

At the European Parliament's Subcommittee on Human Rights, activists tell of Papua abuses

Thursday 30 January 2014, by [ARITONANG Margareth S.](#), [SARAGIH Bagus BT](#) (Date first published: 25 January 2014).

In a move that will irk officials in Jakarta, a group of activists have spoken about the human rights situation in the West Papua and Papua provinces at the European Parliament's Subcommittee on Human Rights.

Three activists, two of whom are Indonesian, were guest speakers at the committee's hearing from Wednesday to Thursday in Brussels, Belgium.

The activists are Zely Ariane from Jakarta-based National Papua Solidarity (Napas), Victor Mambor from the Jayapura chapter of the Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI) and Norman Voss from German-based International Coalition for Papua (ICP).

Representing the Indonesian government was Indonesian Ambassador to Belgium, Luxembourg and the European Union Arif Havas Oegroseno.

In the hearing, video footage of which can be viewed at europarl.europa.eu, the activists raised concerns about the unresolved human rights cases in Papua and the limited access of foreign journalists and NGOs to Indonesia's easternmost region.

"There are still double standards in Papua and other parts of Indonesia when it comes to media freedom and the application of the Press Law," Mambor told the hearing.

In his written statement to the forum, which was made available to *The Jakarta Post*, he said that AJI had documented 22 cases of threats and violence against journalists in Papua in 2013 alone.

Zely, meanwhile, told the hearing that "the Indonesian government should admit that the state of the human rights situation in Papua is serious". She called on the EU to put pressure on the government to uphold their commitment to a dialogue with Papua [1].

Norman called for the release of all political prisoners in Papua and reminded the committee of the long outstanding visit of UN human rights mechanisms to Papua. "Papua needs to be opened up and international human rights norms be realized for Papuans. A peaceful and sustainable change cannot be expected in a climate of fear and repression of political dissent," he said.

"We came [to the hearing] to explain our version of what is actually happening in Papua and ask for support from the EU Parliament to help uphold justice and peace in Papua," Zely told the Post upon leaving for Brussels.

"We hope that our presentation will encourage the EU Parliament to endorse calls for the Indonesian government, as well as lawmakers, to actually protect and uphold the rights of Papuans, as well as to ideally implement a peaceful dialogue between Indonesia and Papua," she added.

In a 16-page dossier submitted by the activists to the committee, activists also criticized the

restricted access slapped on foreign diplomats who attempted to assess the situation in Papua, citing the recent closed visit of foreign ministers from Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) member nations as an example.

“After the MSG - a regional body of Melanesian nations who support the human situation in Papua - decided to visit Papua to meet with civil society representatives, the Indonesian authorities only prepared a tour to industry and trade related projects. As a result of this access restriction, Vanuatu withdrew from the visit as it felt the ‘pre-arranged’ tour would not meet the purpose,” the dossier says.

This particular incident also highlights similar restricted practices implemented for other foreign agencies, including those that deal with humanitarian and development cooperation.

Arif, according to the recorded footage, rejected the activists’ claim that the situation had not changed in Papua. He emphasized that the government’s policy of decentralization and special autonomy for Papua had boosted development there.

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P.S.

* Indonesia & East Timor News Updates - January 25, 2014.

Footnotes

[1] See her statement available on ESSF (article 30916), [Papua is a mirror of Indonesian Democracy - On the state of human rights violation in Papua](#).