

Ms. Michelle Bachelet
High Commissioner for Human Rights
Palais Wilson – United Nations
Geneva, Switzerland

2 September 2019

Re: Escalating Conflict in West Papua Requiring Urgent UN Action

Dear Ms. Bachelet,

The Collaborating Organizations for West Papua (in Dutch SOWP) is writing to urge you to renew efforts to visit the conflict-torn territory of West Papua (including both Papua and West Papua provinces) and to initiate prompt and impartial investigations into recent violent clashes between indigenous Papuans and the Indonesian police and military forces. This latest incident does not occur in isolation, but is symptomatic of a widespread pattern of violence that has been used by Indonesian forces for many decades in West Papua.

At the root of the conflict remains West Papua's much-contested decolonization during the 1960s. Due to the deeply entrenched discrimination against indigenous Papuans, the human rights situation in West Papua is deteriorating rapidly with a risk of escalating into a violent conflict. Disproportionately violent and racist military action against Papuan students in Surabaya on August 17, 2019, led to thousands of the indigenous Papuans taking the streets opposing the continuing mistreatment by Indonesian forces and demanding a free exercise of their right to self-determination. At least six Papuans have been reported killed and a yet indeterminate number wounded, including four children, by the Indonesian forces during the demonstrations. Severely restricted access by free and independent press and by human rights workers to the territory makes it virtually impossible to determine the exact number of casualties and further fuels the conflict and the existing culture of impunity.

We would like to take this opportunity and kindly remind you of the fact that Indonesia's invitation of February 2018 to your Office to visit West Papua has not been honored yet. In light of the foregoing, we kindly request you to urge the competent authorities of the Indonesian Government to allow visits by your Office to the territory of West Papua, as well as to allow free and unrestricted access to West Papua by independent press and human rights workers. We also respectfully request you to urgently consider the establishment of an independent international fact-finding mission to establish the exact facts and circumstances of the alleged recent and past human rights violations by military and security forces to ensure full accountability for perpetrators, and thus break the persistent culture of impunity in West Papua.

We thank you for your attention to these pressing issues and stand ready to provide any further information as needed.

On behalf of the SOWP, yours respectfully,

Szilvia Csevár, LL.M.

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The Collaborating Organizations for West Papua consists of the following members (in alphabetical order):

Free West Papua Campaign Nederland

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Hapin Nederland

Chairperson: Yvonne Carels

Stichting Duurzame Ontwikkeling Papua Barat

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