

PASTORAL LETTER
THE RESPONSE OF THE WEST PAPUA COUNCIL OF CHURCHES TO THE
CURRENT SITUATION IN WEST PAPUA
05 / VI / DGP / 2021

Introduction

We, the West Papuan Church Council, consider that the polemic around the Provincial Secretary (Sekda) and the Radiogram letter no.T.121.91/4124/OTDA regarding the appointment of the Provincial Secretary, Dance Flassy, as the acting Governor of the Papua Province cannot be separated from the larger agenda of the central government in Jakarta to carry out divisive politics between fellow Papuans. This agenda also includes perpetuating the continuation of the implementation of Special Autonomy and the plan to expand the creation of New Autonomous Regions, without involving the Papuan people who are the subjects of development. This polemic is a continuation of the two versions of the appointment and inauguration of the Provincial Secretary, namely the Papuan Provincial version and the version from the Ministry of Home Affairs v on March 1, 2021.

We consider that this is also an attempt by the State to evade demands to resolve the four roots of the Papuan problem which LIPI concluded were the roots of conflict in Papua. The four root problems are;

- a. Racial Discrimination and Marginalization;
- b. Human Rights Violations
- c. Development Failure
- d. The Status of Papuan Political History

Affirming the findings of LIPI regarding the roots of the conflict in Papua, we Papuan church leaders conclude that based on the experience of suffering together with the Papuan people, the root cause of the conflict between Papua and the State is **Racism** as the "heart" and "core" which has become the basis for violence and oppression against Papuans by the State.

Currently we are dealing with big problems which are being experienced by our people, namely;

- a. The conflict in Nduga which started in December 2018 and which is still ongoing today, has resulted in massive internal displacement;

- b. The conflict in Intan Jaya ongoing since December 2019 has claimed the lives of pastors and church officials, also resulting in massive internal displacement of people;
- c. The conflict in Puncak since 2021 which has caused civilian casualties and massive internal displacement;
- d. Refugees (Internally Displaced People) from Tembagapura in January 2020

The impact of these conflicts have caused thousands of Papuan people to be neglected and unnoticed even though they are dying constantly.

These conflicts have occurred as a result of the continuous and excessive deployment of troops in the region and other areas throughout the Land of Papua. This shows Jakarta's approach to conflict resolution in Papua is to use a militaristic approach.

We consider that the polemic scenarios of the Provincial Secretary, the extension of Special Autonomy and the creation of new administrative areas are an effort to divert attention from the military operations that have been described previously. The state has ignored the substantive issues and considers the issue of Human Rights Violations as an unimportant and side issue.

The extension of Special Autonomy (OTSUS) and the addition of new administrative regions are not an emergency need in order to resolve problems and conflicts in Papua, but instead they lead to further conflicts. The Papuan people have objected to the extension of the Special Autonomy. There are 700,000 Papuans who have declared Special Autonomy a failure through the Reject OTSUS petition. If the OTSUS extension is enforced in a similar way to other steps Jakarta has taken in recent years, will they be labeled as terrorists?

The issue of racism that occurred in 2019, the labeling of the Papuan civilian movement against injustice as an Armed Criminal group (KKB) which was then later named by the Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal and Security Affairs, Mahfud MD, as a terrorist group on 29 April 2021, has given rise to a new stigma against Papuans as terrorists.

Taking these things into account, we, the West Papuan Council of Churches recommend the following:

To the Central Government:

1. The Central Government in Jakarta should immediately stop the politics of creating conflict between Papuans through the polemic between the Governor of Papua Province and the Secretary of the Papua Province and take into account that currently the Papuan people are in a situation of mourning due to conflicts and prolonged human rights violations;
2. The government should immediately stop the stigmatization and character assassination of indigenous Papuan officials as “separatists”, in the same pattern that has been repeated since the establishment of the province of West Irian in 1963. We conclude that this shows Jakarta's distrust of Papua as a province within Indonesia. This has actually exacerbated the long-standing conflict between Jakarta and Papua;
3. The government should immediately stop all unilateral decision-making processes that are forcing the continuation of Papua's Special Autonomy without involving the Papuan people and listen to the aspirations of the people who have rejected the extension of Special Autonomy through the Papuan People's Petition which has now reached 700,000 signatures;
4. Seeing that the recent state policies related to Papua are full of militaristic approaches, we question the extent of the authority of President Joko Widodo as head of state of the Republic of Indonesia in making political and development policy decisions in Papua.
5. The Indonesian government through the leadership of President Joko Widodo should immediately open access and allow the UN Human Rights Commissioner, various independent international investigative teams from the Pacific Island Forum, African Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries and foreign media to enter Papua, as President Joko Widodo has previously conveyed in various statements.
6. The Indonesian government should immediately seek to resolve the conflict in Papua and Jakarta by following up on President Joko Widodo's statement on September 30, 2019 and meet with pro-referendum groups.

To God's People in Papua;

This situation of conflict and the polemic of the Papuan Provincial Secretary must be seen as a small part of the larger conflict scenario that is being implemented by Jakarta for Papua. This is Indonesia's attempt to divide Papuans, a pattern that has been going on since the 1960s. We have been divided by using relational sentimentalities, namely Papua Mountain - Papua Coast, Papua this tribe and that tribe, Papua Islam and Christian. This all comes from the existence of racist views against Papuans who are considered backward and primitive. Therefore, we urge all Papuans not to become trapped in this divisive scenario so that Papuans will live on from generation to generation.

To the International Community

In view of the ongoing situation of human rights violations and the deteriorating situation of the Papuan people, we ask the following to the international community:

1. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights should immediately conduct a humanitarian intervention in the Land of Papua to see firsthand the impact of conflicts and human rights violations;
2. Regarding the polemic of Papuan Special Autonomy, we see that there is no good will from the state to carry out a comprehensive evaluation of the Special Autonomy for Papua by involving all Papuans, through the mechanism regulated in Law no. 21 of 2001 concerning Special Autonomy for Papua. The Papuan People's Assembly as the cultural representative institution of the Papuan people has attempted to hold hearings (RDP) throughout the Papuan Customary Territory, but in the middle of the process, it was thwarted by the state. The state continues to impose unilateral extension of the implementation of Special Autonomy. Therefore, we ask the countries that support the funding and implementation of Special Autonomy for Papua, namely Members of the European Union, the United States and Australia to immediately send delegates to Papua and see firsthand the success and failure of the implementation of Special Autonomy in Papua.
3. The Member States of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) should continue to include the issue of West Papua through the ULMWP as one of the agendas in the MSG Leader Summit meeting which be soon held during this year.
4. The member countries of the Pacific Island Forum should continue to include the issue of Human Rights in Papua as one of the agendas in the PIF Leader's Summit meeting which will be soon held during this year.

If the conflict situation in Papua is allowed to continue, Papua will become as described by our fellow servant of God Pastor Franz Magnis Suseno, SJ, "The situation in Papua is bad, abnormal, uncivilized, and shameful, because it is closed to foreign media. Papua is a rotting wound in the body of the Indonesian nation. We will be exposed in the civilized world, as a savage nation, a nation that kills Papuans, even though we don't use weapons." (Nationality, Democracy, Pluralism, 2015, pp. 2055 and 2057). This was also emphasized by the servant of God Pastor Frans Lishout, OFM who said that "Papuans have become a minority in their own country, it is very sad, Papua is a festering wound in the face of Indonesia". (Book of Teachers and Pastors for Papua, 2020, p. 601).

In closing this pastor's letter, we would like to emphasize that if the state does not immediately resolve the conflict in West Papua then West Papua will continue to be a problem like a thorn in the flesh that will continue to pierce and cause pain.

Jayapura, 27 June 2021

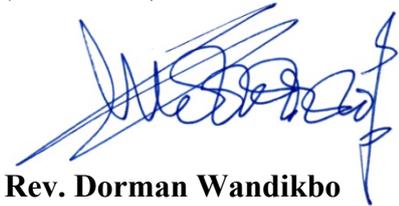
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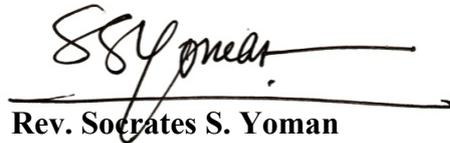
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