

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

IN PAPUA

IRIAN JAYA POST-SUHARTO

PERSPECTIVES FOR RECONCILIATION

Oleh

SEKRETARIAT Keadilan & Perdamaian

KEUSKUPAN JAYAPURA

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KEUSKUPAN JAYAPURA
KOTAK POS 1379
JAYAPURA 99013
INDONESIA

DIOCESE OF JAYAPURA
Tel: +62 - 967 - 534993
Fax: +62 - 967 - 536427
E-mail: sekkp@jayapura.wasantara.net.id

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IRIAN JAYA post Suharto: prospects for reconciliation

I What was the reaction after Suharto stepped down in May 1998?

1. The initial reaction can be characterised as: wait and see what will happen mixed with a kind of relief.
2. Things started off when at the end of the month a report was published about the human rights violations, which have taken place in the final stage and aftermath of the hostage-event in Mapnduma. In the report includes a demand that the army would be taken out of the area. The report resulted in some minor demonstrations in Jayapura end May, beginning of June. The demands formulated dealt with the presence of the army (including the DOM-status of the area), with corruption of the civil servants and people in power-positions, with the presence of Freeport, with violations of human rights in general, with the room for the indigenous people to take part in the administration of the province, with the council of representatives which don't function as representation of the people, with the need for efficient help by the National Committee for Human Rights.
3. June 1998: the killings in Arso, the OPM officially blamed for but largely interpreted as a "counter-act" by the army to make clear that the army is still badly needed (counteracting the demand in the Mapnduma report?).
4. Starting the first of July the tune of the demonstrations and demands became more radical; relying also on more radical demonstrations elsewhere in the country, indigenous people in Irian Jaya became more courageous and besides the demands mentioned above, another demand started being voiced more clearly: to be in charge of their own household, land, country.

--- declaration expressed at Biak---

- ⇒ we, the people of West Papua, pledge to stay united, no matter what the circumstances, under the flag of West Papua and the eastern morning star and pledge to live and die for the flag of West Papua which already flown over an independent Papuan land.

- ⇒ we, the people of West Papua, pledge to continue our struggle to demand our right to independence and the freedom of all West Papuan prisoners and detainees held by the government of Indonesia.
 - ⇒ we, the people of West Papua, pledge to struggle to uphold the ideal of the independence of West Papua.
 - ⇒ we, the people of West Papua, demand the implementation of the fourth point of the letter from the American Congress dated May, 22, 1998, that is, that the people of Irian Jaya be given full human rights and a solution of their political status (independence).
 - ⇒ we, the people of West Papua, declare that the Republic of Indonesia can not interfere in the affairs of West Papua.
 - ⇒ we, the people of West Papua, ask that our security be guaranteed by the United Nations and by no one else.
 - ⇒ we, the people of West Papua, ask that the United Nations give full independence to the state of West Papua in accordance with the urging of the American Congress in its letter of May 22, 1998.
 - ⇒ we, the people of West Papua, will not consider entering into the dialogue with anyone or any party except for the United Nations, and we ask that Secretary General Kofi Annan come here.
 - ⇒ we, the people of West Papua, will always be loyal to and will support the flag of West Papua.
- we, the people of West Papua, hereby state that no one can take away our independence.

God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, is witness to this pledge.

(Biak, Thursday, July 2, 1998)

1. Getting more political, the expressions also became more aggressive, partly responding on repression by security-forces. Demonstrations of the same kind took place in Jayapura, Abepura, Manokwari, Sorong and Biak. The one in Biak ended in a violent clash with the security-forces on the 6th of July. It was a confrontation between an armed and fanatic security-force and an unarmed powerless demonstrating group of people determined to make clear their right for self-determination.
2. Quite a new element in the story is the clear and public siding of migrants with the security forces in Sorong (as aftermath of the demonstration on the 1st through the 3rd of July); they have set up their own defense committee and claim publicly as much right on the land as the indigenous population; it is the first time that an 'outside' group dare to do this, and get away with it.
3. The violent end to the demonstration in Biak leaving –nobody knows how many- a number of people dead, missing, injured or ending up in jail, was

the start signal for a more collective expression of dissatisfaction/anger or of the already long repressed desire for self-determination. In that context a Forum for Reconciliation of the Papuan Community has been set up by a number of representatives of the local community (church leaders, traditional leaders, student-leaders, women-leaders): FORERI (founded the 23rd of July). Its mission: to create a meeting place for people to express their real aspirations, whatsoever. A place also to dig up the history of 35 years of life under Indonesian rule; the history should be written down and made public to the Indonesian community so they would understand why Papuans feel bad at ease in the Republic, as they feel not recognized as real people and as people with full rights on their own land.

4. Some fact finding parties (from the Central Parliament, the Churches, the National Committee for Human Rights) have visited Irian Jaya over the month July-August. After all it has to be said that most of them hadn't any real impact! Except the issue that there should be a National Dialogue without specifying what it should be about.
5. In the beginning of October the official status of Irian Jaya as being a "Area of Military Operation" (DOM) has been lifted; army officially changed their presence into a presence for "village development".
6. FORERI had hardly started to pick up its mission (organising a first workshop analysing the problems, at the end of September) when it got involved in facilitating what was to become the start of the "National Dialogue". The National Dialogue has been proposed by several sides and has been meant to get the history of the Papuan Community including its suffering over the last 35 years into the open, and make it a matter of discussion with the authorities, up till the level of the President of the Republic.
7. It has been quite some hassle to reach an agreement on the terms of reference of the dialogue and the meeting planned with the President. A first delegation of 30 people met with central government authorities at the end of October 1998. Later a small group of 7 people (under the name of Foreri) did the follow-up negotiations. At the end the main idea was to create an opportunity for free expression of the aspirations of the Papuans, and a delegation of 100 people was agreed on to represent the Papuan Community on 26th February in a direct meeting with the President.
8. While the President and his cabinet were expecting some open dialogue mainly dealing with matters that were wrong in their development-policy, the Group of 100 surprised everybody by just stating very bluntly that they

were not interested in that kind of discussion but just in the readiness by the President to recognize the independence of Irian Jaya which has been already granted way back in 1961¹.

II The post-Jakarta Meeting situation

The political statement during the meeting with the President on 26 February 1999 really might be seen as a historic one, although still not completely clear in its impact on the situation.

Let's give it a try to picture the post-declaration situation:

- ◆ the government, including security forces, angry and probably blaming/accusing themselves internally that they were not capable to prevent this surprise
- ◆ the local Papuan community in high spirits
- ◆ the vague message by the President to the Group of 100, requesting them to “think it over again”, which in certain circles has been interpreted as a kind of “agreement in the near future”
- ◆ the vague expectation that the demand by the Group of 100 would be answered on by the President in the near future
- ◆ FORERI marked by the authorities as a siding party (with the Group of 100) and therefore failing in its mission as a neutral meeting place
- ◆ the “group of 100” marked as heroes by their own community, and marked as dangerous by the security-forces
- ◆ the confusion because of concrete elements in the political statement concerning (1) the demand for a transition government before the end of March 1999 and (2) the boycotting of the general elections in June 1999; demands that would prove to be difficult to be kept
- ◆ The army and police more and more clearly voicing their anger with the created situation leading to the forbidding of all activities of socialization of the results of the meeting with the President (instruction dated May 1, 1999)
- ◆ A lack of real constructive follow-up of the event by FORERI as well as by the Group of 100, leaving people in the villages confused and asking questions: what next? While prominent figures traveled all over the world to lobby in international circles for understanding and support of the independence-aspiration.

¹ The political statement on February 26, 1999 makes clear: “that the core problem that causes political and security instability in West Papua (Irian Jaya) since 1963 up to today is not notably caused by the failure of the development but it is the political status of West Papua which on December 1, 1961 has been stated as an independent state amongst other nations in the world. The statement became the best alternative, hope and future ideal for the people of West Papua, but has been annexed by the Republic of Indonesia”.

- ◆ The nation as a whole, including Irian Jaya, slowly moving to its first democratic elections, to be held on the 6st June
- ◆ The army trying to prevent the editing of the vocal weekly Tifa Irian over the last week of June and the first week of July (see Tempo, July 15, 1999)
- ◆ New efforts by the government to divide the Irian Jaya province into three new provinces; this campaign started somewhere in April/May and was meant to be finalised before the elections (June 6, 1999). A lot of protest was the answer on the plan which was felt as heavily politically loaded
- ◆ the police cracking down on the local Papuan Community organisation In Sorong after a flag raising incicent on July 5, 1999
- ◆ a letter from the Immigration Department instructing all its offices in Indonesia to prevent five people traveling abroad (Benny Giyai, Herman Awom, Octovianus Mote, Willy Mandoen, and Tom Beanal); letter dated on June 28, 1999 based on a letter of instruction by the National Army authorities dated on June 23, 1999, and valid for the next six months.

III **New expressions of tension and dissatisfaction.**

- A hostage-affair in the hinterland of Jayapura (May 3, 1999) which still remains questionable as to the actors behind the screen
- A young person shot dead by army-personnel in Genyem (June 7, 1999)
- Flag raising in Genyem (1 July)
- Memorial ceremonies at University Cenderawasih (1-3 July)
- Flag raising in Sorong, and a crack down of the police in activists circles (44 people arrested) 5-8 July
- A young person shot dead by security forces on the quai of the harbor of Jayapura on the 9th of July
- Publication of a renewed summary-report on the Biak massacre July 1998 by Human Rights Organizations backed by the three main churches in Irian Jaya (10th of July)
- The release of the report was followed by a student protest on July 13, 1999 which formulated 11 demands²

² The demands formulated by HIMABI (Students Oragnisation Biak): (1) need of an independent international team to investigate the Biak massacre, (2) demand to the ICRC to take responsibility for what happened at Mapnduma in the final stage of the hostage-crisis in May 1996, (3) demanding for an international trial of Suharto for his killing thousands of people, (4) demanding KOMNAS HAM to disclose its findings on Mapnduma, Biak, Bela-Alama during their visit at Timika and Biak (June 1998), (5) demand to the government to continue the dialogue on the status of Irian Jaya, (6) demand to the Army to return the corpses of six people who have been killed by the army in their attack in Biak on July 6, 1998, (7) demand that the army be retreated from Sorong and the care for security handed over to the leading figures in the community, (8) the release of all political prisoners, (9) demanding the army and police to give compensation to the victims (or their families), (10) demand to all persons in power (are who were in power) to be responsible for the violations of human rights over the last 36 years, and (11) charging PT Freeport with shared responsibility in the violations of human rights in its area of operation as well as demanding for an independent investigation into the matter.

- Documentary by the ABC-TV (Four Corners) giving fresh reasons to discuss the final stage and aftermath of the hostage-crisis way back in May 1996 (broadcasting on July 12, 1999)
- Also connected with mentioned documentary the preparation of the publication of a renewed report on Mapnduma by Human Rights Organizations backed by the three main churches in Irian Jaya (planned release: end of July)
- Publication of a situational report on the impact of security-force presence in the Star Mountains by the Secretariat for Justice and Peace of the Catholic Church, backed by the two other main church denominations in the area. (July 16, 1999)
- New protest on the plan by the government to divide Irian jaya up into three provinces within a short time from now

IV Elements for Reconciliation-efforts

- 1 FORERI didn't function up till now, but is still very needed as a neutral body; special efforts should be made (and are done and underway) to build it up to its job; a neutral meeting place, voicing also comments on actual socio-political developments is more needed than ever (if not FORERI another has to be found out)
- 2 Study should be made of the past especially around the transition of Irian Jaya into the hands of Indonesia, culminating in the act of free choice (1969); analysing as well documents which are often mentioned such as the New York-agreement and the Rome-agreement.
- 3 A form of institution should be set up to harbor the "independence aspiration" and recognized as a political –opposition- party in a democratic setting; it might be seen as the institutionalization of the Group of 100; the first step to that effect has been taken after recent talks by representatives of the "Group of 100" (July 23-25, 1999)
- 4 All efforts to 'create' a more clear local indigenous leadership should be supported
- 5 Special efforts have to be made to involve Papuan intellectuals and "Papuan in power –government administration and other institutions- position" in the process of further reflection and opinion building; up till now they are a vague lot not playing a significant role; they might be first of all be asked to involve themselves in critical talks on development-poliies in the area (a field of reflection which is more 'generally' acceptable)
- 6 Reflection on recent –35 year - Indonesian history and making them public (easy reading publications) is necessary as means to build internal conscientisation as well as to channel a message to the wider public of the Indonesian republic; also 'non-Papuan' communities have to be reached

- 7 Organising workshops where 'opposing' sides can meet and discuss the problems at hand
- 8 Opportunities have to be provided for the indigenous population to voice their anger and feeling of powerlessness that has been built up over tens of past years; this room for expression is unconditional if any 'reconciliation' which is looked for
- 9 At all occasions it should be stressed that the Papuan Community opts for peacefull struggle and is strongly opposed to any use of force or violence

Jayapura, July 29, 1999

Theo van den Broek
Director Office for Justice & Peace