, others (such as Terry Aronggear and Parmenas Awom) co-founded the now well-known, OPM - Organisasi Papua Merdeka (Free Papua Organisation).

In a symbolic and strategic sense, OPM signified the end of accommodation to the 1962 New York agreement.

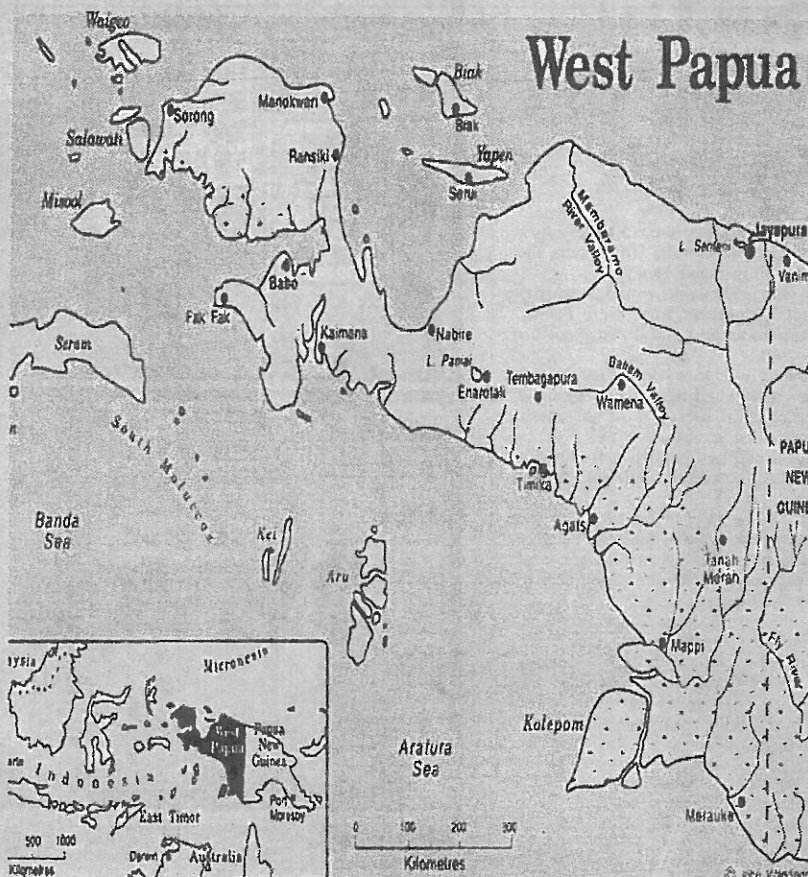
Through to 1978, it represented the desperate and often violent Papuan struggle to resist Indonesianisation. Guerilla tactics were employed with varying success with by OPM.

But up against the well-armed Indonesian forces they were always at risk. Bombing raids and targeted terrorism by Jakarta's military forces combined to nullify OPM's appeal among the grassroots.

In 1969, Indonesia fulfilled its promise to hold a West Papuan referendum on its future. But the so-called ACT OF FREE CHOICE saw a mere 1022 West Papuans (out of a possible 816,896) vote for alignment with Indonesia - hardly a democratic vote, and a joke as far as being a mandate for West Papuan interests.

In the end, only 175 West Papuans were signatories to an intention to integrate with Indonesia!

John Salford's brilliant and distressing account of



## West Papua

the whole 'choice' process.

Far from upholding the rights of the West Papuans as outlined in the 'New York Agreement' signed seven years earlier (August 1962) between the Netherlands and Indonesia, Ortiz Sanz and his team seemed to have acquiesced to the uninterrupted bullying coming from Jakarta.

The Javanese policy was to challenge and change every point of the original New York formula in Indonesia's favour.

That the UN complied with this culture of complaint is disturbing.

As Ortiz Sanz remarked to Australian journalist Hugh Lunn at the time, 'West Irian is like a cancerous growth on the side of the UN and my job is to surgically remove it' (p. 163).

That one ordained by the world community to protect the indigenous interest of West Papuans could speak so disparagingly of them gives cause to continue to question the quality and neutrality of the UN.

Tens of thousands of Papuans have died as a consequence of the UN betrayal. The situation there remains dire, but perhaps there is hope.

Salford's effort is one of a growing body of work aimed at re-presenting the West Papuan case to the UN and it is redeeming to think that Ortiz Sanz's self-described surgical task may not have entirely succeeded.

The belated, public repudiation of the value and legitimacy of the UN's role in West Papua in 1969's 'act of free choice' may provide further ground for reopening and fighting the UN's abysmal record in this case.

Salford's book is one that made me weep, but the Papuan people and all those working for a just solution to the West Papuan dispute (to whom Salford dedicates his book) should take heart from Ortiz Sanz's last word on the possibility of their self-determination: 'the moment will come, do not fear' (p. 177).

the 'West Papuan' experience at the hands of the UN intermittently between 1962 and 1969 and especially during the seven months of UN administration of the 1969 plebiscite, points to betrayal not just by the Dutch, but by the UN - the one international body indigenous peoples look to for justice and assistance in realizing their legitimate claims.

Salford's work elucidates how West Papuan identity was manipulated by Indonesia as the last colonizing power to propagate its claims on the territory.

Salford's work is powerful because of the clinical, mechanical and unemotional manner in which he details the 'anatomy' of this betrayal of West Papuans by their UN protectors. Chapter after chapter meticulously exposes the conspiracy of form without substance among the UN, the Dutch and Indonesian governments, and the indifference in Washington, London and Canberra to indigenous Papuan claims.

While the UN was struggling to be taken seriously, these centers of global power were preoccupied with another agenda - the Cold War.

As Salford shows, West Papua was a 'problem' settled by being subsumed into the anti-communist priority that dominated American and European thinking of the Cold War era.

In this respect, Salford's work reminds the reader of the effort required to engage in betrayal. Betrayal is not a

natural inclination. In order to turn one's back on a commitment, to forego an undertaking, to repudiate a promise that has been confirmed in writing, a raft of rationalizations is necessary.

Unless one is a completely unethical brute, a progression from one moral position to its immoral opposite is usually graduated and rationalized - even by Machiavellians.

It is shocking to read therefore, that from the beginning of the seven-year plebiscite preparation period to its conclusion - during which the United Nations Temporary Executive Authority (UNTEA) was supposed to moderate competing Papuan claims through legal means and democratic process - the game was already set against their independence. As Salford puts it:

UNTEA ... patently failed to defend the rights and freedoms of the Papuan people and did little to confront the systematic and ruthless campaign of intimidation carried out by the Indonesians throughout the entire period.

Through UNTEA, the UN allowed itself to be party to a cynical betrayal of a people who had no one left to defend their interests except the UN (p. 72).

Salford implies that few in the international community, if any, lost much sleep over the political treachery dealt to West Papua.

Overwhelmingly, the evidence points to a con-

vergence of opinion among Dutch colonialists and the UN's most powerful, elite nations that whatever the moral worth of West Papuans, they lacked the intellectual, cultural and political sophistication for establishing a modern, independent state. Best to just let them pass from Dutch to Indonesian sovereignty.

In this regard, the UNTEA's Dutch liaison officer, Louis Goedhart is reported to have said that the Netherlands was 'only concerned that some façade of responsibility should be maintained' in the handover of Papua to the Indonesians and 'if such an arrangement could be 'cloaked' with an 'air of respectability', the Dutch would be 'satisfied' (p. 66).

Typically, the view from Washington, London and Canberra was to express public concern while quietly concurring.

As one spokesman in the London Foreign Office wrote in 1968, 'there is no other solution than for Indonesia to keep West Irian' and 'no responsible government is likely to complain so long as the decencies are carried out' (p. 95).

Overseeing the 'decencies' of this betrayal was the Bolivian-born (Fernando) Ortiz Sanz - UN Representative for West Irian during the critical 'Act of Free Choice' of July-August 1969.

Salford's evidence is that far from adopting a dispassionate, neutral role, Ortiz Sanz did much to facilitate and defend Indonesian management of

## EDITORIAL

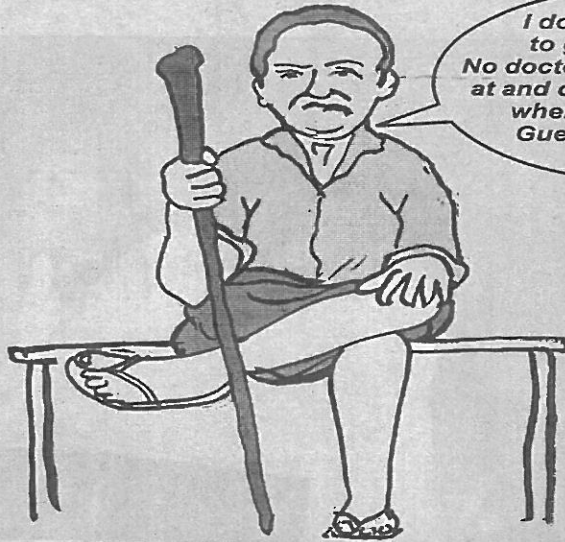
## Whose side is the Pacific on?

LAST month, American Congressman, Eni Faleomavaega, representing American Samoa, together with Congressman Donald Payne (from New Jersey), managed to gain successful passage of a Bill through the US House of Representatives that aims to reopen the case of West Papua's fate at the hands of the Indonesians. In particular, how the UN allowed West Papua to be invaded and then annexed by Jakarta in the period 1963-1969. Faleomavaega has achieved no mean feat for an issue which has been repeatedly and shamefully shoved aside by the 14 nations of the Pacific Islands Forum. The West Papuans are ethnically Melanesian, and yet no leader in the Pacific has cared for their fate at the hands of successive Indonesian administrations. Following the Australian and PNG lead, they have tried, like the Biblical Pilate, to wash their hands and walk away from something they consider irrelevant to their future. Nothing could be more self-serving and blind in our Foreign Policy than this conceit that West Papua is not our problem and better left as an internal Indonesian matter. We made the same mistake with East Timor and allowed tens of thousand to die as a result of inaction and dithering.

In a new press release titled, 'Massacre Warning for West Papua' (dated August 5), Senator Natasha Stott-Despoja, the Foreign Affairs spokesperson for the Australian Democrats political party, is now also raising the alarm. Taken together with a consistent stream of distressing reports from individuals, NGOs, and various church groups (both Catholic and Protestant) that have filtered out of the heavily censored province, the Australian senator's warnings are bracing indeed. If only fractionally accurate, these reports give cause for us to be praying for our fellow indigenous Pacific neighbours, to be asking for compassion of the part of the Indonesian military, and to be petitioning for Indonesian reconsideration of their West Papuan policy. We also need to express our concerns to government, to the Pacific Forum and to the Indonesian Embassy here about the increased Indonesian military presence in West Papua, and the latest escalation of ritual violence and intimidation that have been a feature of Indonesian military presence in the region since the early 1960s.

According to the Australian senator, there are now 'numerous reports that entire villages have been destroyed and the people shot and tortured'. This is an outcome of the fact that '15,000 Indonesian troops have been sent to West Papua in recent weeks'. As Stott-Despoja puts it, 'There has been a specific and concerted effort by the Indonesian military to increase dramatically national and racial tensions. This has all the appearances of a disaster in waiting and we cannot simply allow it to happen'. She warns: 'I am putting the Australian government on notice the situation in West Papua is critical. We have been forewarned. If the current violence escalates the onus will be on the Australian government to explain what it did to prevent such a massacre. The Australian government must call upon Indonesia to

## PATIENTS LOSE PATIENCE



## FROM OUR READERS

### A Flat World

ANJALI DEVI (FT 2/08/05) must speak for herself, because if the State were to propose that the world was flat, I do not think many of us would believe it, including members of our provincial councils.

Her insinuation only shows up her rather poor views of the Fijian people. It was very interesting though that Professor Qalo's view was somewhat challenged (?) recently from a lady in the highlands of Namosi.

Anyway the PRT&U bill in total, as I perceive it, is an attempt by the State to bring about national unity through two human traits namely reconciliation (the need for people to reconcile their differences with others at all times), and tolerance (the need for people to tolerate the behaviours that they deem as objectionable in their daily lives).

That the Fijian people can see these very quickly is not surprising, because in communal co-existence these are essential human traits that are needed to maintain sane and civilised relationships at all levels of life, every time.

One has to live in a village to see clearly just how important and essential these human traits are to maintaining peace (and co-existence) in village life. I believe that Ratu Mara's Alliance Party made use of these terms as party slogan in the late seventies and

eighties, so it is really not new.

Fighting amongst people, even relatives, is a daily occurrence in many communities, and responsible people have to keep on top of these, so that good human relationship can be maintained and sustained. But guess what?

We rely a lot on tolerance and reconciliation to achieve peace for us, because the eye for an eye/tooth for a tooth approach no longer works and as *tau* Lasaro once said 'that would only leave behind a nation that is full of blind and toothless citizens'. (By analogy I compare this role as similar to that of an aircraft engineer who is seated behind the pilots of say a Boeing 747 in flight, monitoring and maintaining (I guess) the performance of the engines, which are essential if the flight is to reach its destination).

The opposition to the Bill thus far, I observe, revolves around the amnesty provision, and in accepting the Bill, many provinces including the GCC, have flagged this as something the State must review.

Personally I see this as a more mature approach, compared to those who have rejected the bill in total, just because they did not like the amnesty portion, ignoring the rest of the bill which I deem as fairly important for our future as a nation. This is their right of course but with a measure of tolerance I am

certain we can all reconcile any differences on this matter, don't you think?

A Naigulevu,  
Suva.

### Minister's report

I REFER to the report of the Minister for Foreign Affairs Kaliope Tavola's statement (DP 07/08/05) that, (quote) "the current political and social climate has made promoting Fiji to the global community a difficult task". Mr Tavola went further: "A window with a view of a divided people and divergent political aspirations with grim prospects for unity on a number of national issues is not conducive to all our work."

This statement is a diplomatic indictment of Tavola's own Government's approach to national issues such as the RATU Bill, multi party Government and others, which has been dictatorial, confrontational and divisive.

I wonder if Mr Tavola had expressed this criticism to his leader, Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase? He needs to say this more and often and emphatically in the Cabinet.

No wonder Mr Tavola had great difficulty convincing the High Commissioners and Ambassadors of the wisdom of pushing the RATU Bill in a politically and racially divisive manner.

Jone Dakuvula,  
Suva.

### Soft target

I CAN emphasise with our benefactors need to control traffic in front of the embassy. It is indeed a soft target, vulnerable to determine men who may want to wreck retributive havoc on the premises.

However, I can also sympathise with the Minister of Works, Colonel Savenaca Draunidalo who must stretch our overextended meagre budget to pacify the burgeoning infrastructure needs.

The proactive embassy request to divert traffic is legitimate but impractical in its current form. It will create congestion.

We can't afford it right now because we will have to relocate the wooden building and cut a new road by Albert Park parallel to the existing slope.

Relocate to a vacant crown land compliments of the Republic.

Inherit the US Embassy building after they move to the Tamavua complex.

Anyway, on behalf of a grateful *vanua*, *vinaka vakalevu* for looking after her children Domicileo in England and we look forward to a win/win solution in resolving your critical security issue.

May God bless our homeland.

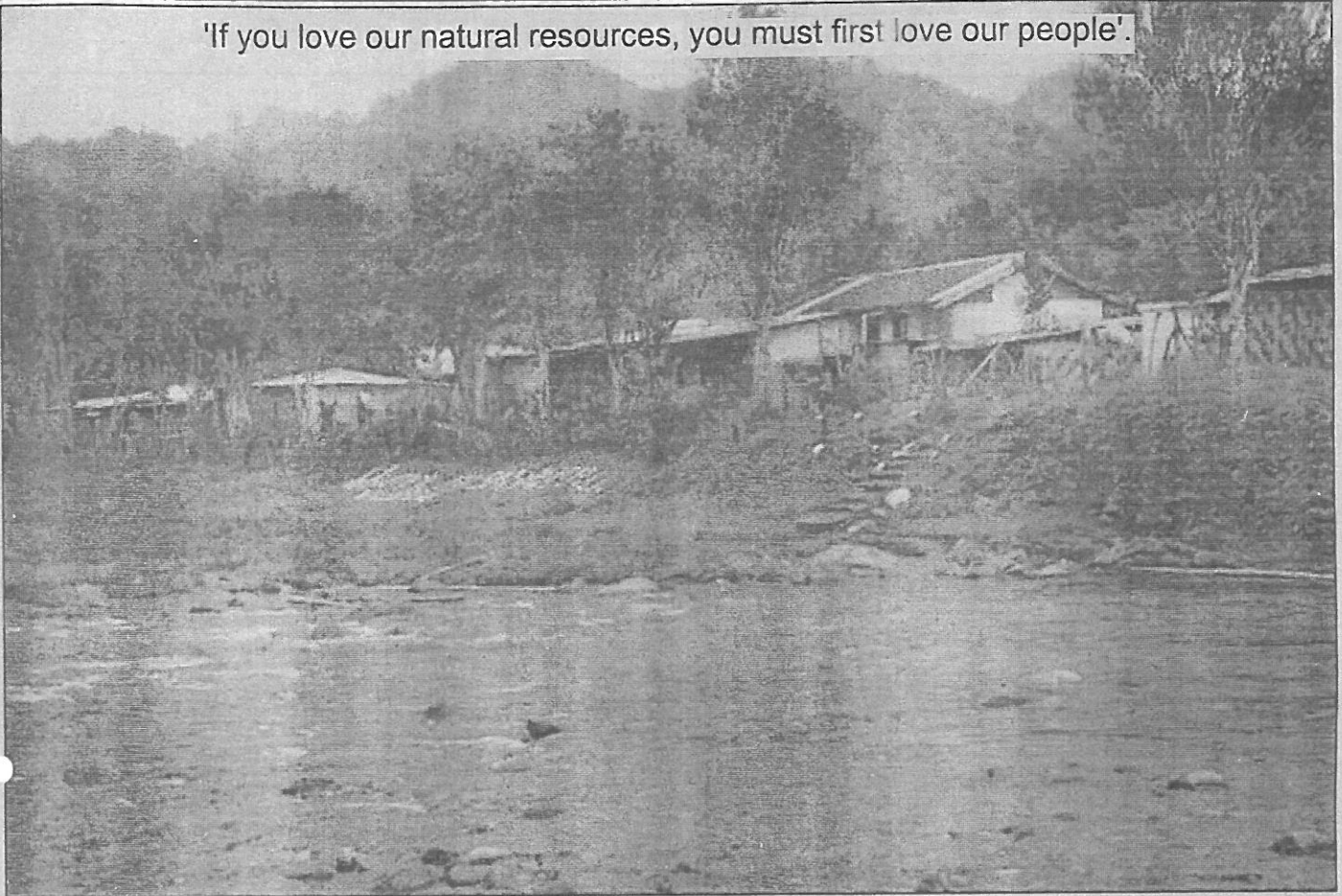
Pita Lagilagi Rakuita,  
Laqere.

immediately withdraw additional troops from West Papua. We must not allow another East Timor to develop on our doorstep. We have the advance warning, there will be no excuse if this is allowed to happen'.

Following the passage of his Bill through the House of Representatives, Congressman Faleomavaega called on Australian Prime Minister, John Howard, to urgently reconsider his policy on West Papua. Now Senator Stott-Despoja is calling for the same on the basis of reliable intelligence suggesting an imminent genocidal campaign by the Indonesian military. We concur with these voices in the wilderness; the case of West Papua is something that all Pacific Forum nations must address - now.

All letters to Fiji Daily Post should be short and accurate with the writer's name and phone number. Letters should be a maximum of 200 words. The Editor reserves the right to edit or withhold letters. Letters with no phone contact will not be printed.

'If you love our natural resources, you must first love our people'



# Another cry from West Papua

Published here is a recent letter from Reverend Socrates Sofyan Yoman, President of the Union of Baptist Churches of Papua, to Lord Browne of Madingley, Group Chief Executive of the petroleum giant, BP.

30th July 2005

Dear Lord Browne,

As a Church leader I must speak out for my people in West Papua, about peace, justice, equality, freedom, truth and human dignity.

Our Land of West Papua was given to our ancestors by God. Your company, BP, has come to our land because you know that there are riches beneath our soil and seas.

I know that you, Sir, have also visited our land yourself. You and the people from your company are welcome to visit us in West Papua.

We Papuans are proud of our people, our traditions and our land and we are pleased to share what we have with our friends.

But on behalf of my people, I must tell you that if you love our natural resources, you must first love our people.

People ask me "Where is this place called 'Tangguh'?" and I have to tell them that there is no river, mountain, village or town in West Papua with that name.

The Indonesian dictator Suharto who killed thousands of my people

gave your project its name. In his language it means "All powerful" or "invincible", like he thought his empire would be.

When you first wanted to take our natural resources why didn't you first ask us Papuans, the owners of the land.

We don't know why you went to Jakarta to negotiate with the Javanese? We are not part of Indonesia. Our ancestors, our grandfathers and grandmothers did not come from Java. We are Papuans and this is our land.

For 42 years, Indonesians have occupied our land, but you know that we Papuans did not invite them.

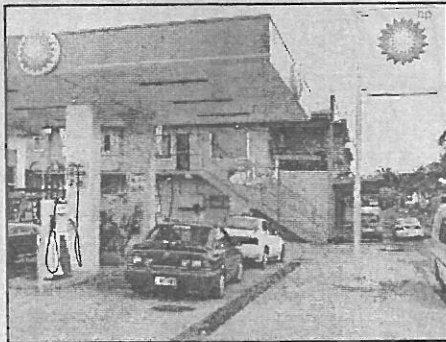
We tried to tell the world that like all other colonies we wanted freedom; that we wanted to be free to enjoy our own land, not be ruled by others ... but the world turned its back on us.

The 1969 Act of Free Choice went through unchallenged. To their eternal shame, the American, Dutch, British and Australian governments stayed silent while my people's blood turned our rivers red.

The red and white flag of Indonesia has brought only misery to my people; murder, mutilation, rape, torture, terror and starvation. Japan also occupied our land during WWII.

Would BP have also gone to Tokyo to negotiate with Admiral Tojo about West Papua's natural resources?

If you love our natural resources, you must first



Workers quarters (top) and a BP Oil service station.

love our people.

You argue that you must negotiate with Jakarta because your government "recognizes" Indonesia's territorial integrity" and tells you that West Papua is part of Indonesia ... but you know for yourself the truth of how Indonesia stole our land.

God has given you your own mind. You can make decisions for yourself about what is right and what is wrong.

On the Day of Judgment we will all have to answer for the choices we made. God will not accept "I was just obeying orders" as an excuse for complicity in murder.

If you love our natural resources, you must first love our people.

Your website and brochures say that everything in your "Project Area" is wonderful.

You tell us that you have built a new village and that you are being so careful not to harm the shrimps in our sea.

You show photos of smiling Papuan children...

but you do not say that outside your "Project Area" my people are being slaughtered like pigs by the same government you share tea with in Jakarta and Jayapura.

What gives you the right to split one part of our land away from the rest and say that everything in "your area" is fine? Our Land of West Papua is one body.

What you are trying to do is to cut one of our hands off and show that to the world. No, we will not allow you to do this. We are one people. Neither Indonesia nor BP can divide us.

If you love our natural resources, you must first love our people.

You also say that you are being so careful not to allow the Indonesian military to provide your security.

We are glad that you admit that it would be dangerous to allow the armed forces of the government you claim to be the legitimate owners of our land to come into your "Project Area".

Perhaps you do know after all that the Indonesian military takes millions of dollars every year to provide "protection" for foreign companies and to turn a blind eye to illegal logging and trading in endangered species? Perhaps you also know that the TNI is raping, torturing and murdering my people all across West Papua and training militias and Jihadists to do the same just like they did in East Timor?

I think you know, like us, what Freeport has done? Have you been to the town of Timika, swarming with Indonesian intelligence agents, with armed soldiers every kilometer and where Papuans, the owners of the land, are lucky to get a job clearing up rubbish? What makes you so sure that you can avoid Freeport's mistakes?

We know from experience that dogs will always find vomit to eat. Whether you like it or not, wherever there is money, the TNI will be there sooner or later to lap it up.

They will create an "incident", blame the OPM and then insist that they provide "protection", at a price, for a "vital national asset".

We also know from experience that in West Papua ruled by Indonesia, where foreign companies operate, our people eventually become marginalized in our own land.

You say that you are being so careful to avoid Freeport's mistakes, but I have to say on behalf of my people that if you really cared about us Papuans as much as you say, you

would not take this very great risk with our lives.

You are like a man who goes into a dangerous part of a big city with a box full of money telling everyone that you are going to be so careful not to allow the gangsters to rob you.

What excuses will you make when it's too late and the gangsters have stolen your money and used it to buy guns to kill thousands of innocent people in the city? So that you can make money, you are prepared to risk my people's lives.

I understand that in your English law, a "reckless disregard for another person's life" is known as "man slaughter".

If you love our natural resources, you must first love our people.

Now you may be surprised to know that my people still say that BP and other foreign companies are very welcome in West Papua ... but you must wait until you can negotiate with democratically elected representatives of the Papuan people, the legal owners of our natural resources.

I am not a politician but I know from the decisions of our Papuan Congress in 2000 that if you respect us as human beings and take care of our land you will be negotiating with friends in an independent West Papua.

Yours sincerely,

Socrates Sofyan Yoman, President of the Fellowship of Baptist Churches of Papua

Tomorrow: BP's reply.

Continued from Page 4

They were referred to as Battalion of Kasawaris. A *kasawari* is a native bird like an emu. From 1971 they are called the TPN-PB or Tentara Pembebasan Nasional - Papua Barat or the West Papua National Liberation Army. It is backed by the a CIA like Papua Intelligence Service and the Commando Operational West Papua Intelligence Service.

"I was eleven when I first carried a rifle with a 'group' of 13 on a guerilla mission," Dr Rumbiak says.

"Then the law of the wild prevailed and you have to kill or be killed."

"Food and water was not a problem. Fruits were plentiful. From the wild life they have three species of kangaroos, wild fowls and pigs - heaps.

"Growing wildly are taro, cassava, green beans and 'sagu'; a palm nut we used to make cakes.

"The sea is always within reach. The rivers and lakes and creeks have lots of fish, prawns and eels."

This sounds like the same spoils of the Namosi province - as the song goes 'bau na vo loa kei na kai, na sasalu ni ucitwai'.

"For salt there are salty water lakes in the highlands," Dr Rumbiak continues.

"Banana leaves are immersed in the salty water. Salt would permeate the leaf which is then dried in the sun. To add salt to our food we would just cut a piece of the dried banana leaf and mix it to our food just as you do with table salt.

"Even with UN in control 1000s of our people were killed. The accelerated promotion that followed saw me and two other 12 year olds as battalion commanders. A battalion in guerilla terms is 200 men. The other two were soon killed.

There was no room for volleyball or touch rugby as for the minds of a Nasinu youth in that age group.

"Our supply of bullets was topped up when we encounter an enemy group. Upon surrounding them we offer to spare their lives on the condition they gave up their weapons and ammunition and supplies.

"If their reaction is hostile the ultimate is the verdict.

The oppression eased in 1969 when the UN issued Jakarta the license to conduct the 'Act of Free Choice' referendum, a UN General Assembly Resolution No. 2504 on November 9. The people of West Papua was supposed to have a choice in their government by election.

But instead of the internationally recognized process of 'one person one vote' the polls were organized in accordance with the so-called Indonesian election practices. As a result only 1022 or 0.125 per cent of the 816,896 Papuans were



West Papuan men wearing the traditional penis gourds, above, and below.

# ...The Crown Pigeon must fly

*'As far back as I can remember as kids our part in the fight was taking food and washed clothes to the OPM army.'* **Dr Jacob Rumbiak**

allowed to vote. These people were hand picked and coerced into declaring for Indonesia in public in a climate of fear and repression.

Incidentally, the youthful Jacob was a proficient football player. He was an Indonesian national player.

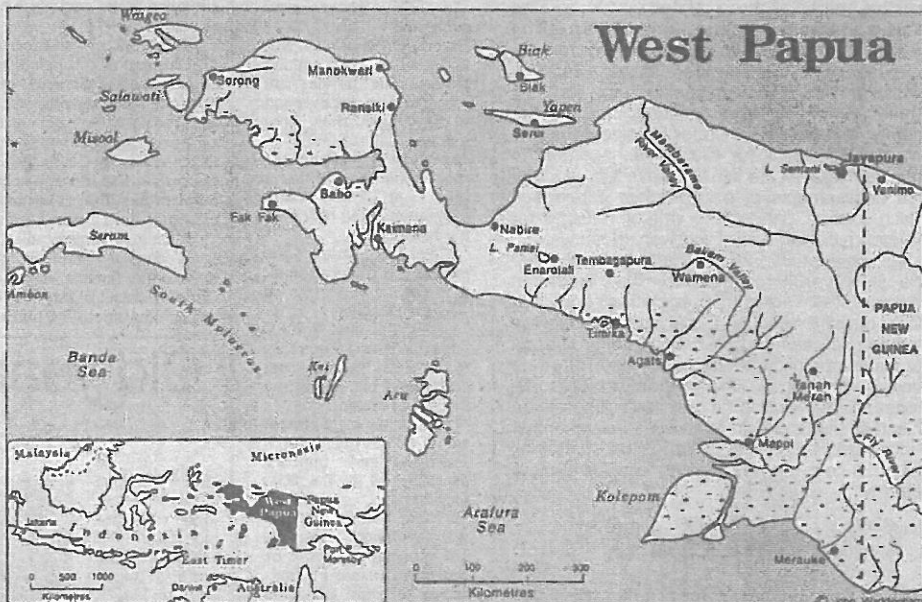
Dissatisfied with the arrangement we fought on with our struggle.

At 17 in December 1976 his exile started. The Indonesian government sent me to study in a Bandung high school. Inevitably his fight for the freedom my people will have to assume a peaceful strategy. I entered the high school at level three. (Equivalent to sixth form in Fiji).

"Before this it was school in the jungle," Dr Rumbiak said.

"Some academics with us conducted classes for us between our guerilla outings.

"UN and government scholarships financed my education into the University of Bandung in the IKIP Institute of



Education."

He then worked in the institute as Assistant Lecturer. In 1986 he lectured in West Papua at the University of Cenderwasi. He covers astronomy, meteorology, climate and Air Traffic Control at airports.

From 1982 their struggle reverted from violent means to non-violence as the right way.

They fought on regardless of the odds. And the Papuan mind evolved as they seek an amicable solution.

In 1989 Dr Rumbiak organised a peaceful demonstration with 42,000 students and grassroots calling on the Indonesian government to stop the atrocities and genocide of Papuans which is not the solution for the problem.



# Suffer the Papuans

**LAST Monday (January 24), a rally for the West Papuans seeking asylum in Australia was held outside the Australian Immigration office (DIMIA) in Melbourne. The keynote speaker was Bishop Hilton Deakin. Here is what he had to say:**

**W**e are gathered today in recognition of an event where 43 West Papuan social activists and students seek asylum from military oppression and loss of human rights and freedoms. This is an event of enormous significance. It is the first time in years that the attention of the media world-wide is focusing on the suffering and death of Papuans, and the behaviour of the Indonesian military and the repetition of its atrocities in East Timor for twenty-four years that are well documented in recently released reports.

We are now faced with decisions that will test our national character. How? We are standing beneath the offices of the Department of Immigration and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA) which has disgraced our national reputation with its repeated mishandling of many cases of migrants, refugees, and even Australian citizens. Everyone in DIMIA ran for cover after the Palmer Report leaked some several hundred mishandlings.

One would hope they had learned some lessons, but apparently not, for they are at it again. They have picked the most expensive way to house and control these refugees from West Papua on Christmas Island. So far away, out of sight, maybe out of mind. Do Indonesian authorities have access? They are smoke-screening already. 'No injustice in West Papua' said one Indonesian foreign affairs man.

Bring them here to Australia. Treat them humanely. Give them bridging visas with full rights. That is the way of fair and just treatment. And that is the way to restore a feature of our national character.

It may well be the first test of public authority that is arranging a security treaty. One element of that, we are told, is that we Australians will never interfere in the internal affairs of the Indonesian Republic. Where there are massacres, Military oppression, and Environmental destruction. What happens when asylum seekers flee to our shores for help and tell us stories of brutality, oppression, and loss of freedoms that we cherish?

No. We will not be silent. We protest DIMIA's treatment of these unfortunate people. Somehow, sometime, we must call a stop to the government's mantras about rules, regulations, and manipulations, and see these people for who they are. They are asylum seekers fleeing injustice and military oppression.

Give them justice and peace. And give us back our national dignity.

The rally began with a striking traditional West Papuan hunting dance. Other speakers included Senator Lyn Allison (Australian Democrats), Robbie Thorpe (Director, Aboriginal

Genocide Litigation Unit), Pamela Curr (Asylum Seeker Resource Centre), Senator Kerry Nettle (Australian Greens) and Jimmy Cocking (West Papua and Forest Activist).

The group made representations to meet with Australian Immigration (DIMIA) officials and sent the following communiqué to Senator Amanda Vanstone, the minister responsible for overseeing Immigration. Dated Tuesday, January 24, 2006, it read:

'Today we gather outside the Department of Immigration in Melbourne to present our considerations for the forty-three asylum seekers from West Papua currently being held in detention on Christmas Island.

We are conscious that yesterday a high-level delegation from the Indonesian Ministry of Defence met with Australian government personnel in Canberra, including the Attorney-General Phillip Ruddock, with a different set of considerations.

We ask the Federal Government of Australia to assess the refugee claims of the West Papuan asylum seekers in accordance with the Refugee Convention and without political consideration. We ask that these people be released into the community with bridging visas with full rights while their claims are being assessed.

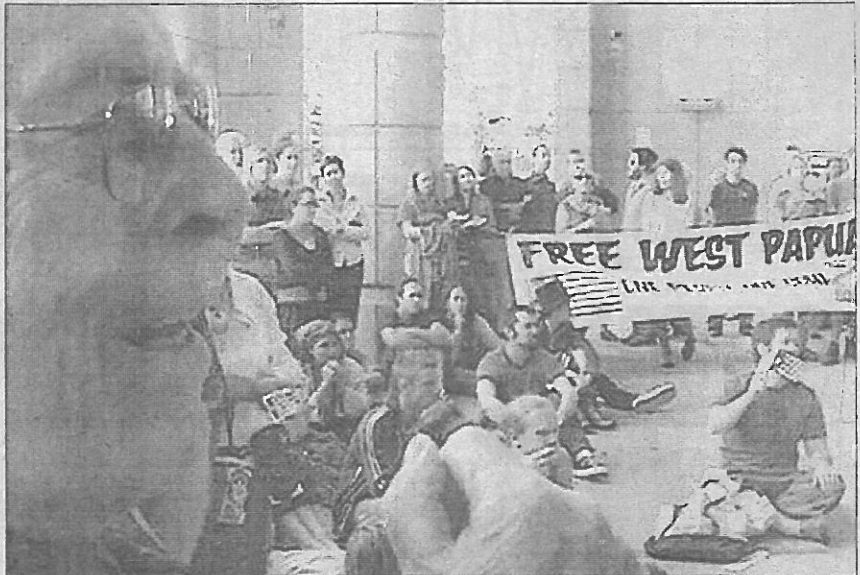
We ask that as a matter of urgency the West Papuans are brought to the Australian mainland where they can be supported by their community and where they can have access to legal assistance in making their claim. We remind the government that the cost of keeping a detainee on Christmas Island is \$800 per person per day.

In a communiqué on Saturday 21 January 2006, a spokesperson for the West Papua National Coalition for Liberation in Jayapura stressed that the core of the problem in West Papua is political, and that certain consequences, such as military brutality and social instability derive from this. He said they were now many Indonesian military in Papua 'dressed for war', and asked 'who announced war in West Papua?'

We therefore have serious concerns for the security of the 43 students on Christmas Island. The island is but a short plane ride from Jakarta and the population is peppered with the remains of the Indonesian casino culture.

We ask that your security forces on Christmas Island are alert to the proximity of Christmas Island to Java, and to the high number of Malay- and Bahasa-speaking locals who may be employed knowingly or unknowingly by Indonesian intelligence operatives'.

It was signed 'Supporters of the Asylum seekers from West Papua'



Bishop Hilton Deakin in rally mode. ■ Photo: TOMMY LATUPEIRISSA.

## Asylum seekers 'forced' to attack Christians

A GROUP of West Timorese from Indonesia is seeking asylum in Australia.

They claim to have been pressured into carrying out attacks against Christians in their village.

Mustafa Ridwan, 23, a Muslim from Alor in West Timor said he and his brothers Supardi, 39, and Mahmud, 30 and a nephew, 18, fled Indonesia because they did not want to be enlisted in anti-Christian campaigns.

"Our situation was not safe so we came to Australia," he said from Christmas Island where the group has been held for almost three months.

He said the group bought a boat in Sulawesi and went back to West Timor to pick up wife and two kids of one

brother and then sailed for Australia.

They bring to 50, the number of people who have fled Indonesia to Australia in the past three months. 43 West Papuans arrived there last week. All are detained on Christmas Island.

Mr Ridwan said the seven arrived in Western Australia on November 3.

West Timor, under Indonesian rule since 1949 has one of the poorest populations in Indonesia, Jason MacLeod, a spokesman for the Australian West Papua Association said.

The Refugee Review Tribunal last week heard an appeal against the family's rejection.

## Papuans tell of beatings, torture

BY ANDRA JACKSON and TOM ALLARD  
*The Age*

**P**APUAN asylum seekers being held on Christmas Island have relayed graphic and disturbing accounts of beatings and torture by the Indonesian military, during interviews with Immigration officers over the past week.

A senior Immigration source said the 43 asylum seekers, who arrived by boat in Australia 12 days ago, had a "very strong case" to be granted refugee status, possibly within weeks.

"Some of what has come out of the interviews has been absolutely heart-wrenching," the source said.

The testimony included accounts of vicious beatings while in prison and attacks on villages and livestock in retaliation for the Papuans agitating for independence.

While rights groups and academics have recently released reports detailing tens of thousands of deaths and even genocide, Indonesia says abuses no longer occur in West Papua.

Immigration Minister Amanda Vanstone yesterday said Indonesian demands for the asylum seekers to be handed back would not stop or influence their processing.



Melanesian students perform a Hunting Dance during the rally. ■ Photo-Tommy Latupeirissa.

spokesman Keith Locke urged last week.

Criticising Australia for "imprisoning" the Papuans at a remote location, he said New Zealand should help out the way it did with some of the refugees stranded on the Tampa.

But Senator Vanstone said Australia had "a very long history of offering protection herself to those people who need it and I see no need for that to change".

The Tampa incident involved a much larger number of people and it took longer to process them because many did not have any documents identifying them, she said.

"This is not such a large number and I would hope we could have an initial decision within two to four weeks from now, well within the 90 days."

Independent lawyers are going to Christmas Island this week to advise on the asylum seekers' claims, she said.

Greens senator Kerry Nettle visited Christmas Island at the weekend and met some of the Papuans.

She called for them to be moved to the mainland, where there is an established West Papuan community. Senator Vanstone said it was not always possible in a larger community to keep women and children out of detention straight way.

# Fiji Daily Post

## EDITORIAL COMMENT

### We must protest

THE fact of being a Pacific Islander implicates all of us – irrespective of our ethnicity or religion – in the welfare of our fellows irrespective of their ethnicity or religion, or proximity. With this obligation in mind, it is difficult for us to stand by and simply let our Papuan brothers and sisters in the western half of the island of New Guinea suffer at the hands of their government. Their Indonesian oppressors no doubt have a grand plan in mind for their eastern-most indigenous Melanesian territory, but for a variety of reasons, they are getting away with murder.

Human rights groups have been slow to extract a global protest about what is transpiring in West Papua – partly due to the difficulty of getting information out of there – but we now know the West Papuans generally have suffered from Indonesian-inflicted sporadic and systematic violence, suppression of their local culture, and mass resettlement of Indonesian people of non-Melanesian origins and people belonging to the Muslim faith – a policy that is designed to desiccate Papuan culture and tradition.

The Papuan people have suffered these grave deprivations of their basic human rights, particularly through the operation of military and police armed forces outside of their proper mandate and authority. Papuans are subjected to an ongoing programme of killings, from individuals to mass murders. Women have been raped; children abducted, beaten and forced into Muslimisation programmes in return for their family sustenance and other rewards. Other Papuans are suffering just because they have raised a flag, or demonstrated in favour of the desire to have basic freedoms.

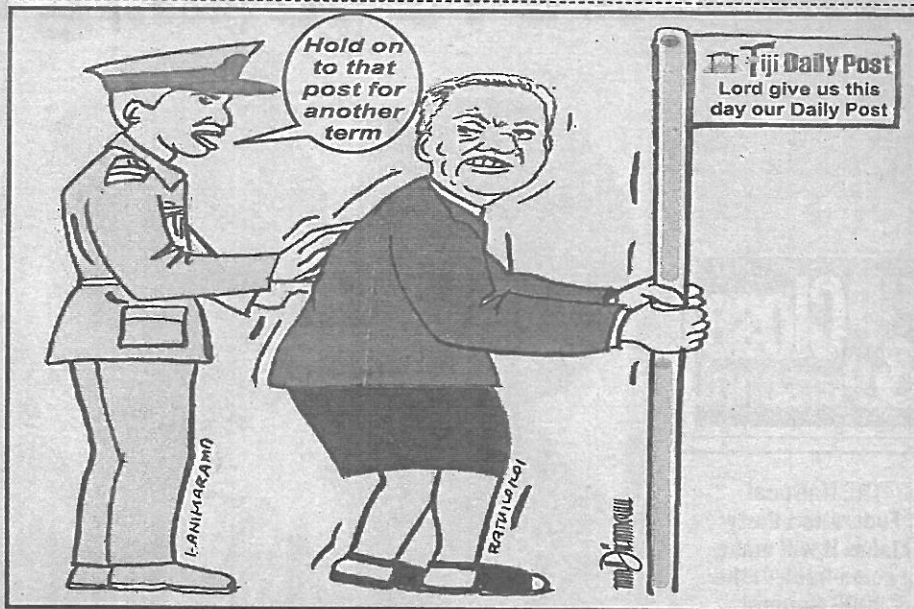
These facts have come to light through four decades of refugee interviews, and critical studies and reports that describe the long list of sufferings these people have endured over that time. Affirmation of these experiences was given recently by a high-ranking member of the Indonesian armed forces.

No one disputes the right of the government of Indonesia to uphold its territorial integrity until the UN reopens the case of West Papua. But Jakarta must, in the meantime, be held to account for the disgraceful manner in which it is treating the Papuan people, our fellow Melanesians and Pacific Islanders.

The West Papuan desire is to have the fundamental right to self determination where they can freely exercise their capacity to vote as they wish in relation to their Indonesian rulers – something they were deprived of when annexed by Jakarta back in the 1960s. Until that happens, the rest of the world and especially we in the Pacific must maintain our concern for them as one of the human family's least protected, least developed, and most vulnerable tribal groups.

While Indonesia may not want outside interference with their internal affairs, human rights supersedes that concern. No nation on earth can expect assistance following the ill-effects of natural disasters without an accompanying concern for the ill-effects of politically engineered disasters. Humans are not to be bystanders ignoring the violation of basic human rights of others – rights that we all treasure and too often take for granted. If we do, we cease to be human to that degree.

## CARTOON



## FROM OUR READERS

### Terrorist calls by FLP

Sir

THE verbal diarrhoea emanating from the likes of the Fiji Labour Party on issues like the Soqosoqo Duavata ni Lewenivanua Party being terrorists, that it practices racism via racial policies and that it is continually at loggerheads with the military needs to be clarified.

The FLP should first study its own backyard, and let "he without sin cast the first stone". Those who live in glass houses should tread carefully particularly when a certain member of the opposition, namely one Amjat Ali hijacked an airplane not too long ago. That act by far is solid definition of raw terrorism.

If SDL members are terrorists, a definition coupled with proof is warranted. Take economic terrorism for instance. This as we know it is lobbying abroad for causes that go against the grain of economic development. The Leader of the Opposition does this on a regular basis.

Terrorism can also be based on ones faith and belief. However, we adhere to the principle that one is innocent until proven guilty and if FLP has proof that members of SDL are terrorists, the next best thing is to report the matter to the proper authorities. In this case, it is the police. We urge FLP to take the first step. Failing that, FLP should stop playing God.

As far as Affirmative Action and racial policies are concerned, the SDL-led Government continues its attempt to bridge the great chasm between Fijians and other ethnic communities.

One will note that prior to the introduction of the Blue print, the majority of businesses were owned by

Fiji-Indians. The commercial landscape is a little more level at the moment.

Primarily, the SDL party aims to successfully ensure equal power sharing amongst all races in Fiji.

We are the government. It is not just the Fijians, the SDL, or the opposition sitting across the House. Bear in mind that the Opposition is paid by taxpayers and that taxpayers are everybody else, as each of us contribute to taxes in one form or another.

Where the SDL has been branded racist in its attempt to protect natural resources, this could not be further from the truth. Land for example, is being conserved so that it is not exploited.

The 'Vola ni Kawa Bula' (VKB), is another example, that exists not for racial reasons but to identify those associated with a parcel of land or title.

The protection of land through the Native Land Trust Board (NLTB), and Fijians through the VKB, is not racist. It is in fact an act of conservation.

Anybody who is against that supports genocide of Fijians in their own land.

Isoa Raduva  
Vatua subdivision  
Narere

### Cartoon debate

Sir,

A group of 12 writers have put their names to a statement in French weekly newspaper Charlie Hebdo warning against Islamic "totalitarianism". Here is the text in full:

After having overcome fascism, Nazism, and Stalinism, the world now faces a new global totalitarian threat: Islamism.

We, writers, journalists, intellectuals, call for resistance to religious

totalitarianism and for the promotion of freedom, equal opportunity and secular values for all.

Recent events, prompted by the publication of drawings of Mohammad in European newspapers, have revealed the necessity of the struggle for these universal values.

This struggle will not be won by arms, but in the ideological field.

It is not a clash of civilisations nor an antagonism between West and East that we are witnessing, but a global struggle that confronts democrats and theocrats.

Like all totalitarian ideologies, Islamism is nurtured by fear and frustration. Preachers of hatred play on these feelings to build the forces with which they can impose a world where liberty is crushed and inequality reigns.

But we say this, loud and clear: nothing, not even despair, justifies choosing darkness, totalitarianism and hatred. Islamism is a reactionary ideology that kills equality, freedom and secularism wherever it is present.

Its victory can only lead to a world of injustice and domination: men over women, fundamentalists over others.

On the contrary, we must ensure access to universal rights for the oppressed or those discriminated against.

We reject the "cultural relativism" which implies an acceptance that men and women of Muslim culture are deprived of the right to equality, freedom and secularism in the name of the respect for certain cultures and traditions.

We refuse to renounce our critical spirit out of fear of being accused of "Islamophobia", a wretched concept that confuses criticism of Islam as a religion and stigmatisation

of those who believe in it.

We defend the universality of the freedom of expression, so that a critical spirit can exist in every continent, towards each and every maltreatment and dogma.

We appeal to democrats and free spirits in every country that our century may be one of light and not dark.

Signed by:  
Ayaan Hirsi Ali,  
Chahla Chahla,  
Caroline Fourest,  
Bernard-Henri Levy,  
Irshad Manji,  
Mehdi Mozaffari,  
Maryam Namazie,  
Taslima Nasreen,  
Salman Rushdie,  
Antoine Sfeir,  
Philippe Val,  
Ibn Warraq.

### Misunderstood statement

Sir,

I WISH to take you back and correct an earlier letter misunderstood by many, including overseas based scribes.

The spokesman of the ruling Soqosoqo Duavata ni Lewenivanua party, Jale Baba had challenged a Brisbane-based scribe to take the opportunity to visit rural areas that remain without proper piped water, poor road infrastructure, electricity amongst other basic necessities.

I believe what was intended by that remark was a comparison between the number of settlements and villages in rural areas that have improved infrastructure since SDL took over the reigns of the country, to the escalating numbers that existed prior to SDL's term in power.

I do believe the figures speak for themselves.

Thank you.

Madhu Latchmi  
Nabua.

# Claims of student massacre

By ROB TAYLOR in Jakarta (AAP)

HUMAN rights watchdogs in Papua are investigating reports that up to 16 students have been murdered by Indonesian security forces. The reports come amid rising tensions between Indonesia and Australia, after Canberra granted protection visas to 42 Papuan asylum seekers who claim genocide by Indonesian security forces.

Australian Democrats Senator Natasha Stott Despoja said today she had information from activists that 16 bodies had been found in forests near the scene of recent student riots in which four police and an Indonesian air force officer were stoned to death by protesters.

Indonesia has bolstered paramilitary police numbers in the separatist-minded province since the riots against a US-owned gold mine, raising fears of more bloodshed as security forces launch reprisals.

Senator Stott Despoja said her source, who she would not name, claimed 16 university students had been found dead in the forests near Cendrawasih University in Abepura, on the outskirts of the provincial capital Jayapura.

"The report's sources are reliable but are not prepared to be named to protect their own safety," she said.

But Aloysius Renuaren, the Papua director of the Indonesian human rights watchdog Elsham, said the deaths were only rumours sweeping through the province.

"It's what people are saying," he said. "But we are still investigating it and so far we haven't found or concluded anything."

He said the reports were also being investigated by other smaller rights groups. While still only rumours, the reports highlight the soaring tensions in Papua, which Indonesian won control of in 1969 following a UN-backed vote of "free choice" widely seen as rigged.

Many analysts fear Australia's decision to give temporary protection visas to the 42 Papuans, separatist leaders among them; will only stoke independence ambitions in the province.

## Aust defaced in Papuan visa protest

THE Australian Embassy's coat of arms in Jakarta has been defaced with paint and abusive graffiti during rallies against the Federal Government's decision to grant 42 Papuans visas.

Protests over the visas were reported in three Indonesian cities on Monday, including two separate rallies involving several hundred chanting protesters who targeted the Australian embassy in Jakarta.

Protesters waved placards with slogans including "Go to hell Australia, the devil needs you there!"

The protesters also threw paint at the embassy's coat of arms and scrawled graffiti saying "Get out of Indonesia immediately" and "Australia f....."

"Don't turn Papua into a second East

Timor," one of the demonstrators was broadcast as saying on ElShinta radio, referring to the former Indonesian territory that became an independent nation in 2002.

The visa incident is the worst to hit relations since 1999 when Australia led peacekeeping troops into East Timor, then an Indonesian province, to halt violence by pro-Jakarta militias following the territory's vote for independence.

The Indonesian Government has been criticised by The Jakarta Post over the row with Australia.

"Instead of calming the situation, Jakarta has aggravated it. A diplomatic spat turned into a political crisis between two nations who really have nothing to quarrel about," the paper says.

## Indonesian ambassador stays away

INDONESIA'S ambassador to Australia, Hamzah Thayeb, has travelled to Vanuatu after briefing President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono on Australia's granting of temporary protection visas to 42 Papuans.

It remains unclear when the ambassador will return to Australia.

Indonesia's embassy in Canberra also covers Vanuatu, which has had strained relations with Indonesia since West Papuan separatists were allowed to open a representative office there in 2003.

A spokesman for President Yudhoyono said he had given no directives to the ambassador but had mostly listened to his explanation of events in Canberra.

Meanwhile there was a small demonstration outside the Australian embassy in Jakarta by members of an Islamic Youth Movement.

Twenty-five activists from a nationalist group calling themselves Truth sang and chanted outside the embassy's recently fortified and bomb-proofed front gates.

"Just only to stop your intervention. We can solve our problem for our brother - please stop it," demonstrators said.



The asylum seekers say Indonesian military is committing genocide in Papua. (ABC TV)

## Indonesia protests visa decision

THE Indonesian government says it is surprised, disappointed and deeply deplores Australia's decision to grant temporary protection visas to 42 asylum seekers from the Indonesian province of Papua.

In a strongly worded statement Indonesia says it regards the group as no more than economic migrants, and regrets that what it believes are false claims of persecution have been accepted by Australia.

The statement says the decision has negated the spirit of bilateral cooperation over illegal migrants, which has been

painstakingly fostered in the past several years.

Indonesia's Foreign Affairs department has also lodged a formal protest with Australia's Ambassador in Jakarta.

The Indonesian Foreign Ministry says the decision shows elements in Australia support the separatist movement in Papua.

But Foreign Affairs Minister Alexander Downer says the decision to grant visas does not undermine Australia's position that the province must remain part of Indonesia. Mr Downer says Australian immigration officials made the ruling and he has spoken to Indonesian authorities.

## To Britain's relief, the French are dumber

LONDON (*The Australian*) - Britain and France have experienced long periods of conflict and rivalry, but now victory in one area can be claimed: Britons are more intelligent on average than the French.

A new European league of IQ scores has ranked the British in eighth place, well above the French, who are 19th. According to Richard Lynn of the University of Ulster, Britons have an average IQ of 100. The French scored 94.

Top of the table were the Germans, with an IQ of 107. The Brits were also beaten by the Dutch, Poles, Swedes, Italians, Austrians and Swiss.

Professor Lynn, who caused controversy last year by claiming that men were more intelligent than women by about five IQ points on average, said that populations in the colder, more challenging environments of northern Europe had developed larger brains than those in warmer climates in the south.

The average brain size in northern and central Europe is 1320cc and in southeast Europe it is 1312cc.

"The early human beings in northerly areas had to survive during cold winters when there were no plant foods and they were forced to hunt big game," he said.

"The main environmental influence on IQ is diet, and people in southeast Europe would have had less of the proteins, minerals and vitamins provided by meat that are essential for brain development."

He added that differences in intelligence across Britain could be attributed to bright people moving to London over hundreds of years. Adults in England and Wales have an IQ of 100.5, higher than Ireland and Scotland, both with 97.

People living in London and the southeast average 102. "Once in the capital they have settled and reared children, and these children have inherited their high intelligence and transmitted it to further generations."

The pattern is repeated in other countries, Professor Lynn claimed. In France, IQ scores in Paris were much higher than those in rural areas.

Professor Lynn has spent three decades analysing thousands of test results to scrutinise the role of evolution in IQ. He has published his findings in a new book. Britons excel in another area of Professor Lynn's research. He found university students had, at 109, the second-highest undergraduate IQs in the world, beaten only by their US counterparts on 110.

## Looking 4 Spareparts?

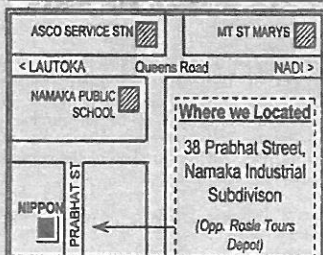


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# Indonesia pressing for Aust support on Papua



West Papuan refugees, Herman Wanggal (L) and Jacob Rumbiak in Canberra, Thursday, May 11, 2006. The government will process all illegal arrivals offshore after upsetting Indonesia with its decision to grant temporary protection visas to 42 Papuan asylum seekers. Photo: AAP Image.



Native Papuans in traditional warfare attire

MEDFORD, (Reuters) - Australia's leader should sign a document recognising Jakarta's rule over West Papua province to resolve a dispute over Canberra's decision to grant 42 Papuans asylum, a senior Indonesia official said on Saturday.

Leaders of Australia and Indonesia, facing their most serious disruption of relations since bloodshed over East Timor independence in 1999, plan to meet soon to discuss the dispute, which caused Jakarta to recall its ambassador.

Indonesia says Australia's decision to grant refugee status to the Papuans in March gave support to Papua's independence movement. But differences over the issue were narrowing between Jakarta and Canberra, said Foreign Minister Hassan Wirajuda.

He said Indonesia's ambassador to Australia should return before Australian Prime Minister, John Howard, and Indonesian President, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono meet, though he declined to say when and where the talks would be held.

"The sooner the better," he said.

Papuan independence activists have campaigned for more than 30 years to split from Indonesia, while a low-level rebellion has simmered and human rights groups accuse Indonesia of widespread abuses there.

The 42 Papuans who sought asylum said they feared becoming victims of genocide, though Jakarta denies those charges. The row has sparked protests near the Australian Embassy in Jakarta and calls for an Indonesian boycott of Australian goods.

Wirajuda said Australia and Indonesia had been discussing a new security pact that would replace one torn up amid the bloody turmoil of East Timor seven years ago and formalise ties that had been steadily warming before the impasse.

The new pact has been expected to guarantee Australia will not interfere in Indonesian affairs, a move aimed at reassuring the mainly Muslim but officially secular archipelago that Australia will not support provincial independence movements.

Wirajuda said a draft security framework was being worked on to include a clause expressing Australia's commitment to Indonesian territorial integrity. Howard has recently said he supported Indonesian sovereignty over Papua.

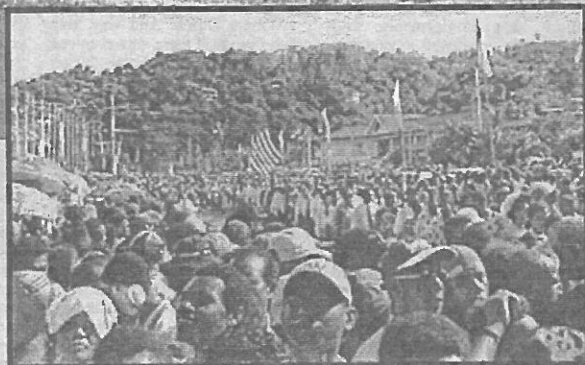
"To put it in as a clause in the new agreement would be better in many ways," he told Reuters in an interview in Massachusetts, where he spoke to graduating students at the Fletcher School at Tufts University.

The last security deal was ripped up when Australia led a U.N.-backed force into East Timor to quell violence by pro-Jakarta militias after a 1999 vote for independence.

Wirajuda met Australian counterpart Alexander Downer on Monday to discuss the matter. Afterward, Downer stopped short of saying bilateral relations were back on track.



TOP: West Papua's asylum seekers after landing in Australia in March this year. The 42 asylum seekers have been granted refugee status by the Federal government, which has created a stir from the Indonesian authorities. INSET: West Papuans have been lobbying for independence for over a decade now and have sought the attention of other international countries.



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# Crisis time in Indonesia

□ DR ROBERT WOLFGRAMM

**I**N 1983, the Indonesian authorities arrested and detained anthropologist Arnold Ap and his colleague Eduard Mofu.

Ap had promoted Papuan cultural expression, championed the revival of traditional Papuan music, and, closer to the time of his arrest, criticized Indonesian policies on the radio program that he hosted. Ap's arrest resulted in immediate protests and calls for his release. Neither Ap nor Mofu were released, however. In April 1984, para-commandos killed the two men after tricking them into leaving their place of detention on the premise that they would be taken to Papua New Guinea. The Indonesian government claimed that the pair had been killed while trying to escape.

In early 1984, Indonesian forces responded to a pro-independence uprising in Jayapura by launching a major retaliatory campaign called Operation Clean-up. Elite para-commandos flown in to direct the operation arrested and shot to death several West Papuans suspected of OPM involvement.

By the end of 1984, the government had set up 24 major transmigration sites or compounds, appropriating 700,000 hectares of land from its traditional owners.

By the middle of 1986, 27,726 families had been moved into West Papua, a total of nearly 140,000 people since the end of the 1970s. Transmigration schemes dispossessed West Papuans of their land and required them to move into the transmigration sites, along with the "transmigrants," people from elsewhere in Indonesia who had been settled on the compounds. Within the transmigration compounds, the government required that Papuans be dispersed, with one Papuan family to every nine Javanese families, thus ensuring that the Papuans would become a minority in each area.

The West Papuans neither shared in the economic benefits of the new settlements nor held significant posts in the administrative staff of the transmigration program.

In May 1985, Indonesian troops burned down 200 village houses in the Enarotali region of the Central Highlands in retaliation for the killing of two migrants from Indonesia killed in an OPM operation.

In June and July of that year, the military killed 517 villagers in several highland villages in reprisal for a confrontation between OPM and Indonesian troops that resulted in the death of more than thirty Indonesian soldiers. A Dutch doctor interviewed by a Dutch TV company called the health situation of the West Papuans "alarming." He described high rates of yaws, measles, whooping cough, small- and large-scale epidemics, and sexually transmitted diseases that impaired the fertility of

the Dani people who resided in the fertile Baliem Valley, a major transmigration site. A Dutch missionary working in the mountain regions told the Dutch TV journalists that infant mortality among the West Papuans in that region was above 60 per cent, and the average life expectancy only 30 or 31 years.

Mortality and morbidity rates among Papuans escalated in the later 1990s as rates of HIV infection rose dramatically. In 2002, 20.4 people per 100,000 were infected by HIV in Papua, compared to only 0.42 cases per 100,000 in the rest of Indonesia. Approximately 40 per cent of Indonesia's HIV and AIDS cases were located in Papua, a province that is home to less than one percent of Indonesia's population.

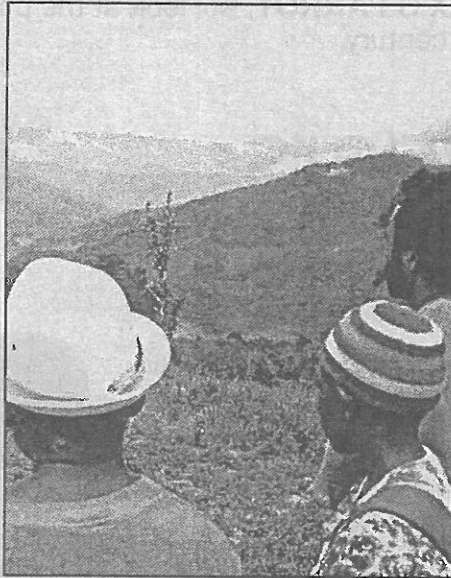
Papuans also appear to contract HIV at rates significantly higher than those of the Indonesian migrant community residing in Papua. Several recent studies suggest that this stark discrepancy in infection rates is due to government-sponsored AIDS educational interventions that systematically discriminate against ethnic Papuans. AIDS prevention efforts by the Papuan Department of Health, which is staffed almost exclusively by ethnic Indonesians, have targeted the professional brothel and bar worker industries that employ Indonesian migrants. Papuan sex workers, who generally work for low pay in unregulated and high-risk environments outside of formal brothels and bars, are rarely provided with any information about HIV/AIDS prevention or condom use.

General AIDS awareness and safe sex campaigns in Papua are sporadic and have focused on urban areas, where they do not reach the majority of Papuans, who live in rural and semi-urban regions.

On October 6, 1994, Indonesian soldiers arrested four brothers, all civilians—Sebastianus Kwalik, Romulus Kwalik, Marios Kwalik, and Hosca Kwalik—and detained them in a shipping container at a military post in Koperapoka, near Timika, accusing them of being involved with Kelly Kwalik and the OPM. Testimony from the first and second wives of Sebastianus Kwalik indicates that all four were kept in the container and tortured from October 6 until approximately November 15, 1994. On that day, both wives went to visit the men, but were told that their husband and his brothers had gone on a military operation and were not in the container anymore. The women never saw the men again.

Three days after the Kwalik brothers were arrested, five other individuals were arrested and detained by the military. The two women in the group, Yuliana Magal (age 50), the adoptive mother of Kelly Kwalik, and Yosepha Alomang (age 37), were kept in a flooded water closet, separate from the men.

The closet was filled up to their knees with water and



What's of our land, ask these West Papuans.

human feces. Yuliana Magal was interrogated and tortured for many hours despite the fact that she did not understand Indonesian and the interrogators did not speak her language. The two women were held in the water closet for one month.

Christmas day, 1994, brought more demonstrations and more military violence in Waa village, near PT Freeport's mining center in Tembagapura.

That morning, Indonesian troops fired on members of the Amungme community and other highland Papuans, who had gathered peacefully to raise the Morning Star flag.

When community member Naranabalan Angaibak was injured in the attack, Indonesian military placed a noose around his neck and dragged him from the back of a car to the army checkpoint near Tembagapura. Soldiers then suspended Mr. Angaibak's dead body from the ankles on a post across from the checkpoint and harassed Papuan villagers by asking them whose pig or dog Mr. Angaibak was.

The military reportedly disposed of Mr. Angaibak's body by throwing it into a ravine along the road between Tembagapura and Timika, as they previously had disposed of other indigenous Papuans killed by the Indonesian military.

Another incident occurred after Easter mass in April 1995. After a scuffle between a civilian, Piet Tebay, and a soldier who had ordered him to report to the security station in Timika, the soldier stabbed Tebay with Tebay's own arrow. Although Tebay eventually recovered, the stabbing incited the crowd to protest the military presence in the community. During the protest, another scuffle between a soldier and a civilian occurred. This time, the soldier shot the civilian two times, killing him.

On May 31, 1995, an army patrol near Hoca was out looking for the OPM leader and came across a group of such refugees, who were gathered together for a prayer meeting. When they

saw the soldiers, the people began to run.

The military opened fire, killing eleven people, including the pastor and four children (ages five, six, fourteen, and fifteen). Reports of abuses in one village included killings, torture, rape, intimidation, destruction of goods and property, and restricted access to foodstuffs and other vital supplies.

During 1990s demonstrations where Papuans raised the Morning Star flag started to take place all over the country. Between July 1 and 7, 1998, such flag-raising occurred in Jayapura, Biak, Wamena, Manokwari and Sorong.

On July 6, 1998, at 5am local police and Indonesian military opened fire on a group of Papuans at a flag-raising in Biak. The soldiers then forced dozens of men and women to lie on their backs and marched on their stomachs.

Eight people were killed immediately, three were disappeared, and thirty-seven injured. Later, women's mutilated bodies washed up on the coast of Biak. Allegedly, women were taken out to sea on Indonesian navy ships, where they were raped, sexually mutilated and thrown overboard.

Over the next two years, the military responded to flag-raising demonstrations (whether peaceful or not) with armed violence. One of the bloodiest of these responses occurred in Wamena on October 6, 2000.

Early in the morning, a joint security force composed of special crowd-control police and Brimob (an acronym for Mobile Brigade) and Strategic Reserve troops raided at least seven community centers in Wamena. These forces fired warning shots, chainsawed flagpoles, and tore up or confiscated the Morning Star flag. By 8am more than fifty people had been rounded up, beaten, and taken to police headquarters.

At least one man had been killed by gunfire, and ten had been wounded. Within hours, a large crowd

had gathered across the river in Wouma. The crowd began to protest, burning and looting shops as they went. Troops arrived and began to open fire from a nearby migrant residential community. The crowd then attacked the migrants' homes, killing twenty-four non-Papuans. At least seven Papuans were also killed by gunfire.

In the aftermath, twenty-two Papuans were arrested for the killings, although almost all were political leaders who were not connected with the violence in Wouma. Some were threatened with torture if they did not confess. In the end, arrested youth group (Saigas Papua) members were sentenced to between six and ten months of imprisonment; the remaining political leaders were sentenced to between four and four and a half years of imprisonment.

Two months after the violence in Wamena, the police station in Abepura was attacked and two police officers were killed. The police immediately sent out teams to round up suspects. What followed, however, was a methodical revenge attack in which all highlanders were targets. The police and the Brimob first swept through the Ninmin Dormitory in Abepura, near the capital of Jayapura, which housed students from the highlands of West Papua, forcing the occupants outside and beating them.

Twenty-three people from that dormitory—fourteen boys and nine girls, including one girl who was only seven years old—were taken into police custody and severely beaten. Next, a group of police swept through four residential neighborhoods where Papuans, mostly from the Wamena area of the highlands, lived. Within 24 hours, three highland students were killed and one hundred individuals had been detained in police headquarters.

The violence did not end there, however. En route to the police headquarters and once there, all of those detained were beaten with rifle butts, wooden blocks, or iron bars. Some were burned with cigarettes, forced to lick the blood off the floor, and whipped with electric cables; one man was ordered to cut and eat his own hair. The detainees were constantly insulted with racist, derogatory language.

All in all, one report estimated that between 1998 and 2000, there were 80 cases of summary execution and 500 cases of arbitrary detention and torture of West Papuans by the Indonesian government or military in West Papua.

In its 2001 report on Indonesia, the U.S. Department of State noted:

Security forces were responsible for numerous instances of, at times indiscriminate, shooting of civilians, torture, rape, beatings and other abuse, and arbitrary detention in Papua.

Security forces in Papua assaulted, tortured, and killed persons during search operations for members of

militant groups. The security forces inconsistently enforced a no tolerance policy against flying the Papuan flag, tearing down and destroying flags and flag poles, and killing eight persons, and beating others who tried to raise or protect the flag.

The State Department's 2002 report affirmed that Indonesian security forces have continued this pattern of repression and violence. Indonesian soldiers and police committed assaults, rapes, and supported militias, 'frequently and arbitrarily detained persons without warrants, charges or court proceedings,' and regularly 'tortured detainees.'

In November 2001, Theys Eluay, a prominent pro-independence leader in West Papua, was assassinated. He was kidnapped and then apparently tortured to death. This death came two weeks after Indonesia promulgated Law No. 21/2001 on Special Autonomy for the Province of Papua, which both the pro-independence advocates and the police force in Papua rejected.

On August 31, 2002, gunmen ambushed a group of foreign schoolteachers employed by Freeport-McMoran who were returning from an afternoon picnic near the Freeport mine in Tembagapura. The attackers fired more than 130 bullets, killing two Americans and an Indonesian and injuring twelve others.

According to U.S. officials, evidence indicates that members of the Indonesian army were responsible for the murders and may have sought to frame members of the Free Papua Movement in order to convince the State Department to add the group to the department's terrorist list or, alternatively, to induce Freeport to increase its payments to the military.

In the past few months, twelve battalions (almost ten thousand soldiers) have been moved into place in West Papua by President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono as his government accepted billions of dollars of aid to assist his people after last December's tsunami catastrophe.

What is the president up to? Last Monday reports emerged of the killing of yet another 'suspected' rebel leader. This Yale Report is part of a growing body of work aimed at letting the world know that many are watching the developing situation in West Papua and to ensure that genocide does not occur there.

The report also has a place in re-presenting the West Papuan case to the UN for a just and timely reconsideration of their plight. The EU has already reopened its examination of the West Papua cause and the United States is contemplating the same.

Their combined repudiation of the value and legitimacy of the UN's role in West Papua in 1969's 'act of free choice' will, if forthcoming, provide further ground for a UN reopening and righting of its abysmal record in this case.

EDITORIAL COMMENT

# The sad story of East Timor and West Papua

WHEN he ascended to power as East Timor's president, Jose Xanana Gusmao carried with him the hopes and dreams of West Papuans who had lent their voices and support to the cause of Timor Leste's freedom from Indonesian rule. They had reason to expect support from the new nation for their claims for sovereignty.

Imagine their bitter disappointment when Gusmao and Foreign Minister Jose Ramos Horta and the new Alkatiri government let it be known they did not support parallel West Papuan claims for independence from Jakarta. Instead they declared that Timor Leste's foreign policy would support the Indonesian government's offer of greater provincial sovereignty for West Papua rather than the former Dutch territory's independence.

Having obtained their freedom, they now wanted to limit it in respect to the oppressed neighbours from one of their principal regional support bases. The histories and colonial insertions of East Timor and West Papua into Indonesia, Ramos Horta and Gusmao argue, were entirely different and could not be compared.

Critics have not been impressed by this fallacious and ill-informed argument. Neither were traditional priests who support the West Papuan cause - they promptly invoked their gods to curse the new East Timorese administration for what they rightly regarded as an act of treachery.

Indeed, if anything, the West Papuan claim for independence could be even stronger if allowed to surface again on the agenda of the UN. But, of course, there is little likelihood of that happening while powerful national and corporate interests conspired to maintain the status-quo in West Papua.

Meanwhile, the little project called the government of Timor Leste has collapsed into self-destruction. For the past month, Timorese citizens and politicians have either had or been hit each other's throats with conflictual claims and locked in a bitter power struggle for control of the government. Gusmao, Horta and Alkatiri have all threatened resignation at one time or other as their supporters threaten to unleash more violence on rivals. More houses have been torched since Alkatiri stepped down earlier this week and there is no sign of things being settled amicably between the three players.

West Papuans may be gloating about the fate of the East Timorese, and few would underestimate their deep sense of betrayal by similar people they see as fellow strugglers against colonial oppression. But politics is a dirty game that corrupts many a principled leadership. In the cut-throat world of international diplomacy friends can overnight become enemies.

It may seem to many, given the disintegration that has befallen East Timor, that it should not have been given its independence and therein lurks an object lesson for West Papuan claims. But that would, of course, place the value of order above that of justice - and that will not do in this age of human rights and indigenous rights.

Whatever the divergent futures for East Timor and West Papua, one hopes they can meet the aspirations of their respective peoples and that their common Indonesian heritage will assist rather than obstruct in obtaining those ends. One also hopes that they can again find mutual support for each other's struggles.

CARTOON

LABOUR PAINS



FROM OUR READERS

New news please

Sir,  
I AM getting tired of reading about the Labour pains story that should be Party. Could the media please give the Labour Party some down time. Give them about two months then tell us what is going on in their camp. That way it will be fresh news.  
In the meantime please bring us something new. Tell us who is divorcing who and who is having an affair in Hollywood.

Reading about the Labour Party is 'hurting me and I think its Labour Pains.

Allen Lockington,  
Lautoka.

RKS omen

Sir,  
PERCHED on a hill at Delainakakai is a majestic but incomplete landmark.  
Current boarders born in 1991, the year the Chapel foundation was laid are now in Form Four. Sincere efforts by many to complete the same have received lukewarm support from those that purportedly hold Lodoni dear.

For this the Oracle warns "... suppose if one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him saying - this fellow began to build and was not able to finish..."  
First it was the

definitory fire, now a land owning unit invasion. What next?

Vula Halafaki,  
Suva.

Outside the Box syndrome

Sir,  
The ongoing "shit chat" (FDY 286) between your Editorial and the Honourable leader of the Opposition needs some spicing so I will add my piece.

My first encounter with Mick was in the mid eighties when he was elected as President and I as the Honourable Treasurer of the infamous Nadi Airport Club. For some of us this 'watering hole' was a second home making our

wives very mad.  
Whenever Mick walks in, my friend Nathan 'many kitchens' All knew we would get drunk for free. Funny though was the nickname "politicking" we coined without his knowledge because of his Alliance Party connections then.

Alas, then in our widest dream did Nathan and I think that one day he was destined to be the leader of the Opposition. A big man with a big heart and a soft spot for the ordinary person on the street.

I am no politician but it would be vain to assume that Mick's conciliatory strategy makes him a 'softie'. It is early days yet to be doom saying and soon and very soon either squeals of delight or sparks would fly, so mark my word Mr Editor.

With his strong-headed charismatic personality and gift of the gab he may become yet the best Opposition leader yet. Written on the inside door of a public convenience I once used "Diplomacy is the art of telling someone to go to hell in such a way that he looks forward to taking the trip".

As for you my good friend Mick, the Oracle has this to say "... The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks..." A belated congratulation on your appointment Mr Politicking.

Vula Halafaki,  
Suva.

## Tomb reveals ancient woven flowers

LUXOR, Egypt - Archaeologists hoped the first tomb discovered in the Valley of the Kings in 80 years would hold the mummy of King Tut's mother. They opened the last of eight sarcophagi on Wednesday, revealing no mummies but finding something almost as valuable: embalming materials and ancient woven flowers.

Hushed researchers craned their necks and media scuffled inside the stiflingly hot underground stone chamber as Egyptian antiquities chief Zahi Hawass slowly cracked open the coffin's lid - for what scientists believe is the first time in more than 3,000 years. But instead of a mummy, an archaeologist had expected, the coffin revealed a tangle of fabric and rusty-colored dehydrated flowers woven together in laurels that looked likely to crumble to dust if touched.

"I prayed to find a mummy, but when I saw this, I said it's better - it's really beautiful," said Nadia Lokma, chief

curator of the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. The flowers were likely the remains of garlands, often entwined with gold strips, that ancient Egyptian royals wore around their shoulders in both life and death, she said.

"It's very rare - there's nothing like it in any museum. We've seen things like it in drawings, but we've never seen this before in real life - it's magnificent," Lokma said. Dug deep into white rock, the tomb is known only by the acronym KV63 - the 63rd tomb found in the Valley, a desert region near the southern city of Luxor used as a burial ground for pharaohs, queens and nobles between 1500 and 1000 B.C.

The burial chamber was discovered accidentally last year by US archaeologists working on the neighbouring tomb of Amenemhat, a late 19th Dynasty pharaoh. It was the first uncovered since the famed tomb of King Tutankhamun in 1922.

# Report shows Indonesian military treats PNG as its own

**A**N explosive report in today's issue of *The Bulletin* has vindicated a field investigation into the activities of the Indonesian military (TNI) in the Papua New Guinea - West Papuan border region.

This investigation was undertaken by fieldworkers from May 14 to June 14 2006 on behalf of the Free West Papua campaign in Australia. The work was funded exclusively by grassroots donations from Australia.

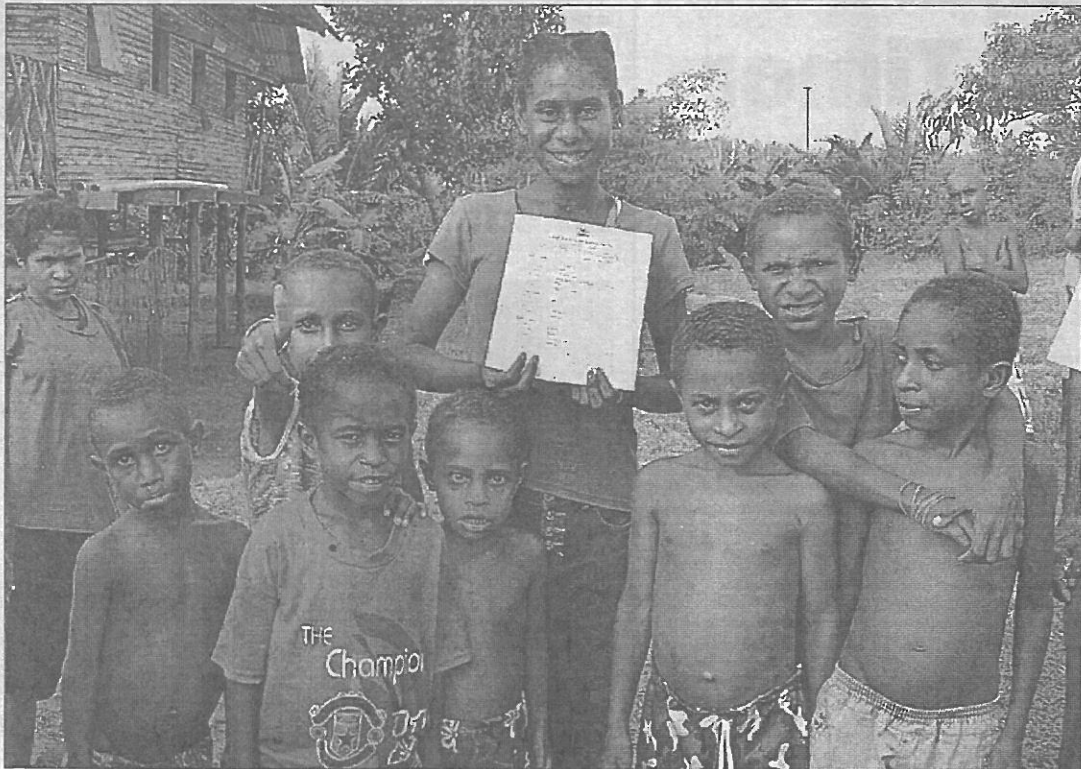
"For too long the security and human rights issues present along the border of the Papua Niugini and West Papua have been ignored at the strategic peril of countries in the region," said Nick Chesterfield, the compiler of the report, and International Officer with the Free West Papua Campaign.

"In abandoning those who fought so hard for our freedom in World War 2, we have missed out on a genuine opportunity to stop displacement of our neighbours, and to genuinely combat terrorism on our doorstep," explained Chesterfield.

Chesterfield continued: "The TNI's network of terror has now spread deep within Papua Niugini and has made its presence felt within isolated communities along the border, who are living in fear of an imminent invasion. We uncovered evidence that a massive ground offensive is in the final stages of planning, and there are questions that need to be answered publicly by many people in the region to prevent this from happening."

In recent weeks, several incidents have occurred on the border which have exacerbated the tension felt by local communities. This includes the shootings by PNGDF of fisherman suspected to be undercover TNI, in circumstances that are still unclear, amid claims of a PNG Government ordered cover-up. There have also been widespread allegations of illegal crossings by Kostrad and Kopassus personnel.

Also just this morning, the Indonesian Consul-General in Vanimo, Harodojo, refused to stop to go through passport control at the Wutung border crossing. According to a police officer



A handout photo of Doris Korodi, a 14-year-old West Papuan refugee, displays her newly-issued Papua New Guinea birth certificate surrounded by other refugee children at the border town of Klunga in Papua New Guinea, November, 2005. The issue of PNG birth certificates over the last two weeks to more than 1700 children whose families crossed from the Indonesian province has been welcomed by UN officials who say it will help protect their rights. (AAP Image/UNHCR, Fadela Novak)

who spoke with Mr Chesterfield, "He said he was late for an important military meeting in Jayapura, and was too busy to wait for immigration. He just ignored our orders, walked across the no man's land, hopped in a taxi and drove away. But what can we do?"

"Before PNG was independent, the Indonesian military government already had a long standing plan to annex PNG. The TNI have gradually come to control the economy of PNG with the help of corrupt figures in the PNG government," said Jacob Rumbiak, Foreign Affairs Co-ordinator with the West Papua National Authority.

According to Rumbiak, the TNI "are using the pretext of the demonstrations on March 16 to hunt to their deaths students throughout the border region, terrorising local people. This is

being done to prevent West Papuan people speaking out about military abuses and the genuine aspirations for their self-determination."

"Now these latest incidents on the border are showing that PNG people also are waking up to the TNI's plans to destroy the territorial integrity and dignity of PNG"

Central to this is the appointment of Major General Zamroni of Kopassus as the new military commander of West Papua. When contacted by the Free West Papua Campaign today, Dr Clinton Fernandes, author of *Reluctant Indonesians: the future of West Papua and*

senior lecturer in strategic studies at UNSW, said "Major General Zamroni's appointment shows the Indonesian military's thorough disregard for the wishes of the civilian administration."

"Zamroni was once deputy commander of Kopassus under the murderous Lieutenant-General Prabowo. Extra-judicial murder and other forms of state terror were and remain a speciality of this organisation. Australians should keep this in mind when they hear their government's preference for closer links with the Indonesian military," explained Fernandes.

Photographic and witness

evidence was also found that shows clearly that Timbul Silaen, the infamous and indicted former police commander of West Papua (and the police chief during the carnage of 1999 in East Timor), is present in West Papua and overseeing militia activity.

"Questions need to be asked about what these people are doing in West Papua at the time where there of a militia build-up, and a renewed presence across West Papua of the very 'rogue elements' that have such a brutal history," Chesterfield said.

SOURCE:

www.freewestpapua.com



Pro-independence militiamen in traditional headdress stand with their primitive weapons in the Ballem Valley, in West Papua, also known as Irian Jaya province, Indonesia, in this July 30, 2000 photo. (AP Photo/Djalal, File)

## EDITORIAL COMMENT

## As with Papuans, so with Samoans - the Pacific Island Forum must grow

PACIFIC indigenous peoples are scattered through many nation-states - some of these states are members of the Pacific Islands Forum, some are not. It is through international gatherings such as the Pacific Island Forum, that Pacific peoples can transcend their various social contexts and unite proudly in terms of celebrating a common heritage with common interests and goals.

Coming together as one, around a common table, or on a common shared mat is as Pacific as it gets. It is an integral part of the Pacific way. Colonial empires that divide Pacific peoples from each other should learn that point and profit by it. As we have noted before, there is nothing meritorious, nothing to be gained by keeping Papuans and American Samoans from joining the rest of the Pacific.

As we have argued here before, these peoples should be offered the right to associate with their Pacific cousins, and even the symbolic importance of some kind of membership in the Forum. To be sure, Americans see the Samoans in terms of their national rather than ethno-racial identity. But that cannot obscure the fact that the eastern-most islands of Samoa are Samoan - people who deserve to have a place in any gathering of Pacific peoples.

The United States, like Indonesia, will need to be more pro-active in this regard. While we understand that issues of national sovereignty take precedence over questions of ethno-racial solidarity, the United States must be more open in granting concessions to the Pacific peoples (Carolinas, Palau, Hawaiians etc) under their rule - people whose ties to the rest of the Pacific are ethno-racial, cultural, religious, and historical, as well as geographical. Indeed, Washington should encourage ties of this nature. Building good and effective diplomacy and international relations in the Pacific will be the result of a more open policy toward a more permissive Pacific solidarity.

It is ironic that the case of keeping American Samoa out of the Forum is being argued by the same US that helped to unite Germans who were once divided by an 'iron curtain'. As we noted here before, no border could break down the fact that people in West Germany and East Germany were German. No wall could obscure the fact that West Berliners and East Berliners were Berliners - as one American president was given to concede (before he was cruelly assassinated).

The situation in the Pacific is somewhat similar with respect to the American Samoans. It is important therefore to acknowledge the fact that Pacific peoples transcend man-made colonial borders. We all belong together in a common forum, a shared meeting house. This reality should be seen by the United States.

The reality of a larger, growing Pacific community would also work to encourage the achievement of regional goals such as greater security and economic cooperation that post-9/11 globalisation is demanding. Like the EU, a wider Pacific Forum that integrates everyone into some kind of membership should be seen as a natural organic development that will bring positive benefits to all.

## CARTOON



## FROM OUR READERS

### Allowing bail?

Sir,

I WAS amused to read High Court Judge Nazhat Shameem's reasoning that because the Suva Prison Awaiting Block is unfit for human habitation, bail is allowed pursuant to section 25(1) of the Constitution and future bail applications will be entertained by the High Court.

I am amused because when I practiced law in Fiji from 1993-1999, during which time Ms Shameem was the Director of Public Prosecutions then appointed a Judge.

I am not aware of a single instance in which she or her office ever instigated or supported any bail application made by defence counsel due to the unhygienic conditions of the Korovou prisons.

As a matter of fact, Ms Shameem and her officers would have strenuously objected to any bail application made and argue that section 25(1) would not be in and of itself sufficient ground to allow bail.

It is a well known fact, that prison conditions in other parts of the world, such as in Asia, Eastern Europe, Middle East, India & Pakistan are worse off than in Fiji and in contravention of UN Conventions, yet the court's in those countries do not follow her reasoning.

Her reasoning in effect is dictating social justice policy through the courts, which is judicial intrusion in the political arena and bastardising the concept of separation of powers.

The prisoners bail class action was easy to predict because of her comments when she said, that any bail application will be

entertained by the High Court based on the grounds mentioned above.

Is Judge Shameem and her colleagues who advocate this line reasoning willing to accept full responsibility should these accused persons recommit further offences whilst on bail or abscond from the jurisdiction and further burden the police and prison authorities?

Living in inhuman conditions I respectively submit is only one of the issues Judge Shameem has to consider before granting bail, yet relying solely on section 25(1) of the Constitution is wholly unsafe and should be appealed by the DPP to get some sensible direction from the Fiji Court of Appeal because it is wholly unacceptable for Judicial Officers to use their judicial office to further their political or personal agendas.

Tui Savu,  
Townsville QLD,  
Australia.

### Cranky Franky

Sir,

IT seems that a lot of people tend to suffer from 'foot in mouth' disease in Fiji. And I thought typhoid was on an outbreak! Seems I was wrong! In this case the leader of the 'men in green' with guns, Frank Baimarama is the latest victim.

Cranky Franky seems to have forgotten who his employer is and he is against the very people who are paying for his bread and tea; the Laisenia Qarase-led Government. That is just complete outrageous, not to mention stupid! But he has 'balls' I must admit to be

doing whatever it is he's trying to accomplish.

In my opinion, Franky should resign from his post as the military boss and join politics. He has definitely shown that with his recent and past outburst against the Government. So why not Franky? Resign and join the 'big boys' in the running of our beloved country. Maybe his input will bring a difference and his inclusion is the secret 'recipe' that the present government has been missing. Think about your options Franky and give everyone a break, especially the Government who have been doing an excellent job.

As for Mr Qarase and his men, I salute you Sirs and Madams who are doing an excellent task in controlling our economy and Fiji as a nation. So Mr Qarase and team, ignore the 'barking dogs' outside the fence for they will very soon be out of breath!

God bless Fiji!

Emily Qoliwaqa,  
Suva.

### Naqelevu's legacy

Sir,

MAY we please express our appreciations to Sireli Naqelevu for doing so well in South Africa at the Currie Cup, whilst playing for Western Province (FDP 19/10). We hope that he will get a contract to ply his trade with the "Stormers" in the 2007 Super 14 season, and we are positive that he will strategically up his performance another notch, and become a truly accomplished Fijian rugby player, whether recognised by the FRU or not.

We must also thank his

family for supporting him all the way.

Personally, I could envision that his dad, Sireli Naqelevu would have excelled internationally during his rugby playing days, if he had the opportunity that his son, Sireli is getting today. Sireli too was an accomplished player for RKB in 1961 especially, as well as with the Fiji Army throughout his life (may he rest in peace) and for the Fiji Reps, as we used to call them.

To Sireli, we say, thank you for continuing the Naqelevu legacy in the sporting field and especially in the game of rugby. We continue to wish you well in your rugby career and we hope this turn of career will be a booster (if not already) for you and your family.

As well, may you continue to don the Digicel Fiji sevens sweater in 2007.

A. Naiguleva,  
Tamavua



All letters to Fiji Daily Post should be short

and accurate with the writer's name and phone number. Letters should be a maximum of 200 words. The Editor reserves the right to edit or withhold letters. Letters with no phone contact will not be printed.

## EDITORIAL COMMENT

## Down-siding Australia's new attitude to West Papua

BOTH the United States and Australia have moved to strengthen ties with Indonesia. Each has reassured the Jakarta government that it is on track in its reform programme – a reform programme that aims, among other things, to continue to clean up its troublesome military.

The Indonesian military has been responsible for some of the worst human rights abuses in the nation. East Timor, West Papua, Maluku, and Aceh are just some hotspots in recent decades that have felt the brunt of an Indonesian military on a long leash.

For both Australia and the US, a strong, but reforming, and democratically-oriented, Indonesia is the best means of holding the rein on the tentacles of terror that have been unleashed in Bali and West Papua of late. While Australia has pledged to respect Indonesian sovereignty and to maintain a border policy that will make it more difficult for persecuted Papuans to find refuge there, the implications of this new security agreement have rightly alarmed some in the region. What the new agreement will mean for the reputation of the nation? West Papuan activist, Nick Chesterfield, notes, 'the Howard Government has squandered an unprecedented opportunity to push for overdue reform in West Papua.'

The proposed security agreement is nothing more than a cynical handshake with the Indonesian military, a recognised source of instability within our region'. Chesterfield, a spokesman for the Australia West Papuan Association, says, 'the Howard government has chosen instead to stifle legitimate voices of dissent which are calling for basic human rights including self-determination.'

Chesterfield says the Australian government has 'missed its chance to set reasonable pre-conditions in the new security treaty, such as international media access or ensuring that foreign aid is not channelled through the Indonesian military. Instead, it has used the joint security agreement to once again put short-sighted political strategy above human dignity. The Howard government talks about values and a structured narrative to history.'

This treaty should serve as an ominous warning to the Australian people about the types of values we are now exporting to the world'. Nation-to-nation relationships are necessary and necessarily compromised, but, with Chesterfield, we worry that indigenous 'original' peoples are typically again the meat in the globalisation sandwich.

## An option worth trying

OUR national leaders are trying to deliver a knock-out punch to our rebel military commander in the ring of political discourse by the time-honoured carrot-and-stick combination.

On one hand (is a carrot): the commander has been wooed to the GCC and is now invited to mediation sessions by a GCC-appointed team. On the other hand (is a stick): the police are investigating him with a view to possible sedition and theft charges laid against him and his accomplices. The rebel commander's response to the carrots has been to slap them away and demean the offering and the genuine goodwill behind the offer.

His response to the sticks has been to dismiss them away with a list of impossible demands and to pull out a bigger stick to wave back at government and the nation as a whole. In light of this, we suggest that while the commander is in New Zealand he be delivered to a psychiatric couch for a comprehensive and authoritative mental assessment. If he passes, good and well – we'll be the first to apologise.

If he fails, the result of the test could form the basis of a court plea that could give him a chance to escape future imprisonment by reason of insanity - which may be his only hope, given that he is an opponent of amnesty.

## CARTOON



## FROM OUR READERS

### Qurukutu's cheap talk

Sir,

I HAVE been following your weekly column titled 'Under the Microscope' from Qurukutu and they are often laced with innuendoes gossip and cheap talk with a lot of misinformation and distortion.

The *Fiji Daily Post*, commandeered and run by a first cousin of the Prime Minister is now becoming the official mouth piece of the SDL-led Government using the newspaper to help camouflage the growing nepotism that exists in Government which is fast turning the current administration into being a haven of crooks and self-centred individuals.

The recently concluded High Court case and the impending one on Peter Foster has now surely become a laughing stock for the whole world to see what is now the true colours of some of our representatives in Parliament.

My first suggestion to the newspaper is be true to the apt title of its column and perhaps proceed on a microscopic overview of how the *Fiji Daily Post* is now the family abode or hide away of yours truly, a son or, the yam expert from Kaumikula and a daughter and son-in-law combination at the expense of taxpayers' money.

This is nepotism of the highest order and perhaps in its most glaring example fully supported by fourth floor Government Buildings, which some years ago via their cronies at the Public Service Commission issued a directive that all departments must fully subscribe and advertise all official Government messages in the *Post* to ensure its continued existence in particular for the family quartet.

Then following this, I will further suggest that they take their microscope and if I may add their cutting edge to the Prime Ministers Office and therein similarly look closer

at the flouting of regulations and indeed the existence of perhaps at higher level and degree of nepotism compared to the Daily Post.

Some years ago, a Deputy Secretary recruited her own daughter into the staff establishment of the office following deregulation of intake procedures from the PSC. This did not go down well with his boss who later decided not to interfere since they were all from the same origin I suppose.

However, some months down the line the boss saw the dream of his life and his gift from heaven who was then employed in another ministry which according to prevailing conditions of delegation of powers, a transfer can only be effected through the trade-off of an existing staff member.

This therefore became the neat and best opportunity to alleviate what is perhaps the greatest degree of nepotism in the highest office in the land. Well what happened to that bed of roses is best forgotten, but I would suggest to columnists to have a serious look at other areas in the civil service and assist get rid of corruption, nepotism and affairs at very high places.

If that is still not enough to fill perhaps their daily columns up until the last issue of the year, then these would be other good ones for a try. What about the love affair between two Chief Executive Officers in Government who once attended a seminar in Hawaii under the guise of being husband and wife when he was in attendance in his capacity as Chairman of a leading statutory body. Their more recent government paid trip through taxpayers' money was to Australia again as Mr and Mrs.

And if that is not enough, what about the case of a mixed blood millionaire who gave \$1.5 million to the SDL for its 2006 General Election campaign and who is now getting restless for not being given the correct bargain in as far as a payback agreement is concerned?

What about the 45 sets of rugby jerseys bought under the Taiwan Grant in the Prime Ministers Office during the lead up to the election and delivered to perhaps all corners of the group including the outlying islands?

What about the outboard motors, brush cutters and cooking pots that is often stocked up at the office as a lure or bait to win votes?

Also the countless number of church leaders who benefited in cash or kind from this grant so that they will at all times, reserve their loyalty to the SDL-led Government. The Tamavua Village and Nadera Church Community Halls are best examples.

Definitely, there is more out there than what meets the eye that your columnists and observers will, I believe better expose for public scrutiny and consumption.

Now let me finally turn to the events particularly after May 19 2000 which many will find amusing and of course news to them. At around 2pm that day, George Speight now into the fourth hour of the parliamentary siege and of course with the non appearance of the real perpetrator of the civilian coups decided without any further options to issue three decrees following advice from his legal practitioners of what the appropriate way forward was for the coup plotters.

At the time, the commander was away in Europe on official business. The first of these three decrees was the Fiji Constitution Revocation Decree 2000. Interim Government Decree No. 1.

This decree was dated Friday 19th May 2000 and issued under Fiji Gazette of that day published as the gazette said at the top of the page, by authority of the Interim Government.

In it, the now established coup maker said, in exercise of powers vested in me as Taukei Civilian Takeover Leader, I hereby make the following: 1. This decree may

be cited as the Constitution of the Fiji Islands 1997 Constitution Revocation Decree 2000.

The RFMF knows and is of the view that your column is really based on some files now gathering dust at the Fijian Affairs Board in Suva or what your sources like Ratu Epeli Kanaimawi are spreading misinformation as a means to discredit the nation saving role which the army took upon itself in 2000.

There is no denying this fact as now engraved in our proud history. It will rest there for time immemorial becoming a fitting testimony to the men and 'women of the security forces who toiled day and night and for some paying the ultimate sacrifice to ensure the security of all people of Fiji'.

Also on the same breath, George Speight issued Decree No 2 titled Republic of Fiji Military Forces – Appointment. In this decree, again signing off as Taukei Civilian Takeover Leader, he appointed Colonel Ulaiasi Vatu and Colonel Filipo Tarakinikini as commander and chief of staff respectively of the Republic of Fiji Military Forces.

The third Decree again issued immediately after the first two was titled the Constitution Abrogation – Interim Government and Finances Decree 2000.

This particular piece of legislation enacted by Decree and therefore was forceful as law at the time had among other provisions legitimised the illegal takeover and the appointment of an Executive Council headed by Ratu Timoci Silatolu as interim Prime Minister and furthers the "legal abrogation" of the 1997 Constitution.

Also it was an indication of how those in SDL party and now in Government felt it was time the commander should be removed because they feared that he will forever champion truth and justice to save this country.

*Iliesa Cewanivalagi,  
Davullevu.*

# Multi-cultural Indonesia

**DOCTOR** Robert Wolfgramm, a sociologist from Monash University, Australia does not seem run out of idea to question the reintegration of the Province of Papua (West Papua) into the Unitary State of Indonesia.

His recent article published in the *Fiji Daily Post* clearly undermines the legal status of the Act of Free Choice (AFC), which was conducted in 1969 with the full participation of the UN.

He has previously done similar things by exploiting the issue of religious and ethnic diversity in Indonesia.

Dr Wolfgramm has previously warned Pacific Islands countries to be alert with the presence of Indonesia in Fiji.

He specifically reminded them of the danger of an Indonesia's influence in the Pacific.

He even suggested separating the Province of Papua based on his insufficient knowledge and understanding of ethnic and religious diversity in Indonesia.

He has failed to understand the obvious fact that West Papuans are not the only ethnic Melaneseans and Christians in Indonesia.

For Indonesia has 11 million ethnic Melaneseans, and only two millions of them live in West Papua, and the rest live peacefully in other parts of Indonesia, such as Ambon, Flores, Maluku, Kai, West Timor, and Tanimbar. Moreover,

his perception that the West Papuans are the only Christians in Indonesia is also incorrect.

Although Indonesia has the largest Muslim population in the world, it is not an Islamic state, and the country is called the Republic of Indonesia.

Being a multicultural society, Indonesia's national constitution of 1945 and the state ideology, Pancasila, clearly grants the right of every individual to choose and practice his or her religion. Accordingly, Indonesians are not only Muslims, but also Hindus, Christians and Buddhists.

If Dr Wolfgramm has done proper research on ethnic and religious diversity in Indonesia, I am sure he will have a broader knowledge and balance view on Indonesia.

However, Dr Wolfgramm does not seem to have any interest to do that, because his motive is simply to exploit the issue of ethnicity and religious in Indonesia with a view of separating the territory from Indonesia.

In his recent article, Dr Wolfgramm has again introduced new idea to question and undermine the Act of Free Choice (AFC) conducted in 1969. While he does not fully understand the consequences of the United Nations endorsement over the result of the AFC, he also claims that the AFC is the only legal basis to reintegrate the territory into Indonesia.

Therefore, he conve-



Kalimantan ... a purity touch of nature tropical.

niently suggests revisiting it and correcting it, which is completely wrong and out of question.

Dr Wolfgramm has again failed to comprehend the core of the issue, and tended to ignore the other important legal document, which clearly supported Indonesia's claim to reintegrate the territory, namely the 1949 agreements signed between the Republic of Indonesia and the Netherlands. The agreement clearly recognised the claim of Indonesia over the whole former Netherlands colony, including West Papua.

Indonesia's claim was

based on the principle of "usi possidentis", in which the successor state would inherit the whole territorial boundary of a colony. If the Netherlands had not reneged on the original agreements, a final solution would have been reached on a purely bilateral basis in 1950, and the involvement of UN was no longer needed.

Unfortunately, the Netherlands failed to meet her obligations, forcing

Indonesia to bring the case to UN.

The UNGA resolution 1752 authorised the implementation of the AFC in 1969, and the people of West Papua had chosen to join the Republic of Indonesia.

The result of the AFC was later endorsed by the UNGA resolution No 2504 without any dissent.

To conclude the claim of Indonesia over West Papua is solid.

It was clearly recognised in the agreement signed between Indonesia with the Netherlands and the UN had endorsed the reintegration of the territory into Indonesia.

Therefore, from Indonesia perspective the status of the Province of Papua is final.

Any attempt to challenge the reintegration of the territory by creating a new form of referendum is wrong and out of question.



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## EDITORIAL COMMENT

# We can't complain

WITH the closing of the electoral rolls today, complaints about them being deficiently updated are surely farfetched. The public has been on notice for three months now, that it has a duty to bring its records up to date, to register and to check that information is correctly entered. Compare that three month period with the time given to the public in Australia of just two to three weeks maximum. Indeed, legislation now before the Australian parliament is intended to end the "grace" period of enrolment and registration checks altogether. The system proposed there is that the rolls will be considered closed the day an election is announced by a Prime Minister.

The effect, it is argued, will be to disenfranchise possibly half a million potential voters at any given poll. The people of Fiji can be grateful that we have so long a grace period in which to bring our enrolments up to date. Few democracies in the world have that luxury. Our Opposition should stop the unwarranted fear-mongering that encourages the public to imagine (wrongly) that a grand conspiracy exists in government to disenfranchise eligible Labour Party voters. As we noted recently, the onus to vote lies not with the Government or the Electoral office, it is our civic responsibility as citizens of this fine country to get enrolled and to vote. If we don't we can hardly complain about getting a future government we didn't participate in shaping in some way.

## Australia's Papuan stand deserves support

THE increasing tension between Indonesia and Australia is their business. But the matter over which their relations are strained is our business – it is a Pacific and human rights issue. In short, the desperate plight of the indigenous people of West Papua has long been scrutinised by human rights activists in the churches, by the international media, and by various NGOs and aid organisations. Now it is becoming an international and intergovernmental issue which must change the character of relationships between Indonesia and the rest of the world including, we hope, the wider Pacific Forum nations such as Fiji. Indonesia has attempted to pretend that the province of Papua is no one else's business. It has successfully sold the UN its right to govern the Melanesian people there. Since the 1960s, the line that it is in their best interests to submit to Jakarta's rule has been toed internationally.

But time is running out on this forty-five year-old farce; the pendulum of justice is swinging back slowly in the direction of the Papuan people. The granting of temporary protection visas to 42 Melanesians who fled to Australia's shores with tales of the effects of Indonesian rule is evidence of that. The refugees' account of what is happening to them and their families in their homeland fits too well with other fragmentary accounts that have emerged from the security-sealed territory. They cannot be dismissed out of hand. Australia should be supported for taking a principled stand in relation to the brave Papuan boat people and all that they have risked.

## CARTOON



## FROM OUR READERS

### The chocolate factory

Sir

AS A Fijian boy growing up, I was taught never to question authority, not to confront and that silence was synonymous with respect.

Today that silence and respect has cost us, the majority of respectful, honest and decent Fijians dearly in our inability to speak out against injustice, abuse and violence.

We suffer in and with our silence. We mask our objections with false humility. Our silence has been the means by which our Fijian political leaders and chief in their "pack mentality" and in their minority have enjoyed and maintained the chocolate factory.

In their arrogance and vanity, they truly believe that in spite of their corruption, dishonesty, lack of morals and principles they can stand as being worthy of running and leading this country. They believe that politics is the vehicle to maintain their power and status. And that we will be silent.

Our silence is usually broken when short term communal objectives masquerading as "nationalism" and "taukei" is falsely threatened then we pack and plot and the outcomes are usually destructive and dangerous. Note the significant involvement of the kai viti in all the coups.

Fijians packed, partied and plotted at Parliament House in 2000 while other Fijians were held hostage. It is selective hypocrisy to then preach about nationalism!

As much as we question the motives for the army today, I do not forget that

they broke a peace deal in the absence of the police, again led by a Fijian at the time.

Where was the collective churches condemnation during that shameful time of our political history? Sadly, many of my people did not collectively group and voice our protests at the coup and its supporters. We were all silent and allowed the army to shoulder the responsibility of addressing the shameful and destructive deeds of a group of Fijians.

Today we posture and offer up analysis and post mortems of the reasons for the coup of which now I am heartily sick of. Many of us lost our livelihood, family members and crops and yet we continue to sweat the small and petty stuff and ignore the gaping holes of our own inadequacies.

The unforgivable result of the coups by a greedy and power hungry group is that my dignity as a Fijian suffered by the belief of many that my race is lazy, violent, corruptible and utterly lacking in principles and morals.

And I have colluded with that belief with my silence and have continued to do so by following the pack and voting for the Fijian party system.

No more, not now, not ever – fool me once, fool me; fool me twice, fool you.

I will not allow the fruits of my education; great work ethic and reputation of the majority of wonderful, honest and law abiding Fijians be enjoyed and manipulated by the lazy, arrogance and dishonesty found in the Fijian party system today.

As Fijians, we forgive very easily but never forget. Resentment simmers until the promise of short term monetary gain, and then we're fair game.

Sadly, history indicates that we can collectively address issues that affect us as a group when the goals are for short term monetary gain with the minimum of hard work. I remember someone saying that Fijians were born retired. As first this was funny but now with the benefit of hindsight, it is hurtful.

As long as nationalism remains the buzz word for us Fijians we are again at risk of sacrificing peace, democracy and stability.

We need to unite in our belief that we are truly decent and loving people, in for the long term and for the betterment of all races in Fiji. For that we need to be humble. Any government that advocates separation and division is shortsighted and vain.

My opportunity in addressing this inequality and injustice will come in May when I will not vote for those with a history and record of dishonesty, division and corruption.

Fijians, who without conscience (and without other means of survival) view politics as the chocolate factory and remain in government through the party system, are synonymous with a rotten tree. We need to give it a good shake.

Josefa Naudre,  
Suva.

### Agitative cartoon

Sir

THE reprinting of the cartoon published in an Australian newspaper in the *Fiji Daily Post* (4/4/06) is very much deplorable and condemnable.

Although the artist who had created the original cartoon stated that it was not intended to depict the

Indonesia president, but common sense would come to imagine that it really would.

While deeply regretting the cartoon, the President was concerned by the improper and humiliating manner, it was presented. He considered the cartoon agitative and destructive and did not wish to see the continuation of the cartoon war, which would not help to find the solution of the problem but would rather create a new one.

FX Bambang Guruno  
Ambassador of  
Indonesia.

### Double standard army

Sir

THE RFMF has been blatantly promoting their "Truth and Justice" campaign which they are undertaking in villages and settlements around the country, although this function was never in their area of responsibility.

The army claims that the truth of the events of 2000 must come out.

However, in the same breath they are fighting tooth and nail to prevent the disclosure of the military board of inquiry's findings into the 2000 coup which was applied by Timoci Silatolu and granted by the High Court.

Where is the truth and justice being preached by the army?

These double standards being continuously displayed by the commander and the military shows the high level of confusion which exists at the army camp in Nabua.

God have mercy on our nation!

Elina Bera,  
Davulevu Housing.

## EDITORIAL COMMENT

## How to recognise a friend

CHINA is proving to be a great friend of the Pacific. Its benefits are not just theoretical, but tangible. Prime Minister Qarase stressed the 'powerful and vital force' of China's presence in the world, but he could also have emphasised its peaceful character.

Among the world's great nations, nothing stands out more than the pacific nature of quasi-communist China as measured against the belligerent character of the American state. One nation has rarely engaged in extending its power through warfare and domination, while the other persistently whips itself up against lesser nations like Cuba, Vietnam, Grenada, Afghanistan, and Iraq.

China dwarfs the Pacific and casts a long shadow over its undeveloped economies. Yet its material assistance speaks volumes of its good intentions.

Meanwhile, the other world power speaks always of its good will, but there is little on the ground in terms of physical benefits.

Indeed, while dramatising the so-called threat of Chinese influence in the Pacific, the only major harm that has ever come to the Pacific has come from the United States and France and their infernal preoccupation with nuclear arms.

To boot, the French (champions of human rights, liberty, democracy and equality) are still courting colonies under another name (New Caledonia and Tahiti).

The Marshallese (formerly under American control) are wondering, meanwhile, whether they will receive justice in any American court for the damage done to their traditional ancestral islands by the nuclear testing on Bikini, Rongerik and other atolls during the decade after World War 2.

And this, after President Ronald Reagan promised them an immediate and fair settlement twenty years ago.

In those Cold War years, the future for the Pacific looked American, British and European. Now it has effectively swung in the direction of China, and India too.

Fiji is fortunate to be on good terms with both rising powers. The visit by Prime Minister Qarase to India earlier this year and now the timely visit by Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao to our shores underscore Fiji's orientation to practical and proportionate reciprocity with the world's economic giants of the future. To avoid economic stagnation, we need self-reliance (as our Prime Minister indicated to Mr Jiabao), but we could also do with all the great power advice and aid China (and India) can give us.

## CARTOON



## FROM OUR READERS

### Racial vilification guidelines

Sir,

I REFER to your editorial (DP 6/4/06) "Racial vilification" and the request in it for the Fiji Human Rights Commission (FHRC), and me in particular, to provide some guidelines about working our way through the tensions between fair criticism and racism.

I am pleased to be given the opportunity to provide my views since this matter has been troubling me also in relation specifically to two recent news reports of speeches made by the Prime Minister, Ben Padarath, as well as the letter to the Editor of the Fiji Sun by Ismail Khanda, to which you refer in your editorial.

The issue of the precise limits to free expression and opinion in elections campaigns was first brought to our attention by a complaint lodged with the police by two NGOs, FWRM and the Public Centre for Public Integrity, about the speech allegedly made by the Prime Minister, that only a Fijian Prime Minister could understand Fijian concerns.

The NGOs complaint was that the PM's remarks were an infringement of the Public Order Act provision on "inciting racial antagonism" which has a penalty of both fine and imprisonment. I should add that this matter was not reported to the FHRC by these NGOs so we were not in a position at the time to give our views.

A press interview by the National Alliance Party candidate, Ben Padarath, along the same lines, that only an indigenous person should be Fiji's Prime Minister for reasons of security, also gave rise to some concern because the public were given to

understand that this is also the view held by his political Party whose leaders were apparently present when Padarath made his comments.

However, there were no media reports of whether the NGOs who had complained to the police about the Prime Minister's remarks had laid a similar complaint about Mr Padarath.

The third item was, as you say, a letter by Ismail Khanda to the Fiji Sun on April 5th, which was the subject of your editorial, about an alleged saying in Hindi which is so disgusting, insulting and antagonistic that it does not bear repeating here.

All three statements, by the Prime Minister, by Ben Padarath and by Ismail Khanda, can be seen as objectionable and insulting. But are they unlawful? Only the police can tell us whether these statements infringe section 17 of the Public Order Act on "inciting racial antagonism" and therefore whether any of these people will be charged.

You should note that the media outlets publishing these remarks can also be held to account because a key part of section 17 (1) of the Act includes "any person who...spreads any report".

That can catch editors or publishers for spreading reports that incite racial antagonism.

The fact that they are reporting what someone else has said is not defensible under the Public Order Act even taking into consideration the saving provided in subsection 2 of the Act.

From a human rights point of view, though, I can say the following:

1. Under the Bill of Rights provisions of the Constitution, free expression and opinion are limited by 'hate speech'. Hate speech is different

from objectionable speech. Hate speech is that which encourages or allows the practice of institutionalised discrimination.

2. However, objectionable speeches made by policy makers and leaders (including political candidates) carry more weight and tend to have a greater effect on people and policy than those made by ordinary citizens. When people in power make objectionable remarks these are much more likely to be defined as hate speech in the law because of their potential effect on implementation of discriminatory institutionalised policies.

3. Racial prejudice is different from racial discrimination. Racial discrimination is institutionalised racial prejudice that is when personal prejudice becomes an institutionalised policy. Discrimination in any form is not permitted by law under section 38 (2) of the Constitution.

As you can see, dear Editor, the area is rather grey and muddy. The definitions are subjective rather than objective, though the law tries to objectify the boundaries as much as possible.

Perhaps if the police do charge anyone under the Public Order Act, the courts may take the opportunity to draw the boundaries tighter still.

Anyway, the legal test may be different during election time when candidates are likely to be more forthright in expressing their prejudices in the hope of catching the fringe votes.

They may, therefore, make remarks which would not be tolerated in ordinary times.

On the other hand some may say that remarks like these should be even less acceptable during election time.

I believe people should decide for themselves (hopefully assisted by the media and police) which of the three public statements referred to above are hate speeches and which are objectionable, disgusting, but useless views of the individuals quoted, and also what to do about it, if anything.

*Shaista Shumeem  
Director  
Fiji Human Rights  
Commission*

### X-rated cartoon

Sir

I REFER to your cartoon (DP 4/4/06). The picture depicts two men in a sexual position.

While freedom of the press must be maintained at all times - do you really need to print what other publications show?

Many people read your newspaper including children, do you want our children to have access to this kind of pictures.

My daughter was shocked when she saw the picture this morning. Please maintain your integrity.

By the way to what does the cartoon refer to?

*Allen Lockington,  
Lautoka.*

### Milo bite

Sir

THE captain of Fiji Rugby 7s team is the player who advertises Milo on TV and is the same person who ends up biting an England rugby player in the HK 7s final.

I am a class seven student of Labasa Sangam and also drink a lot of Milo, now will this make me bite the students at the school.

*Pravish Nath,  
Labasa Sangam  
Primary School.*



## EDITORIAL

# Tourism-related crimes

THE death of an Australian tourist last weekend came, ironically, on the heels of Prime Minister Qarase's call for greater respect, care and hospitality toward our foreign visitors. Tourism is worth between \$500million and \$1billion a year to our economy.

It is also a sensitive industry. The threat of terrorism, high crime and political instability all create questions in the minds of potential visitors. The reputation of the country is at stake and it is all too easy to convince the fickle-spending international tourist to go and holiday elsewhere.

Like the Bahamas, Fiji has a great reputation to defend. We must get on top of crime and political uncertainty if we are to cement stable long-term growth in tourism. At the moment we are taking advantage of the loss of confidence in Bali and other South-East Asian tourist destinations.

To be sure, these places will recover from unfavourable political winds just as Fiji did after 1987 and as we are doing in the wake of 2000. There is no guarantee either that our neighbouring Pacific destinations such as PNG, Solomon and Vanuatu will always lag behind us. Tahiti has already signaled its aim for an all-out tourism push in collaboration with a major international airline.

While it is impossible to halt all crime in any country, we must remain vigilant in our determination to stamp out tourism-related crimes whether they be commercial or personal in nature. Individual tourists must also be aware that sexual behaviour that violates traditional norms and customs runs the risk of provoking unpredictable violent reactions.

Nevertheless, because of its critical importance to our national reputation and wealth, our legislators should consider giving weightier punishments to those convicted of tourism-related crimes.

Much depends on whether others think of our shores in the way Pope John Paul II once did: 'Fiji, the way the world should be' - secure, hospitable and friendly.

# One-China is good, but any China is welcome

A 'one China policy' is good sense and in the face of the unofficial visit by Taiwanese President, Chen Shui-Bian, Chinese ambassador, Zheng Xuefang, has rightly registered his government's ire. But what is Fiji to do? As a small Pacific nation, we are pressed about on all sides by big powers promising much and doing little. Talk is cheap in diplomacy and often it is international pariah-states such as Taiwan, rather than the big-talkers who come up with concrete aid when it is needed. Outsider countries such as Taiwan have nothing to lose by attending to the real material needs of the nation.

Ambassador Zheng Xuefang should be respectfully reminded that the Pacific Ocean is an open-ended lake that covers nearly half the world's surface. It is a lake whose centre is dotted with some of world's tiniest and poorest nations, but a lake at whose edges stand some of the world's most powerful and wealthiest nations: China, Japan, Australia, Russia and the United States. While all of these nations give much in assistance to the Pacific, it is Taiwan and smaller powers that often supply material assistance where and when it is most needed.

Fiji is a sovereign nation that has the right to talk to who it likes and can play host to whomever it wishes to entertain. But in doing so, it can also remain committed to a 'one China' policy that remains as contentious as it is ultimately, desirable.

## CARTOON

## FIJI TO EXPORT SHRIMPS TO US



## FROM OUR READERS

### Compensation for coup victims

THE Honourable Leader of Opposition, Mr Mahendra Pal Chaudhry has embarked on his political campaign for the General Election by repeating yet again that the victims of the May 2000 political upheaval should be compensated before reconciliation can be achieved.

He has once again played the role of judge and jury in condemning the perpetrators of the Government takeover in 2000 while trying to demand that Government compensate the victims.

The people who were involved during the coup and the multitude of people who visited and lived in the vicinity of Parliament for a period of time did so under a conviction, wrong, as it may be, that their very existence was being threatened. Their actions were pre-meditated.

The country exists under the control of a judicial system and the system will deal with these people in its own way within the framework of existing laws. Whether the prisoners are released under the Compulsory Supervision Order or extramurally, this is what the system provides. If need be then the rules of engagement must be changed to address the concerns that so many so-called "legal experts" are always raising.

If Mr Chaudhry thinks that the victims of the May 2000 event should be compensated then he should treat everybody the same. Will he maintain this stance for every victim of any event whatsoever, where somebody has been subjected to adverse action? I would venture to suggest that he meant only for those people who were victims where the perpetrators acted within intention.

Does this apply to the families of people who were killed in vehicle accidents where the driver was proved

to be under the influence of alcohol?

Mr Chaudhry should be well versed with such incidents as he was directly involved in one. The fact that he drank and drove was evidence enough that his action was predetermined and was with intention.

In my book anybody who drinks and drives and kills somebody is a murderer whose action was premeditated. Should the victim's family members in this case be also compensated in Mr Chaudhry's book?

He states with arrogance that he has served his time. Suffice to say, the same law that was applied to him was also applied to the people now being imprisoned for the 2000 event.

If the people of Muainaweni and other localities who were victims of the coup are compensated then the family members of the person that Mr Chaudhry killed and others in Fiji who were confronted with the same situation should be compensated. And so should other victims of other circumstances too many to mention. Where do we stop?

What I am trying to say here is that there is a judicial system in place competent to deal with such matters whether it is imprisonment or claims for compensation. Mr Chaudhry should let these forums deal with these matters within the law. His continuous babblings only show his level of ignorance and prejudice.

Serove Donu  
Suva.

### Unity Commission

CONGRATULATIONS to Mr Qarase and his Attorney General Mr Bale for their courage of conviction to establish an independent "Reconciliation and Unity Commission in the face of stiff opposition.

Gentlemen, you have the mandate of the people to govern this country. And I tell you this, march forward without prejudice and govern us to the best of your ability.

Critics will continue to whimper and gossip. Let them talk and express their opinion, by all means listen and pick up the worthwhile bits. The rubbish, most of which are, well you know where it should go. But never let their babbling dampen your spirits.

You have done this country proud by trying to bring about reconciliation and unity. You have given us the skeleton; it's for us the people of Fiji to provide the meat that would make the Commission work.

May God bless Fiji.

Soani Kurusiga,  
Tailevu.

### Halal Meat

Mr Gul Zaman's understanding of Halal Meat is questionable, for the following reasons:

Any animal slaughtered and declared "Halal" by a Muslim must be considered lawful; if only someone can prove otherwise.

Personal choice is not the basis of the Shariah (Islamic Law), for example AFIC, FIANZ, FML, as cited by Mr Gul Zaman.

Moreso, they are not the only certifying authority within these countries. For example, HCA Pacific and its sister organizations, certify in over 32 countries, world wide.

The onus is not on the Muslim League, even if the meat is cheap or expensive, but on the Muslim certifier, himself.

If any Muslim eats meat certified "Halal" but is not Halal this is a crime under law and sin for the Muslim certifier, as well.

The Holy Quran says animals slaughtered by the People of the Book (namely

the Jews and Christians), as of the method approved by the Muslims, and with no other name except that of Allah (God) pronounces over the slaughtering rite, is also Halal for Muslims, world wide.

The common meat slaughtered by Jews is termed as Koser and equivalent to Halal meat and Muslims can consume this. However, some Muslim scholar, especially from the Indo-Pakistan states that Koser meat can be eaten when Muslims do not find animals slaughtered by Muslims, in that area.

The best way for Mr Gul Zaman to address the question of Halal Meat is; to lodge an official protest in New Zealand and Australia so as the governments concerned bring all those involved to book, rather than protesting here in Fiji.

Similarly, the Muslims of Fiji have a right to protest and lodge official complaints, with the Government, for the animals slaughtered as "Halal" at the 9 1/2 Miles, Nasinu, Abattoir; and this does not confirm to Islamic rites.

Dr A.Q. Buksh,  
Principal Consultant  
HCA - Pacific,  
Suva.

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## EDITORIAL

# Fiji and East Papua

The welcome visit by the Prime Minister of PNG, Sir Michael Somare, to raise trade and commercial links between our two Melanesian nations gives time to pause and reflect on the significant differences that nevertheless exist between us.

By the UNDP Human Development index, Fiji rates 0.75 behind Australia at .93, but well ahead of PNG at .53.

In the last half of the last decade of the 20th century, Fiji had an annual average growth rate of 0.3 per cent, well behind Australia's 4.3 per cent, but well ahead of PNG's minus 0.1 per cent.

In terms of life expectancy, Fiji has an average approaching 70 years, a few years behind Australia's 78 years, but well ahead of PNG's 55.6 years - the lowest in the Pacific region.

In terms of infant mortality rates, Fiji has 20 deaths per 1000 live births, well above Australia's 5.5, but much better than PNG's 69.

In terms of access to clean water, Fiji and PNG are comparable with figures in the 40-50 per cent range for their respective populations.

In terms of illiteracy, Fiji has a rate of 7 per cent for its population, where PNG has an illiteracy rate of 36 per cent.

In terms of primary education enrolments, Fiji has a gross rate of 112 per cent, PNG has a low rate of 85 per cent.

In terms of telecommunication useage, Fiji has slightly more than 10 lines per 100 persons, well below Australia's figure of 52 lines, but well above PNG's 1.5 lines.

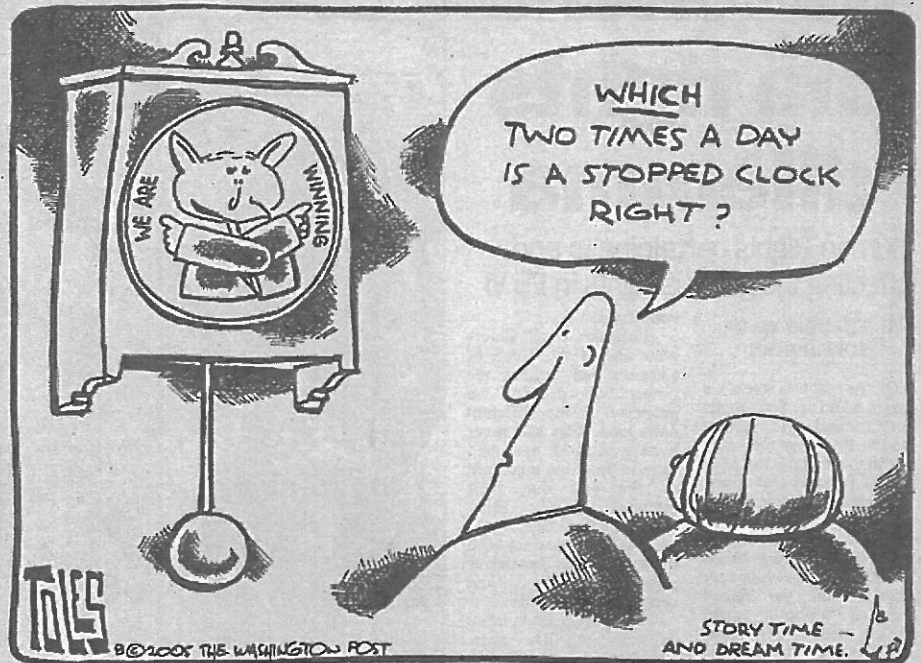
In terms of access to computers there is more parity between Fiji and PNG with about 60 computers per 1000 persons.

In some important senses then, despite the fact that PNG has more than five times the population of Fiji, it lags behind as a less developed nation on important social indicators (as measured by UNCTAD and other bodies).

Greater ties will undoubtedly help both our peoples. And Sir Michael will always be looked upon as an elder statesman of the Pacific in the way that Ratu Mara was rightly lauded.

The only glitch on his outstanding contribution to the "Pacific way" has been his uneven record on West Papua. Like a five o'clock shadow on the face of Pacific progress, this scandal of the abandonment of West Papua by PNG and the rest of the Forum nations remains a lurking stubble that needs the courage of attention and razor-sharp diplomacy - something that someone like Sir Michael is capable if he has the will.

## CARTOON



## FROM OUR READERS

## Correcting misconceptions

Sir,

MAY I on behalf of Transparency International (TI) Fiji please refute the words of Ranjit Thakur Singh (*Fiji Times* 23/08/05), in which he alleged that TI Fiji at one time proposed the setting up of an anti-corruption commission and wanted it to be headed by the Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase.

Mr Singh's letter as it concerns TI Fiji is actually not true.

I am not sure whether he was deliberately misleading you and your readers or he was just having a memory lapse when he penned that letter.

TI Fiji as a chapter of Transparency International has never proposed the formation of a commission nor has it ever approached the Prime Minister to lead any of its activities.

But if TI Fiji were to do such a thing, it would have done so strictly pursuant to and in the spirit of one of its most important guiding principles, which was applicable in all the 90 national chapters of Transparency International around the world, namely "to avoid any partisan political action or affiliation."

I happen to have a copy of the minutes of a meeting of the National Taskforce Against Corruption (NTAC) which was held on the February 26, 2004, which I attended on behalf of TI Fiji.

Mr Singh is recorded there as the Fiji Employers Federation (FEF) delegate and his contribution, which he described in his

letter, is recorded in that minute, but substantially toned down as I remember it.

Mr Singh's emotionally-charged contribution on that day accusing the incumbent Prime Minister as a corrupt person, (and he has done it again) surprised us tremendously, but we had to take it with "a pinch of salt" because he was, if he did not realise it then, officially voicing the position of FEF.

Anyway that taskforce was activated by the Director of Public Prosecution, spearheaded at the time by his Deputy, Peter Ridgway. The membership of that taskforce included, government departments as well as NGOs.

The government departments included the OAG, the Finance Ministry, the DPP (secretariat), and the police to name a few.

Others who were invited to the membership of NTAC included the RBF, the FEF, UNDP GOLD, the RRRRT, the Media Council, TI Fiji and others.

Chairing the meeting that day was Iqbal Jannif, who was there in his own private capacity, for he is a very well-known anti-corruption advocate in this country. Winston Thompson was at the time chairman of TI Fiji.

NTAC was struggling for recognition by government and as I saw it, it was campaigning to achieve this by asking the incumbent PM to give his blessing to it by naming it the PM's NTAC, so that it could achieve some of its mission within Government, primary of which, was to combat

corruption efficiently and effectively, through proper legislation within the framework of UNCAC (i.e. the UN Convention Against Corruption).

Incidentally the PM, I understand refused (perhaps verging on snubbed) NTAC's approaches and he, as we all know chose to form another taskforce comprised solely of public servants.

NTAC had to close door and disperse after that. But only time will tell whether the PM made the right decision given the options he had, vis-à-vis the one he took.

The latest OAG reports seems to show that a negative result maybe waiting at the end of the tunnel.

TI Fiji's involvement in NTAC was based on TI's fundamental principle, which is to operate by coalition-building and dialogue, and this on the basis that it is much more important in the long term to make corruption prevention and enforcement efficient and effective, then it is to unilaterally usurp the functions of the watchdog agencies of policing and prosecution.

I hope Mr Ranjit Thakur Singh, who is writing from Auckland, will see it fit to apologise to the members of Transparency International worldwide given his wild allegation against the integrity of the work of TI Fiji.

Apenisa Naigulevu  
Executive Officer,  
Transparency  
International Fiji

## Failed to pay membership

AFTER reading Naisia Cama's "View from Kaunikuila" (DP 20/08/05) and reflecting on this grossly unfair comments about democracy activists in Fiji, I enquired of the Media Council whether the *Daily Post* newspaper is a member.

I was told that it is not because it has failed to pay membership fee to the Council for some years.

The *Daily Post*, therefore, cannot be held accountable when it indulges in ridiculous and uninformed criticism of NGOs and individuals because it is not governed by the Media Council Code of Ethics and Practice, which is the code governing every reputable media outlet in Fiji.

I call on the Government of Laisenia Qarase to ensure that the paper, that is paid to sing his praises day in and day out is returned to membership of the Media Council.

Rev Akula D Yabaki,  
CCF, Suva.



All letters to *Fiji Daily Post* should be short and accurate with the writer's name and phone number. Letters should be a maximum of 200 words. The Editor reserves the right to edit or withhold letters. Letters with no phone contact will not be printed.

## EDITORIAL COMMENT

## Why China is winning the new Pacific 'war' of influence

DURING a recent visit to Beijing, Micronesian president, Urusemal, heard first-hand from Premier Wen Jiabao just what China's policy is in respect to South Pacific nations. Both men had met at the successful first 'Ministerial Conference of the China-Pacific Island Countries Economic Development and Cooperation Forum' held in Nadi in April this year.

China's Pacific policy, the premier asserted, is 'a strategic principle, not a diplomatic expediency'.

According to the Chinese leader, 'China attaches great importance to relations with island countries in the Pacific Ocean and respects Pacific island countries'. China particularly respects the Pacific's positions on 'safeguarding state sovereignty and independence' and supports Pacific requests 'for equal participation in international affairs', Mr Wen Jiabao said. Consequently, as the premier affirmed to Urusemal, 'China is ready to help economic development of these island countries within its capacity'. Indeed, 'history has proved that China is the sincere and reliable friend and partner of island countries in the Pacific Ocean'.

We find that statement unassailable. Note that in reciprocation, Urusemal commended China's policy toward the Pacific, and particularly its commitment 'to the principle of mutual respect and equality'. The Micronesian could have been speaking equally for Fiji when he noted a willingness 'to enhance cooperation with China, so as to benefit from China's development'. The Chinese leader concurred pointing to the Nadi forum as 'a platform for China and Pacific island countries to deepen all-round cooperation and promote common development'. 'China', he said, 'will work with the island countries to implement the consensus of the meeting and enable the (C-PICEDC) forum to achieve fresh progress'.

All of which is good news for the entire Pacific. The graduated exit if not disengagement of former powerful influences here - such as the UK and the US - is making way for a new lease of Chinese life and interest in our atolls, islands and surrounding seas. The UK is understandably absorbed in the EU on one hand and with the US fighting the necessary global war on terror on the other. Australia meanwhile has rediscovered some interest in its minnow-sized neighbours, this taking the form of a particular and essential preoccupation with being the regional policeman. But New Zealand, apart from appearing to have a one-string foreign policy based on rugby (i.e. a rugby-led recovery for the Pacific nations) minds its own business most of the time.

Which is what particularly endears China to the Pacific - as Urusemal and our own Prime Minister concede. In sum, the Chinese like others to mind their own business just as they mind theirs. Former Australian Prime Minister, Paul Keating, found this out while touring China during his brief tenure at the top. While dining sumptuously with then Premier Li Peng, he brought up the vexed subject of human rights. As Keating biographer, Don Watson tells it, 'Li Peng suddenly rose. Keating rose. The dinner had come to an abrupt end'. Pacific nations are too polite to do this to Aussies, Kiwis, Brits and Americans, when lectured about our alleged failings in democracy and human rights. But, to borrow the words of Queen Victoria (which amount to the same thing): 'we are not amused'. China is winning the sphere-of-influence 'war' in the Pacific because it appreciates and respects that little point.

## CARTOON

## High Court blocks Rabuka's PNG golf trip



## FROM OUR READERS

### FLP ministers' stance

Sir,

IN the absence of any ground rules on the workings of a multiparty Cabinet the junior partner is likely to be at a disadvantage.

This is particularly so in situations where one dominant party or a coalition of parties has an absolute workable majority in the House of Representatives.

The Fiji Labour Party accepted an invitation from the Prime Minister to be represented in Cabinet without any conditions. All Cabinet ministers are governed by the principle of collective responsibility and confidentiality.

As their collective responsibility to Cabinet the nine FLP Cabinet ministers are required to support the majority decisions of the Cabinet.

The prime minister has the right to discipline or even sack any Cabinet minister for failing to toe the line.

The SDL-dominated Cabinet has an excellent opportunity to push forward controversial legislations such as the Qoliqoli, Indigenous Claims Tribunal and the Broadcast Licensing Bills. Other bills likely to follow are the Promotion of Reconciliation, Tolerance and Unity and the Native Land Tenants Bills.

It would be interesting to find out the stand of the nine FLP Cabinet ministers when the above bills come up for voting in the House of Representatives.

The nine FLP Cabinet ministers would be caught with their pants down.

Deo Narain,  
Suva

### Church and vanua

Sir,

THE successful conclusion of the Bose ko Viti in Bau is a tribute to the people and the vanua of Tailevu for hosting a gathering of such magnitude.

I am told that the warmth of the reception and hospitality is unsurpassed and a fine display of their unshakeable belief and faith in God.

However, all is not fine as the church has come under intense pressure lately.

But the traditional presentation by the Marama Roko Tui Dreketi and Vanua of Naitasiri in Bau for the 2009 Methodist Church conference to be convened in Rewa and Naitasiri respectively and the acceptance by the Bose ko Viti is a symbol of the deep seated respect and loyalty that exists between the vanua and the church (Noqu Kalou, Noqu Vanua).

The vanua owe immeasurable debt of gratitude to the church for making it what it is today. The vanua looks to the church as the manifestation of God and the source of its blessings and progress, over time, through divine power and grace.

The church respects the sanctity of the vanua and support in terms of donations in kind and free will financial contribution

and levies for its operation.

The vanua and the church are inseparable. Yet, they are distinct institutions with their own set of rules, guidelines and purpose.

The church's role is primarily focused towards the promotion of spiritual development and enlightenment of the vanua and its people.

Whereas, the vanua has its traditional and social obligations to maintain its identity and the well-being of its people.

Once their role contradict and interfere with one another, this could disturb the unity that has been the hallmark of the relationship between the vanua and the church.

For example, the question of protocol in terms of who does the church recognise in a vanua, a chief that is recognised by the Native Lands Commission (NLC) or someone else. I say this because of the inherent traditional leadership disputes facing the vanua.

Any indifference can undermine the sanctity of the vanua and create unnecessary confusion and instability contrary to the church's very purpose. The church needs to state its position categorically on this.

Again the increased pressure on the vanua and its people on their time and contribution. Most of them are on the poverty line and receiving Social Welfare Assistance.

I am happy that the Bose ko Viti has rejected the proposed increase of levy to the Cakacaka Levu from \$10 to \$15 in consideration of this.

But this is only a small

part of their contribution and the BKV also need to look at their contribution to the Divisional Circuit (Wasewase) and to their village churches to truly reflect the extent of their financial obligation to the church.

There are other concerns raised in terms of the high cost of running the church, the increased social and family breakdowns and impoverishment with church members, the number of youths that have joined other churches, politicising of the church, etc.

I know that most of these have been well covered in the BKV but I request the church to be more transparent and disseminate timely information to members because most criticism leveled at the church is simply misinformation through ignorance.

For example, the publication of the Methodist Church Holding Trust for public consumption provides hope to the members that the church is trying to lighten their financial burden, contrary to critics.

But meaningful and constructive criticisms would be good for the church's development and progress.

The statement by the Deputy Secretary of the Church Reverend Tuikilakila Waqairatu that the institution reinvents itself to make it more effective, accountable and transparent under contemporary Fiji situation is timely.

Epeneri Bale,  
Nausori.

EDITORIAL

# Well done Don

ALTHOUGH an unknown just three years ago, New Zealand's National Party leader, Don Brash, has just won 49 seats and is within a whisker of deposing Labor's Helen Clark and her government. He may still, but whatever happens, New Zealanders have sent a clear message that the political concessions to their Maori people given by the Clark government risk national unity and the collective identity of New Zealanders. Curiously, Clark supports indigenous policies for her own nation, but is a critic of them in ours.

She will have to reassess her stance now that she has nearly fallen at last weekend's final hurdle. The familiar horse-trading for the votes of minor parties are sure to support Helen and see her gain a third consecutive term, but Don has sent a loud signal that the ordinary New Zealander will not be taken-for-granted nor bullied by Maori political militancy.

# Well done Wendy

WEST PAPUA is another Melanesian crisis about to happen on the doorstep of Australia and the Pacific. Now it is the turn of John Howard's coalition partner, the National Party, to raise this thorny problem for our regional governmental attention.

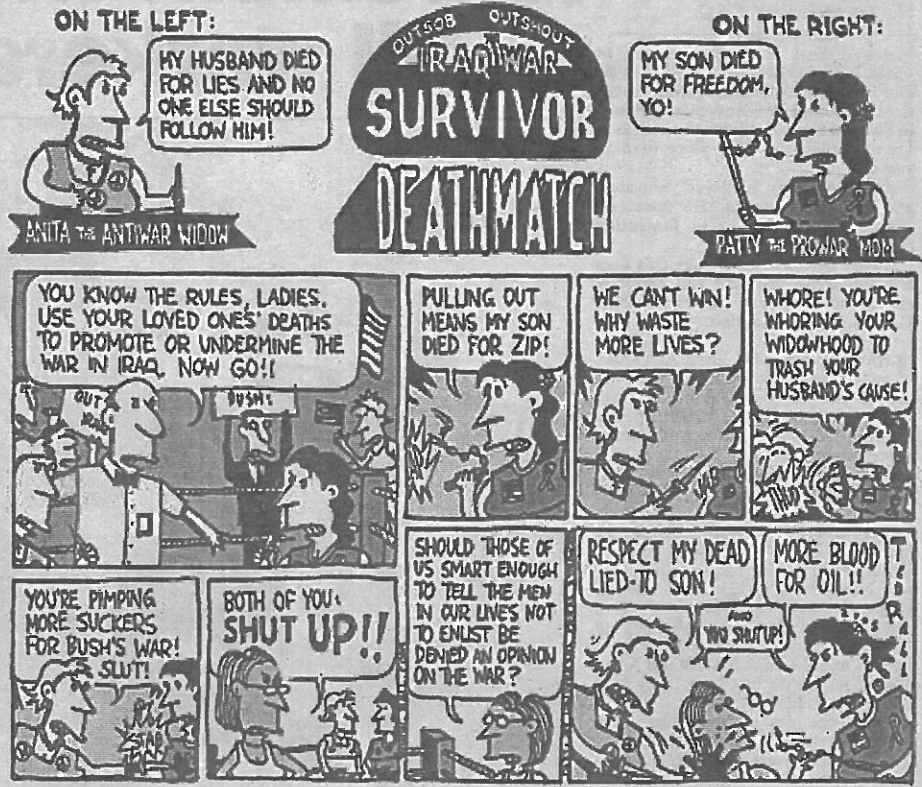
On Saturday, the party's Resolution No. 11 was passed. It calls on the Liberal Party (the National's coalition partner in government), to investigate human rights abuses in West Papua. Significantly, the motion was put to the National Party's national convention in Canberra by Wendy Duncan, President of the National Party (WA).

The National Party's concern for West Papuans is timely. According to the Australia West Papua Association, on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> September, West Papua university students from all over Indonesia gathered in Manado (North Sulawesi/Celebes) to demonstrate against the acquittal of two Indonesian generals who'd been charged with the murder of sixteen students in Abepura on 7 December 2000. Central to the students' demands was a manifestation of true democratic values rather simulations designed to appease the international community. Early yesterday morning, after high-level intimidation by Indonesian police from Jakarta, Makassar, and West Papua, the students cancelled their conference.

According to AWPA, international concern for the security problems posed by the Indonesian occupation of West Papua is escalating and seriously undermining the confidence of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's government, whose policies in the resource-rich province have reached a state of paralysis. For example, he recently moved the headquarters of the East Indonesian airforce from Makassar to Biak Island (off the north coast of West Papua), and is now moving the headquarters of the Indonesian Navy from Surabaya (East Java) to Sorong (on the west coast of West Papua). As we noted earlier this year, in the past months, thousands of TNI troops have been secretly landed throughout West Papua.

We repeat these findings because we believe they are significant for all Pacific and Christian peoples. Unless there is greater solidarity and attention given to West Papua, Pacific governments risk repeating the same mistakes made in relation to Bougainville, East Timor and the Solomons - acting after the fact rather than taking preventative measures beforehand.

CARTOON



# Charities are for suckers

Leave Katrina relief efforts to government

By TED RALL

**H**URRICANE Katrina has prompted Americans to donate more than \$700 million to charity, reports the Chronicle of Philanthropy. So many suckers, so little foresight.

Government has been shirking its basic responsibilities since the '80s, when Ronald Reagan sold us his belief that the sick, poor and unlucky should no longer count on "big government" to help them, but should rather live and die at the whim of contributors to private charities.

The Katrina disaster, whose total damage estimate has risen from \$100 to \$125 billion, marks the culmination of Reagan's privatization of despair.

The American Red Cross leads the post-Katrina sweepstakes, quickly closing in on the \$534 million it took in just after 9/11.

But Red Cross spokeswoman Sheila Graham told the AP it needs another half billion "to provide emergency relief over the coming weeks for thousands of evacuees who have scattered among 675 of its shelters in 23 states."

Shelley Borysiewicz of Catholic Charities USA, which has raised \$7 million thus far, also continues to solicit donations: "We don't want people to lose sight of the fact that this is going to take years of recovery, and we're going to be there to help the people who fall through the cracks."

What "cracks"? Why should New Orleans' displaced have to live in private shelters? We live in the United States, not Mali. There's only one reason flood victims aren't getting help from the government: because the government refuses to

help them. The Red Cross and its cohorts are letting lazy, incompetent and corrupt politicians off the hook, and so are their donors.

It's ridiculous, but people evidently need to be reminded that the United States is not only the world's wealthiest nation but the wealthiest society that has existed anywhere, ever.

The US government can easily pick up the tab for people inconvenienced by bad weather—if helping them is a priority. That goes double for Katrina, a disaster caused by the government's conscious decision to eliminate the \$50 million pittance needed to improve New Orleans' levees.

For our leaders the optional war against Iraq is such a priority, which the Congressional Budget Office expects to cost \$600 billion by 2010. That's four or five Katrinas right there.

(That's also where the levee money went.) Because rich people are always a political priority, their taxes have been slashed by \$4 trillion over a decade—the equivalent of 32 Katrinas.

So worried are our public servants about the tax burden placed on the rich that they're looking out for rich dead people.

This is why they've gutted the estate tax that, at a cost of \$75 billion annually, will run half a Katrina a year.

Trickle-down economists beginning with Milton Friedman shout "starve the beast," but while the social programs are put on a diet, the mean and powerful pig out more than ever.

Disaster relief is too important to be left to private fundraisers, with their self-sustaining fundraising expenses, administrative overhead (nine percent for the Red Cross) and their parochial, often religious, agendas.

It's also way too expensive. In the final analysis, after the floodwaters have receded and the poor neighborhoods of New Orleans have been razed under eminent domain, major charities will be lucky if they've managed to raise one percent of the total cost of Katrina.

Congress, recognising the reality that only the federal government possesses the means to deal with the calamity, has already allocated \$58 billion—over 70 times the amount raised by charities—to flood relief along the Gulf of Mexico. As Bush says, that's only a "down payment."

Cutting a check to the Red Cross isn't just a vote for irresponsible government. It's a drop in the bucket compared to what you'll end up paying for Katrina in increased taxes.

Granted, in terms of popularity of likelihood of success, trying to make a case against giving money to charities compares to lobbying against puppies.

The impulse to donate, after all, is rooted in our best human traits. As we watched New Orleanians die of thirst, disease and anarchic violence in the face of Bush Administration disinterest and local government incompetence, millions of us did the only thing we thought we could do to help: cut a check or click a PayPal button.

Tragically, that generosity feeds into the mindset of the sinister ideologues who argue that government shouldn't help people—the very mindset that caused the levee break that turned Katrina into a holocaust and led to official unresponsiveness. And it is already setting the stage for the next avoidable disaster.

It's time to "starve the beast": private charities used by the government to justify the abdication of its duties to its citizens.