



samenwerkende organisaties  
voor west papua



**To the attention of the United Nations:**

Mr. António Guterres, **Secretary-General**

**and**

Mr. Volker Türk, **High Commissioner for Human Rights**

**For the consideration of:**

Ms Alice Wairimu Nderitu, **Special Adviser of the SG on the Prevention of Genocide**

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***Urgent appeal for intervention in West Papua – Indonesia, after hostage of New Zealand pilot and violent suppression of protests in West Papua.***

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March 8, 2023, Utrecht – The Netherlands

The Dutch Cooperating Organizations for West Papua (*Samenwerkende Organisaties voor West Papua*, hereinafter: 'SOWP') together with the International Indigenous Peoples Movement for Self Determination and Liberation (IPMSDL), the Merdeka West Papua Support Network, Pazifik-Informationsstelle, VIVAT International and West Papua Action Aotearoa call for an international intervention for fear further escalation of the conflict in West Papua<sup>1</sup>. The reason for this are the recent events that have led to a deteriorating - human rights - situation in this particular part of Indonesia.

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<sup>1</sup> Internationally, the Papua region in Indonesia is better known as West Papua and refers to the western half of New Guinea Island. The Government of Indonesia considers the term "West Papua" to have a political and pro-independence connotation and in 2022 they divided the territory into 6 provinces: Papua, Papua Barat (West Papua), Papua Tengah (Central Papua), Papua Pegunungan (Highland Papua), Papua Selatan (South Papua) and Papua Barat Daya (Southwest Papua).

### ***Alarming events***

On February 8, 2023, a New Zealand pilot was taken hostage by the West Papua Liberation Army (TPN-PB). The hostage-taking is an act of desperation after years of discrimination and killing indigenous Papuans, and ignoring the real problems in West Papua. Also, on February 23, 2023, an argument between the family of an abducted Papuan child and the police - who captured the alleged non-Papuan abductor - sparked a conflict in the city Wamena. Violent clashes between armed police, military personnel and civilians left nine native Papuans and two non-indigenous Papuans dead and 17 civilians injured.

The US-based Simon Skjodt Center for the Prevention of Genocide at the Holocaust Memorial predicted in its [July 2022 report](#) that if such events (“warning signs”) occurred, genocide and mass atrocities are most likely to happen in West Papua when “early warning signs” go unheeded.

### ***Humanitarian crisis***

At this very moment Indonesian security forces conduct a [rescue operation in Nduga](#), the region where the New Zealand pilot is being held hostage. Already since December 2018 a humanitarian crisis unfolds in this region. There are approximately [60,000-40,000 IDPs](#) and a [disproportionate number of military personnel](#) is deployed in this region. Earlier attacks in December 2018 by the West Papua Liberation Army (TPN-PB) against workers on the Trans-Papua Highway led to military reprisals, again with many innocent civilian victims, among them women and children. In 1996, after more than four months, the Indonesian military put an end to an [earlier hostage drama](#) in the jungle of West Papua. The military liberation operation at the time resulted in many civilian casualties, while military forces also burned 13 church buildings, 166 homes, and 29 traditional “men’s houses.”<sup>2</sup>The Indonesia Military commander states that this time they will protect local civilians. However, [recent events](#) show that the Indonesian military operates brutal and violent towards the indigenous Papuan population, accusing them of being members of the armed liberation fighters.

### ***Prevention of genocide and mass atrocities***

There is a toxic cocktail of factors in West Papua which – without due attention and international intervention – will lead to genocide or other mass atrocities, as was stated by the Simon Skjodt Center for the Prevention of Genocide. The Papuan people have no confidence in a peaceful solution to the conflict and the humanitarian crisis. Reasons for this lack of confidence are the unwillingness of the Indonesian government to respond to the criticism of the Special Autonomy Law and to enter into a peace dialogue with the local authorities and civil society organizations in West Papua.

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<sup>2</sup> Indonesian Human Rights Abuses in West Papua: Application of the Law of Genocide to the History of Indonesian Control, a paper prepared for the Indonesia Human Rights Network By the Allard K. Lowenstein International Human Rights Clinic Yale Law School

To this day, Indonesia denies foreign media and international humanitarian aid organizations access to the Papuan Provinces. Internet access was - [unlawfully](#) - blocked during earlier protests. Indonesia has ignored repeated requests of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to visit West Papua.

Therefore, we fear for the safety of the Indigenous Papuan population. Given the breach of trust, we consider it necessary that an external party should act as a mediator in the conflict, such as the Crisis Management Initiative (CMI) of former Finnish Prime Minister Martti Ahtisaari that acted as a mediator in the peace talks between the Indonesian government and the Aceh Freedom Army (GAM).

***Our appeal:***

In the year 2023 UN Member States celebrate the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the UN Charter and remind themselves of the obligation to end war and conflict and promote peace and prosperity in the world. In this regard, we respectfully request that you also guarantee the inalienable fundamental human rights – right to life, liberty and security - of the indigenous Papuan people.

We ask you to communicate with the Indonesian government, requesting the Indonesian government to:

- ***Allow the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to visit West Papua as soon as possible in order to investigate the current situation;***
- ***Allow access to international humanitarian aid organizations in West Papua to provide food, medical care and shelter to the IDPs;***
- ***Allow access to international media to report about the situation in West Papua;***
- ***Allow a third external party to mediate in the talks between the Indonesian Government and the West Papua Liberation Army (TPN- PB) – involving the United Liberation Movement for West Papua (ULMWP) – in order to achieve a peaceful solution for the conflict.***