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Indonesia Human Rights Committee

Autumn 2005

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Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono visits New Zealand



On April 6, 2005 Indonesia's President arrived in New Zealand for a 48 hour visit.

Prime Minister Helen Clark was effusive in her welcome and painted the prospects for restored bilateral ties in the best possible light. She even went as far as to comment

that she believed it was time to "turn the page" on East Timor.

Apparently Helen Clark would like to move to "normalise" ties with Indonesia as quickly as she can. Fortunately she is restrained by the stand that the Government has taken on the issue of justice for war crimes in East Timor and by a significant domestic opposition.

Normalising ties with Indonesia implies restoring military cooperation. The United States announced in March that it was restoring IMET (International Military Education and Training Programme) funding. Australia and Indonesia have just conducted their first combined defence exercise since 1999. Maritime air exercise ALBATROS AUSINDO in the Timor Sea was promoted by Defence Minister Hill as a boost to the relationship and to ongoing defence cooperation. A new Security Pact with Indonesia is on the agenda in Australia.

On the New Zealand visit military ties were not on the agenda but Helen Clark has signalled that she believes military ties should be kept under review. However, Foreign Minister Phil Goff has stressed his concern about the unresolved issue of justice for 1999 war crimes in East Timor.

Human rights issues were on the agenda but the media reports suggest that Helen Clark took a soft approach. She acknowledged the importance of

the "unity of Indonesia" and praised the President for pursuing a policy of "devolution within the State of Indonesia" for Aceh and West Papua.

However, it was significant that the issues were raised publicly and the Indonesian President was pressed into a reply in which he referred to the need to "to bring more justice and prosperity to the people both in Aceh and West Papua" and said he wanted to solve the problems "peacefully and properly and wisely".

These issues would probably not have been on the agenda at all if it were not for public concern and the persistent lobbying on these issues by local peace and human rights groups and a growing number of MPs. President "SBY" was met on the steps of Parliament by flag bearing Green M.Ps Nandor Tanczos and Rod Donald and later a colourful demonstration advocated self-determination and human rights for Aceh and West Papua.

Don't turn the page, Helen

The Impunity Saga is ongoing: not one Indonesian military or political person has yet been held accountable for international crimes committed in East Timor by the Indonesian military and its murderous militia cohorts.

The United Nations Secretary General has appointed a Commission of Experts to examine and report on the justice process so far, especially the work of the Jakarta Ad Hoc Human Rights Court on East Timor and the Serious Crimes Investigation Unit and the Special Panels in East Timor.

However, the eminent persons, Justice Prafullachandra Bhagwati of India, Professor Yozo Yokota of Japan, and Ms. Shaista Shameem of Fiji are already encountering considerable controversy.

When they visited East Timor they were met with hundreds of demonstrators calling on the UN not to wash its hands on past crimes and urging the

establishment of international tribunal. The protesters wore black gags emblazoned with "We need Justice" across their mouths.

In Dili, the Commission met with the East Timor Commission of Truth and Reconciliation, with victims and their families and Indonesian Human Rights leaders.

When the Commission tried to go to Indonesia in early April they were refused entry visas, a move which has shocked human rights groups in Indonesia and around the world. Indonesia is the current chair of the UN Human Rights Commission. IHRC has appealed for SBY to allow the team free and unrestricted access to complete its important task.

It is not clear if and when the team will be granted entry, but Indonesian authorities have stated that they believe this process is not necessary since Indonesia and East Timor have now set up their own Indonesian-East Timorese Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Timor expert James Dunn was part of the UN team which investigated human rights crimes in East Timor in 2000. He is very "sceptical" about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission: "It is extremely unlikely to succeed in bringing out the truth behind the atrocities that occurred during Indonesia's 24 years of occupation, which surely must be regarded as a minimum objective by the international community. That is a matter of fundamental importance, involving, as it does, crimes against humanity. These crimes are no less serious than those committed in Rwanda, Bosnia, and Iraq, and call for an international response. In the circumstances a cosy pragmatic deal between Indonesian and East Timorese leaders is not acceptable. It will fly in the face of international humanitarian law and will certainly not constitute a just settlement from the point of view of the East Timorese. In effect it will probably mean forcing the East Timorese people to accept the unacceptable. This important issue can surely only be dealt with by an international tribunal, one authorized by the UN Security Council...In the present political circumstances, with at least some of the TNI military commanders occupying senior positions in the new government, the outcome of the Indonesian-East Timor Truth and Reconciliation is more likely to be a deal than an exposure of the truth of a tragic past that cost the lives of more than 200,000 Timorese. Those who perceive this solution otherwise are being extraordinarily naïve.

"While justice is an obvious central issue, there are other considerations from the point of view of UN,

Australian and East Timorese long-term interests. If the truth is not brought out, the Indonesian political and military establishments are likely to continue to contend that the TNI did not commit any atrocities or at least to play down their seriousness - and to blame Australia and the UN for its humiliation. In relation to these matters, a great deal more work needs to be done before the relationships involved are soundly based. A proper investigation is also essential if the TNI is to be thoroughly reformed, in such a way that it no longer presents an obstacle to Indonesia's progress towards a democratic format and, for that matter, to the security of the region. Finally, it is quite unacceptable for the UN to be virtually humiliated on a matter of such fundamental moral importance, at a troubled time in its history. It would represent a serious setback to the world body's critically important role of securing the implementation of those human rights designed to prevent a return to the horrors of the twentieth century."

Freedom of speech denied

East Timorese protesters were attacked by police and forced to disband when they tried to mount a demonstration against the visit of Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. The demonstrators wanted to convey their opposition to "reconciliation" with the Indonesian government. They strongly oppose their government's plan to abandon the push for an international human tribunal.

Around 200 East Timorese had gathered at the Santa Cruz cemetery, the site of the 1991 demonstration and massacre by Suharto's military. Yudhoyono was scheduled to visit the cemetery. Later the demonstrators were holed up in the offices of the Socialist Party of Timor, which was sealed off by police and vehicles from the Rapid Response Unit. Instead of banners calling for an end to impunity SBY saw only the welcome banners which the East Timor government had got people to display. Secretary -General of the Socialist Party, Avelino de Silva said that "democracy was dead".



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What lies behind the murder of human rights activist Munir

Munir, a prominent Indonesian human rights activist died in suspicious circumstances on September 7, 2004. The founder of *Kontras* (Commission for Missing Persons and Victims of Violence) and *Imparsial* (Indonesian Human Rights Monitor) was killed by a massive dose of arsenic on Flight 974 from Singapore to Amsterdam. Public outrage over the death compelled Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono to appoint a 12-man fact-finding commission, including human rights activists, to investigate the murder.

So far five Garuda employees have been implicated. Garuda pilot Pollycarpus Budharia Priyanto has been charged with premeditated murder and faces a possible death penalty.

The commission has also declared that there are "strong indications" that two as-yet unnamed members of the State Intelligence Agency (BIN) were involved in the conspiracy.

Pollycarpus was in touch with Munir before both men joined the flight in Jakarta. The Garuda pilot swapped seats with Munir, taking Munir's economy class seat and placing Munir in a business class seat where he was given his poisoned meal.

There are many inconsistencies in the reasons given for Pollycarpus' trip. There are also claims that the pilot has links to the Indonesian intelligence service (BIN) and flew missions in Papua and East Timor.

But there is no direct motive for Pollycarpus or Garuda officials to murder Munir. On the other hand the Indonesian military, had marked the activist for

some time. There had been a previous attempt to kill him using a bomb.

At the time of his death, friends believe Munir was preparing a report on corruption in relation to the military's operations and civic programs in Aceh. He is not believed to have any involvement in investigating Garuda. Indonesian authorities have been slow to obtain crucial evidence from the Netherlands. The Indonesian attorney general's office is yet to reassure the Dutch government that the death penalty will not be applied to anyone convicted over the murder.



Munir's widow Suciwati, appealed to the UN High Commission on Human Rights to put pressure on the Indonesian government for a full and open inquiry. IHRC has written to the Indonesian Ambassador and the National Chief of Police General Dai Bachtiar to express concern that the inquiry and investigation into this tragic death will not probe below the surface to seek out those responsible for planning the operation.

If the military or intelligence forces are involved, this would be an ominous confirmation that the military is still wedded to the ruthless methods of the Suharto era.

More Papuans HIV positive

JAYAPURA: The number of people with HIV/AIDS is on the rise in Papua, with around 500 people testing positive for the virus every year.

Latest data from the Papua province health office in March this year showed that 1,874 people were HIV/AIDS positive, an increase from the 1,749 people in December last year. "If there's an addition of 125 HIV positive people in three months, it means 500 in a year. That's an official figure.

But if we use the theory that claims for every known HIV positive case there are 100 unknown, it might mean 5,000 HIV positive cases a year," said

Suardi Redjo, head of communicable diseases subdivision at the Papua health office.

Of the official figure of 1,874, 1,131 were HIV positive and 743 had full-blown AIDS. Most of them were between 20-29 years of age (785), 30-39 years (451), 15-19 years (165) and 40-49 (161).

Source: *The Jakarta Post* April 4, 2005

"Among the refugees in the settlement in Banda Aceh, there is a joke: Sukarno, Suharto, Susilo and (t)sunami. They are all the same, purveyors of chaos for the Acehnese."

Tapol Bulletin March 2005

Acehnese, Islam and foreigners: Clearing up the misapprehension

Aguswandi, London



Aguswandi and Phil Goff

Do the Acehnese hate foreigners? Do they want the many foreign aid workers laboring to help them to leave their villages? Are the Acehnese, you may ask, fanatical Muslims?

The departure of some foreign aid groups and all foreign troops from Aceh signaled the supposed end of what the government called the emergency post-tsunami period (not to be confused with the civil emergency still in place in Aceh), and given some of the mendacious statements made about the foreign presence in Aceh in this period, it is important to offer some clarification about the Acehnese, Islam and their view of foreigners.

Without such clarification the path is left clear for incorrect assessments, like last month's statement by Indonesian defense minister Juwono Sudarsono in Washington D.C. Juwono reportedly hinted that Christian groups needed to leave Aceh because the locals were uncomfortable with their presence.

The same could be said of the actions of members of some militant Islamic groups being allowed into Aceh. In a mosque in Banda Aceh, members of these groups have urged the Acehnese to rise up against foreigners. They have also been very active writing graffiti such as "Foreigners out of Aceh" in some areas. Some groups have also spread rumors that foreign aid workers are attempting to Christianize local people.

However, in a refugee camp in Aceh Besar, an image quite contrary to these sentiments could be seen. A banner raised by Acehnese stated, "Don't leave Aceh", in an appeal to foreign aid workers.

Even more interestingly, in western areas in Aceh, people prefer to seek medical aid from foreign posts than from the nearby government post. In many places the locals have greeted foreigners with a warm welcome. Many of those asked have stated that they are very grateful for the presence of numerous foreign troops and foreign aid workers....

Misrepresenting the Acehnese as fanatical and claiming that they hate foreigners, and Christian groups more specifically, is just one of the cheap propaganda lines being put out about Aceh. It is quite easy to present the local community as hostile to non-Muslims as the Acehnese are predominantly Muslim. In this odd world of ours today, being a devout Muslim is seen as synonymous with fanaticism or, even worse, terrorism. But in the case of Aceh, as in many others, this is absolutely wrong. The people of Aceh are not fanatics.

It is a historical fact that the Acehnese are immensely tolerant of foreigners, regardless of their religion, skin color or ethnicity. This is in part due to the geographical location of their island, which promoted high flows of travel to and from foreign lands. Historians have made special note of the high level of Acehnese interaction with other peoples, notably during the golden age of Aceh's sultanate. As sociologist Otto Syamsuddin has said, this historical mobility gave the Acehnese a very cosmopolitan legacy.

The ongoing conflict in Aceh has also prompted many Acehnese to broaden their understanding of the meaning of their relationships with other peoples. Those of different religions or skin color can be friends, while those that supposedly share their beliefs may not necessarily be friends.

This has led to a more flexible definition of us and them, foreign and non-foreign, infidel and devoted.

Ordinary Acehnese use the word *kafir* (infidel) in reference to those who visit injustices upon them, regardless of their religion. This word can also apply to Muslims. Infidels may be friends, irrespective of their religion, as long as they do not visit injustice on the locals. The issue here is not one of Christianity, Judaism or Islam, the only infidel is a perpetrator of cruelty.

As a result of the lack of Muslim solidarity for the plight of the Acehnese, many Acehnese distrust

Muslim nationalists in Indonesia. A clear indication of this fear can be seen in the many demands by Acehese groups for the international community to help them resolve the conflict in Aceh. The Acehese understanding of what it means to be Islamic has become increasingly inclusive. The province's Islam is becoming somewhat unique; friendly to those that have different beliefs, and deeply suspicious of some of those who claim to share the same religious values as them.

It was, therefore, an absurdity when in 2001 the central government imposed sharia (Islamic) law in Aceh. They suggested that it would be a route to solving the conflict in the province. Yet the locals had not been asking for sharia, they had been asking for justice to be done and for those that had committed crimes against the Acehese to be, regardless of their religion, brought to justice. The present conflict in Aceh has nothing to do with religion. It is a conflict based on injustice practices and policies from a central government — which happens largely to be Muslim as well.

People of different faiths are not a problem for the locals because the most important thing is not the name of their faith, but what these people are doing in Aceh. There have been no incidents caused by religion disputes. There are two major Christian churches in Aceh, and not only did they survive the tsunami but they have been protected by locals from any harm.

Islam has often been used by interested elements, predominantly non-Achehese, to distract people from the real issues in Aceh. Now, once again, the fact that the Acehese are Muslim is being used to drive a wedge between those that would help and those that need help. This must be challenged and prevented from undermining the reconstruction and the longer-term peace process in Aceh.

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Reprinted from *The Jakarta Post*

Aceh updates

Aguswandi an advocate from the Indonesia Human Rights Campaign (TAPOL) and Director of Aceh Civil Society Institute (ACSI) visited New Zealand in late January and addressed record attendances at his public meetings in both Auckland and Wellington. He met with Aid agencies, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and other politicians and was interviewed on TV and radio.

We reproduce extracts from his recent report to the European Parliament and an article he wrote for the *Jakarta Post*.

ACEH: Challenges of building a future after tsunami

The disaster that rocked Aceh on 26 December 2004 was devastating for the Acehese and Indonesians. It had a devastating impact on both the people and the infrastructure. The latest figures show that at least 250 thousand people were killed and 400 thousand became homeless. Two third of Aceh's capital, Banda Aceh is destroyed. Much of the infrastructure has collapsed.

When the tsunami hit in December the province was under a second period of civil emergency law imposed by the current SBY government. Civil emergency law, an extension of the preceding martial law status, imposed a range of restrictions

on the locals and destroyed the life of the population. It was effectively an extension of the military operations run in Aceh from 1989 to 1998. In the two years before the tsunami, the conflict claimed over 3 thousand lives. More people were killed in Aceh in that period than in the same period in the Palestine-Israel conflict. The restrictions on access to the province have been likened to those in North Korea. The isolation of the population is the reason we did not see any images or hear any reports from this worst-hit area for days after the tsunami hit.

Pre-tsunami Aceh, as in West Papua, continued to resemble Indonesia under Suharto. The military and police continue to control not only security but politics too. Aceh is the only place where the bad old days' doctrine of the military's *dwi fungsi* (dual function) integrating security and political responsibilities continue both in theory as well as practice. Several districts and sub districts are under military control. Only in the first few days of the disaster did security personnel do good work in Aceh. Within a week they had reverted to their 'normal' bad behaviour.

Now Aceh is the place of dual disaster, one - conflict being man-made, the other natural. While the latter's impact is being addressed by many groups, there are few efforts being made to tackle the first.

Meanwhile, the locals are talking about how the horror of the tsunami can provide an opportunity to build a new Aceh. This new Aceh should be - and can be - different to pre- or post-tsunami Aceh. Building the new Aceh is not simply about infrastructure or development, but also building peace.

However, this new Aceh is definitely not the one outlined in the present government blue print and plans of many groups working on Aceh. There are no provisions for dealing with the conflict. The blueprint simply aims to return Aceh to 'normal', the conflict-shattered Aceh that still existed on December 25th. Aceh's pre-tsunami 'normality' was abnormal. And yet few of the reconstruction plans on the table even mention peace-building. Numerous foreign aid agencies are overlooking the fact that Aceh is a conflict zone - they point to the fact that the government is in peace talks with the rebels and that is seen to be enough. Few seem to have considered the viability of the talks or what the consequences will be - for the population or their own reconstruction funding and programs - if the talks fail.

For longer term reconstruction the other disaster's recovery must be incorporated. Beside a restoration of people's lives and livelihoods, the economy and infrastructures, it is also essential to restore Peace in Aceh, restore human rights, public space and democracy and capacity of Acehnese civil society.

In the present environment of conflict there is no freedom of expression: for example:

◆ On 10 February the government through the chief of the police in Aceh banned an initiative by local civil society groups to hold a meeting to discuss an alternative blueprint by local people.

◆ An Australian academic, Dr. Edward Aspinall, who wanted to go to Aceh to work for a humanitarian organization was refused entry into Indonesia.

◆ The chief of sub district of East Aceh accused villagers refusing relocation to government camps of being rebels. They were also told that if they refused to go to the camps, they would be refused any help or aid.



"When I don't think about my family I'm okay. It's easiest when I'm asleep." Mawada, an Aceh orphan girl.

Key points from the Initiatives recommended to the EU were:

1. Access

Ensure that Aceh is open to any international groups who want to visit, not only for reconstruction work, but also for monitoring the human rights and peace building situation in the province.

2. Aid distribution

Ensure that aid and support is effectively delivered, and that the aid and support reaches the intended beneficiaries as planned.

3. People participation in reconstruction and recovery process

Not just carefully selected groups whose loyalty and interests are assured.

4. Peace process

Develop a peace process that involves Acehnese civil society. Lift the civil emergency status which runs counter to peace building processes in Aceh, as well as threatening the reconstruction process.

5. Human Rights

Impunity is still the biggest challenge in Aceh and Indonesia. In the post-tsunami climate civilians are being forced to move into government built and controlled barracks.

6. Capacity Building of Acehnese Civil Society

In both the reconstruction of and peace building in post-tsunami Aceh the involvement of Acehnese civil society is very significant, but there are very few programs to build the capacity of local groups. There is a huge amount of money and aid pouring into Aceh, yet there is very little cash for capacity building work available.

7. Observer delegations:

Meet, not only Indonesian government officials, but also local civil society groups.



Tsunami aftermath

West Papua

Paul Kingsnorth of the newly formed and very active Free West Papua Campaign in Britain recently wrote a moving article (2 April 2005) in which he described the death of two year old Nona Kogoya in the highlands of West Papua, near Puncak Jaya:

Nona had fled with her parents from a military operation during which their whole village was torched, the crops destroyed and livestock impounded. Trapped in the forest without medicine or food supplies, Nona's death is estimated to be one of more than 53 in the last few months.

“For months now Indonesian soldiers have been burning villages, attacking civilians, raping women and killing men in a widespread and planned military operation. As you read this, at least 5000 refugees are living precariously on the slopes of cold mountains and in deep forests, hiding from the army. International observers, journalists and aid workers are banned by the Indonesian government from getting into the country.

The circumstances that led to this appalling situation go back to last August when trees were felled to make way for an airstrip and highway to be constructed on traditional land owned by the Tabuni tribe. When Mr Goliath Tabuni, sought to make representations to the authorities in Mulia about the problem, the security forces alleged that he was a member of the OPM. In the ensuing manhunt, the Rev. Eliza Tabuni was questioned with his son. The Reverend could not give any information and was then summarily shot and killed, while his son was wounded.

It is also suspected that the security forces killed a Christian minister as a deliberate provocation to incite protest.

Indonesia has resisted pressure to allow humanitarian groups to access the area and a military cordon remains firmly in place. The only information about the situation is from photographs smuggled out by West Papuan human rights activists.

The Indonesian military has just announced a new deployment of 15,000 troops to West Papua that will bring the total number in the territory up to 50,000. A new division of its crack Kostrad troops will be based in the north-western town of Sorong.

West Papua Baptist leader, Rev Sofyan Yoman has been outspoken on his recent visit to Australia about this tragedy and called on Australia to support

“human integrity” not “territorial integrity”. With respect to Special Autonomy Rev Yoman said investigations by his church showed that the military had been siphoning off funds to fund its operations. Rev Yoman also expressed great concern about the large numbers of transmigrants coming into West Papua every week.

The West Papuan people are united in their call for West Papua to be a Zone of Peace and for the problems to be resolved by dialogue with the Indonesian authorities.

Merbau wood scandal

To add to the long list of resources already being exploited for the benefit of foreigners, it has just been revealed that West Papua has been subject to the world's biggest timber smuggling racket. The London and Washington-based Environmental Investigation Agency and its Indonesian partner Telapak have disclosed that an average of 300,000 cubic metres a month of the luxurious dark hardwood, merbau, has been smuggled out over a three year period. The timber was taken first to China and then on to Europe and North America.

Telapak said that the illegal trade would not be possible without the participation of members of Indonesia's military and police at every stage. The environmentalists believe that if the logging continued at its current rate, Papua would be virtually bare in 10 years.

President Yudhoyono is taking this issue very seriously and held a meeting with his Minister of Forests Forestry M.S. Kaban as well as the National Police Chief, TNI Commander and other ministers. It is accepted that security forces including the Navy are implicated. As the Forestry Minister pointed out “How can heavy equipment, both on and on sea, freely move around when there are so many checkpoints they have to pass through? I dare say that security forces are definitely involved in illegal logging.” Over a 100 officials have now been arrested and equipment confiscated, but as the Minister of Forests points out those arrested are the people on the ground and not the “big fish” who backed the crime.

Signs of hope

Important new recruits are joining the international campaign calling on the UN to review its actions around the time of the Act of “No” Choice in 1969 which sealed Indonesia's annexation of West

Papua. One of these is a United States Congressman from American Samoa: Honorable Eni F.H. Faleomavaega.

He is one of more than 174 parliamentarians and 80 non-governmental agencies from around the world who have written to Secretary General Kofi Annan urging a review.

On March 14, 2005, more than 37 Members of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) joined with Mr Faleomavaega in urging U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan to support West Papua's right to self-determination.

In a recent speech in Auckland, Mr Faleomavaega made a strong plea for Pacific Forum nations to help bring an end to "violence, racism and commercial exploitation in West Papua...As Gandhi said, "To deprive a man of his natural liberty and to deny him the ordinary amenities of life is worse than starving the body; it is starvation of the soul."

West Papuans make request to Green MP Keith Locke

After a three day trip to West Papua, Keith returned with a request from West Papuan leaders that New Zealand "champion their cause at the Pacific Islands Forum."

I received a clear message that West Papua's 'special autonomy' is not helping the people or protecting them from the Indonesian military. The people's desire for independence from Indonesia is as strong as ever.

"The Papuan Parliamentarians I met are frustrated that four years of 'special autonomy' has produced so little for their people. They welcome President Yudhoyono's recent initiative that an indigenous Papuan People's Council be part of the provincial structure, but are concerned that it could end up being a toothless advisory body.

"The political strings are still being pulled in Jakarta, and Papuans who challenge that are suffering at the hands of the military. I saw real fear when I visited the highland town of Wamena.

"The military are no longer confronting an armed rebellion. The leaders of the Papuan Presidium Council, the main representative body of the Papuan people, assured me that they are pursuing a peaceful path towards independence.

"Papuan leaders asked me if New Zealand could put their issue back on the agendas of the Pacific Island Forum and the United Nations.

Papuans want the UN to review the bogus 1969 'Act of Free Choice' and set in train a new process of self-determination for the West Papuan people."

Seeking Peace in West Papua

I represented Pax Christi Aotearoa-NZ and the bicultural desk of the Auckland Catholic Diocese at the 150th anniversary of the coming of Christianity in West Papua last February. I was able to observe the human rights situation and the relations between the major cultural groups.

Overall, it looked like Aotearoa-NZ in the 1860s. West Papua suffers from exploitation of mining, forestry, production-based agriculture, fishing; rapidly growing urban centres are radically changing social life and customs: political life is directed and controlled by the central government in Jakarta.

Linked to all these are widespread human rights abuses mostly in remote areas. Parliamentarians committed to a co-operative relationship with central government said parliamentary missions were being diverted from investigation of reported deaths and abuses by the military. Everywhere, there is a strict control on free movement.

Yet there is a prevailing wish for peace. All groups we visited seemed committed to the slogan "Papua-

Land of Peace". Another 60,000-large gathering linked to Papuan customary leadership committed itself to peaceful processes. But it also expressed dissatisfaction and frustration with the central government over the proposed Special Autonomy Law, seen by the NZ government as the best hope for an end to current conflicts.

In spite of everything, I came away with a heightened sense of hope. A committed and courageous civil sector is intent upon using all peaceful means to work towards a just society for all in West Papua.

A high level of cooperation among ethnic groups wished to get rid of military dominance and associated corruption. What all need is the equal commitment of the international community to assist them to the creation of a fully democratic Indonesia

We in New Zealand have an important role to play in that process and must continue to lobby our government to take up its responsibility to bring it to fulfilment.

Kevin McBride