

Short Summary

WE WILL LOSE EVERYTHING

A Report on a Human Rights Fact Finding Mission to West Papua

Conducted by the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission of the Archdiocese of Brisbane

1 May 2016

This is a short summary that is referring to the data provided by the following report:

Title: We will lose everything. A Report on a Human Rights Fact Finding Mission to West Papua.

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“**We will lose everything: A Report on a Human Rights Fact Finding Mission to West Papua**” conveys the insights of the delegates of the **Catholic Justice and Peace Commission of the Archdiocese of Brisbane**, who belonged to one of the first teams to be allowed to collect information on the human rights situation in West Papua. It was published on **1 May 2016** and provides an overview of the history of West Papua since the 1950s as well as analysing the current situation in terms of human rights and the economic and social situation of West Papuans.

The heart of the matter is the question of West Papua’s sovereignty. From the beginning, the answer to this question was driven by the will of the Indonesian governments to incorporate all of the Dutch colonies, to which West Papua (West New Guinea until 1961) belonged. The New York Agreement, signed by Dutch and Indonesian officials on 15 August 1962, constituted that a United Nations Temporary Executive Authority (UNTEA) would take control of West Papua and later transfer that power to the Federal Republic of Indonesia. A provision for an act of self-determination by the Papuan people at a later stage was also included in the agreement. This agreement went along with repeated use of violent force by the Indonesian military to intimidate the Papuan population. In response to growing armed and unarmed resistance in the late 1960s, the Indonesian military amplified their efforts to restrict the resistance, killing several Papuans. Foreign observers noted a remarkable unpopularity of the Indonesian government among West Papuans during the time before the 1969 vote.

The vote was held between 14 July 1969 and 2 August that same year and involved 1022 Papuans chosen to vote on Integration of West Papua into the Republic of Indonesia in a so called “act of free choice”. The report, however, gives clear evidence that the representatives were taken their freedom by various acts of intimidation through the

Indonesian military: According to one of the participants, the representatives were separated strictly from their families and threatened with serious consequences if they would not support the Indonesian takeover. Various reports of Papuans claim that the referendums were held under serious threat by Indonesian soldiers.

In the end, every one of the eight assemblies supported the incorporation of West Papua to Indonesian territory unanimously.

Despite its knowledge about the continuous use of violent military force, the United Nations General Assembly rejected a proposal to another act of self-determination. Today, most of the UNs members recognize Indonesia as legal sovereignty over West Papua. The report, however, concludes that the vote of 1969 was “neither democratic nor free”. It also puts special emphasize on the contrast between West Papua and its geographical neighbor, Papua New Guinea, which was granted a UN supervised plebiscite that resulted in the country’s independence in 1975.

The report also states that the violence of Indonesian security forces has ever continued since the referendum. The repression of independence and oppositional movements includes aerial attacks, oppression of non-violent protests, constant military presence and torture as well as arrests and elimination of resistance leaders. The report points out at least 18 different cases of human rights violations by Indonesian security forces since 2014, simultaneously naming data that indicates an overall amount of 1200 such cases in 2016. This violence creates an atmosphere of constant fear among the Papuans that could be incessantly felt by the commission’s delegates during their stay in the country. This atmosphere is increased by the omnipresence of Indonesian soldiers, police and intelligence operatives. The Indonesian legal and political system is unwilling and unable to address human rights violations in West Papua.

The report furthermore points out that the Papuan part of the population lives in constant fear of cultural, social and economic marginalization. The most important factor for them is the dramatic demographic change that has resulted from the high rate of migration from Indonesian islands. The Melanesian proportion in West Papua is estimated to have declined from 96% in 1971 to a present day minority of 48.73%. This also threatens to slowly extinguish the traditional customs and cultures.

Much of the land originally owned by Papuans is now sold under use of intimidation to Indonesian immigrants or huge corporations that exploit West Papua’s natural resources. Economic opportunities for Papuans are poor, and high school fees create a vicious circle that is an enormously significant contributing factor in the growing economic marginalisation of Papuans. This is applied particularly to women, who can not compete with the higher quality of richer migrants’ products.

Health standards for Papuans are poor. Life expectancy is low and infant mortality rates are high. Health services in many of the more remote areas are poor, and the HIV rate is increasing. The Indonesian government is not willing to support the Papuans in their situation.

The report concludes that the combined effect of the loss of opportunities for economic and social participation and of culture is that Papuans feel like strangers in the land that has been

theirs for countless generations. The situation is currently not being treated by the world community which in a majority recognizes Indonesia's sovereignty over West Papua.

In sight of these findings, the commission recommends increased pressure by the Pacific states on both the United Nations and Indonesia in order to install an independent commission to report on the human rights situation in West Papua. It furthermore recommends the people of the South Pacific to build a network of solidarity with their counterparts in West Papua. It addresses the Australian government in particular to investigate the human rights situation on an objective base and then urge the Indonesian government towards a policy change. The genuine self-determination of West-Papua should be promoted on international level.

The report finally states that since the first day of Indonesia's occupation until today, the Indonesian government has used an institutionalized racism to intimidate and sow fear among Papuan communities that has led to growing economic, cultural and social marginalization. The people of West Papua are right to be concerned about their future, and the commission urges geo-political considerations to stop dominating so that the injustice is finally ended.

The full report, as already linked in the beginning of this summary, can be found here:

<https://cjpbrisbane.files.wordpress.com/2016/05/we-will-lose-everything-may-2016.pdf>

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